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Wroclaw, Poland. October 3, 2017.
Black Protest – Women's Strike. Polish women protesting on the streets against tighter abortion laws in Poland. Umbrellas become a sign of protest.

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ALAMY LIVE NEWS



Poland

WOMEN AS “THE PEOPLE”

Reflections on the Black Protests as a counterforce against right-wing and authoritarian populism

by **Jenny Gunnarsson Payne**

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe has argued that Europe today finds itself in a “populist moment” – the outcome of which will be decisive for the future of European democracies.¹ As a result of a neoliberal hegemony that has led to increasing inequalities and a shift of power from democratic to financial actors, an increasing number of political movement and parties who claim to give voice back to “the people” have emerged.² In some countries – such as Poland – these political actors have successfully made it into power, and begun a devastating process to dismantle the fundamental pillars on which modern liberal democracy rests. Indeed, when Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (*Law and Justice*) won the parliamentary election in 2015 they “swiftly began to introduce changes in virtually every sphere of social and political life, gradually dismantling the basic tenants of liberal democracy”.³ To describe this type of illiberal democracies, feminist scholars Andrea Pető and Weronika Grzebalska have coined the term “polypore state”, referring to a parasitic fungus (the polypore) that lives of decaying trees and thereby contributes to their deterioration. They argued already in 2016 that the then “emergent regimes of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Beata Szydło in Poland do not represent a revival of authoritarianism, but a new form of governance” that stems from “the failures of globalisation and neoliberalism” and “which created states that are weak for the strong and strong for the weak”. The *modus operandi* of such states, Pető and Grzebalska argue, is that, like the polypore fungus, they “feed on the vital resources of their liberal predecessors and produce a fully dependent state structure in return”; they do this by appropriating “the institutions, mechanisms and funding channels of the European liberal democratic project”.⁴

MOUFFE CLAIMS that a “populist moment” is characterized by a situation “when under the pressures of political or socio-economic transformations, the dominant hegemony is being destabilized by the multiplication of unsatisfied demands”. This leads to the failure of existing democratic institutions to retain the loyalty of their citizens, and subsequently, as a consequence “the historical bloc that provides the social basis of a hegemonic formation is being disarticulated and the possibility arises of constructing a new subject of collective action – the people – capable of reconfiguring a social order experienced as unjust”.⁵

As we have seen throughout Europe, many of the voices that claim to give the power back to “the people” come from right-wing populist movements and parties; they promise “that they will bring back national sovereignty and restore democracy”, but when they speak of sovereignty, they articulate this as “national sovereignty” that is “reserved for those deemed to be true ‘nationals’”. These political actors do, however, not respond to

the democratic demand for *equality*, but articulate “the people” in highly exclusionary ways and formulate a number of groups – most notably “immigrants” – as a threat to the nation.⁶

ALTHOUGH MOUFFE adds the caveat that her recent analysis of the present conjuncture shall be limited to Western European contexts, her perspective also speaks to the development towards “illiberal democracy” in Central- and Eastern Europe, where, as is well established, the promises of the transition to a capitalist economy have failed to deliver and lead precisely to the multiplication of unsatisfied demands and the resulting loss of legitimacy in the liberal-democratic project. Following Mouffe, I argue that populism is best understood as a hegemonic strategy rather than a regime, but for the sake of my argument and to acknowledge how these illiberal regimes have raised to power through populist articulations claiming that they represent “the people” as an underdog against an elite or an establishment, I shall in the following refer to this phenomena as “illiberal populism”. In Poland, the waning belief in liberal democracy has left the playing field open to the illiberal political actors, who claim to speak in the name of “ordinary” and “normal” people against a liberal global elite that is said to impose its liberal and “globalist” worldview and lifestyle on others, and by a populist political strategy managed to secure the power necessary to begin transforming democratic institutions. Their argumentation is often

built on rhetorical tropes of colonial oppression whereby “Western” supra-national institutions such as the EU and the UN impose their liberal worldview – including gender equality and multiculturalism – in a manner similar to the Soviet social engineering of the past.⁷

As part of this illiberal populist project, conservative anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQ sentiments have entered Polish politics with a renewed

form and force, and made a strong alliance with the current illiberal regime, articulating “gender” as a key element of their construction of an “alien threat to the nation” and making abortion one of the symbolic issues in their “politics of traditional values”.⁸ In doing so, they have successfully managed to gain wide support for a new illiberal universalism “that replaces individual rights with rights of the family as a basic societal unit and depicts religious conservatives as an embattled minority”, building successful national and transnational alliances between conservative religious actors, illiberal populists,⁹ and in some countries between secular conservative, authoritarian and extreme right-wing movements and political parties.¹⁰

As Elzbieta Korolczuk has noted, in the Polish context the electoral victory of illiberal and conservative PiS has resulted in Polish society becoming “extremely polarized but also much

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Activists in favor of the legal abortion react in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on August 9, 2018 to the voting by the Argentine Senate against the bill that legalize the procedure in the country.

PHOTO: MARIANA TERRILE

more engaged and politically active”, the Black Protests being one in a longer line of political manifestations against the anti-democratic and illiberal reforms performed by the current regime.¹¹ After having followed the movement and its transnational permutations, mostly from afar but also “IRL”, it has, however, become clear to me that the Black Protests offers one of the most powerful examples of a democratic counter-movement against such illiberal populism to date, not just in Poland but also far beyond, on a transnational level. Specifically, as I shall argue in this essay, one of the main achievements of the Black Protests is that they have not only offered powerful examples of active rejections of the exclusionary articulation of “the people” as articulated by the illiberal regime and conservative Christian movements, but also an alternative collective identity – another, feminist and transnational version of “the people” – that has proven effective in mobilizing broadly nationally and transnationally on democratic issues far beyond sexual and reproductive rights.¹²

CRUCIALLY, I SHALL ARGUE that three key reasons for their success are:

- their proven ability to mobilize broad layers of the population, leading to the politicization of great numbers of individuals who previously did not identify with a political movement or cause;
- their effective strategies in mobilizing around a single key issue (abortion), but successfully managing to articulate this issue with other political issues so as to make this issue part of a broader political struggle including many prototypically left-wing issues as well as intersectional feminist demands;

- their unprecedented example of how the movement over a very short time managed to mobilize transnationally, playing a crucial part for the construction of a feminist global struggle united in solidarity across their differences.

