Constraints and Limitations on Women's Right to Vote in Carniola

Concepts, Activities and Perceptions[1]

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Democracy has not always been taken for granted and has even had different meanings throughout history. Especially in the 19th century, democracy began to develop into a global idea that influenced people all over the world. Carniola was no exception. Together with the collective actions of ordinary people, a new political vocabulary emerged in Carniola in the 19th century that would alter the political landscape. Until then, the term *political* implied state institutions or administration and was associated with the elite. However, this meaning began to change with the establishment of associations, the new role of the middle class and the development of the *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* in the second half of the 19th century. From 1848 on, constitutional ideas spread among the population, especially after the 1860s. In addition, the lower classes were more open to joining associations and increasingly willing to promote democratic ideas. Nevertheless, the state still sought to control associations through the Associations Act[2] and only wanted to create a limited sphere where citizens could act freely, hoping their activities would be limited to social and cultural purposes. The authorities were intent on preventing political activities aimed at gaining political power through associations, even at the beginning of the 20th century.[3]

Terms such as *constitution*, *suffrage* and new mechanisms of responsibility, for example the duties of the people's representatives or parliament, appeared. Unsurprisingly,

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2 See Section 30 of the *Vereinsgesetz* [Associations Act] of 15 November 1867 that prohibits the participation of "women, foreigners and children" in political associations and was not repealed until 30 October 1918.

3 Hiebl, Ewald: The Instrumentalization of Bürgerlichkeit: Associations and the Middle Class in Hallein, Austria from the Nineteenth to the Beginning of Twentieth Century, in: Graeme Morton/Boudien de Vries/R. J. Morris (eds.), Civil Society, Associations and Urban Places. Class, Nation and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Europe, Hampshire 2006, pp. 55–76, 62.

most people, even in Carniola, had difficulty understanding what these new words, which were signs of democracy, meant in political discourse and wondered whether these concepts would impact them directly, nevertheless democratization of the state opened venues for politization. The basic prerequisite for politicising the masses was the Austrian reforms of the 1860s (the restoration of parliament, compulsory education and the guarantee of fundamental civil liberties). Only then did the political actors or the national leadership turn their attention to the poorer sections of the population, who became important sources of votes.[4] The nationalisation of society went hand in hand with democratisation or, as Pieter Judson contends, nationalist politics began to change the perception of the masses and bring them closer to the political discourse.[5] However, the nationalisation of society was not only the result of the spread of national consciousness among the population but also consisted primarily of structuring civil society according to national differences.[6]

Throughout the Slovenian territory, there were still doubts about the extent to which the right to vote could improve people's lives; nevertheless, changes began to take place. The idea of what constitutes politics was discussed and transformed in the public sphere or in civil society. Social movements, such as the labour movement, which spread from major urban centres to the outskirts of Slovene territories, gradually expanded people's understanding of political action and presented them as important political actors capable of advancing their own political demands.[7] Professional and amateur politicians, elites and working-class politicians debated formal political institutions and their outcomes. These debates were not only about civil rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press, but also about political rights, specifically the right to vote and to participate in political processes. Public life in Carniola changed as political enthusiasm spread and only then did the understanding of politics become more comprehensive. Initially, the concept of the public sphere was broader than politics but as time passed and politics expanded this changed. This article examines the evolution of politics through the lens of women and the feminist movement.

In the course of democratisation, women began forming their own organisations to represent their claims and interests in public. Similar to other countries, there were factors in the Slovenian case that delayed and contributed to this process and influenced the politicisation of women, especially their demand for women's suffrage. These factors, such as rules of conduct, the conservative nature of the political culture and the Associations Act, are discussed as obstacles to women's participation in public and political life. Furthermore, the precipitating factors are presented as a process of nationalisation and political polarisation. As one of the last segments of the population that could not be part of the political process of the 1907 enfranchising state reforms and the 1908 Carniolan

4 Řepa, Milan: Introduction. The Politization of Rural Areas: The Case of East Central Europe, in: Milan Řepa (ed.), Peasants into Citizens. The Politization of Rural Areas in East Central Europe (1861–1914), Wiesbaden 2020, pp. 1–10, 6.

5 Judson, Pieter M.: The Habsburg Empire. A New History, Cambridge/London 2016, p. 273.

6 Řepa: Introduction, pp. 6–7.

7 Selišnik, Irena: Vstop množic v polje političnega na prelomu 20. stoletja na Slovenskem [Entrance of Masses in the Political Field at the Turn of the 20th Century in Slovenian Territory], in: Katarina Šter/Mojca Žagar Karer (eds.), Historični seminar, Ljubljana 2016, pp. 65–86.

enfranchising reform, women were subjected to rapid changes in the last years of the monarchy, in which they were regarded as suitable political actors in the monarchy. They redefined first the public, then the political as well as the concept of appropriate gender roles. The definition of *political* is addressed in this article by presenting the suffrage activities and arguments of the women's movement. Other important political actors are also included in this consideration, particularly political parties in Carniola. Given that the specific circumstances, the characteristics of the political habitus in Carniola and the women's movement will be discussed later in this article, the focus lies first on the Slovenian political context and women's position at the turn of the 20th century.

1. The Historical Context of Politics and Gender

A strong polarisation or tripartition of the Slovenian political space and culture occurred with the formation of Slovenian political parties in the 1890s, such as the conservative Catholic party *Slovenska ljudska stranka* (Slovene People's Party, or SLS), the social democratic party *Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka* (Yugoslav Social Democratic Party, or JSDS) and the liberal *Narodno napredna stranka* (National Progress Party, or NNS). Each of these parties built its own infrastructure in the form of spaces, economic institutions and supporting associations. In an environment where the SLS focused on peasants (who constituted the majority of the population) and became a populist party where priests played an important role in mobilisation, it is not surprising that this party became a dominant force in Carniola. The NNS lost ground and preserved its stronghold only in cities. The JSDS was a marginal force in the Slovene political theatre and failed to produce any MPs or representatives in the Carniolian Diet. The NNS was organisationally quite conservative and followed archaic or elitist organisational principles.

In contrast, the SLS and the JSDS were mass political parties that tended towards centralisation, professional party workers and systematic agitation.[8] There was hardly any independent political, or even apolitical, movement in Carniola. Women's organisations were no exception in this regard. All parties attempted to use the women's movement to mobilise women through the concept of gender to achieve their own political goals; however, there were differences in their organisation and women were mobilised with different strategies and arguments.

The position of women in Carniola was regulated by the Austrian Civil Code (*Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, enacted in 1812), which, for example, states quite clearly in Article 91: "A man is the head of the family. In that regard, he has the right to manage; he also has a duty to provide for the marriage companion."[9] In some respects, the Austrian Civil Code was more progressive than the French one and offered better protection for

8 Ibid.

9 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Obči državljanski zakonik za nemške dedne dežele avstrijanskega cesarstva. I. del. [The Civil Code for the German Hereditary Lands of the Austrian Empire, part 1], Vienna 1853, p. 32.

illegitimate children and mothers.[10] Under Austrian law, women were considered legally competent and thus active subjects in legal documents. However, divorce was not legally possible for believers in the Catholic denomination and, until 1914, it was also not possible for women to be granted guardianship of children. The legal norms supported so-called "bourgeois paternalism", in which women did not possess the same abilities as men and were therefore dependent on a "rational" and "prudent" father or husband.

