A LATECOMER AMONG YUGOSLAV FEMINISMS? NEW FEMINIST GROUPS IN SLOVENIA (1982-1990)

By Ana Marija Koželnik

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Abstract

This thesis examines the emergence of new feminist groups in Slovenia between 1982 and 1990. The central question this thesis has asks is how the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia engaged in acts of citizenship within the framework of state institutions. The thesis analyses materials created by the members of new feminist groups. It examines oral history interviews with former members of new feminist groups and feminist publications published in this period. By examining these sources, this thesis argues that in the observed period, the institutional framework of the state youth organisation in Yugoslavia presented a meaningful site for feminist politics. It enabled acts of citizenship by providing infrastructure, resources, and visibility. This thesis contributes to the literature on women's movements and feminist groups in socialist Yugoslavia. It aims to fill the gap in existing scholarship with focusing on the developments in Slovenia, which are neglected within this body of literature. By examining the history of new feminist groups as situated within the state institutional framework, this thesis contributes a new perspective on the development of oppositional and critical groups in socialist systems.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research: it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference. I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:
Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc): 25627 words
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Signed: Ana Marija Koželnik

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1. Introduction

1980s: The Last Yugoslav Decade

On the 4th of May 1980, the well-known Serbian television presenter Miodrag Zdravković announced the death of the leader of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Josip Broz Tito. The death of Tito, who was Yugoslavia's central political figure for more than three decades, marked the beginning of "the last Yugoslav decade." In this period, the Yugoslav economy underwent a prolonged crisis, followed by a crisis of the political legitimacy of the Yugoslav establishment. In public debates, "the main structural and symbolic pillars of Yugoslav society – non-alignment, self-management, the revolutionary legacy and brotherhood and unity" came under scrutiny.[1] In the 1980s, most critical and dissenting discourses in Yugoslavia emerged from within the infrastructure of official state institutions, particularly from the *Zveza socialistične mladine Jugoslavije*, ZSMJ (League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia).[2] In the early 1980s, ZSMJ's complex infrastructure, about which more later, combined with the organisation's considerable resources and a relative distance from high politics, facilitated the emergence of a "network of alternative voices" which "challenged the established norms and practices in late Yugoslav politics, media and culture." [3] It was in this context that new feminist voices emerged in Slovenia, the history of which this thesis will explore.

This chapter will introduce the topic of this thesis and provides an overview of the thesis. The first section of the chapter described the socio-political context of Yugoslavia in the 1980s. Following this, I will provide an overview of the new feminist

[1] Ljubica Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 23.
[2] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 2.
[3] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 38.

groups active in Slovenia in the 1980s in section 1.2. Section 1.3 reviews the historiography of new feminist groups in Yugoslavia. Section 1.4 is a positionality statement in which I explain my motivation for the research. In section 1.5, I present the sources of the thesis. Section 1.6 discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis and its methodology, and in section 1.7, I outline the structure of the thesis.

While the women in Yugoslavia were granted equal rights as men by the first Yugoslav Constitution of 1946, their lives often reflected a gap between de jure and de facto equality. The feminist scholar Jasmina Lukić notes that women's legal equality did not mean that "full equality was achieved, or that all the mechanisms of discrimination were neutralised and put under control."[4] For example, the historian Chiara Bonfiglioli argued that discrepancies between the legislature and women's experience showed in reproductive rights. While the abortion procedure was standardised and liberalised in 1963, allowing abortion for medical reasons, and fully legalised in 1977, Bonfiglioli argued that "patriarchal gender norms, difficult social conditions, and underdeveloped health services" complicated women's ability to decide freely.[5] Despite this, Lukić argues that Yugoslav emancipatory politics "made women feel more socially and legally protected as citizens than ever before."[6]

In the late 1970s, the discrepancy between the socialist state's promise of gender equality and the lived reality of women in Yugoslavia became a discussion topic among young intellectuals in Belgrade and Zagreb. These women often travelled abroad and had access to feminist literature from the West.[7] They critically engaged

[4] Jasmina Lukić, "One Socialist Story, or How I Became a Feminist," *Aspasia* 10 (2016): 138.
[5] Chiara Bonfiglioli and Sara Žerić, "Debating Abortion and Contraception in Socialist Yugoslavia: A Microhistorical Perspective," *Narodna umjetnost* 60, no. 1 (2023): 160.
[6] Lukić, 138.
[7] Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

with Western feminist movements and drew from their ideas in their attempts to examine the situation of women in their country.[8] They communicated their insights in various ways: publications in journals and newspapers, open discussions, exhibitions, and conference presentations. Following the international feminist conference *Druga žena: Žensko pitanje – novi pristup*? (Comrade Woman: Women's Question – A New Approach?), which took place in Belgrade in 1978, they started organising women's groups.[9] In April 1979, the new feminists in Belgrade began meeting in the Students' Cultural Centre as the *Grupa za pitanja položaja žene* (Group for the Questions on Women's Position). In the same year, the Zagreb group formally established a women's group within the Croatian Sociological Association called *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society).[10]

In 1984, students and young academics studying and working in Ljubljana formed a women-only discussion group, *Ženska sekcija pri sociološkem društvu* (Women's Section of the Sociological Association), which was the first new feminist group in Slovenia. The historian Zsófia Lóránd refers to the new feminists in Slovenia as the "latecomers" among the feminist groups in Yugoslavia.[11] The women who formed the group *Ženska sekcija* were, on average, a few years younger than the women in the Belgrade and Zagreb groups and were following both the Western feminist movement and the work of the feminist groups in Belgrade and Zagreb. Following *Ženska sekcija*, which was an academic discussion group, three women's groups emerged in Ljubljana in the 1980s. Their membership was mainly informal and frequently overlapped. The

[8] Ibid.
[9] Lina Vušković and Sofija Trivunac, "Feministička grupa Žena i društvo," in *Ka vidljivoj ženskoj istoriji: ženski pokret u Beogradu u 90-ih*, ed. Marina Blagojević (Belgrade: Centar za ženske studije, istraživanja i komunikaciju, 1998), 42.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Lóránd, 36.

group *Lilit* was founded in 1985 by a group of more activist-oriented members of the *Ženska sekcija* group and relied on the framework of the Student's Cultural Centre, ŠKUC. In 1987, a group of lesbian activists who were a part of the *Lilit* group created a lesbian section called *Lezbična Lilit* (Lesbian Lilit), which became an autonomous group called ŠKUC-LL in 1988. In addition to these three groups, new feminists in Ljubljana were also involved in the *Delovna skupina za ženska gibanja in raziskave pri Republiški konferenci Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije* (Working Group on Women's Movements and Women's Research at the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia) (1986), and in the group *Ženske za politiko* (1990).

Apart from the group *Ženska sekcija*, which was organised within the University of Ljubljana's Sociology Department, the new feminist groups in Ljubljana existed within the infrastructure of the youth organisation. This reflected ZSMJ's reorganisation as a platform for increasing the visibility of alternative voices, which began in the second half of the decade and was expressed in the documentation of the organisation's 1986 Congress: "It is impossible to realise the affirmation of the idea of pluralism and democratic "youth politics"… without the acknowledgement of the right of independent existence of the social movements … the SSO [ZSMJ] should create space for the work of the feminist, the peace, the ecological movements, as well as for the other progressive movements among the youth."[12]

Through the second half of the 1980s, the women involved in the new feminist groups in Ljubljana utilised the youth infrastructure to organise events such as public discussions, lectures, and gatherings. Youth press provided the space for publishing

[12] Spaskovska, 125.

feminist articles and translations of foreign feminist literature. The groups in Ljubljana cooperated closely with the groups from Belgrade and Zagreb, publishing their works in Slovenian journals and organising "all-Yugoslav" feminist meetings in Ljubljana in 1987 and Zagreb in 1988.[13] The new feminist groups in the three capitals shared the motivation to highlight the systemic nature of women's oppression, thematise new sexualities, and bring focus to the issue of violence against women.[14] The new feminists in Yugoslavia did not direct their criticism at the structure of the socialist Yugoslav state but instead aimed to "rethink and challenge the socialist project of women's emancipation."[15]

1.2 Historiography of New Feminist Groups in Yugoslavia

The historiography of the new feminist groups in Yugoslavia is a part of the wider historiographic field of the history of socialist Eastern Europe. Within Western scholarship, according to the Australian historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, the history of socialist Eastern Europe emerged as a subject of research after the Second World War, predominantly in the discipline of political science. Fitzpatrick argues that "the totalitarian model, based on a somewhat demonised conflation of Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia, was the most popular interpretive framework. It emphasised the omnipotence of the totalitarian state and its' levels of control,' paid considerable attention to ideology and propaganda, and largely neglected the social realm (which was seen as passive, fragmented by the totalitarian state)."[16] The situation of women in Eastern Europe became of interest to Western scholars in the 1970s. After the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year, Western scholars began publishing

[13] Lóránd, 174.
[14] Lóránd, 8.
[15] Lóránd, 1.
[16] Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7.

studies about the status of women in Eastern Europe. The American ethnographer Kristen Ghodsee and the Polish literary scholar Agnieszka Mrozik argue that the consensus that emerged within Western scholarship on Eastern European women was that "while women in socialist states had *de jure* (legal) equality, they lacked *de facto* equality."[17] The totalitarian framework shaped how Western scholars approached women's movements and organisations in socialist Europe, portraying state policies for women as serving only "the interests of leaders who needed women's labor force participation" and failing to address the real challenges women in Eastern Europe faced.[18]

The early scholarship on new feminism in Yugoslavia, which emerged in American political science in the 1980s, reflected this approach. Western scholars were critical of the socialist model of women's emancipation and perceived state women's organisations as merely following Party orders rather than advocating for women's rights. This view influenced early scholarship on new feminist groups in Yugoslavia, which tended to portray these groups as directly opposed to the state and, by extension, to state women's organisations. This narrative of grassroots feminist criticism further consolidated the view that communist women's activists and politicians advocating for the improvement of the social status of women within the framework of state socialism were acting not in the interest of women but in the interest of the Party. In her 1988 article titled “Neofeminism in Yugoslavia: A Closer Look”, the American political scientist Barbara Jancar argued that the significance of the new feminist groups in Yugoslavia lies "in its picking up where the prewar women's

[17] Kristen Ghodsee and Agnieszka Mrozik, "Authority, Authenticity, and the Epistemic Legacies of Cold War Area Studies: Some Reflections on Women's History and State Socialism in Eastern Europe," *Aspasia* 17, no. 1 (2023): 38, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3167/asp.2023.170103.
[18] Ghodsee and Mrozik, "Authority, Authenticity, and the Epistemic Legacies of Cold War Area Studies: Some Reflections on Women's History and State Socialism in Eastern Europe," 38-39.

movement left off," suggesting that the new feminist groups were the first genuine feminist activists since the pre-war women's movement.[19] This reductive view of women's agency in socialism also couldn't account for the heterogeneity of theoretical perspectives and influences of new feminists in Yugoslavia. Jancar argued that for the new feminists in Yugoslavia, "the reality of the one-party rule means they have no choice of ideology. They must argue within a Marxist frame of reference," thereby dismissing both those feminists who drew upon theories other than Marxism, and those who consciously and extensively worked with Marxist theory.[20]

In the 1990s and early 2000s, new feminism in Yugoslavia was discussed predominantly by authors who were part of the new feminist groups. These works were reflections and relied primarily on the authors' personal experiences. While they remained critical of the socialist state and official women's organisations, they recognised the role Yugoslavia's openness played in the emergence of new feminist groups. For example, the Serbian anthropologist Žarana Papić, who was a member of the Belgrade group *Žena i društvo*, argued that the openness of the Yugoslav system made the feminist efforts possible.[21]

The reflections of the former members of the new feminist groups published in the 1990s and early 2000s provided parts of the story of new feminism in Yugoslavia. They served as a basis for the works of a new generation of feminist scholars working on the history of women's movements and feminisms in socialist Yugoslavia. Before introducing the scholarship on this topic published from 2007 onwards, I will briefly discuss the broader trends in the histories of socialism that emerged around the same

[19] Barbara Jancar, "Neofeminism in Yugoslavia: A Closer Look," *Women & Politics* 8, no. 1 (1988): 25.
[20] Jancar, " Neofeminism in Yugoslavia," 8.
[21] Žarana Papić, "Women's Movement in Former Yugoslavia: 1970s and 1980s," in *What Can We Do For Ourselves?: East European Feminist Conference, Belgrade, June 1994* (Belgrade: Centar za ženske studije, istraživanja i komunikaciju, 1995), 20.

time. These trends challenged the normative view of socialism and influenced the new research on the history of feminist groups in Yugoslavia.

Since the 2000s, the study of European state socialisms has increasingly focused on social and cultural history and the history of everyday life, signalling a departure from the totalitarian paradigm.[22] By recognising personal narratives and oral histories as legitimate sources, "social and cultural history and anthropology take seriously people's experiences of socialism," and show "respect for their claims of having lived a full and dignified life, in contrast to the claims that all that remains from communism is a collection of exotic memories and the impression that people had at best lived halfway normal lives."[23] Younger generations of historians of Yugoslavia also acknowledged the need "to "normalise" Yugoslav history, i.e. to open up the discursive space for histories of everyday life and narratives of ordinary Yugoslavs."[24] The efforts to "normalise" Yugoslav history also led to increased use of oral history methods.[25]

While the history of new feminist groups in Yugoslavia doesn't deal with the everyday life of ordinary people, the broader trends in the historiography of socialism influenced the scholarship on this topic that emerged after 2007. This influence shows in its recognition of the complexities of socialist realities and its use of personal narratives. Among historians, Zsófia Lóránd and Chiara Bonfiglioli were the first to engage with this topic. Since her 2007 MA Thesis on feminist counter-discourses in Yugoslavia in

[22] Igor Duda, "Nova istraživanja svakodnevnice i društveno-kulturne povijesti jugoslavenskog socijalizma [New Research on Everydaylife and Social and Culutral History]," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 46, no. 3 (2014): 587.
[23] Maria Todorova, "Introduction: Similar Trajectories, Different Memories," in *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*, ed. Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, and Stefan Troebst (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2014), 5.
[24] Ljubica Spaskovska, "The Yugoslav Chronotope - Histories, Memories and the Future of Yugoslav Studies," in *Debating the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*, ed. Florian Bieber, Armina Galijaš, and Rory Archer (London: Ashgate, 2014), 242.
[25] Tanja Petrović, "Towards an Affective History of Yugoslavia," *Filozofija i društvo* 27, no. 3 (2016): 508.

the 1970s and 1980s, Lóránd has written several articles and book chapters about new feminist groups in Yugoslavia. Her doctoral dissertation titled Learning a Feminist Language: The Intellectual History of Feminism in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s (2015) was later published as a book titled *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (2018). Lóránd's work provides a comprehensive analysis of the main actors, institutions, conferences, and theoretical currents that shaped the feminist groups in Yugoslavia, focusing on the relationship between the feminist movement and the socialist state. Based on oral history interviews with the members of new feminist groups and archival research, Lóránd argued that feminism in Yugoslavia was a form of dissent and that the feminists simultaneously cooperated and criticised the state.[26]

Chiara Bonfiglioli's 2008 MA Thesis, later published as an article, reconstructs and thoroughly examines the 1978 *Drug-ca žena* conference using oral history and archival research.[27] In her 2018 article Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia, Bonfiglioli examined how foreign feminist ideas were translated and incorporated into the local feminist movement and showed that "the relatively open character of the socialist self-management system meant that debates on the social condition of women were not absent, but rather that local feminists had to engage with an already existing Marxist hegemonic framework when translating Western feminist texts."[28] The new scholarship on new feminist groups in Yugoslavia, influenced by the developments in socialist studies, brought a more nuanced perspective on the groups' relationship with the socialist system.

[26] Lóránd, 2.
[27] Chiara Bonfiglioli, ""Social Equality is Not Enough, We Want Pleasure!": Italian Feminists in Belgrade for the 1978 'Comrade Woman' Conference," *ProFemina*, no. Special Issue No.2 (2011).
[28] Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Gender & History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 252, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12343.

These works are valuable in contributing to the knowledge about feminist discourses in socialist Yugoslavia and in portraying the complexities of state socialisms. However, I want to emphasise that the scholarship on new feminist groups in Yugoslavia reflects the broader practices in the historiography of socialist Yugoslavia, which predominantly relies on sources in Serbo-Croatian. As the historian Marko Zubak noted, there is a "general scholarly disregard for Slovenian developments," which are "wrongly dismissed as peripheral."[29] This thesis aims to fill this gap in knowledge by focusing specifically on Slovenian sources. While Lóránd conducted interviews with members of the groups from Ljubljana, her discussion on the ideas and concepts in feminist writing relies predominantly on the work of the Belgrade and Zagreb groups. Bonfiglioli's work on the subject doesn't engage with Slovenian sources.

This topic of new feminism has remained marginal in Slovenian historiography as well. For example, in their 2018 article *Vidnost in nevidnost žensk: Zgodovina žensk in študije spolov v Sloveniji* (Visibility and Invisibility of Women: Women's History and Gender Studies in Slovenia), Slovenian historians Marta Verginella and Irena Selišnik mention the feminist groups of the 1980s only briefly, referring to them as "non-governmental women's clubs."[30] In Slovenian academia, the interest in this topic mirrors a broader trend of non-historians exploring the history of women's groups more often than professional historians.[31] To my knowledge, the only Slovenian scholar who has more extensively researched women's groups in Slovenia in this period is the political scientist Vlasta Jalušič, who was involved in the work of the new feminist

[29] Marko Zubak, "The Yugoslav Youth Press (1968-1980): Student Movements, Subcultures and Communist Alternative Media" (PhD Dissertation Central European University, 2013), 126.
[30] Marta Verginella and Irena Selišnik, "Vidnost in nevidnost žensk: Zgodovina žensk in študije spolov v Sloveniji [Visibility and Invisibility of Women: Women's History and Gender Studies in Slovenia]," *Javnost: The Public* 25, no. 1 (2018): 8.
[31] Verginella and Selišnik, 12.

groups in the 1980s. Jalušič discusses this topic in her introduction to the 2002 collection of interviews with members of feminist groups titled *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* (How We Attended a Feminist Gymnasium).[32] In the context of Slovenia, where there are no public archive collections documenting the work of new feminist groups, Jalušič's position as an insider enabled her privileged access to sources, allowing her to present her interpretation in detail. Her introduction helped me navigate the groups' activities and played an important role in my research. Like many works on the late socialist period in Yugoslavia published in the early 2000s, Jalušič's narrative is framed within the dissolution narrative, positioning the new feminist groups as one of the "initiators of the democratisation process," shaping Slovenia's post-socialist transition.[33]

My research builds on the work of Bonfiglioli, Jalušič, and Lóránd. In addition to contributing the neglected focus on the developments in Slovenia, I aim to challenge the dissolution narrative. The main questions this thesis will ask are the following: How did self-identified feminists in Slovenia organise between 1982 and 1990? What strategies did they use to establish themselves as political actors within the institutional framework of the Yugoslav political system? How did the institutional framework of the official youth organisation enable ‘acts of citizenship’?