How to capture the transnational echoes of a movement

Notes on a “messy ethnography”

My “messy ethnography” of the Black Protests started in April 2016, when I took part in the Warsaw demonstration against the new law proposal. Since then, I have continued to relentlessly try to follow the developments of the Black Protests and its transnational resonance, for example in the form of other national Black Protests, in expressions of solidarity with the Polish movement, or in the form of other feminist movements explicitly expressing some kind of connection to the Polish Black Protests. A great deal of this has taken part online. “Liking” and thereby following Facebook pages turned out to be particularly useful for understanding how political messages, slogans, images and videos circulate online. In addition to offering information about the specific group administering the page in question, these Facebook pages also functioned as forums for expressing solidarity between groups and movements in different countries, and for sharing links about likeminded protests taking place in other parts of the world. Although much information has been available in English (many of the relevant Facebook pages and websites are bi- or trilingual), I have also followed some pages in languages that I do not master. With limited language skills but patient friends speaking the languages

and a good deal of Google-translating, I have tried to trace the events online and in conversation also in some other languages (most notably Polish and Spanish). I have also spoken to activist friends that have been involved in the struggle to learn about ongoing events, given a speech on a solidarity manifestation outside the Polish embassy in Stockholm (October 2016) and interviewed three activists in Argentina to investigate any potential transnational connections between the movements (Buenos Aires, December 2016).

In this process I have by no means been a “detached observer”. Rather, I have been moving between positions: sometimes I have followed the developments as an activist and advocate of women’s rights and of reproductive and sexual rights, sometimes mainly as a researcher, and always as a feminist ally, and a friend in solidarity. I have been emotionally attached, squealing with excitement when I have witnessed video clips of big marches and speeches online (sometimes without understanding much of what is said in the video!), and reacted with anger, political fatigue, or even fear, when reading about the rise in anti-abortion and authoritarian anti-gender sentiments in Poland and beyond.

Following transnational feminist echoes: Some methodological remarks

Admittedly, any attempt to draw a picture of the transnational resonance of a movement will necessarily have to do so using large brushstrokes. In trying to capture some of the transnational *echoes* (a term, as we shall see, I have borrowed from feminist historian Joan Scott)¹³ of the Black Protests it is impossible to avoid missing out on local organizational complexities and embodied experiences of concrete activist practices.¹⁴

What my research strategy has enabled me to do instead, however, is to reach an understanding of how the echoes of the Black Protests chimed (and continue to chime) across cultural, political, national and regional contexts across the globe – and how many of these echoes in the process became more or less “detached” from the political actors who originally might have formulated them. This means that some political statements quoted in this text might have originated in another group than the one I quote to have shared them. Crucially, these quotes shall not be read as evidence that their original formulation shall be assigned to the group quoted; sometimes the quote is reused from some other website or Facebook group, with or without a reference. This demonstrates precisely how political echoes work; indeed, how they are repeated in different contexts, by different actors – and how their meanings are, to a lesser or greater degree, transformed in the process.

Rather than striving to assign specific statements to an original source, in other words, I have followed the “echoes themselves” as and when I have come across them. In doing so, I have also deliberately avoided to assigning sources of inspiration to the protests or connections between groups of manifestations unless I have seen explicit references in the empirical material or if I have else been able to demonstrate the existence thereof. Therefore, while it is obvious that my emotionally attached and

messy ethnographic observations have not given rise to a neutral and systematic empirical set of “data” to be neatly analyzed, I have paid conscientious effort to be faithful to my own observations. Thereby, I seek to understand some of the dynamics that led to the successful mobilization of the Black Protests, and in particular how we can understand the Black Protests as a catalyst for an amplification of – or even a re-emergence of – transnational feminist solidarity in Europe and beyond.

Making sense of political passions

Reading the Black Protests through a populist and psychoanalytic lens

In her recent book *For a Left Populism* (2018), Mouffe¹⁵ puts her hope for the task of saving European democracy in the creation of a left populism of the type that has been practiced by parties and movements such as Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece and the Momentum movement in the UK, and, I assume without it being mentioned in the book, the Polish Partia Razem. What this type of populist projects seeks to do is to “recover democracy to deepen and extend it”.¹⁶ Their strategy to do so, according to Mouffe:

[...] aims at federating the democratic demands into a collective will to construct a ‘we’, a ‘people’ confronting a common adversary: the oligarchy. This requires the establishment of a chain of equivalence among the demands of the workers, the immigrants and the precarious middle class, as well as other democratic demands, such as those of the LGBT-community. *The objective of such a chain is the creation of a new hegemony that will permit the radicalization of democracy.* (emphasis added).¹⁷

This linking together of a variety of political demands under a common “name” that names the struggle of an “underdog” against an oppressive regime (an elite) follows what both Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau has called *a populist logic*. Importantly, “a movement is not populist because in its politics or ideology it presents actual *contents* identifiable as [populist], but because it shows a particular *logic of articulation* of those contents – whatever those contents are”.¹⁸ In this essay, I shall argue that the Black Protests and the transnational feminist movement that emerged in its aftermath follows this kind of logic to create a broader social subjectivity of what Graciela Di Marco has called “a feminist people” – and that this is precisely what is necessary to oppose the illiberal right wing- and anti-gender movements that have gained momentum on a global scale over the last few years.

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND *how and why* the Black Protests and their sister movements in other parts of the world managed to do this, I also take the cue from Mouffe and her statement that we cannot understand political mobilization without taking into account how *passions* lie at the very heart of all forms of collective identification. In her words, political discourses have “to

offer not only policies but also identities which can help people make sense of what they are experiencing as well as giving them hope for the future” – and that such an analysis requires “a serious engagement with psychoanalysis”.¹⁹

Viral politics and the strategies of affirmation, repetition and contagion

As is also acknowledged in the theory of populism formulated by Laclau (2005) and Mouffe (2018),²⁰ Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis teaches us that the construction of political identities is a crucial task of politics, and processes of identification are always deeply engrained in affect. Indeed, from Freud we know that the construction of collective identities are a form of “libidinal ties” – love, in its broadest meaning – that serves the function of holding the group together against a political enemy towards which aggressive sentiments are being channelled.²¹ In order to achieve this, the affective energy has to be “inclined” towards a common goal, and in political mobilization this is done through a plethora of affectively laden linguistic, visual, aural and embodied practices.²² In order to understand the Black Protests’ communicative devices in the form of affectively laden messages, slogans and images that were used in demonstrations and many that became “viral” online,²³ I draw on Laclau’s Freudian reading of conservative thinker Gustave LeBon and his accounts of *affirmation, repetition and contagion*.