However, the exclusion of women from formal political institutions was not absolute. In the Habsburg Empire, property qualifications and higher education formed the basis for a special electoral system of corporative representation, introduced in Austria in 1861 as part of the transition to constitutional government.[11] The Carniolian Diet consisted of four *curiae*, corporate bodies representing the interests of particular population groups, namely, large landowners, cities and towns, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and rural communities.[12] Similar principles for *curiae* were introduced for the *Reichsrat* (parliament in Vienna), as members of parliament were directly elected from 1873 on. In 1897, a special "general *curia*" was added in which all men over the age of 24 were eligible to vote. It was not until 1907 that universal and equal suffrage for men was introduced to parliament.[13]

Women's right to vote in provincial elections was closely linked to their right to vote in municipal elections, which contained no rules or qualifications for eligibility; what counted was wealth. However, in 1866, a special article stipulated that female taxpayers could vote through male proxies. In 1850, women were excluded by law from municipal elections in the city of Ljubljana. The same provisions prohibiting women from voting were enacted for the provincial assemblies in Carniola and Carinthia in 1884 and in Styria in 1904. On the other hand, aristocratic women could still vote through a male proxy for the *curia* of large landowners and independent businesswomen were allowed to vote in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Other women lost their rights with the new voting reforms, although they had filed a complaint with the State Court.[14]

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10 Sineau, Mariette: Law and Democracy, in: Françoise Thébaud/Georges Duby/Michelle Perrot (eds.), A History of Women. Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century, Cambridge 1998, pp. 497–526, 497.

11 Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: From Corporate to Individual Representation: the Electoral Systems of Austria, 1861–1918, in: Raffaele Romanelli (ed.), How Did They Become Voters? The History of Franchise in Modern European Presentation, The Hague/London/Boston 1998, pp. 295–339, 295.

12 Melik, Vasilij: Volitve na Slovenskem [Elections in the Slovene Territory], Ljubljana 1965, pp. 11–13.

13 Bader-Zaar: From Corporate, p. 311.

14 [Anonymous]: Volilna pravica učiteljic [Women Teachers' Right to Vote], in: Slovenski narod 17 October 1884, p. 3; Jutta Martinek estimated that women's share in the *curia* of great landlords for Upper Austria varied between 7 and 11 % from 1868 to 1879 (see Bader-Zaar: From Corporate, p. 300); in Carniola, the percentage of women voters in the *curia* of great landowners totalled 27.2 % in 1895, while in the following years the percentage of women voters decreased. In 1912, women represented 18.4 % of all voters in the *curia* of great landlords, in 1895 (27.2 %), 1897 (25 %), 1899 (26 %), 1905 (22.4 %), 1906 (21.2 %), 1908 (20.5 %) and 1912 (18.4 %). Based on an analysis of Arhiv Republike Slovenije [ARS; Archives of the Republic of Slovenia], SI AS 16, Deželno predsedstvo za Kranjsko [Land Presidency for Carniola], folder 5, folder 6.

2. Liberal Women's Organisations and Suffrage Activities: Moderate Actions and Conceptual Dilemmas

Social movements are a special form of contentious politics because they include collective demands. Social movements emerged in the 18th century and became significant change agents in the 19th century, when ordinary people were able to participate in public politics.[15] Among them are the social movements organised by women, which became the most enduring and successful social movements of modern times.[16] The distinction between the women's movement and the feminist movement will be briefly highlighted, as both were present in 19th century Carniola. Ferree and McClurg Mueller define a women's movement as "mobilisations based on appeals to women as a constituency and thus as an organisational strategy", and it is in this sense that the term is used in this text. On the other hand, the feminist movement aims to challenge and change the subordination of women to men.[17]

In the second half of the 19th century, the strengthening of the women's movement and the feminist movement gained force because internationalisation created strong links between women in many European and American countries, and, as a result, similar social movement strategies, such as campaigns and repertoires of social actions and means, were adopted throughout the West. In this context, it can be observed how the connections at the transnational level,[18] indicating a conscious crossing of national borders and the supersession of the nationalist orientation, also had an immense impact at the local level within states through the exchange of ideas and activists.[19] This influence can be seen globally and in the context of the monarchy through the interplay between the national, the state and the transnational.[20] The *International Council of Women* (ICW), the oldest international women's organisation founded in 1888, with which the

15 Tilly, Charles: Social Movements 1768–2008, London 2009. p. 3.

16 Marx Ferree, Myra/McClurg Mueller, Carol: Feminism and the Women's Movement: A Global Perspective, in: David A. Snow/Sarah A. Soule/Hanspeter Kriesi (eds.), Blackwell companion to social movements, Malden, Mass. 2004, pp. 576–607, 576.

17 Marx Ferree/McClurg Mueller: Feminism, p. 577.

18 Some authors reject the use of the word "transnational" and prefer "international". For others, transnational suggests a conscious crossing of national boundaries and a supersession of nationalists' orientations; research focuses on the interaction between transnationalism and the national level, as for example, how political transfers have influenced national women's movements, and it is in this sense that the term is used in this article. In contrast, for example, Karen Offen argues that what was meant by international at the time could be called transnational now and the term does not solely define intergovernmental aspects. Offen, Karen: Understanding International Feminisms as 'Transnational' – an Anachronism? May Wright Sewall and the Creation of the International Council of Women, 1889–1904, in: Oliver Janz/Daniel Schönpflug (eds.), Gender History in a Transnational Perspective. Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders, New York/Oxford 2014, pp. 25–45, 28.

19 Ibid., pp. 28–30.

20 Leszczawski-Schwerk, Angelique: Dynamics of Democratization and Nationalization: the Significance of Women's Suffrage and Women's Political Participation in Parliament in the Second Polish Republic, in: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity 45/5 (2018), pp. 809–822.

Slovene women's association *Splošno žensko društvo* (SŽD) was in contact through the German-Austrian association of women's organisations (*Bund Österreichischer Frauenvereine* or BÖF), was also part of this network.[21]

In these women's associations, one can observe the acquisition of the "political self" or political socialisation; habits, group membership, attitudes towards political ideas and sentiments were developed in this environment. Here, a political habitus with a certain kind of social capital emerged, where norms and the groups' social positions towards the system were established. At this point, formal politics, with its institutionalised political actors running the state and institutions, overlapped with civil society and reached its broader definition with the "unconventional forms" of participation.[22] With these political activities taking place in women's associations, an arena for the public and the political was developed. As women's associations focused on gender, the principle of the dichotomy between men and women was also called into question. In the 19th century, the doctrine of separate spheres prevailed, along with the view that gender roles were primarily based on the concepts of biology (scientific) and religion. As a result, the position of women was determined by their sex and they were relegated to the private sphere (their homes and households), while men were in the public sphere (outside the home, in business and in politics). However, as can also be observed in the case of the SŽD, the ideology of separate spheres was only an idea that was challenged by the women's movement because reality, even then, did not correspond with those ideals and not only that, this division was also questioned by political parties.[23]

Founded in Ljubljana in 1901, the SŽD was one of the main agents of change for women, helping to transform the understanding of women's public and political engagement. Its leading members were the wives of prominent liberal politicians in the party, such as former teacher Minka Govekar (1874–1950)[24] and Franja Tavčar (1868–1938).[25] This association's programme was elaborated by one of Carniola's most radical feminists, namely Elvira Dolinar (1870–1961).[26] At that time, Dolinar was one of the most prominent Slovenian authors of the first women's journal, *Slovenka*, published in Trieste. As asserted by Govekar, society's goals included "the liberation of women from mental dependence, mental slavery".[27] The society's statutes contained the following

21 Rupp, Leila J.: The Case of Transnational Women's Organisations, 1888–1945, in: The American Historical Review 99 (1994), pp. 1571–1600, 1574.

22 Della Porta, Donatella: Temelji politične znanosti [Foundations of Politicial Science], Ljubljana 2003.

23 Kerber, Linda K.: Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History, in: The Journal of American History 75, no. 1 (1988), pp. 9–39.

24 Minka Govekar, née Vasič, a teacher, translator, writer and activist of the liberal women's movement. She was an editor of the women's periodical *Slovenska gospodinja*. She was married to the writer, journalist and theatre director Fran Govekar (1871–1949).

25 Franja Tavčar, née Košenin, was a leading figure in numerous women's associations and actively participated in Ljubljana's political life. She was married to the mayor of Ljubljana Ivan Tavčar, who was a writer, lawyer and leader of the liberal party. See also footnote 47.

26 Elvira Dolinar, née Sittig, who wrote under the pseudonym Danica, was a teacher, writer and publicist. See Fortunat Černilogar, Damjana: Slovensko splošno žensko društvo v Ljubljani [Slovene General Women's Association], in: Kronika 40 (1992), pp. 98–105, 98.

