Chapter 12
Hope as Master Frame in Feminist Mobilization: Between Liberal NGO-ization and Radical-Intersectional Street Politics

Alexandra Ana

12.1 Introduction

Scholars argue for a paradigm shift regarding social movements' claims for justice, from redistribution towards recognition, the later dominating the last decades. Today's struggles and claims on social justice are divided between redistribution – aiming at a just sharing of resources and welfare, and recognition of a different standpoint, based on ethnical, racial, sexual orientation or gender components (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 7). To inquire about the cultural replacing the material or identity replacing class is inadequate since it confines recognition to identity politics and ignores the dynamic relationship between redistribution claims and challenges to misrecognition (Hobson 2003, p. 1). The equitable distribution of economic resources is associated with the remedy of racial, gender, sexuality, or citizenship related subordination and this nexus becomes more obvious today, in the context of a growing politics of social exclusion, supported by technocratic, neoliberal arguments. The fall of communism, the free-market ideology, and the ascendance of identity politics played an important role in downgrading redistribution claims when recognition demands were increasingly predominant (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 8). Nonetheless, the 2008 financial crisis and the 2015 refugee (reception) crisis opened the opportunity to bring back class into public debates, affirming the necessity to bridge between recognition and redistribution claims.

In Romania, feminist activists and scholars agree about the feminization of poverty and that certain groups of women face multiple obstacles to enter the labor market, to earn a decent income. Feminists also agree that societies depend on the care work of women – unrecognized, unpaid or low paid, flexible, in formal and informal markets. They agree as well that deprivation and poverty are related to

---

A. Ana (✉)

Department of Political Science and Sociology, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy
e-mail: alexandra.ana@sns.it

social rights and entitlements or the lack of, threatened during the economic crisis. Austerity measures around the world gave rise to protests to which feminists aligned (*feministas indignadas* in Spain). In Romania, the 2012 anti-austerity mobilizations had a visible, strong feminist component, divided nevertheless between those who challenged the democracy-liberal-market consensus and those who supported it (Ana 2017).

The anti-communist backlash in public debates informs about the discursive opportunity structure during post-communism and the possibilities for subversive movements, with progressive narratives, such as the feminist one, to engage with a critique, not just of welfare state retrenchment, but of the welfare chauvinism and neoliberal capitalism that split people between the meritorious contributors and the non-worthy–migrant, Roma, the poor[1].

While feminist scholars criticized neoliberal globalization (Jaggar 2005), neoliberal policies, arguing for welfare measures to support dependency work and as a matter of justice for women (Fraser 1994), some Romanian feminist scholars argued that in post-communist countries, welfare policies are detrimental for women (Miroiu 2004a, b). During the first decades of post-communism, when the anti-communist backlash was at its apogee, the feminist movement debuted as an intellectual-elitist endeavor, constituted within a mainstream liberal philosophy (Molocea 2015). It soon became NGO-ized, in the context of privatization and deregulation and acting sometimes as a substitute for the retreating welfare provisions that already represented a space for women paid and unpaid labor and feminist struggles (Bernal and Grewal 2014, p. 9). It followed the path of other social movements in Eastern Europe–of an early institutionalization within the process of democratization, under the influence of funds available to NGOs (Della Porta and Diani 2006, p. 246). The democratization and free-market discourse, coupled with the integration within supranational structures, inhibited criticism towards hegemonic institutions that advocated global scale marketization and liberalization, but which nevertheless developed in parallel, in an underground scene. Feminist autonomous groups organized around political and cultural activities, supporting an anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, no borders, and anti-capitalist discourse. Due to the anti-left backlash, to threats from the extreme-right and to police repression[2], they remained in the underground, thus less visible in the public discourse.

The late 2000s financial crisis and the 2015 refugee (reception) crisis opened a discursive window of opportunity (Koopmans and Statham 1999) where class, economic inequalities, and poverty began to penetrate the liberal right-wing curtain that aggressively promoted privatization and deregulation, delegitimizing the use of welfare provisions, by deepening the cleavage between the worthy and non-worthy.

An intersectional politics of hope started to contour from feminist positions, through a three-dimensional process of bridge-building at the level of: (1) discourse,

---

[1] See, http://artapolitica.ro/2018/07/17/denuntarea-indezirabililor-noul-civism-timisorean/

[2] See, https://activewatch.ro/ro/freeex/reactie-rapida/6-ani-de-la-summit-ul-nato-la-bucuresti-jandarmeria-gasita-vinovata-pentru-abuzuri-asupra-cetatenilor-dar-lasata-nepedepsita

between redistribution and recognition; culture and welfare; class and gender and ethnicity; (2) movements, within the feminist movement and across movements, between white feminist NGOs, Roma feminist organizations and informal, queer and radical-left collectives, the housing movement, engaging politically in a process of solidarity with forcibly evicted persons, migrant workers, and refugees; (3) repertoires of action, between contentious actions and more institutionalized forms of political interventions. Many if the actors who occasioned these bridge-building processes were feminist activists, with overlapping membership who acted as brokers (Diani 2013).

To address the question of an intersectional politics of hope, questioning neoliberal capitalism and welfare chauvinism, addressing the role of class analysis within contemporary feminist movement discourses and strategies in post-communist Romania, I draw on Nancy Fraser's "perspectival dualism" model and on interviews and participant observation conducted in June 2015 and between January and August 2016 as part of my Phd thesis research. I conducted 44 interviews in Bucharest, Cluj, and Sibiu that lasted between 30 min and almost 3 h.