1.3 Sources

The primary sources I will use to answer my research questions are materials created by the members of new feminist groups between 1982 and 1990. Apart from the oral history interviews I conducted, all the sources used in this thesis were available in public libraries in Slovenia. I rely on oral history interviews conducted in 1997/1998 by

[32] Vlasta Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* (Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002).
[33] Jalušič, 12.

the Slovenian political scientist Vlasta Jalušič, herself a member of several feminist groups mentioned in this chapter, and her team of researchers. The interviews were conducted as a part of the research project *Neodvisne ženske skupine v Sloveniji 1980-1995* (Independent Women's Groups in Slovenia 1980-1995) at the *Mirovni Inštitut* (Peace Institute) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The research project aimed to document the experiences of women who were involved in what was called at the time the new feminist movement in Slovenia. The interview transcripts were published in the book *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* (How We Attended a Feminist Gymnasium) (2002).

I also analyse the following works: the foreword to the translation of Alexandra Kollontai's selected speeches and writings titled *Ženska v socializmu* (A Woman in Socialism) (1982) by Mojca Dobnikar, the foreword to the collection of translated feminist texts titled *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement) (1986) by Mojca Dobnikar, two special feminist editions of the journal *Problemi* from 1986 and 1988 respectively, the 1987 *Pogledi* (Views) supplement to the *Mladina* weekly titled *Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami* (We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women), and the monograph *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali "Ne vem, sem neodločena"* (Woman, Personal, Political or "I don't know, I am undecided") by Tanja Rener, Mirjana Ule and the statistician Anuška Ferligoj, which is, although published in 1990, was based on the research they carried out for the Marxist Centre of the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party in 1989.

1.4 Positionality Statement

The purpose of positionality statements is to practice reflexivity, "to enable the researcher to reflect on their own biases and assumptions." Reflexivity should be done

early and practised consistently through research. However, as the American political theorist Cynthia Enloe argued, "reflexivity is usually done too late and in retrospect."[34] This is also the case in this thesis.

My retrospective declaration of privilege would only benefit me, allowing me to acknowledge my privilege before someone else pointed it out. With this, I would contribute nothing apart from re-centring whiteness and upholding "the academic culture of narcissism."[35] I do not intend to contest the value of the practice of reflexivity. However, because I can't afford to start over, I can offer two things Enloe calls for: humility and accountability.

I share many similarities with the protagonists of this thesis: I am a white, educated Slovenian woman who is frustrated with patriarchy. I received my education from the same university and frequented the same institutions in Ljubljana's alternative scene. In 2020, after four years of having the world explained to me by an almost all-male Political Science department at the Faculty of Social Sciences, I had to decide what I wanted to write about in my final thesis. I concluded that I should write my thesis about feminism in Yugoslavia because I am a feminist, and Slovenia was once a part of Yugoslavia. This was the first time I learned that feminist groups in Slovenia existed before 1991 and that the region I come from had a rich history of women's movements and feminisms.

I wanted to share this story because I wanted to illustrate that my motivation for this research is, first and foremost, ego-driven. I chose this topic because I am a white, educated Slovenian woman who is frustrated with patriarchy, and I wanted to know

[34] Cynthia Enloe. ”Being Reflexively Feminist Shouldn't be Easy.” In *Researching War. Feminist Methods, Ethic and Politics*, edited by A. Wibben. (London: Routledge, 2016), 259.
[35] Jasmine K. Gani and Rabea M. Khan. ”Positionality Statements as a Function of Coloniality: Interrogating Reflexive Methodologies.” *International Studies Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2024), 8.

the story of other white, educated Slovenian women who were frustrated with patriarchy. There is a reason why their voices are preserved in publications, which coincides with why I could write about them: we are all white, educated Slovenian women.

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Zsófia Lóránd explains that she describes the phenomenon of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s in socialist Yugoslavia as "new Yugoslav feminism" because "the actors themselves often use the term *neofeminizam*, "new feminism" both for themselves and for the second wave in the United States and Western Europe", but points out that not everyone involved with the new feminist groups identified with this term.[36] In her explanation, the adjective "new" signals a connection to the early twentieth-century feminist organising in the Yugoslav space. I will also use the term new feminism to refer to the subject examined in this thesis.

In my decision to label these groups as feminist, I will rely on the British historian Sheila Rowbotham's definition of feminism. In 1992, Rowbotham argued that "the use of the term 'feminism' served to highlight women's specific oppression in relation to men, preventing from this being submerged, amid all other unequal relationships in society... In practice, however, women's actions, both now and in the past, often have been against interconnecting relations of inequality and have been involved in many aspects of resistance around daily life and culture that are not simply about gender."[37] As I will show in this thesis, the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia highlighted and worked against women's inequality through their activism and writing. However, if we use this as the criterion for feminism, the question arises: How should we refer to

[36] Lóránd, 133.
[37] Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1992), 6.

state women's organisations and female socialist politicians who opposed feminism but were actively working on improving women's rights?

I suggest that a critical approach to the label feminism should entail the acknowledgement that, as the Dutch historian Francisca de Haan argued in an interview with the Bulgarian historian Krassimira Daskalova, following the collapse of European state socialisms and "in the subsequent climate of Western triumphalism feminism has (re-)gained its connotation of being quintessentially Western".[38] This process concealed the fact that early socialist and feminist movements developed side by side and that the early socialist women's rejection of the feminist label happened under specific historical circumstances when the term feminism encompassed primarily bourgeois feminism.[39] Following this, I argue that a critical approach to the term feminism helps in broadening the analytical scope of this thesis, which opens the possibility to frame the conflict between state women's organisations and new feminist groups not as a false opposition of values, but rather as a challenge to define who gets to speak about women's position, and in what way. Finally, in answering the question of how we should refer to the female socialist politicians and women's activists who opposed the term feminism, I agree with de Haan, who draws upon the American scholar Eric S. McDuffie and states that it makes analytical sense to name these women feminists.[40]

In the context of new feminist groups in Slovenia in the observed period, I find the performative aspect of feminism particularly important. Zsófia Lóránd highlights this aspect by stating that the importance of women's agency and responsibility are crucial

[38] Krassimira Daskalova, "Entangled Histories of Women's Movements and Feminisms: An Interview with Francisca de Haan," *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics* 4, no. 2 (2020): 2, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/8518.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

aspects of feminism. In her view, "feminism is a form of humanism which is defined by respect and responsibility – responsibility both as the responsibility of feminists and feminism towards their community and identifying what and who holds the responsibility for the status quo. Calling oneself a feminist is also a performative act by which one is willing to associate herself or himself with feminism."[41]

In this thesis, I follow Zsófia Lóránd's argument that the new feminists in Yugoslavia were "cooperating with the state and criticising it at the same time."[42] Lóránd frames the new feminist discourses in Yugoslavia as "a critical discourse and a form of dissent, rather than dissidence," because they "attempted to engage the state in a dialogue rather than refusing it per se, as most dissidence does."[43] While Lóránd doesn't define what 'the state' refers to in her interpretation, she argues that new Yugoslav feminists "engaged with the state from the outside."[44]

My approach to the relationship between the new feminists in Slovenia and the state considers the Yugoslav-specific state paradigm organised around the decentralisation of state power, which resulted in a complex infrastructure of political institutions. I follow Ljubica Spaskovska's argument that in the 1980s, the specific institutional structures of Yugoslav self-management enabled certain state institutions to "represent a location for real meaningful politics."[45] Spaskovska's approach is helpful for this thesis because it suggests to "blur the line between what is considered 'alternative', 'oppositional' versus 'institutional' or official'," and opens the possibility to situate the feminist challenge to the state within the framework of state institutions.

[41] Lóránd, 18.
[42] Lóránd, 2.
[43] Lóránd, 9.
[44] Lóránd, 11.
[45] Spaskovska, "The Yugoslav Chronotope - Histories, Memories and the Future of Yugoslav Studies," 3.

This thesis views the work of new feminist groups in Slovenia in this period through the lens of 'acts of citizenship.' The political theorist Engin Isin defines acts of citizenship as those that "rupture or break the orders, practices and habitus," which can "take forms of resistance or subservience," and "transform forms (orientations, strategies, technologies) and modes (citizens, strangers, outsiders, aliens) of being political by bringing into new being actors as activist citizens (claimants of rights and responsibilities) through creating new sites and scales of struggle."[46] The central question this thesis asks is how the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia engaged in acts of citizenship within the framework of state institutions.

The central argument this thesis attempts to present is that in the observed period, the institutional framework of the state youth organisation in Yugoslavia presented a meaningful site for feminist politics. It enabled acts of citizenship by providing infrastructure, resources, and visibility. In my interpretation, the members of new feminist groups in the observed period engaged in acts of citizenship by: (1) transforming forms of being political through separatist practices, which enabled the transition from scattered interactions between women to a more organised group structure and enabled the formation of a collective feminist identity; and (2) transforming modes of being political through textual interventions, which provided the space where feminists could legitimise their position as political actors. Through their activities, the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia in the observed period utilised the institutional framework of the youth organisation to establish themselves as legitimate political actors who could meaningfully reshape the Yugoslav socialist system in a way that could contribute to women's emancipation.

[46] Engin Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Greg Nielsen and Engin Isin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 36.

1.6 Thesis Outline

Chapter Two provides the historical background of the thesis. It examines the 1968 student movement in SFRY and the post-'68 social, political, and cultural transformations. I argue that the 1960s presented a crucial point in developing new ways of political participation and profoundly transformed the youth media landscape in Yugoslavia. In this period, youth media became a crucial space for non-dominant voices. The 1960s were a critical point in the diversification of the youth sphere in Yugoslavia, and these developments importantly shaped the transformation of the youth organisation in the 1980s. I also argue that the 1960s also marked two distinctions in the alternative intellectual circles in Ljubljana in comparison to Belgrade and Zagreb: firstly, the dominant role of humanist Marxism, which remained strong in Belgrade and Zagreb, was challenged by other theoretical approaches, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis in the 1970s. And secondly, literary journals emerged as the most critical space for introducing new ideas in Slovenian alternative circles. In Belgrade and Zagreb, these were centred around universities.

In Chapter Three, I examine the landscape of alternative cultural production in Ljubljana in the 1980s and focus on the role the youth organisation ZSMS played in providing the youth media and cultural infrastructure in which non-dominant voices, such as the new feminist groups, could gain visibility. I argue that new feminist groups utilised the youth organisation infrastructure and show that they relied primarily on youth press and cultural venues. I argue that printed media was important for the new feminist groups in Slovenia because it allowed them to introduce feminist ideas from abroad through translations. It was also a space where they articulated their feminist

ideas. Alternative cultural venues were important spaces for events organised by feminist groups and a space where they could hold meetings. In this chapter, I try to show that situating new feminist groups in Ljubljana in the observed period within the institutional infrastructure they used blurs the line between oppositional and official spaces.

Chapter Four investigates the personal stories shared by women who were a part of the new feminist groups in Slovenia from 1984 to 1990. I look into how the personal narratives of interviewees portray different encounters that shaped their feminist identities: encounters with feminism, encounters with other feminists, and encounters with the state. In this chapter, I argue that their personal stories show that self-expression and narration of their personal experiences, which took place during their meetings, were crucial steps towards more stable and organised forms of feminist organising. I also argue that, in the observed period, new feminist groups in Slovenia employed consciousness-raising and separatist practices. In analysing how they perceived the political environment in the observed period, I argue that they expressed a belief in the ability to influence politics through organising, reflecting the idea that for the politically engaged youth in the 1980s, the youth organisation represented a space for meaningful politics. They also faced challenges like individual ridicule and opposition from politicians, which reflects the idea that youth activists in this period aimed their critique, among others, at the older elite.

Chapter Five analyses feminist textual interventions published between 1982 and 1990. I argue that by drawing on psychoanalytic feminism, post-Marxism, critical theory, lesbian feminism and concepts central to Western second-wave feminisms such as patriarchy, sexual difference, and experience, the authors attempted to expand the scope of local public debates and to distance themselves from the

prevailing economistic Marxist interpretations of society and sexual inequality. I argue that textual interventions provided the space where these feminist authors could legitimise their position as actors who know how women's emancipation can be achieved and where the Yugoslav emancipation model failed.

Chapter Six will reiterate my main questions, outline my main findings, and suggest areas for future research.

2. Historical Background

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the 1968 student movement in SFRY and the post-'68 social, political, and cultural transformations as the historical background to the thesis. Following the introduction which provides an overview of the chapter, section 2.2 discusses the social unrest in 1968 generally. In section 2.3, I focus on the role of women in the New Left. Section 2.4 focuses on the social and political developments in SFRY in 1968. Section 2.4 discusses the humanist Marxism of the Praxis group and the group's intellectual influence on oppositional discourses in 1968 and post-'68 SFRY and the relationship between the Praxis group and new feminist groups in SFRY. In section 2.6, I examine how the development of oppositional discourses during the student movement led to the diversification of the youth sphere in SFRY after 1968. In section 2.7, I discuss the 1968 student movement in Ljubljana and examine the development of the alternative scene in Ljubljana after 1968.

2.1 1968 Protest Movements

The year 1968 marked a significant turning point in global history. Spontaneous uprisings emerged across numerous nations, bringing about profound societal changes despite their quick dissipation. While seen as national, these movements were interconnected and influenced one another as much as they influenced their respective local environments. Collectively, they represented an enduring era of global transformation.[47] While students in the West expressed dissatisfaction with their countries' political climate, activists in the East argued for changes in the socialist system. Although scholarship on the 1968 student movement initially focused mainly on the developments in the West, particularly in France, contemporary critical scholarship generally agrees on the globality of social unrest in 1968.

There is little consensus among scholars on whether the student revolts followed comparable trajectories and had similar consequences worldwide. For instance, the German sociologist Wolf Lepenies stated that "nothing happened in France in '68. Institutions didn't change, the university didn't change, conditions for workers didn't change – nothing happened. '68 was really Prague, and Prague brought down the Berlin Wall."[48] While it is difficult to argue that there is a direct causal effect between Prague '68 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the quotation above hints towards a difference in student revolt's implications in different parts of the world.

[47] Georgy Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 1.
[48] Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Several social and political transformations influenced the events in 1968. In the West, particularly in the United States, the year 1965 is particularly important. The Anti-Vietnam War Movement and the Free Speech Movement, a mass civil disobedience act on the campus of the University of California, were important instances of youth politicisation. In addition, both movements gave rise to specific modes of organising and protesting, later adopted by the 1968 student movement.[49] In Eastern Europe, the developments that substantially affected the 1968 movement occurred earlier as well. In the Warsaw Pact countries, the process of de-Stalinisation during Khrushchev's Thaw, starting in the mid-1950s, resulted in liberalisation reforms. These reforms allowed for more open cultural and media production, which included critical voices. The easing of political repression during the Thaw also increased the possibilities of protests across the Warsaw Pact countries. In Yugoslavia, social and political life was significantly transformed following the introduction of self-management in the 1950s. According to the historian Marie Janin Calic, this transformation entailed that "a degree of pluralism was tolerated, at first in literature and the fine arts, but then also in political theory."[50] The early 1960s also brought about a significant wave of reforms in politics and the economy.[51]

2.2 Women in the New Left

The term "New Left" refers to various leftist intellectual and social movements that emerged in the late 1950s in Europe and the United States.[52] What marked the

[49] Judit Bodnár, "Making a Long Story Longer: Eastern Europe and 1968 as a Global Movement, Fifty Years Later," *Slavic Review* 77, no. 4 (2018): 876, https://doi.org/doi:10.1017/slr.2018.284.
[50] Marie Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2019), 180.
[51] Spaskovska, 60.
[52] Kristina Schulz, "The Women's Movement," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, ed. Martin. Klimke and Joachim. Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 285.

emergence of the New Left as a specific type of leftism was the departure of the movement from traditional leftist groups, or the "Old Left", in terms of organisation and theoretical underpinnings. The New Left strove towards organisational autonomy and criticised the central theoretical tenets of the traditional Left. Instead, its members drew upon more contemporary social theory, such as the German Frankfurt School and the French Situationists.[53] The relationship between the New Left, and later the student movement of 1968 on the one hand, and women's liberation movements of the 1970s on the other was, as the Swiss-German historian Kristina Schulz puts it, "difficult but constitutive".[54] When examining the interconnection between student activism and women's organising, a concept that often emerges is the notion of the "sexism of the New Left." As much as early women's groups integrated central aspects of the New Left, utilised the organisational network established in the context of the student movement, and became politicised through their participation, women also rebelled against their male counterparts and criticised their discriminatory attitudes.[55] Women were present in the movement, but their roles were frequently relegated to those of secretaries.[56] These experiences were crucial in forming new feminist movements in the 1970s and 1980s. In the West, disappointment with the New Left impeded feminist organising. In addition, the contacts these early women's groups established through their active participation in the student movement proved crucial for creating an autonomous women's movement. As Schulz notes, in the Italian, French, and West German context, the women's liberation movements did not develop directly from the student movement of 1968.[57]

[53] Schulz, “The Women's Movement”, 285.
[54] Schulz, “The Women's Movement”, 288.
[55] Schulz, “The Women's Movement”, 288.
[56] Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, 27.
[57] Schulz, “The Women's Movement”, 289.

Nonetheless, even though the early women's groups that emerged in 1968 eventually disintegrated, the women's groups that developed later in the context of women's liberation movements could rely on the organisational infrastructure created by the 1968 women's groups.[58] Criticism of the male-dominated New Left was important for the new feminist discourses in Yugoslavia as well. As Nada Ler Sofronić, a member of the Belgrade group *Žena i društvo* noted, the new feminists in Yugoslavia challenged the "androcentrism of the New Left and its relation towards the women's movement and the women question in general."[59] In addition, the 1968 student movement in Yugoslavia similarly gave rise to networks, intellectual frameworks, and institutions crucial to forming and advancing new feminism.

2.2 1968 in Yugoslavia

In the landscape of global social unrest in 1968, Yugoslavia occupied a distinct position regarding its geopolitical situatedness and the characteristics of social and political developments. According to the historian Nick Miller, the first distinctive feature of the Yugoslav context is that the various protesting movements lacked clear political outlines. 1968 in Yugoslavia revolved not only around the student movement but also around the internal disputes in the Serbian League of Communists, the nationalist movement in Croatia, and the separatism of Kosovar Albanians.[60] Thus, the demonstrations across Yugoslavia in 1968 varied significantly in their demands. Protest activities ranged from students demanding better living conditions in student

[58] Schulz, “The Women's Movement”, 289.
[59] Nada Ler Sofronić, "Mlade žene ne smiju pristati da se njihovo pitanje rješava tek poslije pobede 99%,[Young Women Shouldn't Let Their Question to be Solved Only After the Victory of the 99%]" in *Praxis: Društvena kritika i humanistički socijalizam*, ed. Dragomir Olujić Oluja and Krunoslav Stojaković (2021), 262.
[60] Nick Miller, "Yugoslavia's 1968: The Great Surrender," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion and Utopia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 277.

dormitories, higher stipends, and improved health care for students to nationalist movements critiquing the role of Serbia in the Federation, namely its relatively stronger political status compared to other Yugoslav republics and provinces.[61]

Another distinctive feature of the 1968 movement in Yugoslavia is that it differed from those in the West and the East in the sense that the student movement's demands were aligned with the official narrative of the ruling Party, the *Zveza komunistov Jugoslavije*, ZKJ (League of Communists of Yugoslavia, LCY).[62] As the protesting students argued that their program was "the program of the most progressive forces of our society – the program of the LCY and the constitution," the ruling party saw the protest movement as its ideological and political confirmation.[63] This specific attitude towards the establishment also occurred in later oppositional movements in Yugoslavia, where the target of critique was not the system itself but rather the inability of the ruling officials to materialise its ideological tenets. The main intellectual influences for critical discourses that emerged during the 1968 student movement in Yugoslavia came from the contacts with oppositional student groups from the West and the intellectuals associated with the Praxis group, a group of influential Marxist humanists.[64]

[61] Kaitlyn Tucker Sorenson, "Radikalna igra: Ljubljanska alternativa 1968 [Radical Play: Ljubljana's Alternative 1968]," in *Med majem '68 in novembrom '89: transformacije sveta, literature in teorije* [Between May 68' and November '89: Transformations of the World, Literature, and Theory], ed. Marko Juvan (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2011), 371.
[62] Boris Kanzleiter, "Yugoslavia," in *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, ed. Martin. Klimke and Joachim. Scharloth (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 222.
[63] Kanzleiter, "Yugoslavia," 222.
[64] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation,* 42.

