Inception and Demise of Laboratory 1918: Gendering Resistance in Georgia

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Abstract

During the past few years, a reawakening of student activism and political concern has taken place in Georgia. Students have emerged as new social actors and have taken up a pioneering role in the formation of new forms of social protest. In the milieu of post-Soviet left-wing nihilism, a left-wing organization called Laboratory 1918 endeavored to make left-wing rhetoric relevant in public life without the stigma of being pro-Soviet and aspired to bring change through collective action. This paper explores the nature of student activism on the example of Laboratory 1918; it also investigates where Laboratory 1918 and its members position themselves in relation to gender oppression and how it impacts their feminist stance and activism.

Introduction

After the fall of the Soviet Union, left-wing political discourse passed into oblivion and neoliberal and nationalist discourse has instead become prevalent in Georgia. Laboratory 1918 was one of the first student organizations that attempted to rehabilitate the left-wing discourse in Georgia. The promulgation of this discourse has endeared Laboratory 1918 to some, whereas others labeled them as pro-Soviet because in the Georgian context, leftist ideology alludes to a Soviet influence. The activists of Laboratory 1918 had to perpetually prove that they have nothing to do with Soviet politics. Khatia, a Laboratory 1918 activist, notes: “Freedom, Equality, Solidarity is not a Soviet remnant, instead, it is an achievement of French Revolution.”¹ In the milieu of post-Soviet left-wing nihilism, the group

attempted to make left-wing rhetoric relevant in public life without the stigma of being pro-Soviet. Laboratory 1918 aspired to bring change through collective action.

This paper, first and foremost, explores the nature of student activism and how students embark on a journey into activism on the example of a left-wing organization called Laboratory 1918; Secondly, I investigate where Laboratory 1918 and its members position themselves in relation to gender oppression and how it impacts their feminist stance and activism. I focus on left-wing student activism, as I endeavor to explore the possibility of feminist activism within the progressive left-wing politics.

The research consists of plethora of methods: participant and non-participant observation, systemic observation of the online activities of the selected organization, and semi-structured interviews with the members of Laboratory 1918. The fieldwork was conducted from September to December 2012 and from May to October 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia. I have conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 11 male and female Laboratory 1918 activists. In addition, I have observed the selected organization’s online activities until their official Facebook page was removed due to the demise of Laboratory 1918. During my fieldwork in 2012, I attended protest demonstrations organized by Laboratory 1918; I also went to the public meetings, where Laboratory 1918 activists were invited as guest speakers; and finally, I analyzed their media interviews.

Inception of Laboratory 1918

Laboratory 1918 emerged among students of Tbilisi State University in 2011. The title of the organization is symbolic: 1918 is the year when Tbilisi State University (TSU) was founded. In the manifesto, activists lament the lost eminence of TSU and intend to make it a vanguard of civil society. “Laboratory” refers to a place where new discoveries happen, new ideas emerge, and new decisions are made. On May 11 in 2011, Laboratory 1918 activists presented their manifesto in front of TSU’s VI block building. The activists standing on the stage numbered 14 (7 boys and 7 girls). The manifesto was read out loud and speeches were given by two of the activists. Both were boys. A female activist held a

2 See the Manifesto, Laboratory1918.wordpress.com, 11 May 2011, Available at: https://laboratoria1918.wordpress.com
megaphone for the speaker. This invokes the traditional gendered conception of activists: men as active spokespersons and the “makers of revolution,” with female activists as “revolutionary secretaries.”

The organization was not hierarchical and was based on horizontal decision-making principles. The guiding idea was that all the members could express their interests and participate in decision-making, with a decision made by consensus. During the decision-making instead of attracting the maximum number of activists on their side, the activists were motivated to persuade each other and thus achieve consensus. This was a highly democratic form of decision-making, where even a single voice mattered. Notwithstanding, it had several limitations: First, during debate, activists with diametrically opposed views on the various issues had to make concessions, sometimes on the cost of very important ideas. Second, this tactic became arduous as the number of activists increased, turning into high-cost activism that required more time and energy for consensus and to ensure everyone’s willing participation. Finally, it had a possibility of being a mere semblance of horizontal decision-making since some of my respondents avowed that there were “centers of power” in the organization whose words were considered more significant than, for instance, those of novices or women.

