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Feminism

“This generation expresses a feminism that is much more intersectional”

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The opportunity for this interview arose at a women’s seminar at the International Institute for Research and Education, Amsterdam. In a gap in the busy schedule of debates and working commissions dedicated to analysing the most recent cycle of feminist mobilizations, Laia Facet spoke to Nadia de Mond, a member of Communia in Milan and a feminist activist, to review the latest international initiatives of the movement, recent political events in Italy and the prospects for this new emerging feminism.

Nadia, you have been a feminist activist for decades, how does someone with this trajectory see the new cycle of mobilizations?

What is evident in many countries where there have been mobilizations in the past two years is that we are in a new phase of development of international feminism. Of course, it is not a global phenomenon that affects all countries, but it is no longer limited to a continent or a region. We say that we are in a new geopolitical phase and that we cannot think of continuity, something similar happening in the feminist movement. After years of small experiences, collectives and struggles, but where it seemed that not much had progressed, in the last two years several ingredients have combined that were not seen before to make a very rich mixture. And there is this new phenomenon. Which is generational, because those who are build these new mobilizations are very young. Of course alongside older activists, but it is generational. Then also, and this is normal, this generation has its own ways of doing feminism. I think every generation appropriates feminism in its own way. This generation expresses a feminism that is much more intersectional than previously. Very spontaneous, very natural in the less politicized layers, in seeing the continuity of the various oppressions of race, gender, origin and class, of course, that come together in a general malaise that necessitates protest and change.

As for Italy, it is perhaps a challenge for this new feminism to go beyond its social and generational scope. Reaching their mothers, women more integrated in the daily grind of a job. It can touch these layers, some may have known feminism but have not seen its revolutionary force and have abandoned it; others had never had anything to do with it. But it is clear that this new generation has to make alliances with layers of society which are more moderate, more integrated, quieter. The problem is that women from this generation who are more integrated into the world of work are unfortunately not organized in feminist or women's groups or in unions, so it is not easy to link up with them.

I was just going to ask you that in this new phase we have seen the presence and visibility of racialized, veiled, transsexual women with an important presence in the mobilizations. We saw it in the Women's March, but in all the mobilizations it has been emphasized. I remember talking to some of my comrades about whether there was an overcoming of the limits of the second wave. How far are we in overcoming them?

I'm excited about this new wave. But the more bourgeois, more institutional part, is not defeated, it has many ways of maintaining its control and its weight in the women's movement. It has many means of communication, not social media like ours, but the mass ones; women in positions of cultural, political, power and so on, they are there and we will have to confront them still, we have not won the battle. For example, Cinzia Arruza told me that in the United States, part of the initial Women's March tried to silence sectors that called for a strike and a more intersectional and plural, class, racial march ... No, it is not an easy coexistence.

And what has been the process in Italy? You have had a very strong cycle of mobilizations. You have also succeeded in regenerating the structures of the feminist movement, generating new spaces such as [Non Una Di Meno](#). What has this been like?

Unexpected. It has been a convergence between a more radical, revolutionary sector of young feminism that had been structured around abortion in solidarity with the Spanish state, which maintained a feminist assembly structure in Rome. This network (“Io Decido”) came together with the women workers of the anti-violence centres who have their own slightly more institutional network –who were directly affected by the cuts and plans of the government – and some other sectors to create Non Una Di Meno, but the response has gone far beyond these initial forces. The interesting thing is that from the beginning street demonstrations and protests have been combined with national general assemblies the day after to discuss in depth all aspects of what is called violence. Violence that includes all forms of oppression and discrimination against women and LGTBI+ persons. This has allowed the creation of working groups, not only these national mega assemblies of more than two thousand women, but also in large cities. They have been working on content and proposals for action, which has taken almost the entire political year. Now the challenge is to consolidate this great strength. In the last 20 years in Italy there have not been any national feminist structures, everything was very fragmented and localized. So, having maintained this form of national organization is a novelty. The challenge is what perspective to give it.

On the one hand we have the confrontation with the government’s plans. But there are different positions between the more autonomous sectors that do not want to get near the government, the section that says: we will go and we will present our positions to weigh with the strength we have, and another section, linked to the coordination of institutional centres, that is more willing to negotiate because they depend on budgets for their survival. So it's a very difficult discussion.

In addition, we discussed here proposing a national annual meeting of feminism, inspired by the Argentine women again, to maintain an occasion for discussion within feminism that starts from this new wave and is not one of these more institutionalized sectors.

Have you thought about the mobilization of September 28th? What is the abortion question in Italy?

There will be mobilizations by cities, there will not be a national mobilization, to be closer to what's going on on the ground and in hospitals. The problem of law 194, which is the law that determines the possibility of abortion in Italy, is the question of the conscientious objection clause for doctors, which is extended to all health workers. This means 70% of doctors are objectors and in some public hospitals and some regions the possibility of obtaining a termination is very difficult or very late. But here, there is a discussion. Is our goal to change the law, removing this article from the law; or should we ask that all the public structures must ensure that in one way or another the service is guaranteed. This latter is one position, more pragmatic if you want; the other, which is more political, is more interesting, but if you want to do politics you have to say how you are going to change the law. Within a context in which we have a parliament that is called centre left but is more centre right. In this balance of forces, how are you going to change the law? With the PD being a fusion between the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party, the Eurocommunists, there is not a sufficient balance of forces. There should be a huge mobilization, because the risk is that if they discuss law 194 in this Parliament it will worsen; when in addition, from time to time, the right mobilizes to introduce a legal status for the embryo. It is an argument; but the real threat that pregnancy cannot be interrupted and that we cannot continue this way and that we are against conscientious objection, this is clear and there will be several actions. I think it will be a success.

This week we are debating the international scenario of the growth of mobilizations, and the situation of global chaos and the rupture of the social pact that has been evidenced by the political crisis ... What role do you think the feminist movement plays? What strategic role can it play in the coming years?

I see a lot of potential, without denying the difficulties. Together with the phenomenon of the rise of the feminist movement, we discuss the other phenomenon that is the feminized leadership of many other social, territorial, ecological, health, social services, housing movements. Both these things seem to me to indicate that the emptiness

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and the paralysis left by the defeats of the left is beginning to be filled by these new forms of mobilization and that if we work well can also modify the ways of doing activist politics. Ways that incorporate an integral perspective of the life of the people in which sexuality is an issue, but also common ownership, nature and so on. I see a possibility. A new vanguard, I know this concept is under discussion. But these female leaders incorporate a complex of contradictions that can greatly strengthen and be a good basis for the development of new paradigms of change and revolution.

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