2.3 The Praxis Group

In the early 1960s, the production of critical Marxist thought in Yugoslavia materialised primarily within a group of philosophers and sociologists from the University of Zagreb and the University of Belgrade. The Praxis group gathered first around the summer school on the Adriatic island of Korčula, which first occurred in 1963, and later around the journal Praxis, first published in 1964.[65] The type of critical Marxist theory that the Praxis group produced was humanist Marxism, which drew upon Marx's early writings, mainly his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.[66] In short, as stated by Gajo Petrović, a philosopher and one of the leading theorists of the group in the first edition of the Praxis journal, the group strove for a "ruthless criticism of all that exists" and opened up the Yugoslav intellectual space for the elaboration of Marxism.[67] The historian Zsofia Lóránd argued that the discursive space opened by the Praxis group's revision of Marxism was also important for developing new feminist discourses in Yugoslavia.[68] The group's insistence on the creative potential of the individual proved to be formative for the surfacing of the debate around the sexual revolution among Yugoslav intelligentsia in the 1960s, a topic that was one of the earliest points of critique articulated by Yugoslav feminists.[69] In addition, the historian Una Blagojević suggested that "both Marxist Humanists and "new feminists" shared a similar political language in socialist Yugoslavia.[70] They read the "young" Marx, who was not only

[65] Laura Secor, "Izneverena zaveštanja: jugoslovenski intelektualci i put ka ratu [Testaments Betrayed: Yogoslav Intellectuals and the Road to War]," *Beogradski krug*, no. 3-4 (1996): 655.
[66] Žiga Vodovnik, "Democracy as a Verb: New Meditations on the Yugoslav Praxis Philosophy," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 14, no. 4 (2012): 433, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2012.736236.
[67] Vodovnik, "Democracry as a Verb," 434.
[68] Zsófia Lóránd, "'A politically non-dangerous revolution is not a revolution': Critical readings of the concept of sexual revolution by Yugoslav feminists in the 1970s," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 22, no. 1 (2015): 121, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2014.983432
[69] Lóránd, "'A politically non-dangerous revolution is not a revolution'," 121.
[70] Una Blagojević, "The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals," *Contradictions: Journal for Critical Thought* 4, no. 2 (2020): 49.

interested in economic issues – a common criticism of the work of the so-called "mature" Marx – but also in questions of human autonomy, social alienation, and the category of humanity."[71] It's important to note that topics of women's issues and gender were not discussed in the Praxis journal, and the contributors of original articles to the journal were primarily male. Analysing the role of women intellectuals involved with the journal Praxis, Blagojević noted that several women who later became the leading members of the new feminist groups significantly contributed to the journal as translators and reviewers.[72] Blagojević suggested that the Praxis circle "offered these women one of the first places in which they could have access to literature, create intellectual networks, and, through the writing or reviews, could also bring forward their own critical voices."[73] Lóránd also argued that the group had "quite some influence on the beginnings of the new feminism in Yugoslavia", and described personal connections between young feminists and Praxis professors as "very encouraging."[74] However, although the professors were supportive of their students' and colleagues' feminist endeavours, they did not consider feminism as a serious topic.

According to the Slovenian sociologist Tomaž Mastnak, Praxis philosophy and Marxist revisionism remained strong in Belgrade and Zagreb after 1968. In Ljubljana in the early 1970s, the dominant role of Marxist revisionism was challenged by the emergence of different kinds of critical Marxism, which were influenced by psychoanalysis, structuralism, and post-structuralism.[75]

[71] Blagojević, “The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals,” 49.
[72] Blagojević, “The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals,” 69.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia,* 32.
[75] Tomaž Mastnak, "The reinvention of civil society: Trough the looking glass of democracy," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 46, no. 2 (2005): 331, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975605000111.

2.4 The Diversification of the Youth Sphere in Yugoslavia after 1968

As I discussed in the Introduction section of this thesis, the Yugoslav political system had a complex infrastructure of youth institutions. This reflected the critical role youth played in the Yugoslav socialist project. According to the historian Ljubica Spaskovska, "the youth was considered one of the most important pillars of Yugoslav society," which the popular slogan *Tito-Partija-Omladina-Armija* (Tito-the Party-the Youth-the Army) also reflected.[76] To foster "Yugoslav socialist patriotism", the state invested in youth both symbolic and economic resources.[77]

In the 1960s, the youth in Yugoslavia became increasingly politicised. Students who were influenced by the critical Marxist humanism of the Praxis school and the ideas of Western progressive student movements developed new critical discourses, which they expressed through new cultural and political practices.[78] This had a lasting impact on the Yugoslav youth media. The historian Marko Zubak, who analysed the Yugoslav youth press from 1968 to 1980, argued that from the late 1960s, Yugoslav critical youth significantly transformed the state's youth media landscape.[79] Zubak argued that youth media "began to introduce various innovations, while creating space for non-dominant representations opposed to the mainstream norms and closely related to the informal political and cultural initiatives of the youth." After the student protests in 1968, the ZKJ showed growing concern over the emergence of oppositional ideas among university students and the role of universities and student unions as breeding grounds for

[76] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 38.
[77] Spaskovska, 38.
[78] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 42.
[79] Zubak, "The Yugoslav Youth Press (1968-1980): Student Movements, Subcultures and Communist Alternative Media", 2.

oppositional ideas.[80] The student movements all over Yugoslavia were eventually suppressed.[81]

The ZKJ decided to reform Yugoslavia's youth organisation and curtail the previous relative independence of the student unions.[82] Consequently, the ZKJ adopted a resolution titled "The struggle of the SKJ [ZKJ] for a socialist orientation and active participation of the young generation in the development of the socialist self-managing society" in December 1972, merging the *Zveza študentov Jugoslavije* (Yugoslav Student League) with the *Zveza mladine Jugoslavije* (Yugoslav Youth League) to form the new *Zveza socialistične mladine Jugoslavije* (League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia).[83] According to Spaskovska, this was an effort to homogenise the youth politically and organisationally.[84]

Following the reform of the youth organisation, the Yugoslav youth infrastructure grew more complex. It consisted of "event venues, publishing houses, weekly and scholarly magazines, student centres and radio stations," that "directly or indirectly involved hundreds of well-educated, creative young people."[85] Spaskovska argued that "the second half of the 1960s could be pinpointed as a critical period for the diversification of the Yugoslav youth sphere," on one hand because the increasingly politicised youth developed new political and cultural behaviours, and on the other hand because the ZKJ's response to the growing politicisation of youth resulted in the reform of

[80] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 42.
[81] Zubak, “The Yugoslav Youth Press (1968-1989),“ 128.
[82] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 41.
[83] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 44.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 52.

Yugoslavia's youth organisation, resulting in a wide infrastructure of youth institutions with considerable funding.[86]

In the 1980s, when Yugoslavia underwent a severe economic and political crisis, young people seeking alternative expressions found opportunities within the youth infrastructure, particularly in the institutions of the youth cultural sector and youth media.[87] The decentralised structure of the organisation provided platforms for rethinking political dogmatism and exploring counter-cultural styles and alternative viewpoints.[88] Though initially peripheral, these critical voices gradually began to influence the organisation. By the mid-1980s, the organisation sought to redefine itself as a space for political alternatives and a platform for broader institutional challenges.[89]

2.4 The 1968 Student Movement and Post-68 Alternative Scene in Ljubljana

The first signs of discontent among students in Slovenia emerged at the beginning of the summer of 1968.[90] The administration of the student dormitories in Ljubljana announced their decision to vacate the dormitories during the summer months to accommodate tourists, followed by a rent increase of 25 dinars.[91] Although the ambience in Ljubljana's student village, Rožna dolina, stayed relatively calm, the situation became more tense after news about violent suppression of student protests started pouring in from Belgrade.[92]

[86] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 43.
[87] Spaskovska, 38.
[88] Spaskovska, 55.
[89] Spaskovska, 38.
[90] Tucker Sorenson, ”Radikalna igra,” 369.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

After the initial unrest during the summer of 1968, the students in Ljubljana became more organised. They brought together an assembly where they articulated their demands and urged for a dialogue with the *Izvršilni svet Skupščine Socialistične republike Slovenije* (Executive Council of the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia).[93] The students demanded higher stipends, social insurance for students, and the overall improvement of their economic situation.[94]

Amidst the negotiations between the protesting students and the Slovene establishment, the vice-president of the Council declared that the Slovene establishment supported the students in their aims for change but expected them to proceed calmly in their protesting, borrowing de Gaulle's remark from earlier that year and saying *"Spremembe- da, cirkus – ne!"* ("Changes – yes, circus – no").[95] The literary theorist Kaitlyn Tucker Sorenson argued that it was around this statement that the dynamic between Ljubljana's alternative scene and the socialist establishment was structured up to the very end of Yugoslav socialism.[96] Similarly, as elsewhere in Yugoslavia, the youth in Ljubljana became increasingly politicised in the 1960s and found new and creative ways to express their criticism of the socialist establishment. Tucker Sorenson, who analysed publications in two Slovenian literary journals from the late 1960s to early 1980s, argued that in contrast to Belgrade and Zagreb, where critical discourses emerged within universities and cultural centres, the critical intellectual life in Ljubljana centred primarily on print media as a primary platform for expression and exchange.[97]

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Tucker Sorenson, 376.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Tucker Sorenson, 371.

According to the philosopher Helena Motoh, literary journals have been the main space for introducing new ideas in Slovenia since the 1950s.[98] Although initially concentrated on literature, the journals gradually included wider socio-political discussions.[99] New generations of thinkers gathered around these journals, introducing new philosophical and cultural trends and ideas such as existentialism, critical theory, structuralism, and psychoanalysis.[100] These publications provided a public platform with sporadic but almost complete freedom of expression, though they were occasionally supervised and criticised by the political establishment.[101] Publishing was an important aspect of alternative culture in Ljubljana, at least since the 1960s, which was reflected in the city's relatively large number of alternative journals and publications.

2.6 Conclusion

The social and political transformations in the Yugoslav and global context were particularly important for the politicisation of youth in Yugoslavia. The humanist Marxism of the Praxis school and ideas from progressive student movements from the West shaped the ideas of the critical youth in Yugoslavia, which introduced new ways of political participation and profoundly transformed the Youth media landscape in Yugoslavia. In this period, youth media became a crucial space for non-dominant voices. The 1960s were a critical point in the diversification of the youth sphere in Yugoslavia, and these developments importantly shaped the transformation of the youth organisation in the 1980s. In addition, the 1960s also marked two distinctions in

[98] Helena Motoh, "Punk is a Symptom: Intersections of Philosophy and Alternative Culture in the 80's Slovenia," *Synthesis Philosophica* 54, no. 2 (2012): 286.
[99] Motoh, ”Punk is a Symptom,” 286.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.

the alternative intellectual circles in Ljubljana in comparison to Belgrade and Zagreb: firstly, the dominant role of humanist Marxism, which remained strong in Belgrade and Zagreb, was challenged by other theoretical approaches, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis in the 1970s. And secondly, literary journals emerged as the most critical space for introducing new ideas in Slovenia.

3. The Landscape of Alternative Cultural Production in Ljubljana, 1980s

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the landscape of alternative cultural production in Ljubljana in the 1980s. It focuses on the role the youth organisation ZSMS played in providing the youth media and cultural infrastructure in which non-dominant voices, such as the new feminist groups, could develop. I start this chapter with a short description of the emergence of the punk subculture in Ljubljana in the late 1970s in section 3.2, which challenged the prescribed norms, and explain how punk influenced the transformation of ZSMS into a platform for non-dominant voices. In section 3.3, I describe the structure of ZSMS. In section 3.4, I examine alternative youth press in Ljubljana in the 1980s, and in section 3.5, I discuss alternative cultural spaces in Ljubljana. In both sections, I focus on how the new feminist groups used these institutions. Section 3.6 is the final section, which concludes the chapter.

3.2 The Nazi Punk Affair

The historian Oskar Mulej described life in Ljubljana in the 1970s as "marked by a stuffy atmosphere of conformism, flattery, hypocrisy, and – simple as it may sound –

boredom."[102] Mulej went on to describe the centre of Ljubljana as a "ghost town," where "almost all bars and cafés closed at 9:00 p.m. and only police patrols could be seen around."[103] Towards the end of the decade, two students from the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science and Journalism in Ljubljana decided to challenge "the "still life" under socialism" by organising a concert in the gym of a high school in Ljubljana, which they advertised as "The first punk concert behind the Iron Curtain."[104] The concert of this band, which was called *Pankrti* (Bastards), marked the beginning of vibrant punk scene in Ljubljana. Several bands inspired by *Pankrti* emerged and, along with their fans, established "a mass presence in the very centre of Ljubljana" with "anti-fashion and non-normative behaviour, such as alcohol consumption, bagging, swearing, fighting with authorities, depicting non-normative sexuality and sexual practices."[105] Until the end of the decade, the Slovenian authorities didn't express their position on punk.[106] The tensions started growing at the beginning of the 1980s, when punks were facing increasing police repression, and culminated in the Nazi Punk Affair in 1981, "when police arrested three punks on fabricated charges that they had organised a national socialist party of Slovenia."[107]

Several authors writing on the topic of alternative culture in Ljubljana in the 1980s identify the emergence of the punk scene as crucial for the development of new social movements. In this context, the term new social movements (*nova družbena gibanja*)

[102] Oskar Mulej, ""We Are Drowning in Red Beet, Patching Up the Holes in the Iron Curtain": The Punk Subculture in Ljubljana in the Late 1970s and Early 1980s."," *East Central Europe* 38, no. 2-3 (2011): 377.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Gregor Tomc, ""Comrades, We Don't Believe You!" Or, Do We Just Want to Dance With You?: The Slovenian Punk Subculture in Socialist Yugoslavia.," in *Made in Yugoslavia: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. Danijela Beard and Ljerka Rasmussen (New York: Routledge, 2020), 199.
[105] Jasmina Založnik, "Punk as a Strategy for Body Politicization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s," *AM Časopis za studije umetnosti i medija* 14 (2017): 146.
[106] Tomc, ""Comrades, We Don't Believe You!" Or, Do We Just Want to Dance With You?," 199.
[107] Ibid.

describes a broad network of social movements that emerged in the early 1980s, united around the critique of avant-gardism and called for the political pluralisation of Slovenian society.[108] Among these new social movements were ecological groups, peace groups, and also new feminist groups.[109]

The punk culture impacted the development of other alternative groups in Slovenia in two ways. Firstly, it introduced new ways of behaviour that challenged the prescribed norms, from which different groups drew inspiration.[110] Secondly, the 1981 Nazi Punk Affair was crucial in shaping the future position of ZSMS towards alternative groups.[111] According to Tomc, "ZSMS was criticised by punks and intellectuals for not having done enough to prevent police repression." In response, ZSMS organised a discussion titled 'Some actual questions concerning the cultural politics of the ZSMS and the youth activity in the sphere of culture,' where participants from alternative media demanded that ZSMS accepts punk "as a part of popular culture and not as an excess or a political project."[112] ZSMS gradually became supportive of punk and other alternative groups. With this, it was the first in the ZSMJ framework to "deviate from the official line" and gradually transformed itself "into a more autonomous body which provided space for alternative forms of youth organisation."[113] In the following section, I will describe ZSMS and its structure in more detail.

[108] Žiga. Vodovnik, "Demokratizacija in nova družbena gibanja [Democratisation and New Civil Movements]," *Teorija in praksa* 51, no. 2-3 (2014).
[109] Ibid.
[110] Založnik, "Punk as a Strategy for Body Politicization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s," 146.
[111] Tomc, ""Comrades, We Don't Believe You!" Or, Do We Just Want to Dance With You?," 201.
[112] Tomc, ""Comrades, We Don't Believe You!" Or, Do We Just Want to Dance With You?," 171.
[113] Ljubica. Spaskovska, "Stairway to Hell: The Yugoslav Rock Scene and Youth During the Crisis Decade of 1981-1991," *East Central Europe* 38, no. 2-3 (2011): 362.

3.3 The League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia (ZSMS)

The ZSMS was the Slovenian branch of the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia, the official youth organisation in the Yugoslav political landscape. Although it existed under various other names since the post-war years, it came to exist under the name the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia in 1974, when the Youth Organisation was merged with the Student Organisation, resulting from the reform of the federal youth organisation in 1972, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Initially, and up until the 1980s, ZSMS functioned as a transmissive organisation for recruiting young people into high politics.[114] As with several other political organisations in Yugoslavia, ZSMS's structure was complex. In this chapter, two institutions within the ZSMS framework are particularly important: *Republiška konferenca ZSMS, RK ZSMS* (the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia), and the *Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS, UK ZSMS* (the University Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia).

The University Conference primarily comprised students and young university employees among its membership. The Republic Conference held the highest authority within ZSMS. Lower-level organisational units and other institutions in the ZSMS infrastructure did not always align with the decisions made by the Republic Conference. The University Conferences occasionally emerged as a dissenting force concerning the policies and directions advocated by the Republic Conference.[115]
As mentioned earlier, ZSMS was the first in the ZSMJ framework to deviate from the official line and gradually transformed into a platform for alternative culture and critical

[114] Blaž Vurnik, *Med Marxom in punkom: Vloga Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije pri demokratizaciji Slovenije (1980-1990)* [Between Marx and Punk: The Role of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia in democratisation of Slovenia (1980-1990)] (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2005), 7.
[115] Vurnik, *Med Marxom in punkom*, 14.

voices. Already in 1978, ZSMS developed a cultural policy that would support and increase the quality of all informal cultural production, which should have the right to spontaneity.[116] Later, in 1982, ZSMS declared itself a pluralistic organisation and started working towards including and supporting various critical voices, such as peace, environmental, and new feminist groups.[117]

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, similar developments occurred at the federal level in the early 1980s. ZSMJ reorganised itself as a platform for increasing the visibility of alternative voices, which strengthened ZSMS's position towards new social movements. In 1986, it officially integrated new social movements into its political agenda.[118] As a result, ZSMS assumed the role of legitimising the involvement of these emerging movements in the political process. It provided the necessary infrastructure, resources, and visibility to facilitate their engagement in the political system. Some new social movement groups formed working groups within the Republican Conference of ZSMS. Some of the members of the new feminist groups in Ljubljana were involved in the *Delovna skupina za ženska gibanja in raziskave pri Republiški konferenci Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije* (Working Group on Women's Movements and Women's Research at the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia) (1986).

