


BOOK REVIEW

***Feminist Politics in Neoconservative Russia: An Ethnography of Resistance and Resources.* By Inna Perheentupa. Bristol: Bristol University Press. 204 pp. GBP 80. ISBN 978-1529216967.**

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What can an ethnography of feminist activism in Russia contribute to our understanding of contemporary feminist politics? The book *Feminist Politics in Neoconservative Russia* excellently fulfills the task of inscribing context-specific feminist struggles in authoritarian Russia under the neoconservative turn of the 2010s into the broader picture of transnational feminist politics in the neoliberal digital era.

Three themes around which the book evolves are politics, resistance, and resources. Grounding their approach in the feminist understanding of politics, the author argues convincingly that politics and resistance in the authoritarian context take a variety of forms, overt and covert, and often happen outside of the realm of traditional political spaces and institutions (see also Arik et al. 2023). Such a nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of politics opens a possibility to recognize resistance in actions and activities that may be not perceived as such in a more traditional conceptualization of social movements and activism. Among such activities, according to the book, are art, techniques of self-making, and various forms of mediatized activism.

Inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Perheentupa coins the notion of *reparative politics* (chapter 3), which the author defines as the key dimension of feminist politics in Russia and also internationally. Reparative politics describes a process of political (feminist) awakening as the result of individual painful experiences and traumas when feminism becomes a therapeutic resource for activists. In line with the feminist claim about personal as political, reparative politics bridges individual and collective modes of resistance. In the context, where feminism meets hostility from the political establishment and misunderstanding from the oppositional movements, the personal feminist awareness becomes a starting point in the broader political change, and individual repairing provides resources for aspirations and actions aimed at the structural change. Nonetheless, the book withdraws from romanticizing reparative politics. The author

warns against the potential risk of atomization and individualization of activism imprinted in self-repair and self-awareness techniques. Furthermore, Perheentupa argues that individualization of feminist politics is not a specifically Russian phenomenon but rather a sign of transnational neoliberal and postfeminist tendencies.

The analysis of atomization and fragmentation of the feminist movement in Russia, as well as internal conflicts within feminist activism, is among main contributions of the book. *Feminist Politics in Neoconservative Russia* provides a systematic engagement with the question of resources — symbolic and material — in the feminist movement and how the access to resources influences feminist politics. Interrogating the multiple spaces of feminist resistance in chapter 4, the author pays particular attention to the digital sphere as the most stable domain of Russian feminist activism in the 2010s. The digital realm blurs the boundary between private and public domains of activism and, being widely accessible, provides feminists with a resourceful advantage to build and maintain activist networks in a country as large and geographically spread as Russia. Although the resourcefulness of the digital space is a widely acknowledged aspect of contemporary feminist and LGBTI+ activism (Fotopoulou 2016; Kilic 2023), the book provides novel insights into shortcomings of such activism, pointing out that the lack of physical interactions caused by digitalization of activism contributes to tensions and fragmentation in feminism. Also, the book scrutinizes the reliance of digital activism on public visibility, which creates competition and tensions among activists when those with better social capital and access to media set the public agenda for feminism (chapter 6).

In conclusion, the book highlights the dynamism of the feminist movement in Russia and its adaptability to the uncertain political context. The most drastic change is, of course, the full-scale invasion that Russia launched in Ukraine in February 2022. The book helps explain the current tendencies in Russian feminism, when, on the one hand, the feminist anti-war resistance has become the most organized and coherent response against the war that Russian civil society has demonstrated so far. But on the other hand, atomization and fragmentation of the feminist movement analyzed in the book continues, and the position on the war among Russian feminists is not homogeneous (Rossman 2023; Solovey 2023).

Feminist Politics in Neoconservative Russia is a scrupulous and theoretically rigorous documentation of the developments in Russian feminism in the 2010s. It is therefore regretful that the book focuses primarily on feminist activism in two metropolitan cities — Moscow and St Petersburg. Assumingly, inclusion of other cities and regions into the research design could have nuanced some of book's findings. This notwithstanding, the book is of great interest for feminist scholars, researchers of social movements, and readers who are interested in various forms of political resistance in contemporary Russia.

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