As I have discussed elsewhere, Le Bon describes *affirmation* as “a strategy used by a leader to break the link between that which is affirmed and any rational reasoning that proves it”.²⁴

The main point here is that facts and rational information *in and of themselves* are not sufficient (or, unfortunately, not even necessary) to achieve a broad political mobilization. Instead, in Le Bon’s words, affirmations are necessary to “making an idea enter the mind of the crowds.”²⁵ The function of such affirmations is, then, to break with dominant discourses (in this case, for example, the dominant narratives of the Catholic church and the government), and provide a vocabulary that is able to provide an “affective lexicon” that puts “into words an experience which is felt by many, but which cannot be expressed consistently within dominant language games”.²⁶

IF AFFIRMATIONS ARE to exert any political influence, however they need to be “constantly *repeated*, and so far as possible in the same terms” (emphasis added).²⁷ It is by way of repetition that affirmations become “embedded” in the minds of the individuals that are exposed to them. The psychoanalytic implication of this is that this process also works on “those profound regions of our unconscious selves in which the motives of our actions are forged”,²⁸ and over time comes to be experienced *as true*.²⁹ The affective grip of a movement is determined by its ability to “mobilize affect”, to “move” the feelings of a great enough number of

subjects to the extent that they come to identify with a political cause.

Thus, repetition is also imperative for constructing a feminist collective identity, and for such collectivity to be extended so as to include an increasing number of subjects to become part of the same struggle and to work for the “same” political cause. Indeed, as I have argued before, it is “through repetition subjects involved in diverse struggles recognize the *same* ‘enemy’ despite disparate [potentially] antagonistic experiences” and it is only through repetition that the sense of shared feelings that are necessary for the creation of an affective collectivity can be sustained over time.³⁰ If we are to understand both how the Black Protests managed to mobilize such a broad spectrum of the Polish population, *and* how it managed to mobilize across national and cultural contexts, however, we need consider that no repetition is ever a “pure” repetition of the “same”.

Feminist identity and fantasy echo

A crucial part of “sharing and bonding” is to create fantasmatic narratives that, in feminist historian Joan Scott’s words, “enable identifications that transcend[s] history and national specificity”.³¹ In feminist mobilization, this often happens through references to different feminist “foremothers”, who sometimes have lived and acted in radically different historical times and national and political contexts. In the Black Protests, the articulations of a “feminist us” have alluded to a feminist pre-history from the start: the use of the symbolic coat hangers alone repeats a symbolism of previous struggles for accessible and

safe abortion, and puts it within a historical context where such items have been used to self-induce abortion.

In this context, what is crucial to understand is that the very *political acts* of creating and repeating affectively laden fantasmatic narratives about the pre-history of the movement by linking it to previous national and transnational struggles are in themselves crucial

in creating “a feminist us” with which individuals can positively identify.³² Following Scott, I argue that fantasy is crucial in understanding any successful political mobilization. For an intense affective attachment to a political cause to be formed, it is necessary for the subject to form a narrative in which they imagine themselves taking part, and begin identifying with – and this is precisely where fantasy comes in. Fantasy “enables individuals and groups to give themselves histories”.³³ The reference to past protests, thus, should not be read as simple reiterations of past events, but rather in terms of what Scott has referred to as *fantasy echo*:

It is precisely by filling the empty categories of self and other with recognizable representatives that fantasy works to secure identity. In my use of it, echo is not so

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The Black Protests in Poland with the slogan “Stop this Bloody War Against Women”.

PHOTO: ELŻBIETA KOROLCZUK

much a symptom of the empty, illusory nature of otherness as it is a reminder of the temporal inexactness of fantasy’s condensations that nonetheless work to conceal or minimise difference through repetition.³⁴

In other words, the operation to repeatedly articulating links with previous struggles both within and across different points in time and national territorial borders serves a crucial function so as to constitute a shared sense of “us” across time and space – and this is also what makes possible a collective fantasy that another future is possible.

Scott’s reflections on “echo” are particularly helpful to theorize the resonance that the Black Protests had in a transnational context; rather than reading their repeated affirmations as “pure repetitions”, we can read them as “echoes” that repeat back parts of their political messages but adding, subtracting and partly transforming them in the process. Characteristic of echoes, Scott writes, is that they are “delayed returns of a sound” and as such “incomplete reproductions, usually giving back only the final fragments of a phrase”. An echo also “spans large gaps of space (sound reverberates between distant points) and time (echoes aren’t instantaneous)”, and because it is never a complete repetition of an original sound but always incomplete, fragmented or otherwise distorted, it necessarily creates “gaps of meaning and intelligibility”. When the sounds that are echoed include words, “the return of partial phrases alters the original sense and comments on it as well.”³⁵

Although any metaphor comes with its own limitations, the metaphor of the echo is the most suitable I can think of in de-

scribing the resonance that the Black Protests started across the globe, and how they “echoed back” the demands of the Polish Women’s Strike and other feminist networks, each with their own contextual variation, thereby creating a kind of feminist “echo-chamber” in which multiple voices can resonate without being merged into one.

The Black Protests in the populist moment

The construction of “a feminist people”

We find numerous examples of affirmations in political slogans that have been used during the demonstrations in the context of the Black Protests, including: “Stop this BLOODY war against women!”, “My body, my choice!”, “Freedom of choice, not terror”, “Girls just wanna have FUNdamental human rights”, “I wish I could abort our government” combined with affectively laden visual representations such as coat hangers associated

with unsafe illegal abortions, an image of uterus with a hand doing the “fuck off-sign”, sometimes including a Christian cross; a drawing of a tied up woman, or a stop sign.

It is precisely because they work on the affective register that such slogans and visual representations come to provide a framework of meaning that makes sense of existing frustrations by naming the problem

(lack of reproductive rights), pointing out its cause in the form of a political enemy (the government, patriarchy, the Catholic Church), and indicating a political solution or goal (bodily autonomy or “choice”, the change of regime).

While these affirmations circulating online (in the form of typed slogans or as photographed placards from the demon-

“SOON MORE POLITICAL DEMANDS WERE ADDED, USING THE NAME ‘BLACK PROTEST’ TO NAME A BROADER FEMINIST STRUGGLE.”

strations) initially focussed almost exclusively on reproductive rights, soon more political demands were added, using the name “Black Protest” to name a broader feminist struggle.

Already on October 9, the Facebook group entitled Black Protest International (established by the network Gals4Gals) posted a link to an article in the Washington Post followed by a call for women’s sexual rights and autonomy on a global scale:

Sisters and Brothers! An outrageous reminder of how much there is still to do about women’s rights in the context of rape culture. We have to reclaim our feeling and thinking bodies from the hands of those, who usurp the power over us. Trump is just one striking example of global visibility, but there is so much more hidden violence going on uncovered by the news. It is hard to believe the ways in which rapes committed by powerful men Julian Assange, Dominique Strauss-Kahn and Roman Polanski are publicly excused on the grounds of the high social and political position and merits of the rapists. [...] Together we can and we should fight the rape culture in its different manifestations! #blackprotest had shown the power of women’s solidarity and determination! Let us learn from this experience and do not allow our voices to fade!