Although the new feminist groups were considered a part of the new social movements, both by themselves and other groups within the network, the relationships between them were not straightforwardly supportive. For example, the punk culture

[116] Marta Rendla, "Alternativna kulturna gibanja in ”konglomerat FV” v osemdesetih letih v Sloveniji [Alternative cultural movements and the ”FV conglomerate in Slovenia during the 1980s]," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* LVIII, no. 2 (2018): 143-44.
[117] Rendla, “Alternativna kulturna gibanja in “konglomerat FV” v osemdesetih letih v Sloveniji”, 147.
[118] Spaskovska, "Stairway to Hell: The Yugoslav Rock Scene and Youth During the Crisis Decade of 1981-1991," 362.

was significant in bringing attention to sexuality and sexual identities, which was important in new feminist discourses. The scholar Jasmina Založnik wrote that the alternative art group The Borders of No Control Nb. 4, active between 1982 and 1983, used video art to explore a "range of possible sexualities and sexes, switching and morphing the one-dimensional, limited direction of a subject inscribed and marked by its given sex and gender."[119] On the other hand, Vlasta Jalušič writes that new feminist groups held a critical distance towards punk and the sexist messages of the songs like Pankrti's song titled *Gremo na ženske, gremo na pir* (Let's Go Have Some Women, Let's Go Have a Beer).[120]

3.3 Alternative Youth Printed Media in Ljubljana, 1980s

As described in the previous chapter, alternative cultural production in Slovenia has been centred around publishing, particularly literary journals, since the 1960s. In addition to literary journals, the 1960s saw a transformation of youth media across Yugoslavia, and youth media became a space for non-dominant voices to oppose mainstream norms. In the 1980s, the Slovenian youth press was at the forefront of critical debates in the Yugoslav youth media landscape.[121] According to the historian Zsófia Lóránd, Ljubljana was a forerunner in feminist publishing in the Yugoslav context as well.[122] In this section, I will examine the journals and newspapers important for feminist publishing in the 1980s.

[119] Založnik, "Punk as a Strategy for Body Politicization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s," 152.
[120] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 29.
[121] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 70.
[122] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 38.

In the 1980s, alternative publishing mainly revolved around the journals *Tribuna* (The Tribune), *Katedra* (The Chair), *Problemi* (Problems), *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* (Journal for the Critique of Science, Imagination, and New Anthropology), the newspaper *Mladina* (Youth). Among periodicals, most feminist publishing was centred around the magazine *Problemi*. *Problemi* published feminist articles, both by local authors and in translation, and two special feminist editions in 1986 and 1988, which I will analyse in Chapter 5. The journal was experimental in form and content and represented important spaces for non-dominant voices to push the boundaries of politics and media.[123]

The weekly newspaper *Mladina*, which started as a bulletin of the youth section of the Yugoslav Communist Party in Slovenia in 1920, reached its development into an alternative news medium somewhat later than *Problemi* and *Tribuna*. It nonetheless became a vital part of the alternative scene by the mid-1980s.[124] *Mladina* published feminist articles and advertised the events organised by the new feminist groups. This was important because, as a youth weekly newspaper, *Mladina* had a wider readership than the journals discussed earlier. The group *Ženska sekcija* prepared a collection of feminist articles for the 1985 *Pogledi* (Views) supplement of *Mladina*.[125] *Mladina* also published a special lesbian edition of the supplement *Pogledi* titled *Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami* (We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women) in 1987, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5. In 1986, the women involved with the new feminist groups collaborated with peace movement members and published an issue of the *Pogledi* supplement of *Mladina* on

[123] Tucker Sorenson, "Radikalna igra: Ljubljanska alternativa 1968 [Radical Play: Ljubljana's Alternative 1968]," 372.
[124] Zubak, "The Yugoslav Youth Press (1968-1980): Student Movements, Subcultures and Communist Alternative Media", 274.
[125] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 36.

women and military service.[126] Following this, they co-organised a round table discussion on this topic.[127]

In her Introduction to the 2002 collection of interviews *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, the political scientist Vlasta Jalušič writes that while Mladina played an important role in providing visibility to the topic of feminism in the public sphere, it also "constantly distanced" itself from it.[128] For example, Jalušič cites an article published in *Mladina* after the inaugural women-only evening of the *Lilit* group in club K4 in 1985, in which the author is guessing what women on a women-only evening could do: "They will be cooking, doing laundry, and sewing."[129]

Another article from August 1985 stated: "The talk about the debate on the issue of clitoral or (or rather and) vaginal orgasm at the *Lilit* club on Kersnikova 4 in Ljubljana has not yet died down. However, it is not possible to know what the outcome of the discussion was, i.e. whether orgasm is exclusively clitoral or whether vaginal stimulation is also necessary for a "full" orgasm."[130] The article concluded by ridiculing the Australian feminist author Germaine Greer, known for her works on female sexuality, by citing her as the author of the following statement: "I don't care if the orgasm is vaginal or clitoral, but I know it's much better to fuck with a full pussy."[131]

Printed media was important for the new feminist groups in Slovenia because it allowed them to introduce feminist ideas from abroad through translations and by publishing their articles. I will discuss the role of feminist textual interventions in more

[126] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 37.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Jalušič, 40.
[129] Jalušič, 40.
[130] Jalušič, 35.
[131] Jalušič, 35.

detail in Chapter 5. Youth media was important for these groups because it provided visibility to their ideas and activities. At the same time, youth media also reproduced sexist discourses and ridiculed feminists.

3.4 Alternative Cultural Spaces in Ljubljana

In addition to the youth press, cultural venues within the youth infrastructure contributed to raising the visibility of new feminist groups in the public sphere.[132] In Ljubljana, two such spaces were important – the *Študentski kulturno-umetniški center* ŠKUC (Students' Cultural and Art Centre) and the student club K4. ŠKUC was established in 1972. In 1978, ŠKUC opened an exhibition space on Stari trg in Ljubljana, called the ŠKUC Gallery. The exhibition space quickly became the centre of alternative culture in Slovenia.

ŠKUC was the home of gay and lesbian organising as well. In April 1984, it hosted the first gay culture festival in Yugoslavia, followed by establishing the first gay group called *Magnus*. The festival featured various lectures, film screenings, and an exhibition of works by European and American gay artists.[133] From 1985, the feminist group *Lilit* operated under the ŠKUC umbrella. Its lesbian section, *Lezbična Lilit*, organised various events that ŠKUC hosted. In 1986, the venue featured presentations on lesbian scenes from other cities, such as Berlin and London, as well as exhibitions and performances, including the exhibition *Obszöne Frauen* (Obsolete

[132] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 135.
[133] Roman Kuhar, "Ljubljana: The Tales From The Queer Margins," in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe Since 1945*, ed. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London, New York: Bloomsbury), 141.

Women) by the Austrian photographer Krista Beinstein. In December 1988, "The Week of Lesbian Film" was hosted by the ŠKUC Gallery.[134]

The name *Klub K4* (Club K4) refers to the basement of a building on Kersnikova Street n. 4 in Ljubljana, which belonged to the University and the City Conference of ZSMS.[135] Although Klub K4 formally became a nightclub in 1989, the basement was an important alternative venue throughout the 1980s.[136] In 1984, K4 hosted the first gay club nights organised by *Magnus*.[137] The first event organised by the group *Lilit* was hosted in K4.[138] The event was a women-only evening, which featured a discussion on women's sexuality and was attended by roughly 250 women.[139] After the first event in April 1985, the group *Lilit* organised women-only evenings in K4 monthly.[140]

New feminist groups in Ljubljana relied on the infrastructure of the youth organisation, mainly the cultural venues. In these spaces, they could organise events and reach more visibility in the public sphere. At the same time, the group used these spaces for meetings. As I will show in Chapter 4, the meetings of feminist groups were important because they enabled the transition from scattered interactions between women to a more organised group structure, allowing for the formation of a collective feminist identity, which served as a basis for the development of a theoretical articulation of feminism, as well as political action.

[134] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 136.
[135] Rendla, "Alternativna kulturna gibanja in ”konglomerat FV” v osemdesetih letih v Sloveniji [Alternative cultural movements and the ”FV conglomerate in Slovenia during the 1980s]," 141.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Kuhar, “Ljubljana: The Tales From The Queer Margins,” 141.
[138] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 31.
[139] Jalušič, 36.
[140] Jalušič, 37.

3.6 Conclusion

In the early 1980s, the punk subculture in Ljubljana influenced the transformation of Slovenia's youth organisation, ZSMS, into a more autonomous body within the federal organisation and aimed to provide space for expressing non-dominant views. This allowed the groups that formed the new social movements, a network of alternative groups, to utilise the wide infrastructure of the youth organisation, particularly the youth press and cultural venues. The printed media has had an important role in alternative culture in Slovenia since the 1960s, which put the Slovenian youth press at the forefront of critical debates in the Yugoslav youth media landscape. In this chapter, I examined how new feminist groups utilised the youth organisation infrastructure and showed that they relied primarily on youth press and cultural venues. Printed media was important for the new feminist groups in Slovenia because it allowed them to introduce feminist ideas from abroad through translations and by publishing their articles. Alternative cultural venues were important spaces for events organised by feminist groups and a space where they could hold meetings. As I showed in this chapter, situating new feminist groups in Ljubljana in the observed period within the institutional infrastructure they used blurs the line between oppositional and official spaces.

4. Creating Feminist Identities, Building Feminist Spaces, 1984-1990

4.1 Introduction

In 1984, Mirjana Ule, a social psychologist and Tanja Rener, a sociologist with whom Ule shared an office at the Faculty of Political Sciences, Sociology and Journalism in Ljubljana along with a group of supportive colleagues from the *Inštitut za sociologijo*

(Institute for Sociology), established the first formal new feminist group in Slovenia. The *Ženska sekcija pri sociološkem društvu* (Women's Section of the Sociological Association) was a women-only discussion group where approximately 25 women, primarily young academics, met weekly. In addition to internal discussions, they organised lectures on women and women's rights.[141] From the group of the *Ženska sekcija*, which was more academic, a smaller group of more activist-oriented members emerged, and in 1985 founded a new feminist group called *Lilit* (Lilith).[142] The group *Lilit*, active between 1985 and 1988, organised around 30 events on various topics, including female sexuality, invisible labour, reproductive rights, and violence against women.[143] The members of the group *Lilit* held meetings and organised their events in the spaces of *Galerija ŠKUC* (ŠKUC Gallery).[144] ŠKUC also provided financial support for the group's activities. In 1987, a group of lesbian activists who were a part of the *Lilit* group created a lesbian section of *Lilit* called *Lezbična Lilit* (Lesbian Lilith), or LL for short, which in 1988 became an autonomous group.[5] The members of the ŠKUC-LL, as the group was called since then, organised a wide range of activities: lectures, publishing activities, film festivals, and international cooperation.[145] From 1987, ŠKUC-LL became a part of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), engaged with the International Lesbian Information Service (ILIS), and participated in events abroad such as the 'Gay and Lesbian Pride' in the Netherlands and the '*Lesbenwoche*' in Berlin.[146] In August 1988, the group organised an international lesbian camp on Rab Island in Croatia. This event brought together

[141] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 19.
[142] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 18.
[143] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 18.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Suzana Tratnik and Nataša S. Segan, *L: zbornik o lezbičnem gibanju na Slovenskem: 1984-1995* [L: Compendium on the Lesbian Movement in Slovenia 1984-1995] (Ljubljana: ŠKUC, 1995), 11.
[146] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 132.

activists from Yugoslavia and Western European countries (Austria, England, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Portugal).[147]

In addition to these three groups, which held semi-autonomous positions within either academic (*Ženska sekcija*) or youth cultural institutions (*Lilit*, ŠKUC-LL), two feminist groups more closely connected to the youth organisation, the ZSMS, existed in this period. The first was the *Delovna skupina za ženska gibanja in raziskave pri Republiški konferenci Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije* (Working Group on Women's Movements and Women's Research at the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia), hereafter *Delovna skupina* (Working Group).[148] *Delovna skupina*, active between 1987 and 1988, was established by members of the existing feminist groups. The second was the group *Ženske za politiko* (1990), in which, similarly to the *Delovna skupina*, various feminists worked together.[149] The goal of this group was to influence the political program of ZSMS, which was at that time in the process of transforming itself into a political party.[150]

Documents such as archival collections of ZSMS, the Student Cultural Centre ŠKUC, personal archives of the members, and newspaper articles allow us to trace the existence and activities of feminist groups in which feminists in Slovenia participated between 1984 and 1990. Alongside this process of forming feminist groups, the members of these groups developed their feminist identities through a series of encounters. My use of the term 'encounter' in examining the development of feminist identities in these personal narratives is inspired by the work of the British-Australian

[147] Ibid.
[148] Jalušič, 37.
[149] Jalušič, 38.
[150] Vurnik, *Med Marxom in punkom: Vloga Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije pri demokratizaciji Slovenije (1980-1990) [Between Marx and Punk: The Role of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia in democratisation of Slovenia (1980-1990)]*, 23.

feminist theorist Sara Ahmed. Ahmed writes of encounters as meetings involving surprise and conflict, which are constitutive of identities. In Ahmed's words, "Identity itself is constituted in the 'more than one' of the encounter: the designation of an 'I' or a 'we' requires an encounter with others."[151] Discussing the significance of encounters in shaping identities highlights how identity formation is a continuous process of transformation. This idea suggests that identity isn't confined to an individual's internal realm but is perpetually reshaped through interactions with others. This chapter investigates the personal stories shared by women who were a part of the new feminist groups in Slovenia from 1984 to 1990. I look into how the personal narratives of interviewees portray different encounters that shaped their feminist identities: encounters with feminism, encounters with other feminists, and encounters with the state. By doing so, the chapter aims to answer what these women's personal experiences can tell us about the development of their feminist identities.

The first section of this chapter, 4.1, overviews the new feminist groups active in Slovenia from 1984 to 1990. Section 4.2 introduces the interviews and interviewees. Section 4.3 analyses how the interviewees describe the processes of their feminist identity formation. Section 4.4 examines the interviewees' descriptions of how experiences abroad influenced their work in feminist groups. Section 4.5 discusses how they describe the process of organising into groups, and section 4.6 analyses how my three recent interviewees describe their experiences and views on the state. Finally, section 4.7 answers this chapter's main question on what these women's personal experiences can tell us about the development of their feminist identities.

[151] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*, 6.

4.2 Sources and Methodology

This chapter analyses two sets of oral history interviews. The first set was conducted in 1997/1998 by the Slovenian political scientist Vlasta Jalušič, herself a member of several feminist groups mentioned in this chapter, and her team of researchers. The interviews were conducted as a part of the research project *Neodvisne ženske skupine v Sloveniji 1980-1995* (Independent Women's Groups in Slovenia 1980-1995) at the *Mirovni Inštitut* (Peace Institute) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The research project aimed to document the experiences of women who were involved in what was called at the time the new feminist movement in Slovenia. The interview transcripts were published in the book *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* (How We Attended a Feminist Gymnasium) (2002). In the book's preface, Jalušič explains how they selected the interviewees: "We interviewed some of the main actors, initiators and later protagonists of the new feminist movement in Slovenia: especially those who founded various groups, worked in them with particular dedication and made public appearances, and thus contributed to the legitimisation of the feminist movement and thought in Yugoslavia and Slovenia."[152] Out of 16 conducted interviews, 14 were published.

This chapter focuses on the ten interviews from *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo* with women who had been involved in the new feminist groups in Slovenia in the period from 1984 to 1990: Mirjana Nastran Ule (b. 1947), Tanja Rener (b. 1954), Nives Brzič (b. 1957), Mojca Dobnikar (b. 1957), Milica Gaber Antić (b. 1958), Vlasta Jalušič (b. 1959), Metka Mencin (b. 1959), Nataša Sukič (b. 1962), Darja Zaviršek (b.

[152] Jalušič, 15.

1962), and Suzana Tratnik (b. 1963). The interview transcripts were published in the Slovenian language, and all translations used in this chapter are mine.

The second set of oral history interviews this chapter will analyse are interviews that I conducted myself. My original intention was to interview all ten women who had participated in the research *Neodvisne ženske skupine* and had been active members of the 1980s new feminist movement in Slovenia. Between November 2021 and September 2022, I conducted four oral history interviews with three people. I interviewed Mojca Dobnikar online in November 2021 and at her home in Ljubljana in July 2022, Mirjana Ule online in August 2022, and Metka Mencin in Ljubljana in September 2022. My initial plan was to compare the narratives from both sets of interviews to trace the similarities and differences in how these women narrated their experiences in the new feminist groups in 1997/1998 and two decades later. Because I didn't collect enough interviews for such a comparison, I used the two sets of interviews separately. In the sections Personal Narratives of Feminist (Self-) Identification (4.3), Experiences from Abroad (4.4), and The Kitchen-Table Phase (4.5), I rely on the oral history interviews conducted by Jalušič in 1997 and 1998. In the section Reflections on the State (4.6), I rely on the oral history interviews I collected myself.

It is important to keep in mind that oral accounts cannot reconstruct historical events. They are, in the words of the Italian historian Alessandro Portelli, “less about events than about their meaning.” Using oral history accounts, we gain insight into what people “wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think

they did."[153]It is equally important to keep in mind that the temporal context in which an interview is conducted has to be an integral part of oral history analysis. As the American gender scholar Nan Alamilla Boyd wrote in her essay on queer theory and oral history, "Narrators cannot remove themselves from the discursive practices that create stable subject positions. The narrators' voices must, therefore, be read as texts, open to interpretation, and their disclosures should be understood as a part of a larger process of reiteration, where identities are constantly reconstructed around very limited sets of meaning."[154] Informed by these insights, I will now turn to the first set of interviews.