27 Ibid., p. 99.

wording: "[…] a comprehensive organisation of Slovene women for the purpose of their education, elevation of their social and economic position and defence of their interests; the society is based on the principle of complete equality and equal rights for all social classes."[28]

In addition, the SŽD was the only Slovene association that was part of the ICW through the BÖF. When the ICW launched an initiative in 1899 to promote the establishment of new national councils, it also encouraged the foundation of the *Council of Women in the Habsburg Monarchy*. As the multinational empire was rife with national disputes at this time, these conflicts also manifested in the inability to form a unified representation body for women in the monarchy.[29] When the BÖF was founded in 1902, many women's organisations founded by non-German nations in the monarchy boycotted its establishment, the SŽD not being one of them.[30] Govekar, secretary of the SŽD, and Tavčar, president of the SŽD, were in constant correspondence with Marianne Hainisch (1839–1936), president of the BÖF, and received monthly reports from the BÖF.[31] They emphasised that the BÖF represented all women, regardless of nationality.[32]

The SŽD participated in some joint BÖF campaigns (for example the one of 1904), which circulated the petition against the Lower Austrian school law, which discriminated against female teachers in terms of equal pay and prohibited them from continuing to work after marriage.[33] Two SŽD delegates were present at the demonstration for women's suffrage in Vienna in 1912; that same year, they also attended the BÖF conference for suffrage in Vienna.[34] One of the most influential demands of this first wave of feminism and its international organisations was women's right to vote. Within this framework, the SŽD also cooperated with Czech women's associations and signed two petitions for women's suffrage in 1911.[35] In the first petition, they also argued that women should become members of political parties, contending that women's dignity was humiliated because they could not be members of political associations. As Birgitta Bader-Zaar suggests, this prohibition of women's membership in political associations (including political parties) was one of the key factors hindering the organisational potential of

28 Translated by the author. Zgodovinski arhiv Ljubljana [ZAL; Historical Archive Ljubljana], LJU 285, Splošno žensko društvo [General Women's Association], box 9, Pravila Splošnega slovenskega ženskega društva [Rules of the General Slovenian Women's Society].

29 Zimmermann, Susan: The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Case of the Habsburg Monarchy, in: Journal of Women's History 17 (2005), pp. 87–117.

30 Govekar: Petindvajsetletnica [The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary], p. 190; [Anonymous]: Občni zbor Splošn. Slovenskega ženskega društva [The General Assembly of the General Women's Association], in: Slovenski narod 24 January 1905, p. 3.

31 ZAL, LJU 285, Splošno žensko društvo [The General Women's Association], box 4, Letno poročilo 1910, p. 2.

32 [Anonymous]: Redni občni zbor Splošnega slovenskega ženskega društva [The Regular General Assembly of the General Women's Association], in: Slovenski narod 25 February 1907, p. 2.

33 [Anonymous]: Občni zbor [General Assembly], 24 January 1905, p. 3.

34 [Anonymous]: Die 1. österreichische Frauenstimmrechts-Konferenz, in: Zeitschrift für Frauen-Stimmrecht April 1912, p. 1; [Anonymous]: Občni zbor splošnega slovenskega ženskega društva [The General Assembly of the General Women's Association], in: Slovenski narod 29 January 1912, p. 4; Govekar: Petindvajsetletnica [The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary], p. 190.

35 [Anonymous]: Občni zbor [General Assembly], 29 January 1912, p. 4.

the Austrian liberal movement and, within this framework, especially the political demand for women's suffrage.[36]

The SŽD was among the first agents of change to demand the right to vote in Carniola and was likely strengthened by its cooperation with the international movement. One of the association's petitions pointed out that they represented the liberal point of view on equality:

> "[…] adult women, reasonable and educated, who carry out their calling as mothers with all responsibility, and women who proved themselves equal to men at work, are now on the same level as those who are not aware of their responsibilities and do not understand public affairs. Women are also humiliated in their national pride, as they are put on an equal footing with foreigners in their own country […]. Excluding women from political education harms our entire political life because women cannot educate their children properly to become future citizens".[37]

In another petition, they argued that women, like men, must fulfil their duties (either paying taxes or accumulating their husband's wealth with their work) and that, therefore, with equal duties, equal rights must be demanded.[38] The women gathered in the SŽD were well acquainted with the work of the British philosopher, politician and economist John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), as the German translation of his book, "The Subjection of Women", could be found in the association's library. Mill was also mentioned by Govekar, the leading figure of the association.[39] The SŽD's argument was very much in line with Mill's. He asserted that women make up half the population and that politics also affects women. Therefore, women must be allowed to vote to protect their own interests. The same arguments about the universalism of human rights can be found in the Slovene petitions, while the "special role of women – their motherhood" was not considered as important as can be recognized from Catholic or social democratic discourse as I will elaborate later.

In this context, we must bear in mind that these demands were quite radical for conservative Carniola from numerous points of view. The general opinion in Carniola was against the suffragettes in the United States and Great Britain because, in the media discourse, they were considered fanatical,[40] funny[41] and crazy,[42] which was no differ-

36 Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: Women in Austrian Politics, 1890–1934: Goals and Visions, in: David Good/Margarete Grandner/Mary Jo Maynes (eds.), Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives, New York 1996, pp. 59–90, 62.

37 Translated by the author. ZAL, LJU 285, Splošno žensko društvo [The General Women's Association], box 1, Slavna zbornica poslancev državnega zbora.

38 Ibid., box 6, Visoka poslanska zbornica.

39 [Anonymous]: Kongres slovenskih strokovnih organizacij [The Congress of Slovene Professional Organizations], in: Slovenski narod 16 August 1913, p. 2. She probably also wrote the article [Anonymous]: Ženska volilna pravica v kulturnih državah [Women's Right to Vote in Civilized Countries], in: Slovenski narod 31 December 1910, p. 11.

40 [Anonymous]: Front cover, in: Slovenski ilustrovani tednik 2 April 1914, p. 1.

41 [Anonymous]: Nam ni treba mož [No Men Are Needed], in: Dan 29 May 1913, p. 2.

42 [Anonymous]: Sedaj jo bodo pa sufražetke staknile [The Suffragetes Will Get It Now], in: Dan 29 October 1913, p. 2.

ent from the public opinion in the rest of German Austria.[43] Their progressiveness was strange because these women were undeniably politically organised in some ways, which would violate the laws on the right of assembly and association mentioned above in Austria. The legislation was clear and forbade women to participate in political associations (and consequently political activities) under the so-called Associations Act and Article 30.[44] Nevertheless, the feminist movement organised numerous activities throughout the monarchy to change this article and petitions were sent to the parliament between 1890 and 1914.

On the other hand, Austrian women mostly demanded suffrage in informal, temporary groups in order to avoid "organised politics".[45] The explanation of what is political was missing in the Associations Act; however, court rulings offered some definitions, stating that "associations are tasked with taking into account all the needs of the people and must follow the agitation activities of the German, socialist and Catholic party, support journals of the radical movement and spread political speeches delivered by MPs".[46] Since the law did not explain exactly which associations were political, each local administration decided what was political and what was not, not only which association but also which activity. If someone was not satisfied with the decision, they could always go to court and file a complaint.

How the definition of the term *political* changed over time can be seen in the lectures in the SŽD. In 1901, Ivan Tavčar (1851–1923),[47] a prominent liberal politician and husband of the association's president, wanted to give a lecture at the SŽD titled "Women and Politics". This lecture was banned because the SŽD was not a political association and was prohibited from engaging in political activities. However, a talk titled "Women and the Public" was permissible in 1902.[48] Almost ten years later, in 1913, the social democrat Alojzija Štebi (1883–1956)[49] held a meeting called "Women and Political Rights" in Ljubljana. At this event, speeches were made in connection with International Women's Day, demanding, among other things, women's suffrage. Leaflets were distributed and the state administration had no problems with this. At that time, one could also find

43 Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: Frauenrechte und Menschenrechte. Zur Bedeutung der Geschlechterdifferenz für den Wandel des Gleichheitsbegriffes, in: Österreich in Geschichte und Literatur 46 (2002), pp. 240–256, 250.

