

Heritage of Emancipation:
**Empowering Roma Women
through Networks of
Solidarity**

Dr. Ivan Djordjević
Institute of Ethnography SASA
Serbia
January 27, 2026.



HEROINES



Citizen science project centred on
Roma women's emancipation in Serbia

Recognised with **EU Prize for Citizen
Science (Grand Prize)**





Emancipation as **intangible heritage**:
stories, objects, routes, networks

Citizen science lens: Roma women as
**knowledge-holders and co-
producers**

Goal: overcome limits of “existing
research” via participatory design –
community mapping





Multi-site work and local anchoring (e.g.,
Belgrade/Kostolac/Pirot)

Collaboration: Institute of Ethnography SASA +
Faculty of Philosophy (UB) + Roma Women's
Centre **Bibija** + Partners from Pirot and Kostolac



Community mapping as the cornerstone method

Produces “evidence” that standard methods miss: bottom-up approach, oral histories, lived experience

Roma women to define what emancipation means in their own terms.

Turns research into a platform for **self-advocacy and empowerment**



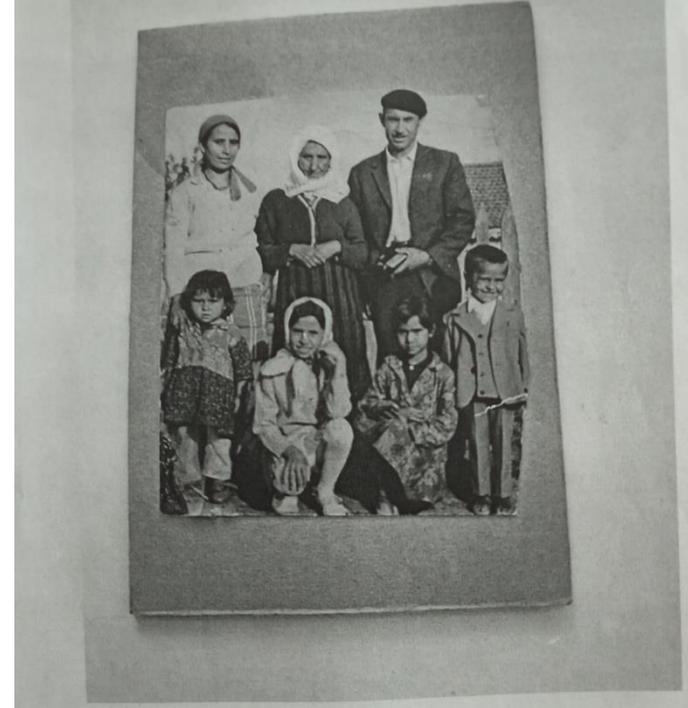


Built on **existing collaboration** with Roma women's organisations (e.g., Bibija; local partners)

Partners often have strong field/research experience, even without formal methods training

Project design leverages that strength: trust, access, interpretation, continuity (not "parachute research")

Long-lasting methodological tool for partners





Not just respondents:

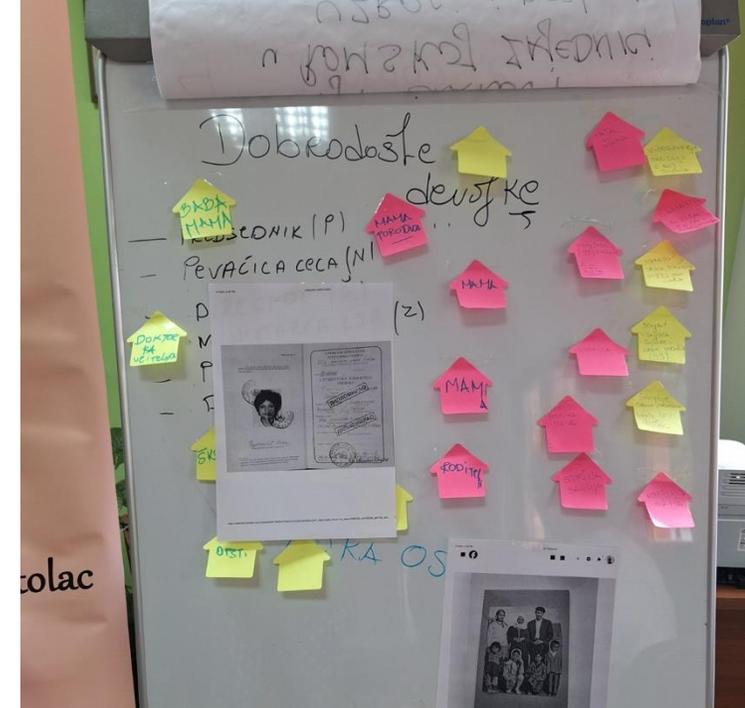
Roma women engaged across

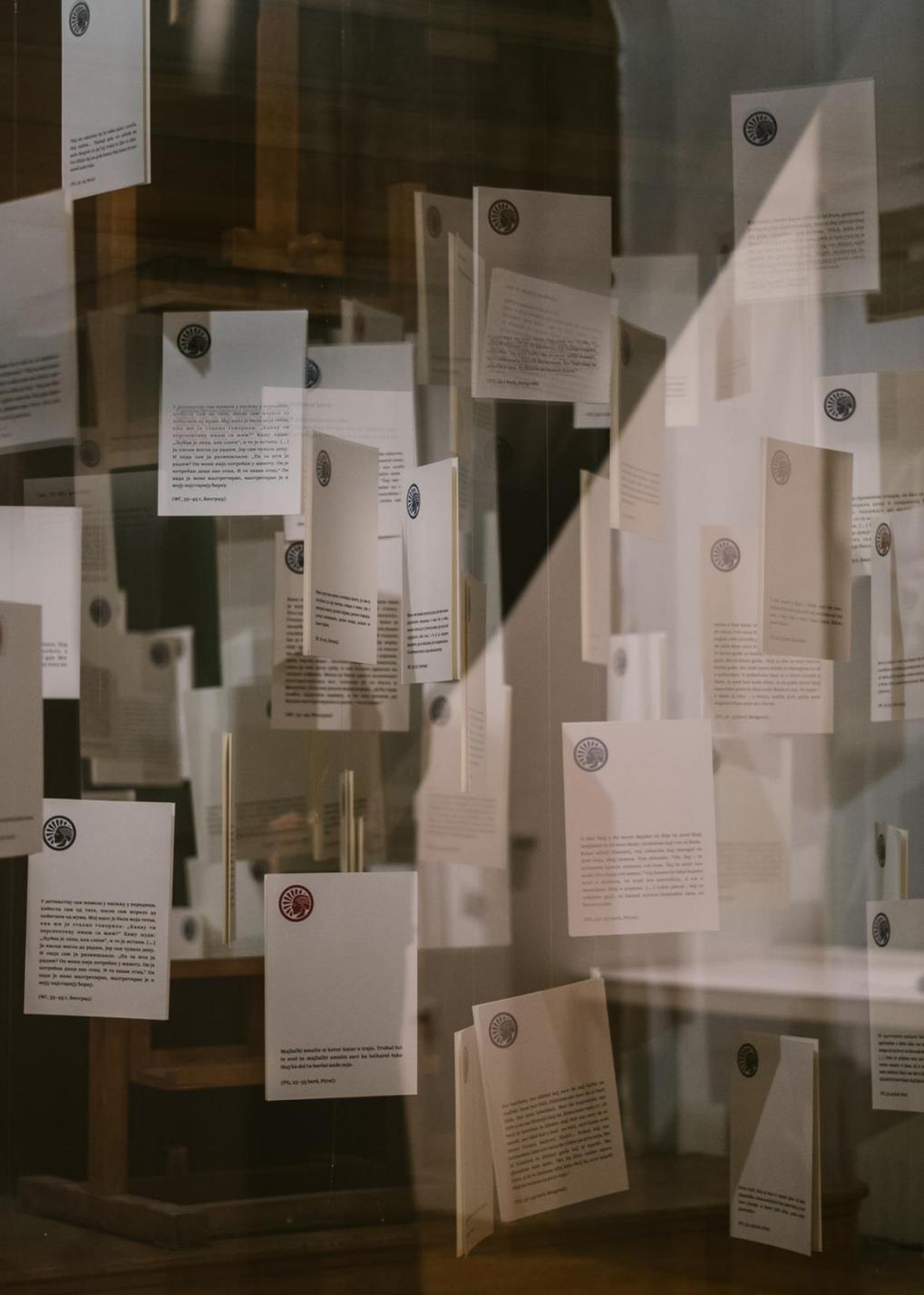
design -> mapping -> interpretation -> public outputs

Participation as *method* and *governance*:

deciding what counts, what stays private,

what becomes public





Dissemination as a two-way exchange
(community-facing and public-facing)

Exhibition “**HEROINES: POWER OF ROMA WOMEN!**”
at SANU Gallery (Nov 2025)

Public outputs shaped by participants: stories,
objects, maps created by Roma women



Hard shift: from “data extraction”
to **epistemic partnership**

Need to value narrative evidence
+ lived expertise as legitimate
knowledge





Is participatory research ever “fully” participatory (time, funding, academic gatekeeping)?

Representation risk: speaking *for* others rather than **with** others

Keeping exchange alive in dissemination (especially exhibitions): co-curation, consent, community review



Method: **community mapping** as inclusion infrastructure

Partnership: start from trusted organisations, respect experiential expertise

Politics of knowledge: the real work is sustaining reciprocity beyond “data” and into authorship + dissemination