4.3 Personal Narratives of Feminist (Self-)Identification

The oral history interviews Jalušič conducted in 1997/1998 allow us to explore the development of feminist identities of the women active in new feminist groups in Slovenia in the 1980s. The interview transcripts, which begin with questions about how they encountered feminism, show how the women narrate the development of their feminist identities. In their narratives, this development is presented as a process, from individual experiences expressed in the singular subject to collective experiences described in the plural. The distinction between the singular and the plural subject in personal narratives, as the American literary scholar Doris Sommer suggests, is related to two distinct ways of reflecting on one's past, each corresponding to a specific way in which the narrator relates to their broader societal context.[155] Sommer distinguishes between autobiographies, in which the subject is singular, and

[153] Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different.," in *The oral history reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 67.
[154] Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 2 (2008): 108, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30114216.
[155] Doris Sommer, ""Not Just a Personal Story": Women's Testimonios and the Plural Self," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 67.

testimonials, in which the subject is plural. In testimonials, Sommer argues that the showcasing of relationships is at the front. Through the use of the collective subject, the narrator represents her group, but she does so "as a participant, rather than as an ideal and repeatable type."[156]

In the interviews, the women described their first encounters with feminism through examples of various individual experiences. For some, the experiences of gender-based discrimination in their childhood and teenage years led them to reflect on why such discrimination occurs, eventually leading them to feminist theory. Mirjana Ule, a social psychologist and researcher at the FSPN, pointed out that the experiences of gender-based discrimination in her daily life played a significant role in shaping her feminist identity:

> I developed into a feminist out of everyday needs, out of the need to explain what it means to be told in high school that I can't join the brigade because I'm a woman, but my brother can go every year. So, what do these gender divisions mean? What does it mean if I decide to study psychology and everybody tells me: "What, psychology? Nobody will like you, and you won't get a husband because everybody will say, I'm not going to have a psychologist for a wife!" Feminist theory has helped me to reflect on what it all means, why people talk like that, and what it means to speak like that.[157]

Milica Gaber Antić, a sociologist and member of the group *Ženske za politiko*, similarly recalled her frustrations with everyday sexism as what initially led her to feminism. However, it was the experience of motherhood that made her reflect on women's position in society more intensely: "Later on, through the experience of motherhood

[156] Sommer, ""Not Just a Personal Story," 67.
[157] Ule, Mirjana. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.

and that period when I was at home with my child, on maternity leave, I think that somehow my first thoughts about the position of women in society came from that."[158]

The importance of individuals' lived experiences as a basis for understanding social structures has been highlighted in standpoint theory, which is a prominent approach in feminist theory as well. Feminist standpoint theorists argue that women's lived experiences are central to examining their material and social realities.[159] The personal stories of Ule and Antić reflect this point that individual experiences, particularly those related to gender roles and inequalities, can serve as a basis for examining the social structures that shape such experiences.

While personal experiences with gender-based discrimination were important for Ule and Antić, other women described their first encounters with feminism differently. The sociologist Tanja Rener described how she first encountered feminism when she was at university.[160] In the second half of the 1970s, when Rener was an undergraduate sociology student at the University of Ljubljana, she was drawn to the concept of the private as political, culminating in her entry into feminism:

> Looking back now, I can see that in my term papers in the second year, I was interested in the private – the private as political – and I tried to think about the personal in a political way. So I wrote my first term paper, and then my second term paper, and then my Bachelor's degree, my Master's degree, and my PhD, and I am still working on private things today, which are, of course, gender-structured. I think these relationships are crucial, regardless of how you deal with them, through history, political philosophy, or otherwise. That was my entry into feminism.[161]

[158] Antić G., Milica. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.
[159] Lorraine Code, "Feminist Epistemology and the Politics of Knowledge: Questions of Marginality," in *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Mary Evans et al. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2014), 12.
[160] Rener, Tanja. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.
[161] Rener, Tanja. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik.

Like Rener, Vlasta Jalušič, a political scientist, remembers that she became interested in feminism during her studies.[20] In the late 1970s, when she was an undergraduate political science student, she developed an interest in feminism through reading Marxist authors and finding their accounts of the position of women in socialism "problematic."

> As for me, I came out of a circle of students at the University, where we read a lot. It was practically a Marx book club, so to speak. We read Marx up and down, left and right, in and out... I came to feminism through Marx by reading texts that were somehow within Marx, dealing with the labour movement and the whole interpretation of the position of women in from a socialist perspective, and I saw those texts as problematic. Something didn't "click" for me. That was what pulled me in.[162]

Mojca Dobnikar, who in the late 1970s had been working as a secretary for the student newspaper *Tribuna*, remembers that she started to think of herself as a feminist after others labelled her as one:

> I remember him saying, "Be careful about what you say in front of Mojca; she's a feminist." And I think this was a revelation for me to start researching. In fact, I think I was labelled by others first, and only then did I begin to look into what feminism was. For example, one of my friends introduced me to a woman and said, "You'll find her interesting. She's a feminist like you are."[163]

Suzana Tratnik, Nataša Sukić, and Nives Brzič joined the feminist scene in the mid-1980s when the earlier members had already organised themselves into formal groups. They entered the feminist group *Lilit* because they were interested in women's

[162] Jalušič, Vlasta. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.
[163] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.

topics, leading them to later identify as feminists.[164] When Suzana Tratnik, a sociologist and lesbian activist, joined the *Lilit* group in 1986, she did not consider herself a feminist: "In that period, I wasn't thinking about what I should declare myself to be, I simply did what I was interested in."[26] Nataša Sukić, a lesbian activist, joined the group out of an interest in women's topics, which, as she said, led her to feminism and lesbian activism.[27] Nives Brzič, a musician, remembers joining the *Lilit* group after her then-husband suggested it might interest her.

> I joined the *Lilit* group because I was interested in women's topics. Until then, I never really thought or knew much about feminism or lesbianism. I knew I was interested in this, so I joined the group. In the beginning, I was motivated by curiosity.[28]

The interview quotes show that the interviewees drew upon their various personal experiences to reflect on their first encounters with feminism. While this section focused on the interviewees' initial encounter with feminism, we can also see how this encounter was shaped by previous ones, resonating with Ahmed's claim that encounters happen not only in the present because "each encounter reopens past encounters."[165] For Tanja Rener and Vlasta Jalušič, the relevant encounter was with texts they read during their studies; for Mojca Dobnikar, it was the encounter with other people who labelled her as a feminist, and for Suzana Tratnik, Nataša Sukić, and Nives Brzič, it was the encounter with "women's topics" in the group *Lilit*. In addition, these personal narratives show how, in Ahmed's words, "a particular encounter both informs

[164] Brzić, Nives. Interview by Mateja Hočevar and Mojca Dobnikar. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002; Sukić, Nataša. Interview by Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002; Tratnik, Suzana. Interview by Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.

[165] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 8.

and is informed by the general: encounters between embodied subjects always hesitate between the domain of the particular – the face to face of this encounter – and the general – the framing of the encounter by broader relationships of power and antagonism."[166] This is particularly evident in the narratives of Mirjana Ule and Milica Gaber Antić, who were exposed to and became aware of broader social relationships when encountering gender-based discrimination in their personal lives.

4.4 Experiences from Abroad

Several women interviewed for Jalušič's research project described the work of women's groups abroad as an important inspiration for their own feminist work. Mirjana Ule, Mojca Dobnikar, Vlasta Jalušič, and Darja Zavrišek visited Berlin, while Tanja Rener often travelled to Italy.[31] Mirjana Ule described her visit to Berlin in the early 1980s as what motivated her to start feminist initiatives back home:

> I was also in Berlin, where there were lively movements, everyone was out on the streets. There was really a lot of work going on at that time, it seemed like there was no going back. It was already such a strong alternative to the status quo that it seemed like the world was going to change. When I returned home, I was very unhappy and looking for something to do. Other women had been abroad, too, and had their own experiences.[167]

Mojca Dobnikar visited Berlin in 1984. Similarly to Ule, the visit inspired her to organise women-only events, like those that she encountered in Berlin: "It was important for me that I travelled to Berlin in 1984, and saw women's discos, women's bookshops, women's parties, women's breakfasts, gathering in women's circles and so on. And I

[166] Ibid.
[167] Ule, Mirjana. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik.

wanted to do something like that at home."[168] In April 1985, Dobnikar organised a women-only party in the club K4 in Ljubljana, which around 200 women attended. Darja Zaviršek, a sociologist who joined the group *Ženske za politiko* in the late 1980s, became interested in feminism after she travelled to Germany, which motivated her to become a part of the team establishing the SOS helpline, which a group of women involved with the *Lilit* group founded in 1988.[169]

> I remember being very strongly influenced by women's studies in Germany. In 1987, I had the opportunity to go there, and for the first time, I saw in-depth studies on violence against women, sexual abuse, and so on. I could say that in 1987 I started to be consciously involved in feminism. So in 1988, I joined the group setting up the SOS helpline.[170]

The significance of experiences abroad for the women active in new feminist groups in Slovenia in the 1980s extended beyond the inspiration for starting similar initiatives in Ljubljana. These visits also provided opportunities to collect feminist literature, which shaped their intellectual development. Vlasta Jalušič visited Berlin to study German women's movements, and Dobnikar did her research for the 1985 edited volume *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement) in Berlin as well.[171] Answering the question of how she first encountered feminism, Tanja Rener noted that for her, the ability to travel abroad played an important role in collecting feminist literature: "Yugoslavia's open borders helped. We were not constrained, we could travel. I think I got most of the material, the literature, in Italy at that time."[172]

[168] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002
[169] Zaviršek, Darja. Interview by Jelka Zorn. Undated. Transcript in Vlasta Jalušič. Kako Smo Hodile V Feministično Gimnazijo. Ljubljana: Založba /*cf, 2002.
[170] Zaviršek, Darja. Interview by Jelka Zorn.
[171] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer; Jalušič, Vlasta. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.
[172] Rener, Tanja. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik.

The narratives of the women involved in new feminist groups in Slovenia perhaps most explicitly show how encounters, in Ahmed's words, "constitute the space of the familial", "but in doing so, they shift the boundaries of what is familiar."[173] When travelling abroad, the women saw what kind of women's organising was possible, which inspired them to start organising in Ljubljana as well. Their narratives show that experiences abroad were important for the development of their feminist identities by functioning as a source of inspiration for feminist organising in Slovenia and providing opportunities to collect feminist literature.

4.5 The Kitchen-Table Phase

The Hungarian historian Zsófia Lóránd uses the term "the kitchen-table phase" to describe the initial stages of feminist organising among new feminist groups in Yugoslavia.[174] In these initial stages, women would meet in the kitchens of their private homes to share and reflect on women's topics and their personal experiences. In the interviews Jalušič conducted in 1997/1998, the interviewees started using the plural subject in descriptions of this period. This shift in narration reflects a shift in how the narrators related to their broader social context. In the quotes provided in the sections above, the narrators use the singular subject to reflect on the individual experiences that triggered their interest in feminism. In their narratives about this later period, the narrators use the plural subject, which I interpret as the emergence of a collective identity. For the Italian feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, the emergence of a collective identity is a starting point for feminism:

> For feminism, in the beginning, there is alterity, the non-one, a multiplicity. The founding agent is the common corpus of female subjects who posit themselves theoretically and politically as a collective subject.

[173] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 8.
[174] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 33.

> The communal bond comes first, and then – and only then – there arises the question of what political line to enforce. It is the ethical that defines the political and not vice versa; hence the importance of positing the feminist audience as the receptive, active participant in a discursive exchange that aims at changing the very rules of the game. This is the feminist community to which the "she-I" makes herself accountable.[175]

According to the Italian sociologist Elena Vacchelli, in Braidotti's work, unity arises when a scattered way of interacting among women in everyday life transforms into a more organised group structure.[176] This transition leads to the formation of a collective identity that is based on shared experiences. This collective identity allows for the development of both theoretical and political thoughts. The personal stories of individuals in the group and the group's collective levels mutually influence and shape each other. This process can be seen in the personal narratives discussed in this section. We can see how kitchens provided a discursive space in which a collective feminist identity could develop.

The personal narratives of the women active in the new feminist groups in Slovenia describe how after their initial encounters with feminism, they started to engage in conversations with other like-minded women, which eventually evolved into informal group meetings. Vlasta Jalušič, for example, remembers how, before they organised themselves into feminist groups, women interested in feminism would start building connections based on their shared interests: "There was something in the air in our personal lives. We would talk to each other one-on-one, in this or that corner, one woman would read something, another would hear something..."[177] These private conversations then represented the foundation for more stable forms of organising,

[175] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 203.
[176] Elena Vacchelli, "Geographies of subjectivity: locating feminist political subjects in Milan," *Gender, Place and Culture* 18, no. 6 (2011): 773, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.617916.
[177] Jalušič, Vlasta. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.

initially in the form of informal kitchen gatherings and later in the creation of new feminist groups, eventually allowing the formation of a collective feminist identity. Again, this process resonates with Ahmed's idea of encounters as constitutive of identities.

A decade after Ahmed, the Italian sociologist Elena Vacchelli wrote of exposure as constitutive of subjectivities. In her research on the formation of feminist identities among feminist activists in 1970s Milan, Vacchelli noted that exposure to others was crucial in the formation of their feminist identities: "Exposure to others becomes a constitutive act, contributing to an ongoing version of subjectivity. It is also, at the same time, the material condition for social and political action to take place."[178] The organic exchange of ideas in private conversations described by Jalušič in the quote above resonates with Vacchelli's notion that exposure to others serves as a fundamental element in shaping individual feminist perspectives, as well as with Ahmed's idea that "it is only through meeting with an-other that the identity of a given person comes to be inhabited as living."[179]

I mention Vacchelli here because she connects the idea of exposure as constitutive to subjectivities with the question of space and spatial practices. In practices like consciousness-raising and separatism, feminist political identity is formed through shared self-expression and narrative experiences. Drawing on feminist literature on the politics of location, such as the work of American feminist author Adrienne Rich, Vacchelli discusses how identities are physically situated in a specific and temporal context established collectively through spatial practices such as consciousness-

[178] Vacchelli, "Geographies of subjectivity: locating feminist political subjects in Milan," 768.
[179] Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*, 8.

raising and separatism. Consciousness-raising is a practice that takes many forms. Still, it broadly refers to a collective practice of sharing and reflecting on personal experiences to understand these experiences in a larger social context rather than an individual one. Separatism can be understood in different ways. In this chapter, we rely on Vacchelli's description of separatism as implying "the existence of separate spaces of theoretical production and political action."[180] In the context of new feminist organising in Slovenia, private kitchens were the first spaces where such practices occurred. They provided the collective temporal and spatial context in which a collective feminist identity could develop. Mojca Dobnikar remembers that the topic that shaped their conversations was dissatisfaction with their position as women.[181]

> We were all, in different ways, unsatisfied with what it means to be a woman here and now. These dissatisfactions were very different, some related more to private, some to more public matters. They came together in different ways, and were reflected upon differently.[182]

The women involved in the new feminist groups in Slovenia were familiar with the idea of consciousness-raising, a practice which includes the expression of dissatisfactions and reflecting on them, as explained by Dobnikar in the quote above. In 1985, Mojca Dobnikar described the concept in detail in the preface of the book *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement).[183] However, in the 1980s the Slovenian women were reluctant to use the term to describe their meetings. Tanja

[180] Vacchelli, "Geographies of subjectivity: locating feminist political subjects in Milan," 778.
[181] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.
[182] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.
[183] Dobnikar, Mojca. 1985. ”Osebno je politično, [The Personal is Political]” in Ti-Grace, Atkinson. *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* [On Woman and the Women's Movement]. Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS: Republiška konferenca ZSMS, 1985: vii-xx.

Rener, for example, explained that while she did not then consider the group a consciousness-raising group, their meetings still served that purpose.

> I came from other circles, which were consciousness-raising in some other forms, and I hated it. If anyone mentioned the word 'therapy' or 'consciousness-raising', I would immediately slam the door and leave. I absolutely didn't consider it that way. But if I look back now, we were doing [consciousness-raising] in a sense.[184]

Mojca Dobnikar remembers their practices in a similar way:

> In general, women's groups here didn't adopt the concept of consciousness-raising, they weren't called consciousness-raising groups. It happened spontaneously. When we got tired from all the work, we would meet, and talk about various topics. But we never named it, we never said this is it.[50]

Even though they did not call it consciousness-raising, the exposure to others, self-expression, and narration of their personal experiences were crucial steps towards more stable and organised forms of feminist organising. According to Mirjana Ule, the wish for a more formal organisation came out of the intimate kitchen gatherings: “I could say that we met in our kitchens for friendly hang-outs, which later grew into something more. The kitchens became too small, and we tried to organise ourselves more formally.”[185] This quote resonates with Vacchelli's idea that the development of feminist identities is connected to a collective temporal and spatial context, as well as Braidotti's idea that the transition from scattered interactions between women to into more organised group structure allows for the formation of a collective feminist identity, which serves as a basis for the development of a theoretical articulation of a collective

[184] Rener, Tanja. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik.
[185] Ule, Mirjana. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Živa Humer and Mojca Sušnik.

feminist subject, as well as political action. The first ideas of more stable and organised collective separatist practices emerged in the informal kitchen-table setting.

The first such example of an organised separatist practice were the meetings of the *Ženska sekcija*, where around 25 women, primarily young academics, met weekly. In addition to their weekly meetings, they organised lectures on various topics, ranging from lectures on women in politics, the myth of the Slovenian mother, the history of women in Yugoslavia, and women's writing to psychoanalysis.[186] *Ženska sekcija* was a small academic group. The interview material suggests that some members were interested in adopting separatist practices on a larger scale. One such example was the first event organised by *Lilit*. It was a women-only evening open to the public, which took place on April 3rd, 1985, in the club K4. The flyer for the event, which promised a discussion on women's sexuality, an art exhibition, and the availability of foreign women's press, stated that the event was "for centrists and dissenters, orthodox and alternative, women and možače– but for WOMEN and WOMEN only."[187] Mojca Dobnikar remembered that the idea for this event came from the *Ženska sekcija* group.[188] Vlasta Jalušič mentioned that as a part of the *Ženska sekcija* group, she became familiar with feminist literature and was interested in putting what she read into practice:

> The first idea was to have a women-only evening in K4, open to all women, in short, to get out of the little corner at the Women's Section. That was the basic impulse. But on the first evening, about 250 women turned up, and many of them said they would like to participate. So then we started to have weekly meetings.[189]
>
> I think the question at that time was – well, women, do we dare? Do we dare to say, boys, stay out? Whatever it is that is going to happen in this

[186] Jalušič, *Kako smo hodile v feministično gimnazijo*, 38.
[187] *Možača* is a pejorative term used to describe a woman with supposedly masculine characteristics.
[188] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.
[189] Jalušič, Vlasta. Interview by Jelena Aleksič, Mojca Sušnik and Živa Humer.

> room, boys stay out? This was my perception – the curiosity of what will happen if we exclude men. I was familiar with the literature, but I had no experience of what would happen.[56]

The group *Lilit* was a separatist feminist group active between 1985 and 1988, during which they organised around 30 events for women. Most were discussion evenings on topics such as reproductive rights, sexuality, popular representations of women, and the history of feminism.[190] As a part of the *Lilit* group, a lesbian section called *Lezbična Lilit* – LL (Lesbian Lilith) emerged in 1987 and became an autonomous group in 1988.

The interview material collected by Jalušič in 1997/1998 provides insight into how the members of the new feminist groups look back on the development of their feminist identities. Starting from individual experiences that sparked their interest in feminism, expressed in the singular subject, their narration gradually became centred around collective experiences, described in the plural subject. Relying on the work of Rosi Braidotti, I interpret this process as the development of a collective feminist identity, which was made possible by adopting more organised group structures – initiated by the informal meetings in private kitchens, and expanded in the form of the groups *Ženska sekcija*, *Lilit*, and *Lezbična Lilit*. The interview material also provides insight into how new feminist groups in Slovenia used consciousness-raising and separatism practices. Although they did not use the term consciousness-raising groups, their reflections and descriptions of their practices suggest that these functioned as such. Separatism, in the sense of creating spaces accessible to women only, was a common practice in new feminist groups in Slovenia. Here, it is important to note that the groups *Lilit* and *Lezbična Lilit* operated within the framework of the *Študentski kulturni center*

[190] Jalušič, 18.