44 Schweitzer, Viljem: Naš društveni in shodni zakon [Our Association and Rally Law], Ljubljana 1902, p. 26.

45 Leszczawski-Schwerk, Angelique: Die umkämpften Tore zur Gleichberechtigung – Frauenbewegungen in Galizien (1867–1918), Münster 2015, p. 62.

46 Translated by the author. Schweitzer: Naš društveni [Our Association], p. 26.

47 Ivan Tavčar was a writer, lawyer and important liberal politician. He was MP and Ljubljana mayor (1911–1921).

48 Selišnik, Irena: Zborovanja na Kranjskem v letih 1900–1913 in razmerja moči: 'Ako hočemo biti zmagovavci moramo poučevati ljudstvo po shodih…' [Political Rallies in Carniola between 1900 and 1913 and Power Relations: 'If We Want to Win, We Have to Instruct People in Political Rallies …'], in: Zgodovinski časopis 67 (2013), pp. 86–109, 104.

49 Alojzija Štebi was a politician, teacher, publicist, expert in social politics and editor of *Ženski list* (Women's Paper), *Zarja* (The Dawn), *Ženski pokret* (Women's Progress), *Tobačni delavec* (Tobacco Worker), *Naprej* (Ahead), *Demokracija* (Democracy) and *Naš glas* (Our Voice).

articles in the most important Slovene daily newspapers titled "Women and Politics".[50] Thus, the understanding of politics became far less restrictive in just a decade and even for women, participation in politics was no longer such a rare occurrence. One could explain this in the context of gradual democratisation as the male population was enfranchised. As maintained by Angelique Leszczawski-Schwerk, the demand for women's rights arose from a general claim to these rights for all members of society.[51] This pace of broader evolvement of women in politics can best be observed in another event in Ljubljana in 1911, when special women's pre-election rallies were held for the municipal elections. They were attended by prominent politicians and chairwomen, including Tavčar, the president of the SŽD.[52] While women were not welcome at these assemblies a decade earlier, the moment the male proxies were abolished and they could cast their votes themselves, special women's rallies were organised and there were no more reservations against women.

The appropriate code of conduct was the other element that prevented women from making radical political demands. In Vienna, middle-class women protested in their cars and carriages to support women's suffrage[53] and had no interest in engaging with the Social Democrats. In Ljubljana, on the other hand, things were a bit stricter. When the liberal mayor Ivan Hribar (1851–1941)[54] won the municipal elections in 1907, female students from the Women's High School and Teachers' College participated in the procession celebrating his victory on the streets of Ljubljana. In the following days, a few students at the Women's High School lost their scholarships, while others were threatened with expulsion from school or the worst grade in conduct for having attended a party-related political event on a public street. Well-behaved young women were forbidden to walk the streets accompanied by their fellow male students or to be in the company of unknown men. The Catholic press referred to the women who took part in this procession as "geese" and "dubious".[55] The rules of conduct were important in Ljubljana, a city of 52,000 inhabitants, where there were constant rumours, including about female students who were labelled as badly behaved because they were "radical" and did not follow social rules.[56] It is no wonder that memoirs written by men at this time determined that there were no suffragettes in Ljubljana and only a small number of emancipated

50 [Anonymous]: Ženstvo in politika [Womanhood and Politics], in: Slovenski narod 19 June 1907 and 20 June 1907, p. 1.

51 Leszczawski-Schwerk: Dynamics, p. 809, and Řepa: Introduction, pp. 4–6.

52 [Anonymous]: Ženski volilni shod v Mestnem domu [Women Electoral Rallies in the City Hall], in: Slovenski narod 21 April 1911, p. 1.

53 Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: Politische Partizipation als Grundrecht in Europa und Nordamerika. Entwicklungsprozesse zum allgemeinen, gleichen, geheimen und direkten Wahlrecht für Männer und Frauen vom späten 18. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert, in: Margarete Grandner/Wolfgang Schmale/Michael Weinzierl (eds.), Grund- und Menschenrechte. Historische Perspektiven – Aktuelle Problematiken, Wien/München 2002, pp. 203–256, 247.

54 Ivan Hribar was an important banker, liberal politician, diplomat and journalist. He was one of the leaders of the Slovene liberal party. Between 1896 and 1910 he was the mayor of Ljubljana and greatly contributed to the rebuilding of Ljubljana after the 1895 earthquake.

55 Vašte, Ilka: Podobe iz mojega življenja [The Images of My Life], Ljubljana 1964, and Hočevar, Pavla: Pot se vije [The Road Meanders], Trst 1969.

56 Mlakar, Janko: Spomini [Memoirs], Ljubljana 1940, pp. 378 and 386.

women.[57] In the women's memoirs from the period, they were also portrayed as "radical figures from remote countries".[58] At the same time, it must be explained that the term "feminism" was already in use in Carniola in the 19th century, when articles entitled "Feminism and Womanhood" were published in periodicals. Feminism was defined as "a scientific direction concerned with the realisation of women's hopes […] the goal is the emancipation of women, the question of how to solve all these problems belongs to the realm of the woman question."[59] Meanwhile, the Catholic Church condemned feminism as early as 1894 in the context of other false ideologies.[60]

So far, we have seen that the SŽD's activities included improving the position of women in the public sphere and in politics. However, it was not only the liberal women's movement that advanced such petitions. The demand for the right to vote appeared elsewhere as well. Danica, also known as Elvira Dolinar, wrote in the aforementioned first nationally oriented women's periodical *Slovenka*: "Tradition keeps them [women] confined to the intimate aspects of their lives and excludes them from the public sphere so that even they do not believe that it could be different".[61] The Social Democratic Party published the following in its gazette: "You want political rights? What for? So that you can influence public life and improve your life."[62] In the Catholic camp, the leader of the *Christian Social Movement* contended that "all civil restrictions on women must be abolished" and "women need political rights". He argued that women interested in the public sphere had "the right to be politically active as well".[63]

Thus, the SŽD was not the only organisation that sought women's political participation. Still, it was the only one in Carniola that was part of a broader, international women's movement where women could experience formal, transferable forms of political activity, an essential element of social movements.[64] In later years, despite the intensification of its activities, the purpose of the organisation became more conservative with the reformulation of its statutes before World War I: "The organisation aims to improve the education of its regular members, especially in social sciences, and to provide poverty-stricken girls with an education."[65] At the same time, as will be shown, some members of the SŽD became enthusiastic supporters of the Liberal Party, which points to the contradiction between the goals of the party and those of the association. How-

57 Suchy, Josip: Ljubljanski tipi [Types of Ljubljana], Ljubljana 1924, p. 34.

58 Vašte: Podobe [The Images], p. 79.

59 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Feminizem in ženstvo [Feminism and Womanhood], in: Slovenski narod 3 July 1899, p. 1.

60 [Anonymous]: Sklepi brnskega katol. Shoda [Conlucions of the Catholic Congress in Brno], in: Slovenec 14 August 1894, p. 2.

61 Translated by the author. E. Dolinar – Danica, Naše [Ours], in: Slovenka, p. 274.

62 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Kaj je bistvo ženskega vprašanja? [What's the Point of the Woman Question?] in: Rdeči prapor 20 January 1900, pp. 2–3.

63 Krek, Janez Evangelist: Dostavki v socializmu. Krekova stenografirana predavanja med leti 1902 in 1906 [Addenda to Socialism. Krek's Stenographic Lectures between 1902 and 1906], Ljubljana, pp. 31–32.

64 Tarrow, Sidney: Power in Movement. Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics, Cambridge 1996.

65 ZAL, LJU 285, Splošno žensko društvo [The General Women's Association], box 9, Pravila.

ever, before addressing this question, I will focus on the main competitor of the liberal women's movement, namely the Catholic women's movement.