On October 10, another protest was announced in the same Facebook group, expanding the demands further. The protest was to be held five days later, this time against the international trade deals TTIP and CETA, articulating them as transnational feminist issues: “Dear Sisters and Brothers abroad? Are you preparing to demonstrate against signing TTIP and CETA agreements in your cities? We do! We recognize it as a feminist issue, as it will have a direct negative impact on women’s rights.” In this call, Gals4Gals explain, among other things, that these deals would lead to weakened worker’s rights and worsened working conditions, which would hit low income earners and thus disproportionately negatively affect women “and women of colour in particular”. By being published on the Facebook page using the “name” of the Black Protest, the statement published by Gals4Gals articulated anti-capitalist demands of class- and race injustices as feminist issues and therefore as part of the international Black Protests.³⁶ In other words, what we see here is the construction of a chain of equivalence of a number of political demands, utilizing the name “the Black Protest” so as to name a struggle not only for reproductive rights but also for a broader anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist struggle.³⁷

Yet two weeks later, on October 24, it was reported on the Facebook page Black Protest International that yet another protest had taken place (organised by the All Polish Women’s Strike), again with a long list of demands including but not limited to sexual and reproductive rights. The same event is “echoed” on the website for the International Women’s Strike under the heading “History of IWS” as the “Second Polish strike against violence and state ignorance of women’s issues”, and the extensive list of postulates that guided the protest can be read in Polish on the

website for the Polish Women’s Strike.³⁸ On the Black Protest International Facebook group, the it was reported that:

Today Polish women were demonstrating again – within 3 weeks a *comprehensive list of postulates* was formulated including *free and available sexual education, restoration of democratic procedures and secular state*.³⁹

In this Facebook group, Gals4Gals also described the abortion issue as being merely “the tip of an iceberg” and announced that “there is a lot to do in Poland in order to build a truly equal and democratic civil society”.⁴⁰ The slogan for this protest was “We are not putting our umbrellas away” indicating that the protesters had no intention to stop their fight against the oppressive regime.

Solidarity-echoes

The affective construction of a transnational feminist “people”

“The people united shall always be victorious!” This affirmation introduced a post in the Facebook group of Black Protest International on September 29, 2016, calling for transnational action and empowerment. Interestingly, the post continued with arguing that “Most of the time we tend to forget about the real power that each of us possesses”, and contribute these thoughts to the Afro-American feminist poet Audre Lorde:

Most of the time we tend to forget about the real power that each of us possesses. Audre Lorde, a great Afro-American feminist, who happened to be a poet of an exceptional profoundness and charisma once said, “The power you don’t use yourself is gonna be used against you”. Isn’t that true both on an individual (emotional/psychological) as well as a political level? ⁴¹

In this quote, the appeal to the affective dimension is explicit, and it speaks to an “us”, a feminist “people”, and urging anyone who (potentially) belongs to this “us” to take to the streets to protest on Monday October 3.

Let’s make use of our power, our energy, our skills, our hearts, brains and hands! We are embodied, we are space: we take space, we need it to grow and think. Bringing our bodies to the streets on #blackmonday means everything. We hope to find JOY and PLEASURE in being together, supporting each other, creating bonds, debating our FUTURE!

LONDON-SEFFIELD-PARIS-BRUSSELS-OSLO-COPENHAGEN-STOCKHOLM-HELSINKI-BUDAPEST-PRAGUE-BUCHAREST-VANCOUVER-WASHINGTON DC-BUFFALO...

Waiting for YOU to join the fight! ³⁴²

Thinking with Le Bon, this call can be read as a hope to make the

political message *contagious*, that is, to be so powerful so that it influences not just political views, “but *certain modes of feeling as well*”.⁴³ The quoted call includes not only a call for action (taking to the streets), but also for that action to be filled with shared feelings of energy, joy and pleasure and for those feelings to be shared with an increasing number of people who will join the struggle; it is the creation of a common “space” dispersed into different locations on and offline, where subjects can repeatedly “bond” and “share”, and act *as if* they belong together and share their mutual attachment to the same overarching political cause. Thereby they *come* to “belong together”.

Such creations of belonging necessarily involves subjects engaging “in practices of constructing, confirming and renegotiating images and narratives of *how* and *why* they ‘belong’ together”; it is “in and through such encounters that subjects begin talking, writing, chanting, and in other ways representing their struggles in ways that ‘align’ and articulate, with other struggles, and that detaches them from others” (emphasis added).⁴⁴ It is in and through these practices that the mutual belonging to a common movement is being articulated.

The citation of Audre Lorde in the aforementioned quote is another example of a historical articulation that “aligns” the Black Protests with the struggle of Lorde, thereby writing itself into a transnational feminist history by letting the “echo” of her voice be heard alongside theirs. As we shall see, referring to this as “fantasmatic” does in no way mean that it is “fake”; in fact, all movements need a fantasmatic dimension in order to achieve collective identification. Following Scott, I argue that seeing such articulations of feminist history as “fantasy echoes”, we can “deepen our appreciation of how some political movements use history to solidify identity and thereby build constituencies across the boundaries of difference that separates physical females from one another within cultures, between cultures, and across time”.⁴⁵

IN MY READING, the solidarity manifestations that were organized in multiple countries across the world, and not least in Europe, can best be described as “solidarity echoes” that echoed the demands of the Polish Black Protests, but also, like echoes do, partly transformed the very demands that they echoed, and thereby both inscribing their own protests into a larger feminist “us” and extending this common struggle further both geographically to other parts of the globe, and temporally to historical events and into the future.

A commonly repeated element in the descriptions of the solidarity manifestations is the explicit inspiration from the historical women’s strike in Iceland in 1975. One piece of text that was used in several Facebook events for solidarity manifestations (and in Facebook statuses where individuals distributed information about these manifestations) was repeated word by word

from Gals for gals website: “Just like the brave women of Iceland, who paralyzed their country 41 years ago, on October 3, 2016 Polish women are going on a nationwide warning strike to fight for their basic rights.”⁴⁶

This was, for example, the case in the Facebook group for the Black Protest Nottingham (UK) where it is followed by stating that the “#BlackProtest (#CzarmyProtest) is happening not only in Poland, but in many places around the world”. Alluding to the classical feminist trope of sisterhood, they write that “We would like to join our Polish sisters in the strike, spread awareness and show our solidarity”, and extends this gesture of sisterhood by referring also to the abortion struggles in Ireland, as well as appealing to European women more generally: “This is also a great

moment to think about our *Irish sisters*, who fight to #repealthe8. *European women* must stand strong, together!” (emphasis added).⁴⁷

The same text initiated the description of the call for solidarity manifestations in London and Birmingham (UK). The former was organized by the London based group Polish Feminists, a group that describes themselves as “working and collaborating with international feminist groups” to “spread understanding about feminism and Polish Feminism” under the parole of “stronger together”.⁴⁸ The latter was

held on October 1, 2016, and added after some information on the Polish legislation and law proposal details about the first call for a strike that:

The first call for the strike was made during a Black Protest demonstration held at the Market Square in Wroclaw, Poland. On the same day Facebook event was created and within a single day over 100,000 either declared their interest or participation. It is currently the fastest-growing event on Polish Facebook.