ŠKUC (Student Cultural Centre), which was connected to the ZSMS. As I mentioned in previous chapters, ZSMS was youth organisation and one of the five socio-political organisations that operated within the Yugoslav political system. The new feminist groups, therefore, created their separatist spaces relying on the infrastructure provided by the state. This reflects the historian Ljubica Spaskovska's argument that youth political activism in Yugoslavia in the 1980s presented a form of "adaptation within existing institutional structures", where activists "neither withdrew nor opted out of the institutional/public space and culture; rather, they met the state in its own 'official' and challenged it there."[191] In the following section, we will look into how, three decades after its dissolution, the women that were active in the new feminist groups in Slovenia in the 1980s reflected on the Yugoslav state.

4.6 Reflections on the State

This section examines the oral history interviews I conducted with three women involved in the new feminist groups in Slovenia in the observed period: Mirjana Nastran Ule, Mojca Dobnikar, and Metka Mencin, between November 2021 and September 2022. I was interested in how they perceived the Yugoslav state, politics, and politicians. Members of the new feminist groups were involved in two groups that were directly connected to the ZSMS. The first was *Delovna skupina za ženska gibanja in raziskave pri Republiški konferenci Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije* (Working Group on Women's Movements and Women's Research at the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia) (1987). Archival material documenting the group's activities is scarce but Vlasta Jalušič writes that the group aimed "to achieve a semi-autonomous status within the ZSMS" and to "continue the

[191] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 11.

work of previous groups, but also to connect the existing feminist groups, which could bring greater strength and visibility to some activities."[192] The second example is the group *Ženske za politiko* (Women for Politics) (1990), which connected women from different new feminist groups. This group aimed to directly influence the political programme of the ZSMS.[193] In this period of anticipation of the first multiparty elections in socialist Slovenia, ZSMS was in the process of transitioning from a socio-political organisation into a political party.[194] Some members of the group *Ženske za politiko*, were officials from the League.

The interview material shows that, even though feminist groups could work very closely with political institutions, they experienced ambivalent support. On the one hand, their voices were acknowledged, which suggests a degree of visibility and recognition of their work. On the other hand, this acknowledgement was accompanied by mockery and ridicule. Mojca Dobnikar described how this ambivalence was present within the League:

> In the 1980s, at least as far as feminism was concerned, it was twofold. On the one hand, we were being listened to, and on the other hand, we were being ridiculed. In the ZSMS, they took us under their roof, but they made fun of us whenever they had the chance. I remember that in these public meetings, the men would nod and talk very intelligently, but in private conversations, they would ask, "Are you about to get your feminist menstruation again?"[195]

Despite such forms of aggression, some women joined feminist groups through their involvement with state politics. Such was the case of one of my interviewees, Metka

[192] Jalušič, 37.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Vurnik, *Med Marxom in punkom: Vloga Zveze socialistične mladine Slovenije pri demokratizaciji Slovenije (1980-1990) [Between Marx and Punk: The Role of the Alliance of Socialist Youth of Slovenia in democratisation of Slovenia (1980-1990)]*, 23.
[195] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by author. July 2022. Digital recording.

Mencin, a social psychologist and, at that time, a soon-to-be-elected delegate to the Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, who joined the groups in the late 1980s. She remembers that her involvement in state politics was her entrance to feminism.

> Becoming active in women's groups was, for me, connected to my work at the RK ZSMS (the Republic Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia), where I started working in 1989 as a research associate. A coworker introduced me to Vlasta Jalušič, and I got to know Milica Antić personally, and slowly others too.[196]

While Mencin was one of the few women who encountered feminism through state politics, for Mirjana Ule and Mojca Dobnikar, it was the other way around: they encountered state politics through the work of the new feminist groups they were involved in. To my question how she experienced the state, Mirjana Ule distinguished between politics and the state:

> I didn't feel particularly constrained by the state. But I have felt the constraint of politics, let's say, of individuals. And here, we were struggling, we were not so much struggling with the state. It was actually a big, nice, diverse space, which in itself made a lot of things possible. But politics worked in a different way.[197]

Mojca Dobnikar pointed out that her understanding of the state was different then than it is now:

> I didn't understand the state in the same way I do today. I did not deal with the state as such at all. I used terms such as regime, but not in that negative sense. It was just a regime, a kind of authority. For me, the focus was on these so-called socio-political organisations because in a way all political decision-making happened through them. It seemed to me that if you organise yourself, you can also influence what kind of politics is being done.[198]

[196] Mencin-Čeplak, Metka. Interview by author. September 2022. Digital recording.
[197] Ule, Mirjana. Interview by author. August 2022. Digital recording.
[198] Dobnikar, Mojca. Interview by author. July 2022. Digital recording.

The interviewees also shared experiences of their encounters with politics, particularly experiences of interactions with individuals responsible for specific policies. In this context, all three interviewees mentioned Vida Tomšič as a prominent figure in policies regarding women's issues. Vida Tomšič (1913-1988) was a prominent socialist politician and lawyer. Throughout her extensive political career from the 1940s until the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Tomšič oversaw numerous state policies concerning women and gender relations in both Slovenia and Yugoslavia.[199] Mirjana Ule described her as an opponent and used her as an example to portray how she perceived the struggle not against the state apparatus but rather against individuals within that apparatus:

> Let's say we experienced the Party mainly through the persons who were in charge of certain policies. In Slovenia, for example, Vida Tomšič was considered an authority on women's issues. And she was actually our opponent, she did not support us. We fought with her so that we could get some projects, so that we could publish something. We were not constrained by the state, but by the individual subjects in that state.[200]

The interviewees' perceptions of their political environment during this period indicate an interplay of recognition, negotiation, and sometimes resistance from the establishment towards their activities. While they expressed a belief in the potential for organised efforts to influence politics, they navigated a landscape where visibility could be met with individual mockery and challenges. They also highlighted that they experienced constraints from political actors. In my interpretation, this reflects the historian Ljubica Spaskovska's argument that youth political activism in Yugoslavia in

[199] Mateja Jeraj, "Tomšič, Vida (1913-1998)," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 575.
[200] Ule, Mirjana. Interview by author. August 2022. Digital recording.

the 1980s as a form of “adaptation within existing institutional structures.”[201] This means that activists “neither withdrew nor opted out of the institutional/public space and culture; rather, they met the state in its own ‘official’ territory and challenged it there.”[202] In addition, Spaskovska argued that youth political activism in the 1980s criticised “certain prescribed norms, particular malfunctions of the system, or the older elite.”[203] In my interpretation, Ule’s description of Vida Tomšič as “their opponent,” and her description of being constrained by “individual subjects in that state,” reflects Spaskovska’s argument.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the personal stories shared by women who were a part of the new feminist groups in Slovenia from 1984 to 1990. I looked into their personal narratives to see what their personal narratives can tell us about the development of their feminist identities. In reflecting on their first encounter with feminism, the interviewees drew upon their various personal experiences: Tanja Rener and Vlasta Jalušič were influenced by their studies, Mojca Dobnikar by being labelled a feminist, and Suzana Tratnik, Nataša Sukić, and Nives Brzič by being interested in 'women's topics' and joining the group *Lilit*. Mirjana Ule and Milica Gaber Antić were aware that they experienced gender-based discrimination. A number of women found inspiration in women's groups abroad, which motivated them to organise themselves in Ljubljana.

[201] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation: The Rethinking of Youth Politics and Cultures in Late Socialism*, 3.
[202] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 11.
[203] Spaskovska, *The Last Yugoslav Generation*, 3.

Their personal stories show that self-expression and narration of their personal experiences, which took place during their meetings, were crucial steps towards more stable and organised forms of feminist organising. Initial ideas for structured collective practices arose from informal kitchen-table gatherings, which replaced spontaneous meetings in 1984 with the *Ženska sekcija* group.

The interview material shows that new feminist groups in Slovenia employed consciousness-raising and separatist practices. Separatism, in the sense of creating separate spaces accessible to women only, was a common practice in new feminist groups in Slovenia in the mid-1980s. In the case of women-only evenings organised by *Lilit*, these separatist practices took place in the youth infrastructure cultural venues, such as the club K4 and ŠKUC Gallery.

The interviewees' views on their political environment during this period show that they experienced a dynamic of recognition, negotiation, and occasional resistance toward their activities from the establishment. They expressed a belief in the ability to influence politics through organising, reflecting the idea that for the politically engaged youth in the 1980s, the youth organisation represented a space for meaningful politics. They also faced challenges like individual ridicule and opposition from politicians, which reflects the idea that youth activists in this period aimed their critique, among others, at the older elite. In my interpretation, separatist practices described in this chapter enabled the formation of a collective feminist identity. In this way, the self-identified feminists in Slovenia in the observed period engaged in a new way of being political, therefore engaging in acts of citizenship.

5. Feminist Textual Interventions, 1982-1990

5.1 Introduction

In the 1980s, feminist publishing houses and journals were still not established in Slovenia. Instead, feminist texts were published alongside other texts in various non-feminist outlets, such as collections of *Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije* (Library of Revolutionary Theory) and *Študentski kulturni center* ŠKUC (Student Cultural Centre ŠKUC), the journal *Problemi* (Problems), *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo* (Journal for the Critique of Science, Imagination, and New Anthropology), and the weekly newspaper *Mladina* (Youth). Most local feminist texts, whether published in academic, semi-academic, or popular press, relied on contemporary academic discourses in social sciences and humanities. Academia was an important space for the development of local feminist discourses. Since the 1950s, Yugoslav academia became progressively more open to the West.[204] This openness was crucial for local feminist authors because it enabled them to get access to American, British, French, and German feminist literature, which they read, discussed, and translated.

The authors translating and writing feminist literature were students and young academics who were members of the feminist groups discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter focuses on the works of the translator Mojca Dobnikar (b. 1957), the political scientist Vlasta Jalušič (b. 1959), the sociologist Tanja Rener (b. 1954), and the social psychologist Mirjana Ule (b. 1947) published between 1982 and 1990. These women were associated with the Faculty of Arts or the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science

[204] Blagojević, "The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals," 54.

and Journalism (FSPN) at the University of Ljubljana. At the FSPN, the researchers at the *Center za raziskovanje javnega mnenja* (Public Opinion Research Centre) played an important role in advancing social scientific research on women and the family. Already in 1979, Mirjana Ule was involved in research on the sociopolitical activity of women in Slovenia. Throughout the 1980s, Ule and Tanja Rener, who worked at the Centre, conducted research focusing on women's social position and the family's transformation.

This chapter follows the historian Zsófiá Loránd's claim that the generation of feminists in Yugoslavia, to which the protagonists of this chapter belong, reacted to the still present "patriarchal consciousness" and "offered a new language, a language created through transfers and translations."[205] My understanding of the processes of transfer and reception of ideas draws inspiration from the historian Una Blagojević, who borrows from the historian Augusta Dimou and writes that these two processes "do not presuppose a unidirectional and simple appropriation of a concept, of practice, from one context to another", but that they should instead be understood as a process "in the making", which "requires both innovation and transformation."[206]

In this chapter, I suggest viewing feminist texts as intellectual interventions. Following the sociologists Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz, I view the term intellectual as standing for "the capacity to make a public intervention, a capacity to which many different actors lay claim."[207] Drawing on the historian Chiara Bonfiglioli, who writes of feminist translations as a political challenge, I also understand feminist intellectual interventions in the 1980s in Slovenia as a politically motivated, meaning that feminist

[205] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 13.
[206] Blagojević, "The Praxis Journal and Women Intellectuals," 52.
[207] Eyal and Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions," 120.

intellectual interventions played a crucial role in articulating an internal critique of Yugoslav socialism, and in legitimising feminism in a political context where the political establishment declared the women's question to be solved.[208] This chapter investigates the translations of feminist texts from abroad, forewords to these translations, and original works from local feminist authors published from 1982 to 1990 to answer the following questions: Which ideas and concepts were present in local feminist intellectual interventions? What role did these interventions play in the feminist critique of the Yugoslav socialist system?

The chapter is structured as follows: section 5.1 introduced the outlets, institutions, and authors publishing feminist literature in Slovenia in the analysed period and introduced the ideas on which my understanding of the processes of transfer and reception of ideas is based. Section 5.2 introduces the sources. Section 5.3 clarifies the term 'women's question', and section 5.4 discusses its significance in the Slovenian context. In section 5.5, I analyse the sources. Section 5.6 concludes the chapter.

5.2 Sources and Methodology

This chapter is based on a close reading of the following sources: the foreword to the translation of Alexandra Kollontai's selected speeches and writings titled *Ženska v socializmu* (A Woman in Socialism) (1982) by Mojca Dobnikar, the foreword to the collection of translated feminist texts titled *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement) (1986) by Mojca Dobnikar, two special feminist editions of the journal *Problemi* from 1986 and 1988 respectively, the 1987 *Pogledi* (Views)

[208] Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia," 241.

supplement to the *Mladina* weekly titled *Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami* (We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women), and the monograph *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali "Ne vem, sem neodločena"* (Woman, Personal, Political or "I don't know, I am undecided") by Tanja Rener, Mirjana Ule and the statistician Anuška Ferligoj, which is, although published in 1990, was based on the research they carried out for the Marxist Centre of the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party in 1989.[209] To examine these sources with a focus on the language and concepts the authors used, I use the technique of close reading, which is the "disciplined reading of object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings," which takes "into account the context, both historical and textual."[210] In the following paragraphs, I will briefly introduce the sources.[211]

The selection of translated writings and speeches by the Russian writer and politician Alexandra Kollontai was the first feminist work published by *Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije*. It was published in 1982 under *Ženska v socializmu* (The Woman in Socialism), with a foreword written by Mojca Dobnikar.[212] This publication was followed by a collection of translated feminist texts titled *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement), which included works by American, British, French, and German socialist feminist and radical feminist authors.[213] In the 1980s, *Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije* published two more feminist works: a translation of Susan Brownmiller's 1975 work on the history of rape titled Against Our Will, published in

[210] Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading*, 3.
[211] All translations from Slovenian were done by the author.
[212] Kollontaj, Aleksandra Michajlovna. *Ženska v socializmu / Aleksandra Kollontaj* [A Woman in Socialism / Alexandra Kollontai]. Ljubljana: Republiška konferenca ZSMS: Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, 1982.
[213] Atkinson, Ti-Grace. *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* [On Woman and the Women's Movement]. Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS: Republiška konferenca ZSMS, 1985.

1988 and a translation of Rosalind Coward's 1985 work titled Female Desires, published in 1988. *Knjižnica revolucionarne teorije* was established by the University Conference of the League of Socialist Youth of Slovenia in 1981 to create an outlet for critically examining social phenomena and publishing theoretical works on marginalised and overlooked fields of study. They published works from both local and international authors, primarily in the field of critical social theory.

The journal *Problemi*, founded in 1962 and dedicated to publishing critical discussions on philosophy, sociology, literary theory, and contemporary literature, published two feminist editions in 1986 and 1988, respectively. Both editions included translations of works by Western feminist authors, works of the members of the Belgrade- and Zagreb-based groups *Žena i društvo* (Woman and Society) published in Serbo-Croatian originals, and works by local feminists. The 1986 issue, edited by Vlasta Jalušič, was inspired by the last issue of the British journal m/f, a self-published socialist feminist journal in print between 1978 and 1986. The 1986 *Problemi* included translations of selected articles from the journal m/f, as well as a translation of the interview with m/f's editors Parveen Adams, Rosalind Coward, and Elizabeth Cowie. The local authors who contributed to this issue were the editor Vlasta Jalušič, Tanja Rener, and Mirjana Ule. Lepa Mlađenović, a member of the Belgrade group *Žena i društvo*, contributed an article on women's health. The 1988 feminist issue of *Problemi* featured more articles by the members of the group *Žena i društvo*, including the Croatian philosophers Rada Iveković and Blaženka Despot, the Croatian ethnologist Lydia Sklevicky and Lepa Mlađenović. Among translations, the 1988 issue included a translation of the text titled *Die Totgesagte Vagina* (The Vagina Pronounced Dead) by the German feminist author Renate Schleiser. Slovenian authors who contributed to this edition were Mojca Dobnikar, Vlasta Jalušič, Tanja Rener, and Mirjana Ule.

Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami (We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women) was an eight-page supplement of the *Mladina* weekly.[214] As mentioned in Chapter 3, *Mladina* was a vital part of the alternative scene in Ljubljana. This supplement was significant because it marked the formation of the lesbian section of the feminist group *Lilit*, *Lezbična Lilit* (Lesbian Lilith), or LL. The supplement was a joint effort of six authors, who only signed themselves with first names. It included translations of materials by the lesbian feminist networks ILIS (International Lesbian Information Service) and COC Netherlands, a summary of a chapter on lesbianism from the women's health book Our Bodies, Ourselves (1970) by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, a text by the American lesbian group Radicalesbians, and original texts by the editors.

The monograph *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali "Ne vem, sem neodločena"* (Woman, Personal, Political or "I don't know, I am undecided") (1990) by Anuška Ferligoj, Tanja Rener and Mirjana Ule was based on the research project the authors conducted in 1989, financed by the Marxist Centre of the Central Committee of the Slovenian Communist Party.[215] The research project was titled *Ženske v Sloveniji konec 20. stoletja* (Women in Slovenia at the End of the 20th Century). This project was based on the data collected at the Public Opinion Research Centre for the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey, which covers a wide field of topics and asks how people in Slovenia live and how they assess the social and political situation in Slovenia. In this research

[214] "Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami" [We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women], edited by Suzana, Roni, Erika, Nataša, Marjeta, and Davorka. *Pogledi*, 14. No. 8. In *Mladina*, No. 37 (October 1987): 21-28.

[215] Ferligoj, Anuška, Tanja Rener and Mirjana Ule. 1990. *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali "Ne vem, sem neodločena"* [Woman, Personal, Political or "I Don't Know, I'm Undecided"]. Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče.

project, the authors analysed the gender differences in the answers “I don’t know” in the Slovenian Public Opinion Surveys from 1982, 1984, 1986, 1987 and 1988. They concluded that “gender is one of the dimensions in people's lives that has the most inhibiting effect on the formation of attitudes, especially on current political issues.”[216]

5.3 The Women’s Question in Socialism

The term ‘women’s question’ encompasses examining the causes of women’s social subordination and the solutions towards their emancipation. It’s frequently used by socialist authors writing about the position of women. The early socialist thinkers, such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and August Bebel, saw socialism as the only system in which women could be emancipated. In early socialist thought, the emancipation of women and other separate groups would automatically follow the introduction of socialism.[217] Although socialist theory prioritised class struggle, there was no unified concept or single approach to achieving women's emancipation within state socialist systems. Therefore, in socialist thought, the women’s question also involved positioning women’s organising vis-à-vis worker’s organising. While early feminist and socialist movements developed side by side since the mid-nineteenth century, by the late nineteenth century, socialist women started to reject the feminist label. They began arguing for separate working women’s organisations.[218]

The discussion about the relationship between feminism and socialism helps us understand the state’s response to the emergence of feminist groups in socialist

[216] *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali ”Ne vem, sem neodločena”*, 53.
[217] Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young, "Introduction," in *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism*, ed. Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (1989), 9.
[218] Daskalova, "Entangled Histories of Women’s Movements and Feminisms: An Interview with Francisca de Haan," 2.