3. Catholic Demands for Suffrage Based on Differences

At the turn of the 20th century, Catholic women began to organise their own associations, not just religious congregations. Soon after the foundation of the *Christlicher Wiener Frauenbund* in Vienna, the Slovene Catholic movement followed suit and founded the *Krščanska ženska zveza* (Christian Women's Union, or the KŽŽ) in 1900. The more progressive part of the conservative and Catholic Slovenska ljudska stranka (Slovene People's Party, or the SLS), anchored in the Christian social movement and led by Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917),[66] organised women workers as early as 1894 (*Društvo za delavke*, or Women Workers' Society). At that time, however, this association focused mainly on education and entertainment. This changed a decade later, when other Christian social associations demanded that "women participate in political work". They also demanded that "women have the right to participate in the creation of laws".[67] The society *Društvo za delavke* supported this demand, together with the female branch of the *Christian Social Movement*. In 1906, its spokeswoman, Marija Manfredo (1877–1947),[68] called for "full political equality of women and men" and, above all, the lifting of the ban on women's membership in political associations.[69]

The Catholic women's organisations were not part of international organisations, but Ivanka Klemenčič (1876–1960),[70] one of the lectors in the Catholic associations who also happened to be the first female journalist in Carniola, apparently also participated in Austrian Catholic women's congresses.[71] To some extent, women in the Slovene Catholic organisation learned from women's organisations in Austria or Vienna and at least one brief visit between the *Christlicher Wiener Frauenbund* and the KŽZ was documented.[72] Even though there were some ideological differences between women's associations of different political pillars, the KŽZ's discourse was similar to that of the liberal and social democratic associations: "We raise our voice for our rights and stand up for our ideals with all our strength!"[73]

66 Janez Evangelist Krek was a Christian Social politician, priest, journalist and sociologist. He was the leader of numerous catholic working men associations.

67 [Anonymous]: Občni zbor slovenskega katoliškega delavstva [General Assembly of Slovene Catholic Workers], in: Slovenec 5 March 1904, p. 7.

68 Marija Manfredo was the leader of the *Slovene Catholic Women's Union*.

69 [Anonymous]: Otvoritev 'Društvenega doma' in delavski shod [The Opening of the 'Association Hall' and Workers' Rally], in: Slovenec 2 July 1906, p. 1.

70 Ivanka Klemenčič, née Anžič, was a clerk, the second editor of *Slovenka* and the first woman to be employed as a journalist in the daily newspaper *Slovenec*.

71 [Anonymous]: II. Avstrijski katoliški ženski kongres na Dunaju [The Second Austrian Catholic Women's Congress in Vienna], in: Slovenec 15 April 1914, p. 3.

72 [Anonymous]: Dunajska krščanska zveza [Vienna's Christian Union], in: Slovenec 24 June 1902, p. 3.

73 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Shod krščanske ženske zveze [The Rally of the Christian Women's Union], in: Slovenec 13 June 1901, p. 1.

This "radical stance" was most evident in the case of the somewhat more progressive Christian social branch. The KŽZ did not primarily advocate women's suffrage or equality measures; it mainly supported (and was part of) the SLS's political activities. On the contrary, the Christian women's social movement demanded not only the right to vote but also women's inclusion and equal pay. They had no problem claiming that women needed the same political rights and civil liberties as men because they were part of the nation and taxpayers.[74] In general, however, the Catholic women's movement was not so "radical" because it had the most success mobilising women when moral and symbolic issues were raised.

On 11 March 1906, Catholic women organised a demonstration at the SLS headquarters at the Hotel Union. Three thousand women raised their voices against the parliamentary debates (between 1904 and 1907), calling for an amendment to the Austrian Civil Code to allow divorce.[75] One spokeswoman and speaker said, "Every woman had to fight for Catholic rights; today, she must become a zealous agitator because women are affected by this issue more than men; it is a matter of honour!"[76] This rally was the culmination of activities, as the women also collected signatures against the proposed amendment. In 1900, there were about 508,000 people living in Carniola who contributed 5 %, or 230,600 signatures, out of the 4 million signatures collected throughout the Austrian part of the monarchy.[77] This was one of the most successful political campaigns organised by the SLS. In Carniola, as elsewhere in the Catholic world (for example in Italy), passive citizens (women) were mobilised outside the electoral arena to make political demands heard and to support a party.[78]

Several prominent women in Catholic associations began to emphasise women's suffrage and argue for its acceptance within the framework of essentialism. This idea holds that there are attributes that are a natural or essential part of an individual, and gender is one of the most crucial fixed essences on the contrary with the ideas of equality. In that scope of difference, maternalism is one of the most powerful arguments. Maternalism began to develop before World War I. We can see that a struggle with the difference argument emerged in the monarchy, for example, with Auguste Fickert (1855–1910), who distinguished between advocates of women's rights who merely wanted equality and those with more far-reaching goals, such as the moral transformation of society based on natural femininity, maternity or motherhood. The writer and publicist Ellen

74 Klemenčič, Ivanka: Politika in ženstvo [Politics and Womanhood], in: Naša moč 11 April 1913, pp. 1–2, 1.

75 Harmat, Ulrike: Ehe auf Widerruf? Der Konflikt um das Eherecht in Österreich 1918–1938, Frankfurt am Main 1999, p. 34.

76 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Ženski protestni shod [Women's Protest Rally], in: Slovenec 12 March 1906, p. 2.

77 Cvirn, Janez: Boj za sveti zakon [The Fight for Sacred Marriage], Ljubljana 2005, p. 60.

78 Della Sudda, Magali/Fredette, Jennifer: Politics despite themselves. Catholic Women's political mobilization in France and Italy, 1900–1914, in: Revue française de science politique 60 (2010): pp. 31–55. For the English version see: *https://www.academia.edu/10166459/_Politics_despite_themselves_Catholic_Women_s_political_mobilization_in_France_and_Italy_1900_1914_* 10.08.2023.

Key (1849–1926) popularised such discussions in Carniola.[79] Along with his female followers, Krek, the leader of the *Christian Social Movement*, discussed Key's thoughts.[80] A similar line of argument was used by the leader of the Social Democratic Party Karl Linhart (1882–1918).[81] Key was still very popular in Slovenia during the interwar period.[82] Although some women considered her too "theoretical" and did not see how her views would work in practice, she argued that "women can achieve their maximum development as individuals through their contribution to society as mothers"[83] and had a major impact on new arguments for women's suffrage.

The Catholic activist Ivanka Klemenčič wrote the following in 1913:

> "The absence of a soft and tender woman's hand, the absence of motherly reason, the absence of a motherly soul that understands things quite differently, is noticeable everywhere. It is very significant and quite natural that the best legislation against alcoholism and morality, excellent education and youth care are imposed in countries where women participate in decision-making".[84]

In Klemenčič's article "Politics and Womenhood", she argued that because of their economic situation, women could not be confined to their homes and are therefore entitled to all civil and political rights, including the right to vote, especially "in this day and age when we can find politics everywhere […]. Women are imbued with political ideas".[85] In the spirit of essentialism, Catholic women activists worked with zealous Catholic politicians, each representing women's interests. However, the relationship between them and the exchange of ideas remain to be discussed. Answers to the questions of how the entanglement between pragmatic political calculation to mobilise women and women voters and, on the other hand, interaction with like-minded peers (women colleagues) and politicians in the same political pillar functioned and what their synergistic effect was based on political socialisation through "women's experiences" remain open. At the same time, we can see that in Carniola, as in the whole of broader Austria, there was no single-issue movement or a completely independent women's movement.[86]

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79 Anderson, Harriet: Utopian Feminism. Women's Movements in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, New Haven/London 1992, pp. 10–11.

80 Selišnik, Irena: Volilna pravica žensk kot demokratična novost: Dejavniki, ki vplivajo na njeno uveljavitev na Slovenskem [Women's Right to Vote as a Democratic Innovation: Key Factors Influencing the Implementation of the Suffrage in Slovene territory], unpublished thesis, Postojna 2007, p. 148.

81 Karl Linhart was a journalist and social democratic politician. He edited *Rdeči prapor* and *Naši zapiski*. Later he entered the German party and became the editor of *Štajerc*.