Laboratory 1918 strived against the system at a grassroots level. Activists incriminated Students’ Union representatives at TSU for their neglect of students’ grievances. For instance, when students demanded a Georgian translation of the reading materials, Students’ Union representatives sparked a fight with complaining students instead of addressing the issue and taking it forward. In response to an accumulation of discontent, activists of Laboratory 1918 expressed their dissent and concern over students’ problems as well as issues pertaining to national politics. They inculpated the Students’ Union for not taking action to resist the high tuition fees, which had increased from GEL 1500 to GEL 2250. Activists argued that with the wretched socioeconomic conditions in Georgia, this amount was untenable.

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“Making an Activist” vs. “Becoming an Activist”

In order to understand the process of students engagement in activism, I largely draw from McAdam’s model of recruitment and propose three essential elements indispensable for the involvement in high-cost/risk activism: social networks, rationale and action. Laboratory 1918 sprang from the prevailing discontent with the quality and accessibility of education, with the students’ self-governance, and with the system at large. Another driving force that engendered Laboratory 1918 was a more-or-less established social network. Many of the members were already acquainted with each other or had acquaintances in common. Third, those who joined Laboratory 1918 already had a predisposition toward the protest issue, although many of them still did not have a clearly defined ideological affiliation.

In the beginning, Laboratory 1918 activists endeavored to attract more people and organized few public meetings with this purpose. My respondents avowed that it was an arduous task to engage students. However, some Laboratory 1918 members revealed that the platform was particular about the members and welcomed those who at least understood the “left-wing language.” For instance, in September 2012, during the protests against prison abuse, Laboratory 1918 was in the vanguard of protests. It was a culmination of the Laboratory’s popularity, as the issue gained momentum and resonance within wider society. After the September movement, Laboratory 1918 gained new members, but not all of them were left-leaning. Giorgi complained that there was a case when a newcomer “put forward an awkwardly neo-liberal issue. . . it was difficult to find more or less left-wing individuals.” In order to be a Laboratory 1918 activist, one had to be a formal member of Laboratory 1918. This imperativeness of membership drew lines between “insiders” and “outsiders,” which in turn informed Laboratory 1918 as an exclusive platform. To join, one had to be aware of the left-wing discourse.

Laboratory 1918 sought to promulgate left-wing discourse, and it has proved relatively efficacious. When it comes to mobilization, its position was equivocal. On the one hand, activists labeled Laboratory 1918 as a movement; on the other hand, some of my respondents did not aspire to increase the group number and perceived the Laboratory 1918 as a disseminator of discourse on social issues. Moreover, my respondents reckoned that it has become “fashionable” to be a member of Laboratory 1918 and suspected

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some students’ motives for joining it. There were members within the clearly defined boundaries who made decisions based on the consensus, and there were those who sporadically joined the protest organized by Laboratory 1918. It had a propensity to retreat into an “activist ghetto”,6 as in order to develop a social movement from fragmented protests, the division between “members” and “others” needed to be superseded.

The findings depict that mobilization has not been the prime concern of Laboratory 1918. Most respondents acknowledged that they needed sympathizers, but they did not have a defined plan of action to mobilize. One of the activists referred to mobilization as a PR campaign and lamented that they did not have enough resources like money and media support to do it. Some of the activists assumed that initially many people did not join their protests because they could not “advertise” it. What is missing in their mobilization campaign is a “human relations thing” such as face-to-face encounters with potential sympathizers in order to communicate their ideas and agenda.

The primary means for mobilization was the social media website Facebook. It has several limitations: first, it can be effective for issues that already resonate widely, but it fails for issues that are aberrant or addressed for the first time. Second, it is an exclusive tactic, as it leaves out all those who do not have Facebook or who do not have a “right” social network on Facebook to be informed about or invited to the protest event. Laboratory 1918 did not thrive on attracting a large number of students into action, since their scope of mobilization was limited and their preferred means of protest was restricted to the marches on the streets and demonstrations. All this minimizes chances of encounters. In addition, face-to-face campaigns or direct modes of mobilization offer more control over the reception of ideas and meanings than do more indirect modes such as Facebook, because of the possibility for “constant monitoring and adjustment”.7

The organized protest was preceded with rationalization of their grievances, which identified individual problems as a mere manifestation of a larger system that must be attacked. For instance, Levan noted that they felt discontent with the quality of education, joblessness, and economic situations, which had a very personal and mundane implication as they did not even have enough money to nurse a beer at their

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favorite hangouts. They realized that dissatisfaction with the quality of education and difficulty in finding jobs were not individual problems, but ramifications of new economic and social order.