We cannot be with our sisters in Poland now, but we support them as much as we can and so this Saturday, we are wearing black to express our solidarity and our outrage because of the proposed legislation.

At the same time we remember about our Irish sisters who are also still fighting to #repealthe8 and we welcome them as well as anyone else to join us.

PLEASE DO WEAR BLACK!⁴⁹

In Reykjavik, Iceland, the solidarity protest took place under the slogan Svartur Mánudagur (Black Monday in Icelandic).⁵⁰ On the cover picture for the Facebook page of the Black Protest in Reykjavik, readers were encouraged to come to the protest and “Dress in black. Dress black garbage bag. Take black flag. Take

“WITHIN A SINGLE DAY OVER 100,000 EITHER DECLARED THEIR INTEREST OR PARTICIPATION. IT IS CURRENTLY THE FASTEST-GROWING EVENT ON POLISH FACEBOOK.”



Manifestation in Buenos Aires.

PHOTO: MARIANA TERRILE

black banner”, and lastly, to “Decorate yourself with a black ribbon if you cannot be with us.” Text snippets accompanying press photos online report that “Polish & Icelandic women stood side by side downtown Reykjavik to protest the new polish abortion law” and that members of parliament from all Icelandic parties from all parties of the Icelandic parliament sent their polish counterparts protests as well in support of #blackprotest”.⁵¹

Like in several other cities outside of Poland, the solidarity manifestation in Berlin was explicitly organised by Polish activists living abroad – in this case Berlin-based activists of *DziewuchyDziewuchom*. The group describes their reasons to organize a solidarity protest in the Facebook event:

Why do we organize Black Monday in Berlin?

We are Polish wo/men and have families and friends living in Poland. But most of all we want to support those, who are being threatened of their rights to be taken away. We say NO to lack of respect for our lives.⁵²

In the call for the solidarity manifestation in Berlin, another transnational symbolism is added in their choice of place for the event. The place of the protest was *Warschauer Strasse* – “Warsaw street” – and this choice is described as being motivated by the name of the street itself referring to the capital city of Poland, as well as its symbolically charged location in between East and West: “We are going to stand in the middle and ask for your support. Your presence matters!” The ambition of a broad solidarity protest, symbolically and concretely, was further emphasized by the message being posted – echoed – in three languages, Polish, German and English.

In addition to the numerous solidarity manifestations, some

echoes came back in the form of some countries organizing their own Black Protests, in other parts of the world. In the Facebook group *Black Protest International*, a link to *Black Protest Russia* was shared on October 8:

#blackprotest in Russia! Several members of the government and of the church promote an initiative to ban abortions. We must stop it! Polish women have been an example for Russian women! Sisters unite!⁵³

Another message circulating on Facebook a couple of weeks later, on October 17, announced that now also women in South Korea had taken to the streets under the parole of the Black Protest. A post by the Polish left-wing party *Partia Razem*, argued that “#BlackProtest happens everywhere where women’s rights are endangered”, explaining how in the last few days also South Korean women had dressed in black and taken to the streets to protest against the country’s restrictive abortion laws. It explained how the South Korean law is even stricter than the Polish law, allowing for termination only if “the mother or her spouse has a genetic mental disorder or physical ailment; the mother has a specific infectious disease; the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest; or when the pregnancy is seriously detrimental to the mother’s health”, also explaining that women who had an abortion may be charged with a prison sentence for a year. The message also adds some contextualization of the South Korean situation by pointing out that “Contrary to what the Korean government says, further restrictions will not increase the birth rate – they will only increase the amount of pain and suffering”, and ends with the statement “We express our solidarity with Korean women!” (*PartiaRazem*, Facebook group).⁵⁴

Echoes across the Atlantic

From the Black Protests and Ni Una Menos to the International Women's Strike

As I was following the development from afar – admittedly rather impressed by the mobilization that the Black protests spurred in such a short time – I was also informed by feminist friends in Argentina about what was going on in Latin America. Excited by what seemed to me a global feminist uprising, I began to follow this development as much as I could (being equally limited by distance and lack of language skills as I had been with the Polish case, but again greatly helped by translation web tools and patient Spanish speaking friends).

In Argentina, I learnt, the Ni Una Menos movement (meaning “not one [woman] less”) had mobilized since 2015, using the hashtag #NiUnaMenos to protest against the commonly occurring femicides (murders of women). The first demonstration is reported to have taken place in Buenos Aires on June 3, 2015 after the brutal murder of a pregnant 14-year-old girl who had been beaten and killed by her boyfriend had been revealed. Not unlike the Polish Black Protests, it quickly went viral also to other countries on the continent, notably Chile and Uruguay. On the same day a year later, further demonstrations in several cities in Argentina were organized using the slogan and hashtag #VivasNosQueremos (“We want us alive”), and further marches were held in Chile and Uruguay. A Ni Una Menos march that was organized shortly after in Lima in Peru was reported by the press to have been the largest in the history of the country.⁵⁵

Although I had been informed of some of these developments in private conversations, it was not, however, until the Ni Una Menos collective in Argentina organized another big march and strike on October 19, 2016 in Buenos Aires after more brutal femicides had been reported that I began to notice some striking similarities between Ni Una Menos and the Black Protests.

The event had been named *Miércoles Negro* (meaning “Black Wednesday”), protesters had been dressed in black, a social strike had been announced – and I noticed from the many videos and images that circulated in my Facebook feed that in Buenos Aires they all seemed to be holding umbrellas, just like the protesters in Warsaw had two weeks before. This time, the protests spread even further and also took place not only in Chile, Peru and Uruguay, but also Bolivia, Guatemala and Spain, as well as in Brazil one week later. Intrigued by the similarities, I asked some friends who had taken part in marches whether there were any connection between the movements, but none of the people I spoke to knew of any.

About two months later, in December 2016, my friend and colleague Paula Biglieri helped me to meet three of the central

activists from the Ni Una Menos collective when I was visiting Buenos Aires. In the interview, it was explained that while there had not been any contact between the organizers before the march, the news about the Black Protests had reached them at a time that coincided with a range of developments and events that together had made the movement “explode” at this juncture. The example of the Black Protests had, according to one of the interviewed women, offered an example of “If they can do it, we can do it” at a point in time when there was already groups and networks in place, as well as an increasing frustration over the political situation. As she continued to explain:

So I would say that the strike was fuelled not only by the examples of Poland and Korea, but also by the fact that a week before, there was a terrible repression to the women's movement in Rosario, in the national women's meeting, and the same day there was this terrible femicide of a sixteen year old girl in Mar del Plata perpetrated by drug dealers, so it was narco-violence, and yeah... [...]