82 Štebi, Alojzija: 75 letnica Ellen Key [The 75th Anniversary of Ellen Key], in: Ženski pokret 5 (1925), pp. 76–77, 76; Hočevar: Ellen, pp. 289–294; Key: Žena [Woman], pp. 361–363.

83 Offen, Karen: European Feminisms 1700–1950, Stanford 2000, p. 238.

84 Translated by the author. Klemenčič: Politika [Politics], p. 2.

85 Ibid., p. 2.

86 Mundsperger, Marie Therese: Women's Suffrage in the Austrian Monarchy 1848–1918, in: Herald of Legal History 1 (2020), pp. 141–163.

4. Social-Democratic Women and Their Demands

The Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka, or JSDS) was founded in Ljubljana in 1896. Being Yugoslav in name only, it was basically a party of Slovene workers and the most insignificant party in Carniola. Its only notable achievement was the election of a few city councillors and the first social democratic mayor in Idrija. For centuries, a large mercury mine operated in this decidedly industrial town, one of Austria's most prosperous state-owned enterprises. In 1900, Idrija witnessed the establishment of the social-democratic women's association *Veda*. Its statutes stated that the association's purpose was "to elevate the female sex from scientific, social, and sexual ignorance, to save women from moral and physical decay, and to assist womanhood in improving its economic condition".[87] *Veda*'s activities and statutes were not explicitly political; for example, the right to vote for women was not mentioned until 1911. Subsequently, three things happened in Ljubljana in 1911. Another social democratic women's association, *Vzajemnost*, was founded in the Carniolan capital. The JSDS joined in the celebrations marking International Women's Day. The already mentioned Štebi, a prominent social democratic activist and feminist, resigned from her post as a teacher and joined the JSDS, where she became the editor of the first social democratic women's periodical *Ženski list* and became heavily involved in the social democratic leadership. She joined the wives of prominent social democratic politicians and by this time, had already played a central role in the movement.

Among the Christian social activists and the social democratic women, there are some striking similarities in their understanding of the woman question. They all understood it as a social question and emphasised the role of mothers. According to Štebi,

> "Women's mental abilities are quite different from those of men. Based on today's research about women's mental and psychological abilities, we can conclude that women cannot participate in public life to the same extent as men."[88]

Štebi also referred to the Dutch philosopher and psychologist Gerard Heymans (1857–1830) from the University of Groningen, who researched the biological differences between men and women and ultimately argued that women could be successful in philanthropic work where warm emotions were needed, such as caring for orphans and neglected young people.[89] Similarly, the Austrian social democratic activist Adelheid Popp (1869–1939) in Vienna underscored motherhood.[90]

Women involved in the social democratic movement, however, usually placed the question of social struggle above the woman question. Štebi's counterpart, Ada Kris-

87 Translated by the author. Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Rokopisni oddelek [NUK; National and University Library, Manuscript Collection], Ms 1432, Erna Muser – zapuščina [Erna Muser – Legacy], Pravila Veda.

88 Translated by the author. Štebi, Alojzija: Ženstvo in politika [Womanhood and Politics], in: Naši zapiski 8 (1911), pp. 222–223, 222.

89 Ibid.

90 Bader-Zaar: Frauenrechte, p. 249.

tan (1873–1925),[91] demanded women's rights but her claims were inseparable from the broader social struggle: "Women need the right to vote as a valuable weapon in the struggle for the ultimate goal."[92] She wrote: "Revolt with conscious men, against this unjust social order, in which you cannot achieve human dignity […]. For a new world in which you can be genuine wives and mothers".[93] Social democrats also argued that "as long as there are social differences between women and the same class differences as between men, there is no point in speaking of women as an equal entity."[94] Here, we can observe the typical socialist line of argumentation, which was supplemented by the argument of difference, which was probably more appealing to the leaders of Slovene social democratic women's associations. These demands were usually made on the occasion of International Women's Day celebrations. The first celebration of this kind was organised in Ljubljana and Idrija in 1911. Although just ten women gathered in Ljubljana that first year, the crowds grew in size in the following years. However, they were still organised behind closed doors and even the women workers did not take their demands to the streets or outside party organisations. Unlike the SLS and the NNS, the JSDS bypassed Austrian legislation and women became part of its party apparatus.

5. Political Parties and Women's Legislative Decision-Making

As can be seen, there was a general consensus that women were part of the public sphere in the early 1900s. This general opinion had been in development since the 1870s, when the Slovene national movement and prominent Slovene politicians began to strongly support women's entry into the public sphere under the umbrella of national development and unity. As argued by Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881),[95] whose public operation earned him the honorary title of "Father of the Nation", "a house does not stand on the ground, it stands on the woman, and it is the same with the nation".[96] *Slovenski narod*, a well-known liberal magazine from 1875, wrote the following:

> "In short, womanhood is one of the most important factors influencing the development of any nation. If someone claims that men have the upper hand in politics, that

91 Ada Kristan, née Czernich, was a social democratic activist and a publicist. She was the first wife of Etbin Kristan. See footnote 112.

92 Translated by the author. Kristan, Ada: O ženskem gibanju [About the Women's Movement], in: Naši zapiski 10 (1913), pp. 101–109, 109.

93 Translated by the author. Kristan, Ada: Proletarskim ženam [Proletarian Women], in: Rdeči prapor 3 May 1901, pp. 1–2, 2.

94 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Za žensko enakopravnost [For Women's Equality], in: Zarja 11 May 1912, p. 1.

95 Janez Bleiweis was a conservative politician, journalist, physician, veterinarian and public figure. Already during his lifetime, he was called father of the nation as he led the Slovenian national movement in Carniola. He was the founder of *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* which he edited till his death. The journal had immense influence on nation building processes.

96 Bezenšek, Anton: Svečanost o priliki sedemdesetletnice dr. Janeza Bleiweisa [The Celebration Marking the 70th Birthday of Dr Janez Bleiweis], Zagreb 1879, p. 54; Grdina, Igor: Vladarji, lakaji, bohemi [Rulers, Lackeys, Bohemians], Ljubljana 2001, p. 139.

women should be silent – this was said by an arrogant man who considers himself the master of creation and would be nothing without women."[97]

Much like German nationalism, Slovene nationalism in Austria-Hungary emphasised the role of the national mother and populistically included women of all social groups.[98] In the 1880s, women's non-formal involvement in the national movement became official with the establishment of women's sections of national organisations. The first section of this kind was *Društvo sv. Cirila in Metoda* (Sts Cyril and Methodius Society, or CMD) in Trieste in 1887. The association (including women's sections) took up a new kind of national movement strategy by establishing private schools and kindergartens to promote Slovene as the language of instruction. Govekar explained that those were the times "when we were in the front row at all national rallies, where we were summoned by men, we sold, we served for the well-being of the nation, and yes, we also strengthened and enlivened some rallies and demonstrations with our *živijo* shouts".[99]

When political parties were founded, they occasionally turned to women as well. For example, in order to win elections, the SLS published detailed guidelines on how to organise and convince people to support the party. Women were among the organised supporters.[100] The JSDS also developed some formal mechanisms through internal party rules that allowed women to participate in party leadership through a special women's section or through *Vertrauenspersonen*. Women could also attend party conventions. These good practices were transmitted from the Austrian or German Social Democratic Party. By directly involving women, political parties hoped to mobilise them for their own purposes, either through associations (because they could not be part of the party) or informally. Given that some articles reveal a deep mistrust towards unorganised wives, we can surmise that behind these actions was also the desire to get family support for the already organised partisans.[101]

At the turn of the century, women participated informally in political parties. They were members of women's associations that sometimes discussed clearly political issues. Some were also voters and participated directly in legislative decisions or electoral choices. If women were voters, most of them acquired this right at the local level, where they could vote by male proxy if they were taxpayers. In 1850, women were excluded by law from municipal elections in the city of Ljubljana. However, in 1887, tax-paying women in Ljubljana regained their right to vote. In most cases, their husbands acted as proxies unless other voters did this from the same *curia*. In Ljubljana, the right to vote was extended to all female taxpayers and teachers in 1911 and male proxies were abolished – a rather "modern innovation" in the monarchy, only found in Wiener Neustadt at the

97 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Naše ženstvo in narodna naša ideja [Our Womanhood and Our National Idea], in: Slovenski narod 13 July 1875, p. 2.