Some respondents from Laboratory 1918 noted that initially their protest was merely the voicing of discontent about certain issues, and it was only later that they acquired a rationale to view these issues within a certain framework. In order to define this process, Alexandra, a female left-wing activist from Tbilisi, referred to Laboratory 1918 as an actual laboratory where research, experiments, and teaching took place, which triggered activists to develop their argumentations and frameworks (Interview, 2013). Many Laboratory 1918 members largely described engagement in activism as a result of individual predisposition or even inborn leaning. As Ani, a female left-wing activist, states, she has been posing questions long before the Laboratory 1918’s foundation, but there was not an adequate platform where she could express her grievances (Interview, 2013). Ani’s experience highlights how participation in political activism rendered students with an individual and collective sense of effectiveness, in turn, generating confidence. For instance, another Laboratory 1918 activists, George, first identified grievances pertaining to the university and to the country at large. Interest in the protest issue was crucially related to George’s engagement in activism, but it was not a sufficient condition. In order to conquer the feeling of “individual ineffectiveness,” manifested in sitting at home, complaining, and lamenting over problems, he decided to take part in collective action. Prior to joining Laboratory, he was feeling “empty” and “helpless,” which was soon transformed into the sense of “collective effectiveness” as he took part in collective action. Participation generated confidence, and he was no more a “discontented and complaining person.” Engagement in activism was followed with discussions and readings, which elucidated reasons behind obfuscated and perplex protest issues, and gradually, he developed an illuminating framework or rationale.

Gendering the Nature of Student Activism

Discontent is the word that describes Laboratory 1918’s dissent. They expressed discontent with the quality in education, discontent with the pedagogy, discontent with the inaccessibility of education for all, discontent with the functioning of the Students’ Union. They held responsible not only the university administration for these errors but also viewed these issues as reverberation of national policies for education. As George elucidates: “Education was an important issue [for Laboratory 1918], in
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In particular, free education. Education should not be a market product, commodity, which you can sell. Education is a basic right and should be accessible for everyone. Inaccessible education creates unequal society” (Interview, 2013).

Student grievances were epiphenomenon of macro problems, which had various manifestations. Activists believed that fighting only the outcomes of deep-rooted oppression was not enough. At the national level, Laboratory 1918 opposed the government’s politics, strived for issues pertaining to social and economic inequalities, and worker’s rights. In September, 2012, Laboratory 1918 played a vanguard role in massive protests in response to the prisoners’ abuse scandal in Tbilisi. On September 18, 2012, the violent abuse in the Georgian prison system was exposed. The shocking videos showing torture, rape, and sexual humiliation of prisoners sparked street protests. Laboratory 1918 spearheaded the movement, although it was not the only organizer; numerous active and inactive groups and organizations joined the movement. “The system must be destroyed” slogans reverberated over the air in front of TSU. The scandal arose just before the parliamentary election on October 1, 2012. The ruling party blamed for the prisoner abuse was defeated.

In September 2012, the valorous activists of Laboratory 1918 engaged in high-cost risk activism, chanting the slogan “destroy the system.” I argue that they still acted within the permissible for society boundaries and did not confront issues outside the permissible boundaries, such as sexuality, gender, or authority of the Orthodox church. Striving against the United National Movement—a political party that formed the parliamentary majority and the government until October 1, 2012—involved “high-risk/cost” activism, but it was a permissible issue, as it did not challenge the “virtue of the nation” such as values and tradition. For instance, during the protests against prison abuse a member of Laboratory 1918 was detained by the police and fined GEL 400. The family members of the activists were worried about group’s safety but simultaneously proud of their courageous activism, whereas raising issues of sexuality or religious authority would have threatened their image as righteous dissenters. For example, on September 21, 2012, during the prison abuse protests, the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Ilia II, instructed students not to participate in the demonstrations. Once it was announced, many students obeyed the Patriarch’s instructions, but others refused to abide by it. At this juncture, an artist who was thought to be a member of Laboratory 1918 shouted the blasphemous slogan “Down with

the Patriarch.” As a result, many students repelled and revolted against the artist. Subsequently, Laboratory 1918 elucidated on its Facebook page that the artist who chanted that slogan was not a member of Laboratory 1918. It is not that Laboratory 1918 activists disagreed with the ethos of the slogan, but it was outside the permissible boundaries that, in turn, would have kept away many protestors.