12.2 Recognition, Redistribution, and Power Struggles

Today's struggles and claims on social justice are divided between those concerning redistribution that aim at a more just distribution of resources and welfare and those regarding recognition of various groups and individual standpoints, based on ethnical, racial, sexual orientation or gender components (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 7). Recognition and redistribution demands are frequently analyzed disjointedly. For example, within the feminism movement, claims for redistribution as a remedy to masculine domination are often disconnected from those for recognition of gender difference, revealing the wider trend of dissociating cultural politics from social politics, the politics of difference from the politics of equality (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 7). To view recognition and redistribution, as disconnected, artificial antitheses is misleading.

To enlighten about the antithetical construction of recognition and redistribution, Fraser reconstructs the paradigms associated with them, as categories of interconnected assumptions about the causes of injustice and its antidotes that inform today's social movements (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 11). Related to maldistribution, class structure refers to the societal institutionalization of the economic mechanisms that systematically exclude some people from access to resources and opportunities to participate as equal partners in social life (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 49). Related to misrecognition, status order indicates the institutionalization of patterns of cultural value that deny some members of society the recognition needed to participate on a par in social interactions (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 49). However, as redistribution and recognition are intertwined, class and status order concomitantly affect access and participation of individuals on a par in society. Consequently, claims for redistribution have effects on recognition and claims for recognition

impact distribution, giving rise to intended or unintended effects. For example, social welfare creates and ranks various subject positions or stigmatize and devaluate certain beneficiaries (Fraser and Honneth 2003, pp. 64–65). They have a complex expressive dimension by the fact that they contain in themselves interpretations of the value and meaning of activities such as "childrearing" versus "wage-earning" and constitute subject positions, such as "welfare mothers" or "taxpayers", affecting both the identities and the economic position of social actors (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 67). Benefits that specifically target the poor are a direct redistributive form of social welfare that tend to stigmatize its beneficiaries, by distinguishing them from "tax-payers" and "wage-earners", adding the insult of misrecognition to the harm of deprivation (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 68). Likewise, proposals to remedy androcentric evaluative patterns may have economic effects on the targeted recipients (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 65). For example, campaigns against prostitution aiming to improve women's status might have negative effects on the economic position of the sex-workers (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 69).

To avoid obscuring identity forms of economic injustice or the economic effects of identity struggles, rather than lining up identity politics with recognition and class politics with redistribution, social movements should claim both recognition for categories of personhood and redistribution of material resources, as they both foster parity of participation and achievement of social justice (Fraser and Honneth 2003, pp. 11–12; Gal 2003, p. 93). "Perspectival dualism" allows transgressing the distinctions between the economic and cultural dimensions of society, showing how redistribution and recognition are intertwined, collide and affect each other, without reducing one of them to the other or constructing irreducible oppositions between the cultural and economic dimensions of society.

Arguing that class and status are not the only dimensions of injustice, some researchers consider that power injustices and struggles over power include within them oases of recognition or redistribution, but are not reducible to them (Ferree and Gamson 2003, p. 35). They complement the "perspectival dualism" model with the power dimension analyzed both as autonomy, reflecting the individual level of self-determination, and as authority referring to the actual participation in decisions at societal level, revealing the relational attribute of power, politically crucial regarding the relation between community and individuals (Ferree and Gamson 2003, pp. 36–37).

Perspectival dualism's understanding of recognition and redistribution as two joint dimensions of social justice opens the possibility to disentangle the intricate relationship between different subordination systems making the target of social movements, such as class exploitation, and patriarchal and racial oppression. It allows engaging with the critiques of feminist movement's cooption by neoliberal global capitalism. The interdependence between recognition and redistribution struggles becomes even more obvious in the context of the financial and refugee (reception) crisis. While the first one brought to the forefront redistribution issues, the second revealed the intricacy between recognition and redistribution related to whom is recognized as worthy and entitled to resources and whom not. Claims for social security are entwined with the reactionary scapegoating, whereby certain

people are not included in the redistribution scheme, being portrayed as undeserving. There is a potential that bottom-up emancipatory initiatives foster solidarity and bridge between recognition and redistribution demands, between culture and welfare as two intertwined dimensions of social justice.

12.3 Class and Gender During Post-communist Transition

In Romania, class analysis missed for decades, due to a strong anti-communist backlash, following the collapse of the state-socialist regime, both as a research category and as discursive practice. Politico-economic liberalism became the heteronomous intellectual framework, whereby libertarianism, neoliberalism and neo-conservatism developed unabated. Ideas associated with the left were rejected, class analysis was pushed to the margins, feminist discourses denigrated, and anti-racist organizing hindered by racist violence and discursive racialization in the build-up process of the ethnic Other, intensively targeting the Roma, but also the Hungarian minority.

During post-communism, many Romanians left the country to work abroad, becoming in 2009 the second biggest group of non-nationals living in other EU member states (Publications Office of the European Union. 2011). Their preferred destination countries were Italy and Spain, despite restrictive measures (Andrén and Roman 2016, p. 253). In 2010, Romanian migrants constituted the largest foreign group in Italy and the second largest in Spain (Andrén and Roman 2016, p. 254). During visa liberalization and shortly after EU accession, more Romanian women migrated to Italy than men (Mara 2012, p. 5). However, among Romanian officials, there was no explicit commitment regarding migration politics, aside from inflammatory discourses and campaigns against the internal Other. The increased negative media coverage of Romanian migrants in Italy and Spain, contributed to growing anti-immigrant sentiments in both countries, and exploded with the "Mailat case" in Italy that triggered violent attacks on Romanian Roma and non-Roma. As a response, through a process marketization of Othering, aiming to prevent the othering of non-Roma Romanians by Western Europeans, the Romanian government conducted a highly expensive nation branding campaign in Italy and Spain, based on a racialized construction of Romani alterity (Kaneva and Popescu 2014).