98 Judson, Pieter M.: The Gendered Politics of German Nationalism in Austria 1880–1990, in: David F. Good/Margarete Grandner/Mary J. Maynes (eds.), Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Oxford 1996, pp. 1–18.

99 Translated by the author. Fortunat Černilogar: Slovensko [Slovene], p. 98.

100 Selišnik: Zborovanja [Rallies].

101 [Anonymous]: Dne 1. Decembra [On 1 December], in: Zarja 22 November 1913, p. 1.

time.[102] There seems to be experimentation with women voters at the local level, that municipal elections represented a departure from developments at the regional and parliamentary levels, where women lost their right to vote. Women's suffrage was increasingly restricted in the monarchy and some suggest that the expanding democratisation of the masses took place at women's expense.[103]

However, this improvement in women's enfranchisement and the introduction of personal suffrage for women in Ljubljana were not implemented by the Liberal Party. Even though the NNS represented the premises of classical liberalism, which included the promotion of the equality of all social strata, liberty with freedom of expression, separation of church and state and universal and direct secret suffrage, this was only done on a declaratory level. In its 1901 programme, the NNS advocated a precondition for supporting these demands. For instance, legitimate freedom of expression should be guaranteed by additional regulations and the church's political influence should cease.[104] The leading liberal daily, fearing the SLS and its mass support in the case of the universal and equal right to vote, wrote against universal and equal suffrage as the party was opposed to broader political participation in the lobbies and halls of parliament.[105] "The opinion that the universal, equal, direct and secret right to vote is an expression of the nation's will is already obsolete and remains only in the heads of street screamers and pub politicians. This opinion is a plain conventional lie."[106]

The SLS, then still the KNS (Katoliška narodna stranka, or the Catholic National Party), became the main force of modernisation and the dominant party, while the NNS only reacted to the impulses of the Catholic party and found itself in a defensive position.[107] The SLS programme contained one of the classic demands of liberal parliamentarians: universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage.[108] The party also supported women's right to vote and backed the 1911 Ljubljana electoral reform. Liberals interpreted these SLS demands as an "uneducated women's stance" because the church could exert much more influence on women voters through priests and its associations. The results of the 1911 municipal elections in Ljubljana, which included a special women's electoral poll, confirmed these fears, as women voted disproportionately for the SLS. These fears could also be observed in connection with the Austrian part of the monarchy and

102 Klemenčič: Politika [Politics], p. 1; Bader-Zaar, Birgitta: Rethinking Women's Suffrage in the Nineteenth Century, in: Kelly L. Grotke/Markus J. Prutsch (eds.), Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Power: Nineteenth Century Experiences, Oxford 2014, pp. 107–126, 114.

103 Mundsperger: Women's Suffrage, p. 151.

104 Bergant, Zvonko: Slovenski klasični liberalizem [Slovene Classical Liberalism], Ljubljana 2000, p. 161.

105 Perovšek, Jurij: Liberalizem in vprašanje slovenstva [Liberalism and the Question of Sloveneness], Ljubljana 1996, p. 18.

106 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Volilna reforma [Electoral Reform], in: Slovenski narod 11 November 1905, p. 1.

107 Perovšek, Jurij: Idejnopolitični in socialno-gospodarski pogledi meščanskega tabora [Political Ideas and Socio-Economic Views of the Bourgeois Camp], in: Jurij Perovšek/Mojca Šorn (eds.), Narod-politika-država. Idejnopolitični značaj strank na Slovenskem od konca 19. Stoletja do začetka 21. stoletja, Ljubljana 2020, pp. 15–72, 27.

108 Ibid., p. 28.

elsewhere among liberals and social democrats.[109] Slovene social democrats were also not enthusiastic about women's suffrage, although they had connections with feminist circles.[110] For example, Albin Prepeluh (1881–1937)[111] and Etbin Kristan (1867–1953)[112] expressed great scepticism about the benefits of women's right to vote.[113] They, too, were concerned that clergy-influenced women voters would tend to support conservative and Catholic parties.

Speeches by women who attended pre-election rallies in Ljubljana in 1911 were even more explicit about political parties and their attitudes towards women in politics. Franja Tavčar maintained that women's suffrage was introduced by the Catholic Party only to ruin the liberal movement in the city because "this party hopes to gain dominance in the city council and, subsequently, everywhere with the help of these women voters, since it has traps to catch unreasonable voters".[114] This was the same woman who headed the SŽD and signed petitions for women's suffrage. On the other hand, the Catholic newspaper *Slovenec* stressed that the NNS wanted to deprive women of the right to vote in local elections in Ljubljana.[115] This deprivation would threaten women's honour; therefore, they should participate in the local elections because "they have a big mouth like men, so be there, agitate, work, get involved".[116] Judging from these excerpts, the SLS seems to have been the most zealous factor in modernising Ljubljana, the "most modern city in Austro-Hungary", where women themselves would cast their vote, enhancing its image as a progressive city.[117]

We could claim that the liberal party's fear of women's suffrage was at least partly pragmatic, as it assumed that women would support the SLS, and that the Catholic party's interest in women's suffrage was insincere as it sought to use women's votes to outvote its competitor, the NNS. Nevertheless, arguments can show that the picture is a bit more complicated. Some liberal politicians, such as Karel Triller (1862–1926)[118] or Ivan Hribar, mentioned the burdensome impact that women's right to vote would have on families and social life. Still, a few liberal politicians, such as the teacher Engelbert

109 Bader-Zaar: Women, p. 67; Cvirn, Janez: Dunajski državni zbor in Slovenci (1848–1918) [The Viennese National Assembly], Ljubljana 2015; Bader-Zaar: Rethinking Women's Suffrage, p. 112.

110 [Anonymous]: Ženstvo in klerikalizem [Womanhood and Clericalism], in: Zarja 17 June 1912, p. 3.

111 Albin Prepeluh, who was also known under the pseudonym Abditus, was a left-wing politician, journalist, editor, political theorist and translator.

112 Etbin Kristan was a labor leader and Social Democratic politician. He was a co-founder of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party who developed a concept of cultural autonomy. In 1914, he emigrated to the United States.

113 [Anonymous]: Ženski dan [Women's Day], in: Zarja 10 March 1913, p. 2; Abditus (Albin Prepeluh): O ženi [About a Woman], pp. 82–85.

114 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Volilno gibanje [Election Movement], in: Slovenski narod 21 April 1911, p. 1.

115 [Anonymous]: Liberalci in ženstvo [Liberals and Womanhood], in: Slovenec 20 April 1911, p. 2.

116 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Krščanskim ženam [To Christian Women], in: Slovenec 20 April 1911, p. 1.

117 [Anonymous]: Najnaprednejši občinski volilni red [The Most Progressive Local Electoral Law], in: Slovenec 19 October 1910, p. 5.

118 Karel Triller was a lawyer, liberal politician and close associate of Ivan Tavčar. He was MP in the regional Carnolian Diet.