Yugoslavia, where the state relied on a hegemonic Marxist framework, and the antagonistic attitude towards feminism was present in the official discourses. Zsófia Lóránd argues that by declaring the women's question as solved, the Yugoslav state assumed a post-feminist position and refused feminism in the name of progress rather than conservatism or traditionalism.[219] Writing about the relationship between feminist activists and the state, Chiara Bonfiglioli argues that feminists were "confronted with the condemnation of feminism by state authority, as well as by official women's organisations."[220] To legitimise the use of feminist ideas in addressing the social position of women, local feminists had to "prove that these ideas were not anti-socialist."[221]

It is important to note that the state's antagonistic attitude towards feminism didn't imply that the social status of women was not a subject of debate within the official discourse, but rather that this issue was "discussed within the discursive borders of Marxist theory."[222] Nor did this imply that there was a one-dimensional, unchangeable approach to women's emancipation in the Yugoslav socialist project. As the historian Ivan Simic argues in his work on the Soviet influences on post-war gender policies in Yugoslavia, the interests of people debating the position of women were fragmented.[223] The state's post-war gender policies cannot be "reduced to intentional efforts to reinforce patriarchy." In addition, the new feminist groups were not the only group in socialist Yugoslavia insisting on the importance of recognising women's specific position or problematising the submission of gender to class in Marxist theory.

[219] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 266.
[220] Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia," *Aspasia* 8 (2014): 3, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3167/asp.2014.080102.
[221] Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia," 243.
[222] Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context," 242.
[223] Ivan Simic, *Soviet Influences on Postwar Yugoslav Gender Policies* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 11.

Several communist women's activists involved in Yugoslavia's state women's organisations also addressed these issues. The historian Francisca de Haan writes about how communist women's activists challenged the prioritisation of class in Marxist theory both practically "by setting up gender-based organizations that worked on behalf of women, and proposing and pursuing policies for the benefit of women" and theoretically, "by arguing that women needed to be liberated from their subjugation to men."[224] Although de Haan doesn't write directly about communist women in Yugoslavia, the work of the Slovenian socialist politician Vida Tomšič is an example of both practical and theoretical problematisation of the submission of gender to class in Marxist theory.

Throughout her extensive political career from the 1940s until the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Tomšič held significant positions of authority, overseeing numerous state policies concerning women and gender relations in both Slovenia and Yugoslavia.[225] Tomšič believed that improving women's life conditions required significant economic and social development and that women need to actively participate in policy-making to achieve such development.[226] Tomšič emphasised the importance of women's political and economic agency in transnational debates on gender and development, in which she became involved in the mid-1950s.[227]

In her view on the position of women's organising vis-à-vis worker's organising, Tomšič emphasized the integration of women's organizations within the proletarian

[224] Francisca de Haan, "Introduction: Toward a Global History of Communist Women," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Communist Women Activists Around the World*, ed. Francisca de Haan (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 2.
[225] For a comprehensive overview of political functions held by Tomšič see Jeraj, "Tomšič, Vida (1913-1998)," 576.
[226] Chiara Bonfiglioli, "On Vida Tomšič, Marxist Feminism, and Agency," *Aspasia* 10 (2016): 146.
[227] Ibid.

movement and criticised bourgeois feminist movements. Despite Tomšič's opposition towards feminism, Chiara Bonfiglioli writes that her ideals and convictions show that "she combined a Marxist approach with what could be defined today as a "gender mainstreaming" institutional agenda" and emphasised the importance of protecting women's reproductive rights.[228]

5.4 Feminists and State Women's Organisations

The context in which feminist groups in Slovenia emerged was the Yugoslav economic crisis, which was accompanied by a severe political legitimacy crisis when critical intellectuals intensively scrutinised and criticised prominent political figures and institutions.[229] In this context, Yugoslav academia's openness to the West enabled young women intellectuals to encounter the ideas of Western, mostly second-wave feminists, which they used to articulate a critique of the socialist state's failure to achieve the full emancipation of women. As a part of this critique, they also scrutinised the work of state women's organisations.

The main women's organisation in Yugoslavia in the period when the new feminist groups emerged was called *Konferenca za družbeno aktivnost žensk* (Conference for the Social Activity of Women) or KDAŽ. KDAŽ was organised on the level of the federation and the republics. Zsófia Lóránd writes that the attitudes of local KDAŽ sections towards the new feminist groups varied across republics, and some sections proved to be more critical than others.[230] In 1976, the Slovenian section of the KDAŽ was transformed into *Svet za družbenoekonomski in politični položaj žensk*

[228] Ibid.
[229] Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia*, 203.
[230] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 5.

(Committee for Women's Socioeconomic and Political Status), which was active until1989 and was dedicated to improving women's political participation.[231]

Due to a lack of scholarly engagement with state women's organisations in socialist Slovenia, my interpretation of the Committee's position within the larger post-feminist attitude of the Yugoslav establishment follows the recent critical scholarship on communist and socialist women's organisations. In her study of Cold War-era women's organisations in Yugoslavia and Italy, Chiara Bonfiglioli argues that "when the principle of women's collective and individual autonomy from political institutions is taken as a prerequisite for women's political and social agency, our historical understanding is necessarily limited," because "this narrative erases the complexity, ambivalences, and nuances of women's activism after 1945."[232] In a similar vein, Francisca de Haan argued in her research on the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) that women's international organisations with a socialist agenda, which included, among others, state socialist women's organizations, are considered "deeply politicised" in Western historiography.[233] In contrast, Western women's organisations are regarded as "politically neutral."[234] Scholars such as Bonfiglioli and de Haan have criticized these tendencies in Western historiography. They argue that the result is a flattened portrayal of communist women as lacking agency, contributing to a state of "not knowing" about such women and the organisations they were involved in.

[231]Maca Jogan, "Slovenska (postmoderna) družba in spolna neenakost, (Slovenian (Postmodern) Society and Gender Inequality)" in *Demokratizacija, profesionalizacija in odpiranje v svet*, ed. Zdravko Mlinar (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 2004), 368.
[232] Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia," 4.
[233] Francisca de Haan, "Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: the case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)," *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 547, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2010.502399.
[234] Ibid.

I propose that the work of the women involved in state women's organisations and the politicians working on improving the position of women in society, such as Vida Tomšič, didn't contribute to the state's post-feminist attitude but instead challenged it. I also propose that this perspective is crucial in analysing the feminist criticism of the socialist system in socialist Slovenia. I suggest that the challenge the feminists in Slovenia faced was not in starting a discussion on the position of women in a society where such debates were absent or prohibited but rather in establishing who gets to speak about women's position and in what way.

5.5 Feminist Textual Interventions, 1982-1990

5.5.1 Translations: Ženska v socializmu (1982) and O ženski in ženskem gibanju (1986)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Yugoslav academia's openness to the West enabled local feminists to encounter Western feminist texts, particularly second-wave radical feminist and socialist feminist texts. These works were influential in the Yugoslav context because they critically examined Marxist and post-Marxist theory, providing local feminists with the vocabulary with which they intervened in local public debates.[235] In addition, translations of these texts shaped local feminist discourses and helped disseminate feminist ideas. If we follow the view of the literary scholars Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler stating that translation is "not simply an act of faithful reproduction but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication" through which "translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture," we can examine how in the context of new feminism in Slovenia,

[235] Bonfiglioli, "Feminist Translations in a Socialist Context: The Case of Yugoslavia," 248.

translations of foreign feminist texts acted as public interventions.[236] They did so in the sense that they provided, through practices like forewording, spaces for local feminists to critically position themselves to the translated texts and to express which topics and views they found important in expanding the local debates on the position of women.

In this section, I engage with two translations: the 1982 translation of Alexandra Kollontai's selected works and speeches titled *Ženska v socializmu* (The Woman in Socialism) and the 1986 collection of translated feminist texts titled *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* (On Woman and the Women's Movement), both of which were published with a foreword by Mojca Dobnikar.[237]

Ženska v socializmu is significant because it was published relatively early, two years before the emergence of the first new feminist group in Ljubljana, the group *Ženska sekcija pri sociološkem društvu* (Women's Section of the Sociological Association). Although the book was published as a part of a collection of translated Marxist works, I propose to view Dobnikar's foreword as an early feminist text. Firstly, Dobnikar portrayed Kollontai as someone whose opposition towards feminism was a strategic choice, stating that Kollontai's anti-feminist views were "a defence against the accusations of feminism."[238] And secondly, Dobnikar placed significant attention on the topic of sexuality in Kollontai's works. This topic would later become one of the central topics in local feminist texts.

[236] Tymoczko and Gentlzler, *Translation and Power*, xii.
[237] Dobnikar, Mojca. 1982. "Predgovor [Foreword]," in Aleksandra Michajlovna Kollontaj. *Ženska v socializmu / Aleksandra Kollontaj* [A Woman in Socialism / Alexandra Kollontai]. Ljubljana: Republiška konferenca ZSMS: Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, 1982: 1-23; Dobnikar, Mojca. 1985. "Osebno je politično, [The Personal is Political]" in Ti-Grace, Atkinson. *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* [On Woman and the Women's Movement]. Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS: Republiška konferenca ZSMS, 1985: vii-xx.
[238] Dobnikar, "Predgovor," 16.

The 1986 collection *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* was the first collection of Western second-wave feminist texts. It introduced contemporary socialist feminist and radical feminist debates on topics such as rape, violence against women, reproductive rights, the critique of medicine, and the role of women in wage labour and housework. This collection also included three texts on the topic of lesbianism. In addition to signalling the closeness of local feminist views with those of Western socialist feminist and radical feminist authors, the collection also reflected the important role lesbian activists played in local feminist groups.

Both translations contributed to a new focus on the sphere of the personal present in local feminist discourses. Particularly, the 1986 collection *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* introduced the hallmarks of second-wave feminisms, such as the attention to the personal as the principal site of women's oppression, and to the role of consciousness and ideology in the reproduction of patriarchy, which featured prominently in the later works of feminist authors in Slovenia. By turning their focus to notions such as patriarchy, sexual difference, and heterosexism to discuss women's position in society, the authors attempted to expand the scope of local public debates and to distance themselves from the prevailing economistic Marxist interpretations of society and sexual inequality.

5.5.2 Conceptual Influences in Feminist Textual Interventions, 1986-1988

In their textual interventions, the authors of the works analysed in this chapter attempted to introduce new ways of thinking about the causes of women's subordination. They drew on psychoanalytic feminism, post-Marxism, critical theory, and lesbian feminism. The concepts and ideas from these intellectual currents helped

them to articulate their own understandings of the causes of women's subordination and the meanings of concepts central to Western second-wave feminisms such as patriarchy, sexual difference, and experience.

In her 1986 article titled *Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek* (The Women's Question as an Outcast), Vlasta Jalušič argued that the concept of patriarchy is necessary in theorising women's position in society.[239] However, she argued that authors such as the Canadian radical feminist Shulamith Firestone, who understand the sexual division of labour and women's reproductive labour as the material basis of patriarchy, unwillingly speak in favour of biological determinism by defining patriarchy as a sex struggle based on the exploitation of women's reproductive labour.[240] Jalušič argued that by conceiving biological reproduction as labour, as a conscious activity, radical feminists fail to conceptualise the role of sexual difference in the production of human beings.[241] What eludes authors like Firestone, in Jalušič's view, is "precisely what they seem to stand on, this "other side", because it is equated with the first, the "production of things". Thus, they are constantly revolving in a circle of man-woman, culture-nature, social-biological. The production of human beings is thus relegated to the biological basis of society, and although it is then presented as having been subsequently socially modified, it is nevertheless treated as a natural condition."[242]

According to Jalušič, psychoanalytic feminism offers a more productive understanding of patriarchy: "It is different, however, if the notion of patriarchy is defined as the law of the father, which also implies going beyond the analysis of the male-female dual

[239] Jalušič, Vlasta. 1986. "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek [The Women's Question as an Outcast]", *Problemi* 24, no. 9 (1986), 1-8.
[240] Jalušič, "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek," 5.
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid.

relationship as the one that determines the patriarchal structure of society."[243] The term law of the father is associated with the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to describe children's entry into the patriarchal symbolic order.[244] Here, the term symbolic order refers to "a set of fundamental, systematically organized meanings that structure our psyches."[245] In the texts analysed in this chapter, the authors frequently exhibit closeness to Lacanian psychoanalysis. In the editorial of the 1988 edition of *Problemi*, the editor Vlasta Jalušič wrote of Lacanian psychoanalysis as the "Ariadne's thread" of local theoretical discussions.[246] The presence of Lacanian psychoanalysis in local theoretical discussions influenced how feminist authors conceptualised sexual inequality. In this approach, the focus shifted away from seeing women's subordination as biologically determined towards understanding it as structured into language and culture.[247]

In *Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek*, Jalušič based her understanding of patriarchy on the work of the British psychoanalytic feminist author Juliet Mitchell. The central question that Jalušič posed in this text was: Why does Marxism generate the women's question as a particular question? In her view, by failing to see sexual difference as constitutive of society, Marxism poses the undifferentiated, general human being as the subject of emancipation.[248] Through this perspective of the general, differences are seen as particular, pre-existent, as those that will die out in general human emancipation. Consequently, the articulation of women's subordination can only be posed as

[243] Jalušič, "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek," 7.
[244] Mary Murray, "Law of the Father," in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, ed. A Wong et al. (2016), 1.
[245] Allison Stone, "Sexual Difference," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 875.
[246] Jalušič, Vlasta. "Editorial," *Problemi* 26, no. 3 (1988), 1.
[247] Stone, "Sexual Difference," 878.
[248] Jalušič, "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek," 4.

particular. She argued that this logic inhibited the analysis of women's position in socialism and suggested introducing patriarchy as an analytic category to fully understand women's subordination. However, in her view, simply seeing patriarchy as men ruling over women doesn't explain everything: "The designation of patriarchy as male rule, or its representation as a dual male-female structure, leads to the constant repetition of the discursive arguments that the subordination of women is a social phenomenon, that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", but it does not explicate what is the basis of this "sociality"! The question is not only what pushes a woman into her gender role, but why a woman and a man are pushed into their different gender roles."[249]

Relying on Mitchell's 1974 text Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Jalušič argued that to explain women's subordinate role in society, it is necessary to see patriarchy not as the rule of men but instead as the law of the father. In Mitchell's interpretation, the Lacanian law of the father can be understood as an examination of the emergence of patriarchal social structures and gendered relationships during the psychosocial development of children.[250] Jalušič argued that "accepting the "law of the father" as constitutive of the sexual relation, or of the establishment of human society as such, also implies the necessity of accepting that there is no "biological" sexual difference, but rather that there is a bond between biological reproduction and the symbolic."[251] The concept of sexual difference is rooted in Lacanian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist theories of difference.[252] Here, the notion of difference is connected to the redefinition of subjectivity as a process, which opened the possibility to

[249] Jalušič, "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek," 6-7.
[250] Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth, and Laura Wexler. "On "Psychoanalysis and Feminism"," 458.
[251] Jalušič, 7.
[252] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and Laura Wexler, "On "Psychoanalysis and Feminism"," *Social Research* 59, no. 2 (1992): 457.

conceptualise subjectivity as simultaneously constructed by both material and symbolic instances.[253] In a feminist context, the notion of sexual difference offered a framework to understand how unconscious processes determine masculinity and femininity and to explain that the psyche is not shaped by society alone.[254] By insisting on the importance of sexual difference in constituting and reproducing patriarchy, Jalušič argued in favour of theorising and examining the symbolic order in analyses of women's position in society. At the same time, by placing importance on the concept of sexual difference, she criticised Marxist theory for its inability to theorise the role of the symbolic in the reproduction of patriarchy.

In her 1988 article titled *Ali je feminizem še žensko gibanje? Konstitutivna vloga predmoderne v moderni* (Is Feminism Still a Women's Movement? The Constitutive Role of Premodernity in Modernity), Mirjana Ule argued that women's subordination stems from the division of labour within the family.[255] She relied on the work of two German authors, the critical theorist Max Horkheimer and the sociologist Ulrich Beck. In his 1936 work *Authority and the Family*, Horkheimer discusses the mechanisms through which obedience and constraint dynamics develop and persist within large social structures.[256] Following Horkheimer, Ule argued that the family is a site where antiquated social forms are preserved. In her view, the family has pre-modern, "pseudofeudal" characteristics because individuals cannot freely decide their social roles within the family but are rather forced to occupy them based on their gender:

[253] Young-Bruehl and Wexler, "On "Psychoanalysis and Feminism"," 458.
[254] Stone, "Sexual Difference," 875.
[255] Ule, Mirjana. 1988. "Ali je feminizem še žensko gibanje? Konstitutivna vloga predmoderne v moderni [Is Feminism Still a Women's Movement? The Constitutive Role of Premodernity in Modernity]," *Problemi* 26, no. 3 (1988), 51-55.
[256] Jessica Benjamin, "Authority and the Family Revisited: Or, a World without Fathers?," *New German Critique* 13, no. Special Feminist Issue (Winter, 1978) (1978): 36, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/3115186.

“Because gender roles have been "organically" assigned to individuals' identities from birth onwards, consolidated and internalised in socialisation as lifelong determinants of individuals' biographical destiny, the division of labour and social status between "men" and "women" has also followed these determinants. Thus, the pre-modern, still feudal element of the constitution of gender roles was transformed into a constitutive element of industrial societies.”[257]

Ule took Beck’s idea that the emerging new, or second modernity in contrast to the old modernity, enables individuals to make decisions independently of their social class. In the new modernity, individuals themselves are responsible for establishing, maintaining, and shaping their social ties and connections. While for Beck, this process leads to increased uncertainty and insecurity, Ule interpreted it as a possibility for emancipation.[258] In her view, this transformation entails a transformation of the family: “With the family no longer able to provide the individual with a synthesis of life-positions that could transcend generational and gender constraints, individuals outside and inside the family have become actors in the ensuring of their existence and in the planning of their own biography.”[259] According to Ule, the family loses its function in consolidating and internalising gender roles as lifelong determinants of individuals’ biography, which opens the possibility for individuals to establish a freer relation to their own gender.[260] While Ule argued that the reproduction of women’s subordination had its material roots in the division of labour within the family, she departed from the predominant idea of the socialist model for emancipation, arguing in favour of the

[257] Ule, ”Ali je feminizem še žensko gibanje?,” 51.
[258] Ule, ”Ali je feminizem še žensko gibanje?,” 53.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.

socialisation of domestic labour by viewing individuals' agency as crucial in navigating gender roles.

