

## INTRODUCTION

**“THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF 89 TOUCHED ALL WOMEN. WOMEN CAME TOGETHER AND WERE WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME. FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO FIGHT. AND MEN WERE ON OUR SIDE. AT LEAST IN EAST BERLIN, THE WOMEN DEMONSTRATIONS HAD A LOT OF MALE PARTICIPANTS.” CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT FROM GERMANY**

**Where were we heading to in 1989 and 1990?** What has become of our visions and political goals 30 years after? The conference organized in Berlin-Pankow by OWEN in cooperation with Friedenskreis Pankow, Gender Studies Prague, Public Verdict Foundation and Foundation for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights “Don Women” offered the opportunity for dialogue between different generations of women. It brought together women actors from Eastern Germany, Poland, Czech Republic and Russia who had played a decisive role in movements during the upheavals and transformations of 1989/90. Many of them founded civil society

organizations and stayed active in their social and political commitments. These women were joined at the conference by women and men who today work actively for democratic and social changes in the societies of Germany, Russia, Poland and Czech Republic. Participants shared their views and experiences of activism.

The participants’ activism covered a wide range of political and social issues ranging from human rights, social and economic demands, ecological issues to questions of security and peace. In the period of the transformations, gender-specific issues and feminist claims were present to a lesser extent than in today’s women’s activism and they were strongly entangled with wider visions and hopes for changes in society.

During the three days, all participants were invited to become visionaries of the future. Common themes were identified, but also differences, across countries and generations, stood out. The conference thus created cross-border spaces for political reflection and action.

This documentation brings together the historical knowledge, personal experience, and visions gathered during the conference in the workshops and panel discussions. It also includes shortened versions of the presentations by Marina Grasse and Jennifer Ramme.

The first day of the event was dedicated to listening to different perspectives on 1989: who were the actors and what were their hopes and visions of social change? The second day was focused on today, on the status quo and on

how activists encounter backlashes driven by right-conservative and nationalist movements. Visions for change in today's societies and attempts to influence socio-political developments were shared. The final day was spent on "developing democratic anti-bodies": on discussing how to act, create alliances, and find common grounds.

The four parallel workshops complementing and deepening the talks and panel discussions were dedicated to more specific topics. They dealt with *Visions for Societies in Europe*; *Fundamental Rights, Constitution and Democracy*; *The Economic Transformation of Property and Labour* and *The Communication between State and Society: the Policy-Forming Processes and Representation of Interests*.

Summing up the conference's discussions, as a closing event on the last day, participants split up into country groups and produced slogans that would voice a common message. The task here was to find common messages that would mobilize others and that would allow for alliances with other groups in society.

This written documentation uses the final day's slogans as headlines under which the discussions and outcomes of the conference are summarized. Thus this text does not necessarily refer to the exact meaning that the country groups had in mind in the closing session.

Words in quotation marks and italics are participants' voices; they have often been shortened for brevity or amended for clarity. Our aim is to portray the diversity of voices,

heard at the conference. To this end, we have gathered voices from all different events at the conference, and placed them side-by-side in this documentation.

To all participants, moderators and contributors: thank you for your efforts at making this gathering of women so successful by bringing in your knowledge and inspiration! We will continue to develop visions and creative answers to the great challenges that we are facing.

**"WHAT I THINK ABOUT WHEN I THINK OF 1989? WOMEN DID A LOT OF WORK AND THEN STAYED HOME TO LET THE MEN TAKE OVER." CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT FROM POLAND**