Left-wing activists operated within the “permissible boundaries” and addressed issues that confronted those in power, but they did not strike against the patriarchal and heterosexual norms cherished in Georgian society as any confrontation would have had to stand up to society at large rather than to only those in state power. As a result, parents of respondents approved the issues, which are righteous and resonate among a wider audience. For instance, G.’s parents were pleased when he participated in the movement against prisoner abuse in Tbilisi, and they also welcomed it when Laboratory raised issues concerning the university and education. However, they showed disapproval and disagreement when it comes to the issues of sexuality, such as LGBT rights. Similarly, Ani’s parents were proud of her as she participated in protests against prisoner abuse and other social issues, such as demanding adequate and safe working conditions. However, participation in feminist demonstrations was outside “permissible boundaries.” As Ani told, “She [mother] did not want me to be identified with the feminist movement because [she] feared that it may create problems, and people may think ‘wrongly’ about me.” Thus, participation in the protests with demands asserting women’s sexuality, freedom to abort, LGBT rights, and attacking the definition of women solely as mothers through slogans such as “women are not incubators” was conceived as subversive in the society.

Laboratory 1918 lost its momentum after the parliamentary elections in 2012. Afterward, they protested in solidarity with mining workers for their labor rights and safety; they also proposed a new model of the Students’ Union but could not practice expanded progressive left politics for several reasons: First, it was a heterogeneous organization, which embraced a wide omnium gatherum of activists, ranging from anarcho-syndicalists to Social-Democrats. The latter simultaneously were members of youth wing of the Social-Democratic party, a sector of the newly elected coalition government. This precipitated the ambivalent position of Social-Democrats with regard to certain issues. As one member explained to me, they were bewildered: On one hand, the main “enemy”—the United National Movement party—was defeated, and the Social-Democrats’ representative was in a newly formed Parliament and some even started working in the machinery of new government. On the other hand, the Social-Democrats of
Laboratory 1918 acknowledged that, despite the changes in the political scenario, their voice was not significant enough to bring radical change. Second, working within permissible boundaries affected the trajectory of their activism: First, it shaped Laboratory 1918’s tactics and strategies. Practicing less radical tactics within permissible boundaries was a guarantee of their “righteous” reputation. As soon as they employed more radical means of protest and crossed that boundary, both government and society punished them. For instance, on May 1, 2013 (International Labor Day), Laboratory 1918 organized a demonstration. The students’ demands were not too radical; they primarily asked to declare May 1 as a public holiday and make amendments to the new draft of the Labor Code. They employed unsanctioned methods such as blocking the street and graffiti slogans such as “Down with Capitalism” on the walls of banks and public buildings. As a result, the demonstration turned into a confrontation with police, followed by mass detentions of the activists. Crossing permissible boundaries affected their righteous reputation and precipitated public criticism.

Further, the specter of permissible boundaries largely shaped Laboratory 1918’s agenda and reduced viability of multi-issue, progressive politics. Identity-based issues, such as LGBT rights and gender equality, have been referred as identity politics, which “divides [the] workers’ unity.” On one hand, they were aware that left-wing activism should encompass all the downtrodden, including women and LGBT minorities; on the other hand, they firmly tried to shun identity politics. This ambiguity and indecisiveness was manifested in the Laboratory 1918’s activism.