In other words, what characterized the time at the October march and strike in 2016 was a combination of factors that had spurred the mobilization: police repression in feminist meetings, yet another brutal femicide – and the empowering

example of the Black Protests taking place at the other side of the Atlantic. The specific cities of Mar del Plata and Rosario are described as “emblematic” for the political situation against which the Ni Una Menos movement protests, including an assemblage of neo Nazi groups, the far right wing of the Catholic Church and pro-government groups (a concatenation of political interests that we, despite many other contextual differences, indeed do recognize from Poland and other European societies):

[...] So Mar del Plata is a kind of

laboratory for this new kind of society, the war on drugs, the cartels are coming, I mean there is a whole thing going on and also in Rosario, in these two cities, so it was emblematic that the same day in two cities there was police repression and a femicide and this was you know when we said enough is enough, we'll go for a strike ... and we planned it in five days [laughter]

The activists pointed out to me that the protest went international not only because of the Internet, but also because some of them had gone to international women's meetings to share experiences and ideas across borders. One of their fellow activists, they told me, had gone to two meetings, one in Brazil and one in Bolivia between the demonstration in June and the protest in Oc-

“A NEW GLOBAL FEMINIST WOMEN'S MOVEMENT HAS QUICKLY DEVELOPED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WITH ONE OF ITS MOST IMPORTANT MOVEMENTS BEING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S STRIKE.”

tober “and she was already plotting this international network of Ni Una Menos”.

While, as I now know, the Argentinian protests took place independently of (though inspired in part by) the Black Protests, contacts between the movements were made afterwards – and in the aftermath of these events, a new global feminist women’s movement has quickly developed over the last few years, with one of its most important movements being the International Women’s Strike:

We didn’t connect with the Polish when we were doing the strike, we just did it in five days like crazy, and then of course admiring them and reading their stuff, but not talking actually and then they contacted us and said well, we’re on the same page and also the Koreans, so we were receiving emails from other women’s organizations and this is how we made this network [the International Women’s Strike].

Since then, the International Women’s Strike – also known as *Paro de Mujeres* – brings together progressive women’s and feminist groups from over 50 countries according to the US-version of the website, mostly from Europe and the Americas.⁵⁶

On the website *parodemujeres.com*, we can read that the network was formed in late October 2016, just after the large Black Protests and the Ni Una Menos protests, and under the heading “How did it start?”, the narrative brings together the Icelandic strike as a historical inspiration, followed by brief descriptions of the Black Protests of Poland and South Korea, and the Ni Una Menos protests of Argentina and the Women’s March on Washington that was organized in the US and many other countries January 21, 2017 after the election of Donald Trump.

Following the example of Icelandic women in 1975, Polish women went on a day-long strike to halt plans for criminalizing abortion and miscarriage on 3 October 2016. This planned legislation was immediately withdrawn by the government. Similar issues brought Korean women to protest several times in that same month against introduction of higher penalties for doctors performing abortions. On 19 October 2016, Argentine women reacted with massive one-hour long strikes and rallies to an inhuman femicide and brutal repression of police of the Women’s National Meeting. More protests followed, leading to establishing the International Women’s Strike platform.⁵⁷

On a page of the website explaining the background for the strike on March 8, 2017, it is clear that the mobilization concerns far more than prototypical “women’s issues” and that the feminist struggle is articulated as a struggle for democracy across the globe. They explain that “What links most of our countries are misogyny and permissiveness by elected leaders and public persons using hate speech, by media negligent of their lawful responsibility for reliable information and full coverage, and by

institutions that should be protecting public safety and enduring justice.” The text argues that women’s demands to “defending their rights” are often overlooked both in their communities and in their homes, and explain that this is why the International Women’s Strike was formed. The very purpose of the International Women’s Strike, then, is to build bridges between women’s and feminist collectives in different countries with the aim of more effectively putting pressure on their governments.⁵⁸

Although the International Women’s Strike is a truly international movement, it is built on the different national movements and thereby retains the sensitivity to different national and cultural contexts and traditions. The importance of contextual specificity was emphasised by the Argentinian activists that I spoke to, and on the website it is clearly communicated under the heading “Why do I strike?” which was published in preparation of the March 8 strike in 2017 and where 21 different countries are enlisted in alphabetical order, each offering a detailed description of the political situation in their country and their specific political demands. While there is certainly some issues that come back in different country descriptions (reproductive and sexual rights, gendered violence, discrimination) the differences in emphasis clearly communicate urgent issues that each national movement prioritizes. The website also includes a map of events across the globe, showing how it is widespread, but concentrated in Europe and the Americas.⁵⁹

On the website for the International Women’s Strike US its “populist logic” becomes even clearer, both in their formulation of “a feminism for the 99%”⁶⁰ – a “feminist underdog” – and in the articulation of demands that is communicated as their platform, part of which is here quoted at length:

The International Women’s Strike is a network of women that emerged through planning a day of action for March 8, 2017 in more than 50 countries.

In the spirit of that renewed radicalism, solidarity and internationalism, the International Women’s Strike US is organizing a new strike on March 2018 and continues to be a national organizing center by and for women who have been marginalized and silenced by decades of neoliberalism directed towards the 99% of the women: women working inside and outside of the home, women of color, Native, dis/differently abled, immigrant, Muslim, lesbian, cis, queer and trans women.

We see our efforts as part of a new international feminist movement that organizes resistance not just against Trump but also against the conditions created by Trump, namely the decades long economic inequality, criminalization and policing, racial and sexual violence, discriminatory immigration policies, and imperial wars abroad.⁶¹

After stating that their aim is to “build relationships of solidarity between diverse organizations of women, and all of those who

seek to build a global feminist, working class movement”, they state that everyone involved come from different political traditions but are organized around a set of common principles and goals: An end to gender violence, reproductive justice for all, labor rights, full social provisioning, for an antiracist and anti-imperialist feminism, and environmental justice for all. Like on the other website, the description is published in both English and Spanish. In an interview in the *Jacobin Magazine* the Argentinian feminist scholar Verónica Gago⁶² comments that what we are now witnessing globally is the “emergence of a broad-based, popular feminism”. She points out that although the tradition of feminism has much to offer this new movement in terms of guidance, it has often been academic, elitist or even corporate and adds that “what we are now witnessing is a new kind of feminism, a feminism of the masses”.⁶³ As I shall discuss in the conclusion, the political potential of this new transnational feminist movement to serve as a counterforce to the global surge of illiberal populism lies precisely in the fact that it has managed to articulate itself as “a feminism of the masses” that offers a popular feminist collective identity against authoritarian, socially conservative and neoliberal religious, economic and political elites.