The role of women's experience in feminism was discussed by Vlasta Jalušič in the 1988 article titled *Nemogoča ženska* (The Impossible Woman).[261] In her view, women's experience of oppression is crucial for feminism: "The only way that a feminist discourse can be established is indeed through experience, the experience of oppression."[262] Jalušič didn't view experience as a foundational epistemology for feminism, but rather saw feminism and the experience of women's oppression as mutually constitutive. The idea that emancipatory discourses, such as feminism, and relations of oppression emerge simultaneously came from the work of philosophers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. In their 1985 work, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Laclau and Mouffe distinguished between subordination and oppression to explain how those who are subordinated perceive relations of unequal power as oppressive.[263] For Laclau and Mouffe, there is a difference between subordination, a relation where someone exercises power over another, and oppression, which arises when subordination comes to be perceived as unjust.[264] Jalušič followed this argumentation and argued that women's oppression and feminism are mutually constitutive because feminism entails that relations between man and woman come to be perceived as unjust, thus transforming a relation of subordination into a relation of oppression. Grounding her argument in Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of oppression had two theoretical consequences for Jalušič's understanding of feminism: firstly, it led to the rejection of experience as a source of knowledge, and secondly, it

[261] Jalušič, Vlasta. 1988. "Nemogoča ženska, [Impossible Woman]" *Problemi*, 26, no. 3 (1988), 47-51.
[262] Jalušič, "Nemogoča ženska," 48.
[263] Linda Zerilli, in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 635.
[264] Ibid.

led to the rejection of the idea of a unified female subject. Because oppression doesn't emerge independently but is constructed in specific conditions by a discursive exterior, enabling the subordinated to articulate its position as oppressive, no oppressed subject can possess privileged knowledge about its oppression. In Jalušič's view, a unified female subject based on a shared experience of oppression cannot exist because there is no unitary subordination of women. For her, the basis of women's subordination is sexual difference, which is produced through various discourses. In this article, Jalušič critically positioned herself against the essentialism present in some Western feminist discourses and expanded her definition of feminism to signify the articulation of the unjust relations between men and women. This was an important intervention because it challenged the prevailing antagonistic attitude of the socialist establishment towards feminism, in which feminism was understood primarily as bourgeois feminism. In my interpretation, Jalušič also argued that any discourse that acknowledges unequal relations between men and women is a feminist discourse.

The topic of lesbianism, which gained visibility through the efforts of lesbian activists involved in the new feminist groups in Ljubljana, was also important for introducing new concepts. In the context of expanding the scope of local public debates and introducing a new vocabulary to discuss women's position in society through the new attention to the relationship between the personal and the political, lesbian activists introduced the notion of heterosexism in local feminist discourses. In Ljubljana, lesbian and feminist discourses developed side by side, contributing to the feminist orientation of lesbian discourses. As mentioned earlier, the first collection of translated feminist texts, the 1986 *O ženski in ženskem gibanju* included three texts on lesbianism. The first local lesbian textual interventions were published in the 1987 eight-page *Pogledi* supplement of the *Mladina* weekly titled *Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med*

ženskami (We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women).[265] The *Pogledi* supplement was significant because it marked the formation of the lesbian section of the feminist group *Lilit*, *Lezbična Lilit* (Lesbian Lilith), or LL, and introduced the lesbian position within local feminist discourses. The authors aimed to challenge prejudice against lesbian women by presenting basic explanations of the anthropological and psychological aspects of homosexuality. The articles drew upon the knowledge of lesbian feminist networks ILIS (International Lesbian Information Service) and COC Netherlands.[266]

In addition to providing visibility to lesbian concerns, the *Pogledi* supplement also contributed to how the relationship between lesbianism and feminism was perceived. They signalled their views on this relationship by including a Slovenian translation of the ten-paragraph manifesto The Woman-Identified Woman, initially written by the American lesbian feminist group Radicalesbians in 1970. The manifesto introduced the notion of being "women-identified", which signified a united identification between heterosexual and lesbian women and argued for the acknowledgement of lesbian concerns as inherent to women's issues. In Ljubljana, the women who were the first to critically address the topic of lesbianism in public debates were involved in feminist groups since the early 1980s. They approached lesbianism through the lens of gender inequality and highlighted the joint struggle of women against patriarchy regardless of their sexuality.

[265] "Ljubimo ženske: Nekaj o ljubezni med ženskami" [We Love Women: Something About Love Between Women], edited by Suzana, Roni, Erika, Nataša, Marjeta, and Davorka. *Pogledi*, 14. No. 8. In *Mladina*, No. 37 (October 1987): 21-28.

[266] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 180.

5.5.3 Feminist Criticism of the Yugoslav Socialist System

Through the textual interventions analysed in this chapter, the authors introduced the ideas and concepts of Western socialist feminist and radical feminist authors, as well as European post-Marxist authors, into local public discourses. By legitimising the usefulness of these concepts in analysing women's position in society, the authors expanded the discursive space in which it was possible to express their disappointment with the Yugoslav socialist system. As I will show in this section, the authors expressed their disappointment and critique in various ways in the texts analysed in this chapter. Some texts criticized the submission of gender to class in Marxist theory, connecting this critique directly to the official discourse, which relied on Marxist categories. Other texts focused on the relationship between the state and women's organizations, highlighting the narrative of the declining autonomy of state women's organizations. Additionally, one text critiqued state policies aimed at the socialization of domestic labour.

In *Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek*, Jalušič problematized the submission of gender to class in Marxist theory, criticizing its inability to adequately analyse women's subordination. This critique reflected the ideas of many Western socialist feminists of that period, whose ideas were also present in Jalušič's text. However, Jalušič extended this critique by linking socialist feminist ideas to a broader critique of the socialist state, highlighting the shortcomings of both the theoretical framework and its practical implementation in addressing gender inequality.

She argued that if Marxist theory is considered as a comprehensive explanation of all social phenomena, then the fundamental task of examining women's inequality becomes extending Marxist theory to better address this problem. She based this

claim on a critique of Marx's concept of universal class, defined as a class whose specific interests align with the general interests of society. In Marxist theory, the proletariat is considered the definitive universal class, with its emancipation seen as "both a necessary and sufficient condition of the emancipation of society as a whole from class domination, exploitation and oppression."[267] However, Jalušič claimed that the universal subject of emancipation in Marxism is undifferentiated and abstract, dismissing sexual difference, which she viewed as central and constitutive to society. In her view, this meant that in Marxism, the analysis of women's position in society can only arise as a particular question, which implies that the subordination of women as a particular group will be resolved in the process of universal emancipation.

Jalušič argued that in this way, Marxist theory prioritises the category of class over the category of gender: "In socialism and the labour movement, the "women's question" is reduced to a class question, and, in the labour movement, any feminism, insofar as it is bound up with the labour movement or emerges from it, is proclaimed a bourgeois deviation or is subsumed by it."[268] In her view, the primacy of class in Marxist theory made it unable to adequately analyse women's subordination. She argued that discussing women's position in society solely in Marxist terms prevents a comprehensive understanding of why women are subordinated. From her perspective, the official discourse homogenized how it addressed women's subordination, limiting the scope for understanding and addressing gender inequality: "The ruling discourse homogenised the possible (permissible) interpretations of women's subordination as

[267] Renzo Llorente, "Marx's Concept of "Universal Class": A Rehabilitation," *Science & Society* 77, no. 4 (2013): 542.
[268] Jalušič, Vlasta. 1986. "Žensko vprašanje kot izvržek [The Women's Question as an Outcast]", *Problemi* 24, no. 9 (1986), 1.

an order of Marx, Engels, Bebel, Zetkin, (Lenin) and - at the top - the party analysis, which has retained its validity and relevance to the present day."[269]

Another way of expressing their critique of the Yugoslav system was through discussions of women's organising in relation to workers' organising through a historical perspective. According to Zsofia Lorand, "the feminist modes of criticism of the state-socialist system and its failures of creating gender equality can be very well modelled on the example of historiography."[270] Engaging with the history of women's organisations, particularly from the interwar and Second World War period, was an "essential step in self-definition and gaining legitimacy."[271] In the texts analysed in this chapter, one text deals directly with the history of women's organising. In her text *"Kam si šla, oj kje si..."* ("Where Have You Gone, Oh, Where Are You..."), Tanja Rener presented the history of women's organising in Slovenia from the interwar to the post-Second World War era and argued that the Communist Party's attitude towards women's organisations and the women's question has been inconsistent. Rener also highlighted the importance of autonomous women's organisations and their role in women's political education.[272]

While other texts analysed in this chapter don't focus entirely on women's organising, the authors frequently highlight the importance of autonomous women's organising. In the Foreword to the 1982 collection of Alexandra Kollontai's translated works, Mojca Dobnikar discussed women's organising in the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, arguing that in the Soviet Union, women "have given up" on having an

[269] Ibid.
[270] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 59.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Rener, Tanja. 1986. ""Kam si šla, oj kje si..." ["Where Have You Gone, Oh, Where Are You..."]," *Problemi* 24, no. 9 (1986), 17.

autonomous organisation, which in her view was a result of the Soviet establishment's dismissal of women's specific position in production, "and that this specific position requires a specific struggle, and therefore autonomous organisation."[273] Vlasta Jalušič also wrote about women's organising in socialism, arguing that socialism "has prevented and discouraged any attempt to unite women for any purpose other than to contribute energy to a common cause and to recruit women into the workforce."[274]

The authors insisted on the importance of autonomous women's organisations, reflecting that women's autonomy is equivalent to women's agency. The Italian historian Chiara Bonfiglioli refers to this tendency of equating women's agency with autonomy as the "autonomy principle," meaning that "the principle of women's collective and individual autonomy from political institutions is taken as a prerequisite for women's political and social agency."[275] For the authors of the texts analysed in this chapter, constructing the narrative of the history of women's organising through the perspective of the autonomy principle was linked to their efforts to legitimize the women's groups they were involved in as legitimate political actors, who could participate in local political discussions on women and their position in society.

In addition to the critique of the submission of gender to class in Marxist theory and the declining autonomy of women's organisations in state socialisms, the third mode of criticism addressed the policies aimed at the socialisation of the family. In the text *Ženska, politično, zasebno*, the authors Anuška Ferligoj, Tanja Rener, and Mirjana Ule discussed women's position in the family and argued that the "attempts to abolish the

[273] Dobnikar, Mojca. 1982. "Predgovor [Foreword]," in Aleksandra Michajlovna Kollontaj. *Ženska v socializmu / Aleksandra Kollontaj* [A Woman in Socialism / Alexandra Kollontai]. Ljubljana: Republiška konferenca ZSMS: Univerzitetna Konferenca ZSMS, 1982: 17.
[274] Jalušič, "Nemogoča ženska," 1.
[275] Bonfiglioli, "Women's Political and Social Activism in the Early Cold War Era: The Case of Yugoslavia," 4.

private/public divide have largely failed, or have been a step backwards."[276] While they recognised the progressiveness of laws on gender equality in Slovenia, they didn't portray this as an achievement of the socialist state. Instead, they argued that the "at least within the limits of legal possibilities, the high level of equality between men and women" was enabled by moving "closer to Western standards."[277]In addition, they argued that certain state policies aimed at improving the position of women were as much about extending state control as they were about supporting women:

> "In Slovenia, too, the ideology of self-management understood the family and the private sphere as the stronghold of bourgeois consciousness. Therefore, the various attempts to socialize family functions, to attract women into self-management, were not only an expression of help for overburdened women, but also attempts to hinder the emergence of autonomous private sphere."[278]

The critique expressed by Ferligoj, Rener and Ule detached the achievements in gender equality from the socialist state and portrayed the state's family policies as a means of control. In this sense, this mode of criticism differed from the predominant local feminist critique of the Yugoslav state, which acknowledged the state's role in achieving women's legal equality and criticised the poor implementation of laws.[279] In my interpretation, this reflected a general shift in critical discourses in Yugoslavia in that period. Towards the end of the 1980s, critical discourses progressively abandoned hopes for improving the socialist self-management system, adopting a more liberal perspective and ultimately moving away from the Yugoslav socialist project.

[276] Ferligoj, Anuška, Tanja Rener and Mirjana Ule. *Ženska, zasebno, politično ali "Ne vem, sem neodločena"* [Woman, Personal, Political or "I Don't Know, I'm Undecided"]. Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče. 1990, 25.
[277] *Ženska, zasebno, politično*, 25.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia*, 3.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analysed feminist textual interventions published between 1982 and 1990. I aimed to answer two questions: Which ideas and concepts were present in local feminist intellectual interventions? What role did these interventions play in the feminist critique of the Yugoslav socialist system? I showed that the ideas and concepts from second-wave radical feminists and socialist feminists, such as the attention to the personal as the principal site of women's oppression and the role of consciousness and ideology in reproducing patriarchy, were present in local feminist textual interventions. By drawing on psychoanalytic feminism, post-Marxism, critical theory and lesbian feminism and concepts central to Western second-wave feminisms such as patriarchy, sexual difference, and experience, the authors attempted to expand the scope of local public debates and to distance themselves from the prevailing economistic Marxist interpretations of society and sexual inequality. This reflected my initial suggestion that the challenge the feminists in Slovenia in this period faced was not in starting a discussion on the position of women in a society where such debates were absent or prohibited but instead in establishing who gets to speak about women's position and in what way.

By pointing at the limitations of Marxist theory and its inability to adequately explain women's subordination, the authors aimed to legitimise the usefulness of (particular) feminist ideas. In my interpretation, textual interventions provided the space where these feminist authors could legitimise their position as actors who know how women's emancipation can be achieved and where the Yugoslav emancipation model failed, i.e. engage in acts of citizenship. Constructing the narrative of the history of women's organising through the perspective of the autonomy principle was linked to their efforts

to legitimize the women's groups they were involved in as legitimate political actors who could participate in political discussions on women and their position in society.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I explored the history of so-called new feminist groups in Slovenia between 1982 and 1990. The central question this thesis has asked is how the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia engaged in acts of citizenship within the framework of state institutions.

I found that in the observed period the members of new feminist groups in the observed period engaged in acts of citizenship by: (1) transforming forms of being political through separatist practices, which enabled the transition from scattered interactions between women to a more organised group structure and enabled the formation of a collective feminist identity; and (2) transforming modes of being political through textual interventions, which provided the space where feminists could legitimise their position as political actors. Through their activities, the members of the new feminist groups in Slovenia in the observed period utilised the institutional framework of the youth organisation to establish themselves as legitimate political actors who hold the capacity to meaningfully reshape the Yugoslav socialist system in a way that could contribute to women's emancipation. Therefore, the main argument of this thesis is that in the observed period, the institutional framework of the state youth organisation in Yugoslavia presented a meaningful site for feminist politics. It enabled acts of citizenship by providing infrastructure, resources, and visibility.

Chapter Two provided the historical background of the thesis. It examines the 1968 student movement in SFRY and the post-'68 social, political, and cultural transformations. I showed that the 1960s presented a crucial point in developing new ways of political participation and profoundly transformed the Youth media landscape in Yugoslavia. In this period, youth media became a crucial space for non-dominant voices. The 1960s were a critical point in the diversification of the youth sphere in Yugoslavia, and these developments importantly shaped the transformation of the youth organisation in the 1980s. I argued that the 1960s also marked two distinctions in the alternative intellectual circles in Ljubljana in comparison to Belgrade and Zagreb: firstly, the dominant role of humanist Marxism, which remained strong in Belgrade and Zagreb, was challenged by other theoretical approaches, such as structuralism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis in the 1970s. And secondly, literary journals emerged as the most important space for introducing new ideas in Slovenia.

In Chapter Three, I examined the landscape of alternative cultural production in Ljubljana in the 1980s. I focused on the role the youth organisation ZSMS played in providing the youth media and cultural infrastructure in which non-dominant voices, such as the new feminist groups, could develop. I found that new feminist groups utilised the youth organisation infrastructure and showed that they relied primarily on youth press and cultural venues. I argued that printed media was important for the new feminist groups in Slovenia because it allowed them to introduce feminist ideas from abroad through translations and by publishing their own articles. Alternative cultural venues were important spaces for events organised by feminist groups and a space where they could hold meetings. My research showed that situating new feminist groups in Ljubljana in the observed period within the institutional infrastructure they used blurs the line between oppositional and official spaces.

In Chapter Four, I investigated the personal stories shared by women who were a part of the new feminist groups in Slovenia from 1984 to 1990. I explored how the personal narratives of interviewees described different encounters that shaped their feminist identities: encounters with feminism, encounters with other feminists, and encounters with the state. My research showed that their personal stories show that self-expression and narration of their personal experiences, which took place during their meetings, were crucial steps towards more stable and organised forms of feminist organising. I also found that, in the observed period, new feminist groups in Slovenia employed consciousness-raising and separatist practices. In analysing how they perceived the political environment in the observed period, I showed that they expressed a belief in the ability to influence politics through organising, reflecting the idea that for the politically engaged youth in the 1980s, the youth organisation represented a space for meaningful politics. They also faced challenges like individual ridicule and opposition from politicians, which reflects the idea that youth activists in this period aimed their critique, among others, at the older elite.

In Chapter Five, I analysed feminist textual interventions published between 1982 and 1990. My analysis showed that by drawing on psychoanalytic feminism, post-Marxism, critical theory and lesbian feminism and concepts central to Western second-wave feminisms such as patriarchy, sexual difference, and experience, the authors attempted to expand the scope of local public debates and to distance themselves from the prevailing economistic Marxist interpretations of society and sexual inequality. I concluded that textual interventions provided the space where these feminist authors could legitimise their position as actors who know how women's emancipation can be achieved and where the Yugoslav emancipation model failed.

With this thesis, I hope to contribute to the literature on women's movements and feminist groups in socialist Yugoslavia. My goal was to contribute to the neglected focus on the developments in Slovenia within this body of literature. I used the concept acts of citizenship to analyse the strategies through which the new feminist groups in Slovenia aimed to establish themselves as legitimate political actors within the institutional framework of the Yugoslav political system. With this, I also aimed to contribute to a new perspective on the development of oppositional and critical groups in socialist systems.

Further research on this topic might include elements I have not developed, such as the relationship between the lesbian activists and the feminist activists or how lesbian activism informed feminist views. An important perspective with which I haven't engaged in this thesis is the role of women's literature and artistic production in thematizing sexuality. Here, a future researcher could investigate the feminist potentials of the work of the visual artists Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid, who were also a part of the alternative scene in Ljubljana and whose work explored the topic of sexuality.

Appendix

Interview Guide

Finding a Feminist Identity
Were you involved in any sort of activism as a student?
Was there someone who introduced you to feminist ideas?
Did you call what you were doing at the time feminism?

Feminist Activism
Were there any feminist events, such as conferences or meetings, that you consider particularly important?
What were some issues that you found important?
What kind of socio-political issues were you trying to address?
Were you meeting other Slovenian feminists regularly? If yes, how did your meetings look like?
Were you meeting other Yugoslav feminists regularly? If yes, how did your meetings look like?
How would you describe your relationship to feminists from other Yugoslav republics?

Feminist Literature and Publishing
Were you reading feminist literature? If yes, what kind?
Do you remember any feminist authors that you personally found particularly influential?
What kind of feminist literature was being published in Slovenia at that time?
Do you remember any translations of foreign feminist authors that you personally found particularly influential?

Socio-Political Climate in the 1980s
How would you describe your life in the 1980s? What were you doing at that time?
Did you engage in protests? If yes, what kind?
How would you describe your attitude towards state authorities at that time?
Were you involved in any other social movements?
How would you describe the interactions between different social movements?

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