

FATIGUE

Protest Movements as a Form of Political Participation in CEE

MINA P BAGINOVA – ESR 15



Project Title

***Post-1989 Social Movements in East Central Europe: Activist
Cultures of Contemporary Feminist Movements and Women's
Mobilizations in Poland and Slovakia***

Research Summary

In recent years the increasingly authoritarian governments in East Central Europe have employed so-called *anti-gender* discourse that is characterised by an opposition to questions related to topics such as reproductive rights, access to abortion, the rights of LGBTQ folks, sexual education, or legal tools for elimination of violence against women. These dynamics go hand in hand with the emergence of conservative and often fundamentalist *anti-gender* movements in East Central Europe and elsewhere. At the same time there has been a significant increase of women's protests and feminist mobilizations. In East Central Europe, particularly in Poland, attacks on reproductive rights have mobilized diverse actors around the large-scale protests across the country, challenging the conservative policy-making decisions, as well as inspiring the formation of new activist platforms. Similarly, in Slovakia, a new wave of protests to protect the reproductive rights have emerged as a reaction to the attempts to limit legal access to abortion, opening up a space for questions around different forms of feminisms and intersectional resistance. Based my ethnographic fieldwork with contemporary feminist activist cultures in Poland and Slovakia where the dialectical relationship between the progressive movements, anti-gender groups and the state are particularly urgent, this research explores these relationships, as well as inner dynamics and strategies of contemporary feminist mobilizations in CEE today.

Research Question

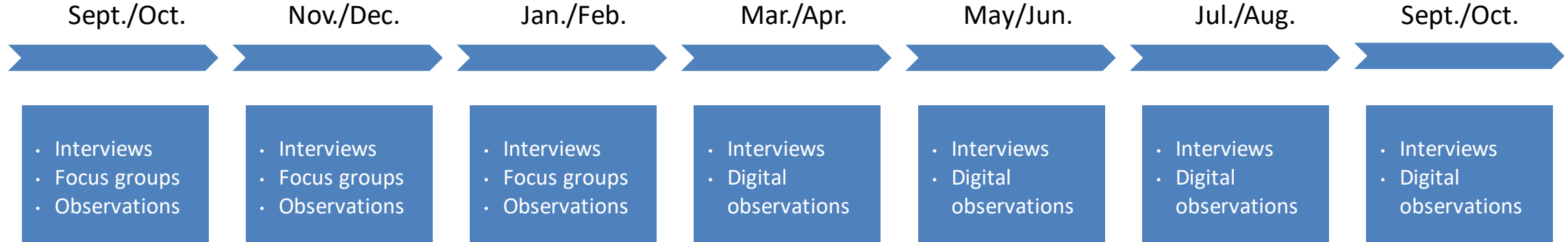
*What are the **feminist activist cultures in CEE** today? How do **the contemporary feminist movements** react to the emergence of **anti-gendered politics**? How the emergence of anti-gender movements and anti-gender discourse of the populist right politics challenge the feminist movements in their **strategy building towards systematic** change in Poland and Slovakia and in the CEE region at large?*

Methodology: Multi-Sited Ethnography & Digital Ethnography

Principles:

1. **On-site “thick”** study of activist cultures and their social life **over prolonged** period of time
2. Study of **multi-layered relationships** of various actors and understanding of social movements as a *process*
3. **Main ethnographic** methods: participant observation and in-depth interviews

2019/2020



Contemporary Feminist Mobilizations in CEE: Background

- 2016 as a turning point in post-1989 feminist mobilizations: Black Protest, Poland
- 2018: mobilizations for reproductive rights, Slovakia
- Right-wing populism & gender: local governmental and transnational anti-gender movements against “gender ideology” - reproductive rights, LGBT+ folks, gender-based violence, sexual education, etc.



Novel Dynamics of Feminist Mobilizations in CEE

- Shaping new feminist debates
- Efforts to mobilize all classes / bridging the urban – rural divide
- Multiplicity of voices & narrations
- Challenging “anti-communism” in post-socialist societies
- Organizing in diaspora
- Building transnational networks & transnational feminist solidarity



Research Explorations

Against anti-gender politics and beyond: towards a broader movement for a systematic change





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