In the aftermath of the 2015 refugee (reception) crisis, a more detailed discussion about migration emerged in the public debates. While hosting approximately 2.475 refugees, Romania was not a choice for transit or staying for refugees (Iacob et al. 2016). However, the Romanian president together with other state officials showed fierce opposition to the EU refugee quotas[3]. The extreme-right party *Noua Dreaptã* organized a protest to ask for the rejection of refugee quotas, framed as solidarity

---

[3] https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/analiza-consiliul-jai-analizeaza-propunerile-ce-privind-imigrantii-romania-respinge-cotele-obligatorii-14710768

with Bataclan attacks in Paris[4]. Support for refugees and opposition to xenophobic and racist discourses came from radical left, anarchist, queer and feminist activists that organized actions of protest, such as a flash mob in front of the Hungarian Embassy in Bucharest against Orbán's policy to build a fence to bar refugees and solidarity actions to collect goods for refugees and migrants, bridging with international pro-refugees movements[5].

During post-communism, public intellectuals, as part of the new elite were a conservative group, with neoliberal affinities, opposing left discourses and promoting a "preventive antifeminism" within the dominant debates, since other forms of activism, from marginalized positions were considered "subversive and incompatible with the paramount national, ethno-religious concerns" (Roman 2001, p. 63). Civic involvement was considered minimal, due to state mistrust and lack of awareness of democratic contractual rights (Pasti et al. 1997, p. 181), reinforcing a conservative attitude in women as political subjects (Miroiu and Popescu 1999). Other scholars question these diagnoses and explain that there is a gap between normative assumptions and experiences of inequality (Magyari 2006, p. 119), as well as academics' unquestioned privilege and complicity with power and institutions (Lovin 2013, p. 196). Likewise, others argue that, at the end of 2000s, class was rediscovered within academic and public discourses. This was a result of Western capitalism's crisis, which intensified during the financial crisis, and the build-up of a network of transnational young scholars, journalists and civil society actors, making the political opposition to the neoliberal consensus (Ban 2015, p. 640). While the latter dominated the first two decades of transition, informing about the confined possibilities for subversive movements, to engage with class and a critique of neoliberalism, during the recent years, the left-wing oasis opposing the liberal-conservative politics, became more visible (Ban 2015, p. 641).

Much of the criticism of welfare state and the hostility towards egalitarian politics is triggered by a fear of dependency of an omnipotent providential state rooted in the communist epoch, which might interfere in individuals' private life (Gheaus 2008, pp. 198–199). How does the argument of a welfare state being detrimental to women in post-communist context unfold? While before communism women where dependent on men, during communism they were integrated into the public sphere (Magyari et al. 2001), with political rights – although unusable in practice in a one-party system, with access to the labor market and equal pay – although employed in light industries, less prestigious, with lower salaries. Social entitlements, universal and equal access to education were ensured, subsidized by the state. However, while officially women's emancipation was part of the communist program, in practice it was more of a castle in the air rather than a brass tack, with multiple burdens for women, from public work, household and childrearing, to the 1966 criminalization

---

[4] https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/circa-40-persoane-cer-premieruluui-respinga-cotele-obligatorii-imigranti-romania-treptele-tnb-ciolos-responsabil-act-terorism-1_564c9d147d919ed50e591999/index.html

[5] https://www.facebook.com/events/1734002970161537/?active_tab=about;   https://www.facebook.com/events/492008561177998/

of abortion, and the lack of contraceptives that brought hardships for women (Bucur 1994; Roman 2001; Teampău 2007).

After 1989, the profound restructuring of the workforce unveiled national scale contradictions, when governmental reforms privileged male dominated heavy industries, exposed to a slower process of liberalization, compared to female domi-nated light industry, which was the first to be privatized. Many women were employed in the private market, paying taxes to the state, and in underpaid low prestige state sectors. Men occupied positions in prestigious state sectors and heavy industry, earning more. The state support of heavy industries and the privatization of light industries allowed for welfare products for men to be paid from women's taxes, working in the private sector (Miroiu 2004a). The resources of the welfare state came from "market women's taxes" and were redistributed to "state men" (Miroiu 2004a, p. 246). Therefore, Miroiu (2004a, p. 278) argues that the reciprocal support between feminism and liberalism is an emancipatory project, indispensable in post-communist Romania.

The economic liberalism and minimal welfare state favored by Miroiu, would only serve the economic success and autonomy of a certain category of women at the expense of underprivileged women and other vulnerable groups, ignoring those women in the informal grey economy, by privatization and left without social pro-tection or welfare benefits. In the wider region, Emigh et al. (2001, p. 29) show that while women might have had some advantages on the labor market, due to the his-torical legacies of socialism, Roma people and Roma women were disadvantaged and the racialization and feminization of poverty contributed to the development of an "underclass" inhibiting the elimination of absolute poverty. Those women who found new opportunities in the capitalist market economy were those privileged enough in terms of status or educational background (Emigh et al. 2001; Ghodsee 2005).

Gender equality was not a priority for transition governments, unless related to EU accession (Massino and Popa 2015, p. 171), expressed through legislative and public policies endeavors to comply with the *acquis communautaire*, considered an import process, labeled "room service" feminism, superficial since the Romanian society did not have the foundation for it (Miroiu 2004b). Likewise, Bucur (1994, p. 225) explained that during communism, women were given rights before they "could read and write – before they would even understand the meaning of voting rights" without engaging in a "conscious fight and organized movement", curtailing those efforts of feminist groups to create spaces of resistance and alternative dis-courses and to improve legislation and policies. This was the context and the man-ner in which during the first decades of post-communist regime: liberal feminism instituted itself as the mainstream form of feminism; class and a critique of political economy were ousted from the public discourse; and racism contributed to the depoliticization of the socioeconomic aspects of Roma marginalization (Vincze in Gheorghe et al. 2018).