“A global feminism of the masses”

Lessons from the Black Protests and beyond

To conclude, it is impossible not to see the importance that the Black Protests have had not only insofar as that it has played a pivotal role in building a democratic resistance against the illiberal regime in Poland, but also in building up a “transnational feminism of the masses” – and one that in some cases has had concrete success in influencing political decisions. In Poland, as we know, the Black Protests managed to pressure the government to back down – at least temporarily – on the issue of abortion. The Irish movement Repeal the eighth – also a member of the International Women’s Strike whose campaign included, among many other things, dressing in black and organising a social strike on March 8, 2017 – succeeded in mobilizing for a change in the constitution which will make a legislation for free and safe abortion possible in Ireland. Although Irish activists had already mobilized for a change in the constitution for many years, international media has reported that the successful mobilizing of the Polish Black Protests served as an inspiration for the actions leading up to their victory. Similar advances have been made in Argentina, where in the summer of 2018 the lower house of congress approved a bill to liberalize their abortion laws. Although the Senate subsequently voted against it, the successful broad mobilization has, in similar ways to the Black Protests, managed to politicize also people who have not previously identified as feminist. At a time when authoritarian, illiberal and anti-gender (these do, as we have seen, tend to go hand in hand) movements and parties are expanding

their power and influence across the globe, this emergence of “a feminism of the masses” mobilizing a “feminist people” is most certainly one of our greatest hopes today – and for other progressive democratic movements to learn from. As mentioned initially, what is at stake in this “populist moment” – that, dare I say, far exceeds Europe – is, after all democracy.

FOR, AS MOUFFE and others have argued, the only thing that can offer a powerful enough counter-hegemonic force against illiberal, authoritarian and right-wing populism, whose increasing success constitutes a serious threat to democracy, is the emergence of other popular identities – other, more inclusive versions of “the people” – and such collective identities can only be formed through discursive practices that can mobilize affect in such a way that the subjects identifying it begin to desire a deepening of the two democratic ideas of freedom and equality and thus get spurred into action to work for this. For this to happen, more anti-populist strategies (that in the current conjuncture tend to be located at or near the centre of the political spectrum) simply will not make it. Neither will simple strategies of “fact checking” and rational reasoning. As mentioned before, while such strategies certainly have their place, facts and rational argumentation *in themselves*, without the affective component, will not create any mass movements that can save, restore, and deepen democracy.

What the movements of the Black Protests and Ni Una Menos have shown us is how to create mass-movements around urgent national and regional issues (abortion, gender violence), to create and repeat affectively laden messages (affirmations) around these issues and how to make them contagious enough to mobilize the masses against oppressive regimes. Thereby the struggles have articulated

“THIS EMERGENCE OF ‘A FEMINISM OF THE MASSES’ MOBILIZING A ‘FEMINIST PEOPLE’ IS MOST CERTAINLY ONE OF OUR GREATEST HOPES TODAY.”

these demands (e.g. abortion, femicide) to other progressive democratic demands, including criticism of neoliberal damage, issues of immigration and racism, and calls for a secular state – chains of equivalence that differ somewhat depending on context, but that still share a family resemblance between them. The concrete results in some countries, at the time most notably on the abortion issue, have been communicated across borders and instilled hope and energy across their own contexts.

By way of on- and offline strategies such as marches, solidarity manifestations and online communication through social media, they both also managed to create solidarity echoes across the globe, that linked these national and regional struggles to create the global International Women’s Strike. Importantly, in the latter, the basis for concrete action still consists of local, national and regional grassroots organizations, and the specificity of their respective situations is reflected in the variety of demands that are claimed in global events such as the mobilization for March 8. As reflected by Gago, existing feminist traditions

have offered valuable insights and inspiration for this movement, and, I would argue, have provided a necessary narrative of a fantasmatic feminist “us” that have functioned as a “surface of inscription” for the demands raised by these movements. Existing feminist narratives provided the frame for a collective identity that has united individuals in very different situations and with sometimes very different experiences to begin conceiving each other as part of an “us”. The repeated “echoing” of both previous and contemporary feminist ideas, slogans, symbols and struggles, through textual, visual, bodily and aural performative representations have made this possible.

BY READING THE process of affirmation-repetition-contagion with Scott’s notion of “fantasy echo”, we can see that what made broader alliances, both transnationally in in the different local/national/regional contexts between groups from different political traditions possible is precisely that each repeated affirmation is characterised by a certain openness that allows for it to be slightly transformed, while retaining some trace of the original “utterance”. This way, each affirmation opens up for an echo that comes back saying that: “we hear you, we stand in solidarity with you” while also continuously adding new demands and contextual interpretations of the struggle. It is the cacophony of solidarity echoes across the globe that formed the starting point for the International Women’s Strike. This partial openness of the messages, therefore, are crucial for building alliances both between feminist groups and between other political actors, such as movements, unions and political parties.

In 2020, the “populist moment” in Europe – and elsewhere – is still very much a political reality. As the neoliberal project has failed to live up to its promises and thereby left the playing field open to illiberal, authoritarian and right-wing populist movements threatening democracy in Europe and beyond, the Polish Women’s Strike, Ni Una Menos and the International Women’s Strike have already demonstrated that a progressive transnational “feminism of the masses” is not only possible but can also influence political decisions. Its most significant contribution so far is not only to provide a powerful example for other progressive movements to learn from and to join – to chime in with the “solidarity echoes” – but, perhaps more importantly, the transformative effect it has had on the progressive political landscape across the Atlantic. At this juncture, the outcome of the European (and indeed global) “populist moment” remains unsure. Indeed, to turn the chilling development towards illiberalism and authoritarianism that we are now witnessing in Europe and elsewhere, we need more movements like the Women’s Strike – movements that are able to mobilize broadly, and manage to build alliances with other movements, workers’ unions and progressive political parties within and across national borders in order to establish a new hegemony that can not only save, but deepen and radicalize democracy. ✖

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Note: This essay is a lightly edited version of the original, also by Jenny Gunnarsson Payne, but published 2019 in Polish. *Kobiety jako ‘lud’*. *Czarne Protesty jako przeciwwaga dla autorytarnego populizmu w perspektywie transnarodowej*, in: Korolczuk Elżbieta, Kowalska Beata, Ramme Jennifer and Claudia Snochowska-Gonzalez (eds), *Bunt kobiet. Czarne Protesty i Strajki Kobiet*, Europejskie Centrum Solidarności (European Solidarity Centre): Gdańsk.

