

„So much to vote for – Suffrage and Gender in the North-Eastern Adriatic Region during the Greater War“

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*But even the peasant women were sufficiently independent to vote against their priests' advice, for a Slav told me that many of the women had come to the priests for absolution for having voted for Austria.**

My proposed poster presentation attempts to contextualise the aftermath of the First World War at the intersections of newly gained franchise rights for female citizens, plebiscites, nationalism, and iconographies of motherhood. This research is part of a larger project, namely an ERC Advanced Grant, which is entitled 'Post-War Transitions in Gendered Perspective: The Case of the NorthEastern Adriatic Region' (<https://project-eirene.eu>) and led by Professor Marta Verginella at the University of Ljubljana. For this specific contribution, I aim to highlight and unpack the Carinthian plebiscite of 1920 with regards to female citizens, who have only been entitled to cast a vote since 1918 after the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and the subsequent formation of what later became known as the First Austrian Republic. Within the concept of geographic demarcations, aspects of citizenship, national belonging or affiliation, and minority rights, palpably, were paramount. Hence, the female voting corpus – in most cases of quantitative significance in post-conflict times, due to the substantial decimation of the male population on battle fields – attained a pertinent part in referendum-based rights to self-determination. This poster is designed to illuminate women's contribution to gender-related and multi-ethnic democratization dynamics during transitional periods after wars, especially in their socially defined roles as maternal caretakers of the family specifically and custodians of the nation as well as bearers of soldier-sons generally. Additionally, the nexus of maternalism, electoral rights, and propaganda will be analysed through transnational prisms by incorporating Sarah Wambaugh's work and writings about this plebiscite and women's impact on it. The Cincinnati-born Wambaugh (1882–1955), herself an ardent suffragist, engineered a somewhat unprecedented career as the foremost and global expert on plebiscites within the predominately masculine and patriarchally defined ranks of the League of Nations. (285 words, excl. citation)

* Sarah Wambaugh, 'Frontiers by Plebiscites,' Sarah Wambaugh Papers, 1919–1948; 89-M64, box 2, folder 3, 16a. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.