Critiques of the first wave of transition's liberal feminism argue that these are simple causation models that contribute to constrict women's agencies and conflate subjectivities to victimization, passivity, and false-consciousness (Lovin 2013,

p. 196). During post-communism, the widespread support for neoliberal policies and the reticence towards the state deepened the existing dependencies for women, creating new ones, both unjust. The double-earner/double-carer model or universal caregiver model (Gornick and Meyers 2003, p. 3), or the caregiver parity model (Fraser 1994) start from the premise of nuclear families, corresponding to Western reality, while in post-communist countries different generations might still live together and child-care is provided within the family (Gheaus 2008, p. 193). The gap between the existing gender equality legislation and its implementation widened through lack of enforcement and deficiencies in application. Moreover, the economic crisis and the anti-austerity measures – some of the severest in EU (Stoicu 2012), translated into cuts in welfare provisions and state salaries. This is to be understood in the context of rising of neo-conservatism and ethno-nationalism in the years following the crisis, inflamed during the refugee crisis by state officials' opposition to the refugee quotas and the extreme right's xenophobic anti-migrants discourse.

12.4   Feminism After 1989: Between NGO-ization and Street Movement

The fall of the communist regimes, the EU accession along with the shift in social movement theory during the 1990s towards cultural approaches exposed scholars to different understandings of the dynamics of contestation and social and political activism. Most of the literature on post-communist feminism in Central and Eastern Europe described activism as transactional, professionalized and lacking potential for broad political mobilization (Petrova and Tarrow 2007; Císař and Vráblíková 2013), using conventional tactics of influence, being NGO-ized (Grünberg 2000). The financial dependency on foreign resources (Grünberg 2000; Gal 2003) studded the NGO-ization hypothesis and turned scholars to the effects of EU funding on NGOs (Roth 2007) and activists' mobilization at international level (Císař and Vráblíková 2010). While these accounts frame a hostile picture of activism in the region, recent research (Jakobsson and Saxonberg 2013) challenge the NGO-ization diagnosis, emphasizing the variety of mobilizations, groups, and repertoires (Regulska and Grabowska 2008; Vlad 2015; Lovin 2013). In Romania, the anti-communist backlash contributed to consolidate the liberal feminism as the mainstream form, while obscuring the contributions on the one hand of queer feminist informal groups associated with the anarcho-punk scene that produced an anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, no borders, and anti-capitalist discourse that remained mostly in the underground, and on the other hand of feminist Roma groups trapped in tensions either within the anti-racist Roma movement or the liberal NGO-ized feminism (Vlad 2015, pp. 98–99).

Roma feminist groups and autonomous, informal collectives, targeting different yet overlapping manifestations of oppression and showing a steady commitment to

various forms of protest have not only coexisted with the NGO-ized feminism, but engaged in synergetic actions, as the latter moved towards more confrontational tactics and inclusive, intersectional politics. The deepening of the economic crisis, accompanied by a rise of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia (ECRI 2011) gave rise to attacks that served as a catalyst for cooperation, occasioning a bridge-building between anarcho-queer, Roma, and liberal NGO-ized feminisms. These tensions and external threats proved necessary for the crystallization of a more inclusive politics of hope, from intersectional positions, emphasizing class exploitation, the racialization of poverty, the oppression of sexual minorities, or housing issues. They favored bridging between recognition and redistribution, between culture and welfare as intertwined dimensions of justice that affect each other in practice and need to be addressed together.

In Romania, during the first decades of post-socialism, feminism developed in four directions. First, in academia, gender studies became institutionalized at the end of the 90s, with the first state subsidized gender studies programs built-up at the National School of Political Science and Public Administration (SNSPA) in Bucharest, created a few years after dispersed courses of feminist theory organized around the Feminist Analysis Society AnA that did research and published the feminist studies journal *AnAlize* (Miroiu 2010, p. 587). In 2000, another gender studies Masters Studies was created in Cluj at Babes-Bolyai University and, in 2004, in Timisoara. While the gender program in Bucharest adopted a liberal social stratification and NGO-ized feminist approach to research, the gender studies MA in Cluj integrated class and ethnicity from an intersectional feminist perspective, under the influence of neo-Marxism.

Second, although gender equality was not a priority at the level of formal official politics, gender equality and non-discrimination bodies were created to comply with the *acquis communautaire* during EU pre-accession. This opened the possibility of collaboration with feminist NGOs that could participate in policy-making, in the area of gender equality, non-discrimination, and violence against women. The search for legitimacy, to be recognized as official partners by the state, further pushed NGOs towards formalization and professionalization, supported by the availability of funds, from international and European donors. Dependency on financial resources charged NGOs with more bureaucratic work, leaving them with fewer resources for unpredictable, reactive actions. This faced them with charges of depoliticization and demobilization.

Lastly, queer feminist self-managed collectives crystalized on the anarcho-punk scene, combining political, and cultural activities around zine production, reading circles, concerts, and protests and Roma feminism developed bringing to the forefront the reality of intersectional oppressions through theatre or grassroots and community organizing. The Food not bombs chapter in Cluj organized an autonomous market, Ladyfest Romania was organized in Timisoara in 2005[6] and in Bucharest in

---

[6] https://fia.pimienta.org/05/cd/en/festival.html

2007 together with a Take Back the Night March[7], anti-NATO protests were organized in 2008 that were severely repressed by the police[8]. In efforts to bridge between class, gender, and ethnicity, Eniko Vincze engaged in contesting the forced evictions and relocations in Cluj affecting mostly the Roma and organizing with the evicted communities to fight for housing rights. In Bucharest, *Giuvlipen*, the Roma queer feminist theatre company addressed arranged under-age marriages, lack of access to education, mental illness, and Roma LGBTQIA issues[9] and *E-Romnja* organization developed projects towards the involvement and consolidation of the Roma women position in Romanian society[10].