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- 2 See also Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism*. (London & New York: Verso, 2018): 13.
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- 5 Mouffe 2018: 11.
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- 8 Emil Edenborg, *Politics of Visibility and Belonging: From Russia’s “Homosexual Propaganda” Laws to the Ukraine War*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 9 Agnieszka Graff & Elżbieta Korolczuk, 2017. “‘Worse than communism and Nazism put together’: War on Gender in Poland.”, in *Anti-gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality*, eds. Roman Kuhar & David Paternotte. London & New York: Rowman&Littlefield: 798)
- 10 Weronika Grzebalska, Eszter Kováts, & Andrea Pető, “Gender as Symbolic Glue: How Gender became an Umbrella Term for the Rejection of the Neo (liberal Order)”, *Political Critique: Krytka Polityczkna & European Alternatives*, January 13, 2017; Korolczuk 2017; Jenny Gunnarsson Payne, “Affective Subjects, Affecting Politics: Affect, Communitas, and Representation in Processes of Political Mobilization”, in: *Thinking the Political: Ernesto Laclau and the Politics of Post-Marxism*. (London & Oxon: Routledge, 2018).
- 11 Korolczuk 2017: 98.
- 12 Graciela Di Marco, “Claims for Legal Abortion in Argentina and the Construction of New Political Identities”. In: *Feminisms, Democratization and Radical Democracy: Case Studies in South and Central America*, eds. Graciela Di Marco & Constanza Tabbush. (Buenos Aires: UNSAMEDITA, 2011).
- 13 Joan Scott, 2001. “Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity”, *Critical Inquiry*, (2001) 27:2: 284–304.
- 14 Indeed, for such details to be captured, more systematic, in-depth local ethnographies, interviews and textual analyses are necessary.
- 15 Mouffe 2018.
- 16 Ibid: 24.

- 17 Ibid., italics added.
- 18 Ernesto Laclau, "Populism: What's in a Name?" in: *Ernesto Laclau: Post-Marxism, Populism and Critique*, ed. David Howarth. (Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2005/2015): 153; Mouffe 2018: 11.
- 19 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2005): 25.
- 20 Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*. (London & New York: Verso, 2005): 24–25; and Mouffe 2018.
- 21 Sigmund Freud, *Mass Psychology and Other Writings*. (London: Penguin Books, 1921/2004); Gunnarsson Payne 2018; Mouffe 2018: 73.
- 22 See e.g. Mouffe 2018: 73; Gunnarsson Payne 2018.
- 23 Importantly, unlike Le Bon, the Laclauian reading does not understand these affectively laden modes of mobilization as pathological, but, rather, as necessary for the formation of political collectivities as such. Where Le Bon makes a separation between "the 'true signification' of words and the images they evoke", Laclau argues that "we cannot simply differentiate the 'true' meaning of the term ... from a series of images connotatively associated with it, for the associative networks are integral parts of the very structure of language". Laclau, 2005: 24–26; Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Manuscript compiled by Carlo Mostacci, (1896/2012).
- 24 Gunnarsson Payne, 2018. While in the context of the Black Protests we need to put aside his strict emphasis on "the leader", and realize that affirmations in principle can be formulated by anyone (also anonymously), we can still use his theory to understand their function for political mobilization: namely to give name to underlying frustrations in a way that cannot be done within hegemonic discourses or with the mere enumeration of factual information.
- 25 Le Bon 1896.
- 26 Laclau 2005: 26–27.
- 27 Le Bon 1896, emphasis added.
- 28 Laclau 2005: 27.
- 29 Although this may be obvious in times of "fake news", this is actually the case for *any* political movement.
- 30 Gunnarsson Payne, 2018.
- 31 Scott 2001: 303.
- 32 See Scott 2001: 289–290.
- 33 I agree with her that this in no way discredits feminism, but rather that fantasy is precisely what makes possible "identifications that transcend history and national specificity", and that by theorising the feminist movement(s) through fantasy, we can reach a deeper understanding of how it functions without running the risk of essentialising either feminism *per se* or the subject feminism seeks to represent (most notably "women"). Scott 2001: 303.
- 34 Scott 2001: 292.
- 35 Scott 2001: 291.
- 36 https://www.facebook.com/Black-Protest-International-blackprotestinternational-1162858547117141/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf;
<http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/blog/2016/feb/25/why-ttip-feminist-issue>
- 37 See e.g. Laclau 2005.
- 38 (<http://strajkkobiet.eu/postulaty/>).
- 39 Black Protest International. https://www.facebook.com/Black-Protest-International-blackprotestinternational-1162858547117141/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf
- 40 Black Protest International. https://www.facebook.com/Black-Protest-International-blackprotestinternational-1162858547117141/?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf
- 41 Quote Audre Lorde
- 42 September 29, 2016, Black Protest International.
- 43 Le Bon 1881, 116, quoted in Le Bon 1896, footnote 17, see also Gunnarsson Payne 2018.
- 44 Gunnarsson Payne 2018.
- 45 Scott 2001: 303.
- 46 The text is cited from the Facebook event entitled "Blackprotest Vigil at Polish Embassy by Polish Feminists" (available <https://www.facebook.com/events/899856403481306/>). Accessed October 28, 2016.
- 47 <https://www.facebook.com/events/178161805959853/> Accessed October 28, 2016.
- 48 "Polish Feminists – Stronger Together! London based group working and collaborating with international feminist groups. We aim to spread understanding about Feminism and Polish Feminism. We organize and take part in actions, marches, protests and events promoting feminism and its goals. Feminism – we are not afraid of this word and we work towards education of women (and men) on it and breaking the stereotypes attached to the concept. We come from different backgrounds and theoretical perspectives, but we believe we develop through it – by respecting, listening and learning from each other we become stronger, together!" (https://www.facebook.com/pg/PolishFeminists/about/?ref=page_internal)
- 49 https://www.facebook.com/events/192392014525826/?active_tab=about
- 50 Although, interestingly, I have not been able to detect any references to the Icelandic strike on the Facebook page of the Icelandic Facebook group (which is mainly written in Icelandic), references to the historic strike were made on the English-language Icelandic news site RÚV as being an inspiration for the Polish protests."
- 51 <http://pressphotos.biz/thumbnails.php?album=2884>
- 52 Available: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1666165643698900/>
- 53 <https://www.facebook.com/events/348181902196361/>
- 54 <https://www.facebook.com/partiarazem/posts/675554642612595:0> [Picture: A photo in the backgrounds shows Korean women during a protest, clad in black and holding transparencies with slogans in Korean and with feminist symbols. The text on the picture says: "#CzarnyProtest w KoreiPld.!", which means: "#BlackProtest in South Korea!". Right under it there is text in Korean: "한국여성들과함께결속하여", which means: "Solidarity with Korean women!"]
- 55 (Chinchay & Cortijo 2017).
- 56 The figure is reported on the website for the US section of the International Women's Strike. LINK?
- 57 <http://parodemujeres.com/about-us-acerca-de/movement/>
- 58 November 10, 2016, <http://parodemujeres.com/international-womens-strike/>
- 59 <http://parodemujeres.com/why-do-i-strike-porque-paro/>
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- 63 Santomaso & Gago, 2017.