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Exploratory workshop “Politics and Poetics of Strike in the Postsocialist/Postcolonial Encounter”

University of Groningen, the Netherlands

April 7-8, 2022

Convenors:

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Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Dr. Fransisca de Haan (Central European University)

Dr. Liz Mason-Deese (University of Sheffield)

Screening of *Who Is Afraid of Ideology? Part I, II & III* (Marwa Arsanios, 2017-2020) and Q&A with the maker

By (re)turning to March 8 as a day of striking, the International Women’s Strike has made visible the potential of feminist movements to think and act *otherwise* (Gago et al. 2020). The International Women’s Strike assembles feminist experiences, struggles and mobilizations across different geographies and temporalities. The act of appropriating strike as a strategy/method by feminist activists has exposed the limited ability of Marxist thinking or Euro-American feminism to capture subjectivities of migrants, care workers, non-binary transgender people, or indigenous communities and their struggles as (also) questions of labour, class and social reproduction (Ferguson and Murray Li 2018). A feminist strike troubles distinctions between formality and informality, employment and unemployment, paid and unpaid labour, productive and reproductive work, or migrant work and work done by nationals (Gago 2018). It recognizes and includes rights claims, lived experiences and spaces inhabited by those who are made invisible by these binary distinctions.

What is more, through a multiplicity of “local” subterranean movements, the feminist strike exposes the silenced interlocking of colonial and gendered divisions of labour, racialized and gendered violence and over-exploitation of land and resources. The Ni Una Menos strike in Argentina laid bare connections between femicide and devaluation of women’s reproductive rights (Draper and Mason-Deese 2018). Struggles of Moroccan seasonal workers in Spain made visible how their double exploitation as racialized women and migrant workers from the Global South is linked to resource extractions and land dispositions (Filigrana and Mason-Deese 2020). The “uneventful” feminist protests in East-Central Europe resist the NGO-ization of feminist and LGBTQ+ activism (Mayerchik and Plakhotnik 2021). Support of migrant women in Lesbos for the International Women’s Strike exemplifies how feminism is made possible and sustained by everyday resistances of migrant women



performed also by acts of caring for their children or the work of keeping themselves alive (May 1st, 2021). Bottom-up egalitarian praxes, in revolutionary and counter-revolutionary times, breach through the secular-Islamist dichotomy that has marked articulations of feminism in the Middle East and North Africa (Sadiqi 2016).

Following Veronika Gago's discussion of the March 8 International Women's Strike as feminist internationalism from below, the feminist strike as practice and conceptual metaphor enables one to think with and to think together the Polish Women's Strike, mass mobilisations against femicides and inequalities in Latin America or Italy, the gender dimension of protests against the politics of authoritarian states such as Belarus, Russia, Egypt and Syria, and the *longue durée* of female disobedience in the aftermath of such revolutionary upheaval, the more recent Essential Strike Manifesto, but also historical experiences of women's antifascist struggles in Yugoslavia or women's activism in apartheid South Africa. Such *thinking with strike* and *thinking different strikes together* provides a critical lens through which we can explore material and immaterial connections between radically different bodies, conflicts and territories and assemble diverse politics and poetics of struggle, protest and liberation across space and time.

This workshop continues the conversation about politics and poetics of a feminist strike and the emerging feminist internationalism from below from the perspective of a postsocialist/postcolonial encounter. How "March 8" – as both an event and a process – travels (back) to postsocialist contexts signifies a controversy; the notion of a feminist strike becomes entangled with the institutionalisation and festivalization of women's struggles during socialism, the continued taming of March 8's radicality and the asymmetries within transnational feminism. To this end, Mayerchuk and Plakhotnik (2021) discuss how in Ukraine, transformation of March 8 rallies into "the Women's March" has epitomized the NGOization and spectacularization of women's struggles through resource exploitation and rationales of effectiveness and massiveness. This is one of the multi-layered reasons why some Ukrainian feminists have subsequently chosen mutual self-care as a protest form over partaking in March 8 events.

Against the background of complex resonances of the International Women's Strike in postsocialist contexts, this workshop echoes the necessity of approaching the notion of international feminism from below from and through the postsocialist frame. In that sense, the workshop suggests that Atanasoski and Vora's (2018) approach to postsocialism as *an analytic* (rather than a historical period) renders knowledgeable the plurality of transformative imaginaries and actions that are not necessarily revolutionary or oppositional.

Additionally, this workshop engages with what Koobak et al. refer to as "the uneasy affinities between the postcolonial and the postsocialist" (2021). It echoes Suchland's question of whether postsocialism is transnational with the aim to place postsocialist feminism more explicitly on the agenda around the feminist strike and international feminism (2011). At the same time, the aim is broader than that. The workshop hopes to explore existing and possible postcolonial/postsocialist encounters through practices, experiences and struggles of a feminist strike. By postcolonial/postsocialist encounters, we refer to the intersections of postcolonial and postsocialist experiences, imaginaries, and legacies,



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including elements outside of these intersections and the challenges that arise from them (Koobak et al. 2021).

To this end, we encourage original contributions that map material and immaterial links between women’s struggles in the postsocialist and postcolonial contexts as well as more theoretical discussions of multifaceted resistances at the intersection of gender and labour. We are also interested in original contributions that explore how postsocialism can be a productive analytic in attending to the yet unseen or less seen elements of feminist internationalism from below.

The workshop will be organized in three interlinked sections:

1) Temporalities of a feminist strike - this section explores how we can think of a strike outside of a linear, progressive temporality while thinking of ‘the feminine’ outside of circular or static time. How do complex temporalities and rhythms of a feminist strike challenge for instance the sustained “first/second/third world” imaginaries or the continued silencing of past socialist anti-colonial networks? How do transnational memories operate along with, and against the current of, feminist “waves”? How can a feminist strike assemble different temporalities and rhythms of resistance?

2) Poetics of a feminist strike - this section studies different poetics of resistance and liberation that emerge in a feminist strike. How are these poetics meaningful in mapping and understanding the postcolonial/postsocialist encounter? What makes a strike eventful? How are various activist practices across postsocialist and postcolonial contexts challenging established understandings of the eventfulness of a feminist strike? Can politics of an impasse or obstruction be classified as a strike or do we need a different vocabulary of feminist resistances (Berlant 2011, Apter 2018)?

3) (Prefigurative) politics of a feminist strike – this section problematizes the transformative potential of a feminist strike. How does a feminist strike imagine and enact alternative politics that make feminist alliances possible? What do postsocialist and postcolonial feminists have in common in terms of their struggles and forms of resistance? What are the prefigurative acts that maintain transversal connections but do not silence specificities in how work and gender are institutionalised, historicized, and experienced across different postsocialist and postcolonial contexts?

Submission details

Please send in an abstract of 300 words before **September 7 2021** to the organizers (s.neuman-stanivukovic@rug.nl, k.robbe@rug.nl and j.a.naeff@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

Indicate in which of the three sections you think your work fits. You can indicate more than one section.

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