12.5   Intersectional Emancipatory Struggles and Street Feminism

During the recent years, an intersectional politics of hope consolidates, through three bridge-building processes, fostered by feminist activists who acted as brokers – position facilitated by their overlapping membership in formal organizations, informal collectives and movements. They bridged at the level of movements – between movements and within the feminist movement; at the level of repertoires of action – between contentious and institutionalized tactics; and at the level of discourses – between recognition and redistribution claims, culture and welfare, re-politicizing class along with gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The emergence of these interrelated processes was facilitated by the discursive opportunity opened by the financial and refugee (reception) crises.

First, within the movement, the process of bridge-building between different feminisms involved collaboration between feminist NGOs and newer feminist Roma organizations, through joint projects, targeting women's emancipation at grassroots level, between queer self-managed feminist groups and queer Roma feminist activists, in the political-artistic sphere or at the level of contentious mobilizations. The role of activists with overlapping membership, who acted as bridge-builders, was crucial. For example, while working together at *Agentia Impreună* – an organization fighting for Roma's rights, two feminist activists nurtured the idea of contributing to the bridge-building between the Roma and the feminist movement through common grounds, one of which was violence against women[11]. One of the two activists was also a member of *Filia* (organization that initially worked on gender studies from a more liberal perspective) and together with her colleague from *Agentia Impreună* and activists from the feminist association

---

[7] https://fia.pimienta.org/weblog/?p=223

[8] https://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2008/04/395456.html

[9] https://www.piqd.com/global-finds/giuvlipen-the-romanian-feminist-roma-theatre-company

[10] http://e-romnja.ro/misiune/

[11] A.F. 1 – Filia.

Front co-organized the 2011 protest for the introduction of the protection order for the victims of domestic violence[12]. Subsequently, both activists left *Agentia Impreună*. One of them became the president of *Filia*. The other founded the Roma feminist organization *E-Romnja*. Together they developed the project "*Phenja* – violence does not have color" on preventing and combating violence against women that aims to build initiative groups of Roma and non-Roma women based on some common experiences, politicizing class inequalities and poverty, while accounting both for the gendered and ethicized differences in experiencing violence and economic inequalities[13].

Still at the level of bridging within and with other movements, *Macaz–Teatru Bar Coop* – as a space and collective that aimed to develop and promote a politically engaged theatre repertoire, by supporting projects that critically analyze the contemporary socio-political dynamics and retell the local history from liberating positions[14], played a crucial role at bridge-building between movements and collectives, including those working from a feminist perspective. Some members of the queer feminist collective *Dysnomia* were as well part of *Macaz*, where they held some of the collective's meetings or launched their first feminist zine. The Roma queer feminist theatre company *Giuvlipen* played some of their plays at *Macaz*, among which *Gadjo Dildo* or *Cine a omorât-o pe Szomna Grancsa*[15].

Another point of bridging is related to the right to housing struggle, where activists from *Frontul Comun pentru Dreptul la Locuire* (FCDL) were also members of *Dysnomia* collective and of *Macaz*, where they organized several encounters. FCDL also worked with *E-Romnja* and *Desire Foundation* that developed the campaign *Căşi sociale ACUM!* [Social housing NOW!], against ghettoization in Patarât (a neighborhood in Cluj), and organized several street protests in different localities to reclaim housing justice for Roma, especially those belonging to the impoverished working class[16]. Involved in the Roma, feminist and, more recently, housing movement, the founder of *E-Romnja*, contributed to bridge between the different movements, acting as a broker. Challengingly, she recalls the difficulties to convince feminist organizations to work on evictions, in a context in which the dominant feminism was not explicitly anti-racist (Gheorghe in Gheorghe et al. 2018). Ultimately, *Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate* (CPE) collaborated with FCDL[17] and members of *Front* and participated at the anti-evictions protests. Explaining their intersectional strategy, one of the members of FCDL, also a member of *Dysnomia* collective, mentions:

---

[12] http://www.ziare.com/stiri/proteste/protest-fata-de-violenta-asupra-femeilor-vineri-la-palatul-par-lamentului-1135139. Accessed 14 Jul 2019.

[13] A.F. 1 – Filia; http://e-romnja.ro/e-romnja/projects_in_progressdetailed_romani.html. Accessed 5 Sep 2019.

[14] https://www.macazcoop.ro/about-us-1. Accessed 5 Sep 2019.

[15] https://www.facebook.com/pg/giuvlipen/events/?ref=page_internal;   http://artapolitica.ro/2017/05/09/dreptate-pentru-szomna-grancsa/

[16] https://www.desire-ro.eu/?p=3116. Accessed 3 Sep 2019.

[17] C.C. – CPE.

> For us, political mobilization is very important, not charity, not paternalism, not representa-
> tion. These are fundamental principles because I come from this anarchist area, you know?
> We cannot say that we have equal relationships (with the evicted people from the Common
> Front) because we are not equal, we are not the same, we know. But the relationship must
> be fair, just and transparent and non-invasive from our part (…) I mean, we're educated
> differently, meaning that I have more privileges (…) There is an inherent class tension in
> these things that is very important and I'm not going to pretend that it does not exist. For
> example, there is a fundamental skepticism, important and cool, a suspicion from the work-
> ing class and Roma in the same class towards non-Roma who are more privileged.