Gangl (1873–1950)[119], supported women's suffrage.[120] It is also worth mentioning that several Catholic politicians were against women's right to vote too. Similar to some liberal politicians, they feared the devastating effects that the right to vote would have on families. Their position on this issue was presented in the Viennese parliament:

> "We think that a woman is made, first and foremost, for the family; this is the main foundation of each healthy state and social organism. The family would be in distress if political quarrels were transferred there. What would it be like in the family circle if a husband and a wife had contradicting political opinions and both were called to the ballot box?"[121]

Had the Catholic Party been genuine in its support of equal and universal suffrage, it would have seized the opportunity to grant women the right to stand for election as well or to extend women's suffrage to the Carniolan Diet, but this was not the case. The SLS's motivation was partly pragmatic; they wanted to experiment and see what would happen. The 1911 experiment was designed to show whether their assumption and calculation of relying on more conservative women's votes was justified. However, the role of women in the Catholic Party was much more than that. They were not simply potential voters with one vote each but also intermediaries who could provide the SLS with many more votes through their immense influence on family members, neighbours and the community. This influence became evident in the interwar period, when women (taxpayers) lost their right to vote at all levels. Yet they continued to be considered important protagonists in the election for the SLS, not as voters but as influencers. In the SLS's interwar propaganda, women were still seen as a decisive factor in exerting pressure on their husbands and sons. The SLS published the following in its daily newspaper before the election: "If you want happiness in your family, convince your husband to vote."[122] There are also such appeals in other Catholic countries, such as France, where women were the key supporters of the Catholic party. They had, or at least it was speculated that they had, immense power to influence their family members (particularly men) and the community. This assumption could also be explained in light of gender stereotypes associating influence and persuasion with feminine powers.[123] This motivation was probably behind newspaper classifieds in Catholic papers where they urged women to support the "right" party even though they could not cast their ballots:

119 Engelbert Gangl was a poet, writer, editor and pedagogue. He was a member of the liberal party.

120 Selišnik: Volilna pravica žensk [Women's Right to Vote], p. 188.

121 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Ženska volilna pravica [Women's Right to Vote], in: Slovenec 17 November 1906, p. 5.

122 Selišnik, Irena: Prihod žensk na oder slovenske politike [The Arrival of Women on the Stage of Slovene Politics], Ljubljana 2008, p. 65.

123 Della Sudda/Fredette: Politics, pp. 31–55.

> "Women and girls, make sure that all voters in your family go to the polls! It is your duty to fight for the victory of men who stand up for your rights in the current elections. Make sure that everyone goes to the polls on the 23rd!"[124]

> "[…] do not stop until you make the last voter from your family go to the ballot box […] when you have done this at home, check on your neighbours [and] friends to see if they have done their duty."[125]

Before the war, the *Slovenski narod* always emphasised that priests put pressure on people, especially women, and through them on men, since Slovene men were considered patient and disinclined to argue with women.[126] In the most extreme version of newspaper discourse, women reportedly threatened men that they would no longer engage in "sexual intercourse" if they refused to do what they wanted.[127] One of the leaders of the SLS, Krek, maintained that "even a woman who has some common sense must convince her husband to choose as she pleases. The present circumstances are such that this is justifiable."[128] This attitude was in some ways surprising because the general discourse of the Catholic newspaper directed at women was strikingly at odds with it: self-sacrifice, hard work and obedience were considered the most desirable qualities in women and women were seen as mothers who should do everything to preserve the peace in their families. However, because the priority of the Catholic pillar was to eliminate the circumstances that would endanger the faith, the goal was paramount: engaging in political struggles for these objectives was considered pure love and to love was one of the most important things for a woman.[129]

It can be acknowledged that women played a unique role in Catholic politics and in the Catholic imaginary, which included both Slovene liberals and Catholic believers, and that their role in the political conflict cannot be explained solely by gender stereotypes. Luisa Accati posits that in Roman Catholic states, women were seen as a kind of intermediary between Catholic (spiritual) and secular (state) power, between the private (family) and the public. Behind this mediating role was the enormous symbolic power attributed to them.[130] In the Catholic world, women were at the centre of the family because, through them, religious power was carried into the private sphere (they had immense moral authority) and, at the same time, through their work in the private (intimate) sphere, they influenced their husbands in the public sphere/politics and took care of the moral society. Some authors speak of Catholic women's moralisation of political life at the turn of the 20th century because they watched over politics being conducted

124 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Slovenska žena [Slovene Woman], in: Slovenec 16 January 1927, p. 5.

125 Translated by the author. [Anonymous]: Našim gospodinjam. Ženam in dekletom! [To our Housekeepers. Women and Girls!], in: Slovenec 28 January 1925, p. 8.

126 [Anonymous]: Klerikalizem in ženstvo [Clericalism and Womanhood], in: Slovenski narod 11 October 1901, p. 1.

127 [Anonymous]: V spovednici [In the Confessional], in: Slovenski narod 18 December 1900, p. 3.

128 Translated by the author. Krek: Dostavki [Addenda], p. 32.

129 [Anonymous]: Desetletnica Katoliškega društva za delavke [The Ten-year Anniversary of the Catholic Association for Women Workers], Slovenec 24 October 1904, pp. 1–3, 2.

130 Accati, Luisa: Lepotica in zver [The Beauty and the Beast], Ljubljana 2001.

in a decent, "right" way.[131] Catholicism underwent major changes in the 19th century and women became more involved in Catholic religious practices in the ecclesiastical sphere. Feminine elements of symbolic communication were strengthened or (re)introduced into Catholicism and the cult of the Virgin Mary was revitalised, which corresponded to women's emotional and practical role in society and also had an impact on women's political action. Their symbolic significance through Catholic ideology became part of the perception of political culture and the symbolic order of society.[132] Women were at the heart of the family, the church and the nation, highlighted in the press of the time;[133] they were responsible for the future of the most important institutions. Because of this "moral high ground", they were allowed to enter the public sphere and conventional politics, but only under certain conditions; they had to do so morally and in a way that men did not.

6. Conclusion

Before the First World War, women participated in both the public sphere and politics. As we have seen, the concept of "political" was much narrower at the beginning of the 20th century and was only gradually extended to include women. As a result, the preconceived notion of the division between the public and private spheres was challenged for various reasons, not only from the perspective of equality but also because of the "difference" argument. At the turn of the century, feminism saw women as a moral force that would transform society. Along with the general trend of the politicisation of the masses and the inclusion of impoverished sections of society, women's participation was unstoppable. This process took place in many ways, including through women's associations (feminist and general), directly through political parties, through the media and through international social movements. Nevertheless, when women did participate in politics, they primarily played an informal role, which could still involve significant work in agitation and administration, for example, as external contributors to political periodicals[134] or collecting signatures for petitions. Women were understood as "volunteers" or simply "helpers".

Public activism also found support in the state's growing willingness to tolerate and even respond to political expression from below in the new century.[135] At the same time,

131 Della Sudda/Fredette: Politics.

132 De Giorgio, Michela: The Catholic Model, in: Genevieve Fraisse/Georges Duby/Michelle Perrot (eds.), A History of Women, vol. 4: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War, Harvard 1998, pp. 166–197, 172.

133 ZAL, LJU 285, Splošno žensko društvo [The General Women Association], box 5, Idejni program, Ženska je soodgovorna za usodo naroda.

134 For example, Cilka Krek (1868–1943), sister of Janez Evangelist Krek, collaborated on the journal *Glasnik*. See Ziller, Franc: Moji spomini na prva leta krščanskega socializma [My memories of the First Years of Christian Socialism], in: Socialna misel 3 (1924), pp. 111–115, 112.

135 Judson: The Habsburg Empire, p. 371; See also Cohen, Gary: Nationalist Politics and the Dynamics of State and Civil Society in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1867–1914, in: Central European History 40 (2007), pp. 241–278, 252.

some politicians believed that the masses, including women, could channel their political goals. With the modernisation of politics, Catholic politicians disregarded possible disputes caused by politics within families and allowed women to engage in politics by casting their votes or through their moral interventions and persuasion. Catholic politicians adopted "modern women's political action" within the framework of acceptable Catholic core values and culture. Liberal politicians in Carniola had their own calculus regarding Catholic women voters and could only support women's suffrage declaratively.

In some cases, women gradually assumed a political role in political parties as speakers, agitators and voters. However, their position in politics was never as powerful as that of men. Women were held back not only by political parties but also by the general rules of society. Public spaces, such as the streets, remained off limits for women's political activities in Ljubljana. Women were only allowed to appear in public in the context of men's political efforts and were discouraged from participating in the struggle for feminist political goals. Yet, these same men also attributed great symbolic or informal power to women, derived from their dominance in the private (intimate) sphere, which they also used as an instrument to expand women's scope of action and thus subversively shift the dichotomy of private and public. Their influence extended from the intimate sphere to the public and then to the political, which was redefined as the locus of all communities. Still, because women's influence was gendered, it could only have a minimal impact.