Second, bridge-building between contentious repertoires of action, more specific to
queer feminist anarchist groups and institutionalized tactics that dominated the
interventions of mainstream liberal feminist NGOs culminated during the organiza-
tion of Slutwalk Bucharest in 2011. How the proximity between the two occurred?
Some feminists, previously involved in the organization of LadyFest participated at
the creation of the radical left project of Alternative Library[18] and, in 2010, started
organizing feminist reading sessions, which became consolidated and known as the
Feminist Reading Group. The Alternative Library offered many feminist titles and
was an alternative to Filia Centre's Library – the only one on gender studies in
Bucharest. Activists from Front Association started to mingle with those from the
Reading Group with whom they found ideological proximity and out of this encoun-
ter, the project of organizing Slutwalk Bucharest grew. Slutwalk Bucharest was a
moment of coagulation between queer feminist collectives and feminist NGOs that
started to meet in the courtyard of Alternative Library to organize the march, write
banners and brainstorm about slogans[19]. As processes of intra-movement bridge-
building started, of convergence and familiarization among different feminisms,
bringing about a knowledge exchange process in terms of discourses, organizational
practices, and tactical repertoires. It involved contamination regarding protest tac-
tics, non-hierarchical organizing and consensual decision-making. It also included
discursive contamination, bringing at the forefront a critique of capitalism and the
anti-racist struggle interlinked with gender, but not reducible to one another.

The process of bridging between institutional tactics specific to NGOs and grass-
roots activism in communities is also illustrated by the founder of *E-Romnja*,
explains that while working in organizations for Roma rights, where she coordi-
nated gender related projects, she distanced herself from Roma women, because the
organizational strategies favored dialogue mostly with formal official institutions.
When she realized that being decoupled from Roma women, she is not aware of
their perspectives and experiences, she decided to go back to the grassroots, work
with women in community development, "speaking about water, electricity and
tampons" (Gheorghe in Gheorghe et al. 2018, p. 122). To this end, she founded
E-Romnja (Gheorghe in Gheorghe et al. 2018, p. 122).

---

[18] From dissatisfaction with the police violence during the NATO summit in 2008, a few years later
the project of the Alternative Library was born.

[19] IT Front, Bucharest; CP Front, Bucharest; AP Accept, Biblioteca Alternativa Bucharest.

Third, bridge-building at the level of discourse and the discursive contamination were occasioned by these collective action encounters and enhanced by the role of activists with overlapping membership, who acted as brokers. This allowed for a re-politicization of class along with gender and ethnicity, fostering the debut of an intersectional politics of hope from working class, anti-racist, feminist positions. It was out of the societal tensions revealed during these collective action processes that discursive contamination emerged. For example, activists remember that anti-capitalist messages and some "racist slippages" provoked heated discussions[20], during the organization of Slutwalk:

> It was a moment of hope for me, when the Slutwalk was organized, though after it faded away. I have learned that there are other groups that have feminist concerns, with other nuances and other directions but for me it was important that there was this moment when we did something together and we talked (…) with all the differences and with all the quarrels. I do not know if you remember the anti-capitalist banner? It was a panic with an anti-capitalist message, and people began to worry. It triggered a little reaction and tension and eventually the banner existed and walked through the march[21].

For some institutionalized feminist organizations such as *Filia*, Slutwalk was anti-system and conveyed a too radical message[22]. Its then president did not want to associate *Filia* with Slutwalk, arguing that it would look bad on the organization's CV and they risk losing potential funding[23]. However, she agreed that *Filia* members participate individually at the organization of Slutwalk, but without any affiliation mentioned. A class discourse or a political economy critique was inexistent in *Filia* until contact with the anarcho-queer feminism of the Reading Group and later the Feminist Centre Sofia Nadejde (CFSN)[24]. One of *Filia*'s leaders mentions about this process of contamination:

> No, in Filia, I did not feel that there was a discourse about capitalism, neoliberalism, until there was contact with the informal feminist groups, mostly the girls from CFSN. Let's be serious, until then I did not feel that there was a discourse on capitalism or neoliberalism in Filia; I did not hear these words in my life. (…) It's okay that it started then, but it did not exist before. So it was a matter of influence from my point of view[25].

There was a similar resistance to integrate a feminist anti-racist perspective by some of the core institutions for gender studies or mainstream feminist organizations. Carmen Gheorghe from *E-Romnja* recalls that initially, when she attended the Master's Programme in Gender Studies at SNSPA "Roma women or Muslim women were spoken about as if they were aliens, meaning that they were distant women, women who are forced to marry and wear veils" (Gheorghe in Gheorghe,

---

[20] B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa, R. 1 – Front, S.P. – ACCEPT, Biblioteca Alternativa.

[21] B.T. Biblioteca Alternativa.

[22] V.A. – Front.

[23] V.A. – Front.

[24] A.F. 1 – Filia.

[25] A.F. 1 – Filia.

et al. 2018, p. 116). Subsequently, she managed to bring discussions about structural inequalities and privileges, contributing to change the mainstream liberal feminist discourse (Gheorghe in Gheorghe, et al. 2018, p. 116). As *Filia* was created initially to support the gender studies master, their feminist perspectives were blind to class and ethnicity at first and only later on changed, through turnover and transformations within the organization and through discursive contamination occasioned by brokers and collective action encounters.

Bridge-building and contamination at discursive level between the political economy and the cultural ideologies that serve to justify exploitation and domination continued after Slutwalk, through different protest actions. For example, feminist activists influenced and challenged the dynamics of the winter 2012 protests (Ana 2017). They coalized to resist and stand against racism, xenophobia, sexism, and homophobia manifested during episodes of racist violence towards Roma protesters and anti-abortion promotion (Ana 2017, p. 1487). The feminist group in the University Square had ideological differences of which activists were conscious from the Slutwalk march. Feminists mostly associated with the Alternative Library, conveyed anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-authoritarian messages, radically positioning against international corporations, police and state repression, while feminists coming from NGOs expressed more liberal and democratic positions framed in terms of women's rights as citizens and taxpayers.

Through collective action encounters, the tensions within the feminist movement, between a liberal feminism, that became mainstream, NGO-ized, and with initial difficulties in integrating class, ethnicity, sexuality, an anarcho-queer feminism trying to organize outside the dominant structures, and a Roma feminism organizing both in NGOs and informal collectives brought to the surface social tensions that were wiped out in the context of anti-communist backlash and of the promise of individual success in democracy and free-market economy. Out of these tensions and with the role played by brokers through overlapping membership in different movements, was born the possibility of bridging within and between movements towards building a more intersectional politics of hope, in which recognition and redistribution claims that target different yet overlapping oppressions and injustices are addressed together.

The subsequent refugee (reception) crisis, brought slight visibility to the immigration issue. In the context of the establishment of EU quotas for refugees and of the construction of the neoliberal order, shaped by marketization and enacted by racism (Vincze 2014), it was anarchist, queer, and feminist activists that proposed solidarity with refugees to counter-act government's opposition towards quotas and extreme right anti-refugees propaganda. The Community Centre *Claca* organized solidarity actions with immigrant workers from outside Europe, including actions to commemorate those who died at the gates of Europe[26] or actions to collect goods for

---

[26] https://centrulclaca.wordpress.com/2015/04/29/in-aceeasi-barca-solidaritate-est-europeana-cu-muncitorii-imigranti-din-afara-europei-vineri-1-mai-ora-19-00/

refugees in the neighboring countries[27]– subsequently organized at *Macaz*. Claca also politicized the exploitation of Romanian migrant workers in Europe, as for example the case of construction workers of a mall in Berlin – subsequently called the "mall of shame" who were not paid for their work[28]. *Macaz* staged theatre plays that politicized the issue of migration and refugees among which the documentary theatre play *Nu ne-am nascut la locul potrivit* (We were not born in the right place) that blends the life stories of five people's refugee experience in Romania, with fragments from the guide on how to get Romanian citizenship for foreign citizens[29]. For these groups, feminism and intersectionality are part of their political method of action and organizing in in order to address the multiple and interrelated relations of domination in which sexism, racism, homophobia, are used to justify and support capitalist exploitation of certain groups in the society.

12.6   Conclusions

The economic crisis opened a discursive window of opportunity, bringing about a process of bridge-building and intra-movement socialization between different groups, involving a shift from a politics of blind hope characterizing liberal NGO-ized feminism, towards a politics of intersectional hope targeting overlapping oppressions. This move included a transfer and contamination by contentious practices and intersectional perspectives where class, ethnicity, and sexuality were as important as gender, with anti-capitalist, anti-fascist ideas and discourses, critical towards privatization and deregulation, opposing oppressive extreme-right discourses, including welfare chauvinism. The process of bridge-building was accompanied by a shift towards more confrontational tactics challenging the diagnosis of apathic, transactional civils society in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.

References

Ana, A. (2017). The role of the feminist movement participation during the winter 2012 mobilizations in Romania. *Europe-Asia Studies, 69*(9), 137–162.

Andrén, D., & Roman, M. (2016). Should I stay or should I go? Romanian migrants during transition and enlargements. In M. Kahanec & K. Zimmermann (Eds.), *Labor migration, EU enlargement, and the great recession* (pp. 247–269). Berlin: Springer.

Ban, C. (2015). Beyond anticommunism: The fragility of class analysis in Romania. *East European Politics and Societies, 29*(3), 640–650.

---

[27] https://centrulclaca.wordpress.com/

[28] https://centrulclaca.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/mall-ul-din-berlin-o-poveste-despre-exploatare-cu-muncitori-romani/

[29] http://artapolitica.ro/2014/11/17/nu-ne-am-nascut-in-locul-potrivit-despre-refugiu-si-neapartenenta/

Bernal, V., & Grewal, I. (Eds.). (2014). *Theorizing NGOs: States, feminisms, and neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bucur, M. (1994). An American feminist in Romania. *Social Politics, 1*(2), 223–230.

Císař, O., & Vráblíková, K. (2010). The Europeanization of social movements in the Czech Republic: The EU and local women's groups. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 43*(2), 209–219.

Císař, O., & Vráblíková, K. (2013). Transnational activism of social movement organizations: The effect of European Union funding on local groups in the Czech Republic. *European Union Politics, 14*(1), 140–160.

Council of Europe: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). (2011). *Annual report on ECRI's activities*. https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-on-ecri-s-activities-cover-ing-the-period-from-1-january-/16808ae6d7. Accessed 22 Oct 2018.

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. Malden: Blackwell.

Diani, M. (2013). Brokerage. In D. A. Snow, D. D. Porta, B. Klandermans, & D. McAdam (Eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of social and political movements*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm017.

Emigh, R. J., Fodor, E., & Szelenyi, I. (2001). The racialization and feminization of poverty? In R. J. Emigh, E. Fodor, & I. Szelenyi (Eds.), *Poverty, ethnicity and gender in Eastern Europe during the market transition* (pp. 1–32). Westport: Praeger.

Ferree, M. M., & Gamson, W. A. (2003). The gendering of governance and the governance of gender: Abortion politics in Germany and the USA. In B. Hobson (Ed.), *Recognition struggles and social movements. Contested identities, agency and power* (pp. 35–63). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fraser, N. (1994). After the family wage: Gender equity and the welfare state. *Political Theory, 22*(4), 591–618.

Fraser, N., & Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution or recognition. A political-philosophical exchange*. London: Verso.

Gal, S. (2003). Movements of feminism: The circulation of discourses about women. In B. Hobson (Ed.), *Recognition struggles and social movements. Contested identities, agency and power* (pp. 93–118). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gheaus, A. (2008). Gender justice and the welfare state in post-communism. *Feminist Theory, 9*(2), 185–206.

Gheorghe, C., Mark, L., & Vincze, E. (2018). Towards an anti-racist feminism for social justice in Romania. In A. Kóczé, V. Zentai, J. Jovanović, & E. Vincze (Eds.), *The Romani women's movement struggles and debates in central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 111–134). London: Routledge.

Ghodsee, K. (2005). *The Red Riviera: gender, tourism, and postsocialism on the Black Sea*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Gornick, J. C., & Meyers, M. K. (2003). *Families that work: Policies for reconciling parenthood and employment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Grünberg, L. (2000). NGO-ization of feminism in Romania: The failure of a success. *AnAlize: Journal of Feminist Studies, 7*(7), 14–19.

Hobson, B. (2003). Introduction. In B. Hobson (Ed.), *Recognition struggles and social movements. Contested identities, agency and power* (pp. 1–17). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Iacob, A., Marcu, G., Zafiu, R., Bondoc, I., & Radu, A. (2016). Raport privind percepția românilor despre criza refugiaților. Asociația Pro Democratia. http://www.apd.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Raport-de-cercetare-privind-criza-refugiatilor.pdf. Accessed 22 Oct 2018.

Jaggar, A. M. (2005). "Saving Amina": Global justice for women and intercultural dialogue. *Ethics & International Affairs, 19*(3), 55–75.

Jakobsson, K., & Saxonberg, S. (2013). *Beyond NGO-ization: The development of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge.

Kaneva, N., & Popescu, D. (2014). "We are Romanian, not Roma": Nation branding and postsocialist discourses of alterity. *Communication Culture & Critique, 7*, 506–523.

Koopmans, R., & Statham, P. (1999). Political claims analysis: Integrating protest event and politi-cal discourse approaches. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly, 4*(2), 203–221.

Lovin, L. (2013). Grounds for hope? Voices of feminism. In J. Kubik & A. Linch (Eds.), *Postcommunism from within: Social justice, mobilization, and hegemony* (pp. 191–210). New York: New York University Press.

Magyari, E. (2006). Romanian gender regimes and women's citizenship. Women and citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe. In J. Lukic, J. Regulska, & D. Zarvisek (Eds.), *Women and citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 21–38). London: Ashgate.

Magyari, N. L., Magyari-Vincze, E., Popescu, L., & Rotariu, T. (2001). The social construction of Romanian poverty: The impact of ethnic and gender distinctions. In I. Szelenyi (Ed.), *Poverty, ethnicity, and gender in Eastern Europe during the market transition*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Mara, I. (2012). Surveying Romanian migrants in Italy before and after the EU Accession: Migration plans, labour market features and social inclusion. *NORFACE MIGRATION Discussion Paper No. 2012–24*. http://ww.norface-migration.org/publ_uploads/NDP_24_12.pdf. Accessed 22 Oct 2018.

Massino, J., & Popa, R. (2015). The good, the bad, and the ambiguous: Women and the transition from communism to pluralism in Romania. In C. M. Hassenstab & S. P. Ramet (Eds.), *Gender (In)equality and gender politics in Southeastern Europe* (pp. 171–191). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Miroiu, M. (2004a). State men, market women. The effects of left conservatism on gender politics in Romanian transition. *Feminismo/s, 3*, 207–234.

Miroiu, M. (2004b). *Drumul către autonomie. Teorii politice feministe*. Iasi: Polirom.

Miroiu, M. (2010). Not the right moment! Women and the politics of endless delay in Romania. *Women's History Review, 19*(4), 575–593.

Miroiu, M., & Popescu, L. (1999). Condiţia femeilor din România între tradiţie şi modernizare. In L. Popescu (Ed.), *Gen si politica. Femeile din România în viata publica* (pp. 3–27). AnA: Bucharest.

Molocea, A. (2015). Reconstrucţia feminismului românesc în cadrul mişcării de femei (1990–2000). In M. Miroiu (Ed.), *Mişcări feministe şi ecologiste în România (1990–2014)* (pp. 19–81). Iasi: Polirom.

Pasti, V., Miroiu, M., & Codiţă, C. (1997). *România: Starea de fapt*. Bucharest: Nemira.

Petrova, T., & Tarrow, S. (2007). Transactional and participatory activism in the emerging European polity: The puzzle of East-Central Europe. *Comparative Political Studies, 40*(1), 74–94.

Publications Office of the European Union. (2011). *Migrants in Europe. A statistical portrait of the first and second generation*. Luxembourg: Eurostat.

Regulska, J., & Grabowska, M. (2008). Will it make a difference? In S. Roth (Ed.), *Gender poli-tics in the expanding European Union: Mobilization, inclusion, exclusion* (pp. 137–154). New York: Berhahn Books.

Roman, D. (2001). Gendering Eastern Europe: Pre-feminism, prejudice and east-west dialogues in post-communist Romania. *Women's Studies International Forum, 24*(1), 53–66.

Roth, S. (2007). Sisterhood and solidarity? Women's organizations in the expanded European Union. *Social Politics, 14*(4), 460–487.

Stoicu, V. (2012). Austerity and structural reforms in Romania. *Freidrich Ebert Stiftung: International Policy Analysis*. http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/09310.pdf. Accessed 5 Nov 2019.

Teampău, P. (2007). 'It won't go away'. Surviving a feminist consciousness in post-socialist Romania. *Intersections: Women's and Gender Studies in Review across Disciplines, 5*, 70–75.

Vincze, E. (2014). The racialization of Roma in the 'new' Europe and the political potential of Romani women. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 21*(4), 435–442.

Vlad, I. (2015). Dezvoltări în mişcarea de femei dupa 2000. In M. Miroiu (Ed.), *Mişcări feministe şi ecologiste în România (1990–2014)* (pp. 89–187). Iasi: Polirom.