Laboratory 1918 was a heterogeneous group and activists’ articulation of identity politics, particularly of gender and sexuality, varied. Many activists of Laboratory 1918 acknowledge gender inequality and view it as an epiphenomenon of capitalism and, thus, subsume feminist struggle into the anti-capitalist struggle. As Alexandra noted, “influence of economic factors is the primary reason” of gender inequality, which suggests that to attack causes other than the economic basis appears super-structural and, hence, superficial: “Gender equality exists, and it is a product of patriarchal culture, which in turn is a part of capitalist system…Feminism is not self-sufficient because [it] is not able to relate to the cause from which inequality derives” (Interview, 2013).

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Archil marked questions of gender inequality as “extraneous,” noting that they only exist because they serve the interests of small organizations who aspire for “more grants:"

I agree that we live in a patriarchal world, but I think that it should be regulated by the legislature, so it would not trigger extraneous questions. And small organizations would not employ these topics to get more grants… However, this patriarchal ambience pressurizes not only women, but men too. (Interview, 2013)

For few of them, issues of gender and women’s rights were not “secondary.” According to Soso, a Laboratory 1918 activist, “Today protests on the issues of women’s rights and gender are equally relevant, and we can never say which dimension is more important” (interview, 2013).

My respondents’ articulations of gender-related issues were largely determined by crisis event, such as the attack during the anti-homophobic demonstration on May 17, which occurred in Georgia during my fieldwork. Many activists’ responses to questions pertaining to gender inequality revolved around the images and debates that were precipitated by the abovementioned incident. May 17 is an International Day Against Homophobia. On this day in 2013, Georgian LGBT activists assembled for a peaceful rally to mark the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO), when thousands of counter-protesters violently attacked them. Prior to the rally, some activists of Laboratory 1918 had planned to publish a statement of solidarity with the LGBT community. However, it became a contentious issue among the members of Laboratory 1918: some urged intervention as part of the IDAHO solidarity protest, but others marked it as identity politics and objected to join it in any form. This was the straw that broke the proverbial camel’s back, and Laboratory 1918 was brought to its end.

Respondents offered varying arguments to elucidate reasons for discontent apropos of the May 17 rally. Firstly, the issue of sexuality was beyond the “permissible boundaries” of Laboratory 1918’s activities as it threatened the “virtue” of the nation. Some of the Laboratory 1918 activists were members of the political party and support of gay rally would have damaged their image among homophobic masses. As Toko stated, it was largely determined by “political marketing” of the pragmatist members, who considered the issue highly unpopular:

The last contentious issue that triggered division was regarding the statement to be published on May 17. It was a statement, on the one hand, with an introduction about homosexuality; further,
it criticized the church and then criticized the organization Identoba. Not community, we were in solidarity with the community. This statement was blocked. The main reason I think was the political marketing. (Interview, 2013)

Secondly, identity politics, due to their non-material institutional bases, were assumed as “mental” and, therefore, secondary or derived. Some of the activists depicted issues of gender, LGBT rights, and religious minorities as secondary, which only distracts attention from the “material” and, therefore, “primary and determining” issues, such as unemployment, homelessness, and education. As Alexandra stated,

Some of us thought that it is not a primary issue. It is a part of liberal discourse that oppression of sexual minorities and the church are the problems. Thus, they want to avoid issues of homelessness, unemployment, and education from the agenda. (Interview, 2013)

Thirdly, some of the Laboratory 1918 activists consider identity-based issues as “narrow politics” as they only benefit a certain community. As Archil noted, “They [LGBT; women; religious minorities] come out on the streets because of their identity, but not because some other problems, which really exist.” In such a way, his statement indicates that homophobia or women’s oppression is not a “really existing” problem. Moreover, Archil purported that big corporations finance these kinds of minorities to create problems for the governments and destabilize the situation: “Identities entail a big threat in itself. I think that society should ground itself in more fundamental social problems and social identities rather than [in] some kind of religious, sexual, or any other kind of identities.”

Thus, on the one hand, some Laboratory 1918 activists purported to be progressivists who should strive against material or non-material injustice, but on the other hand, some issues, such as material-based problems, were considered as “fundamental” and, therefore, “real,” whereas identity-based issues were viewed as “derived,” super-structural, and therefore, “unreal.” Laboratory 1918 activists’ argumentations largely derive from neo-Marxist and postmodernist paradigms. According to the postmodernist paradigm, activism guided by the status categories only reifies those categories; therefore, instead of deconstructing those differences, which are the basis of inequality, it reconstructs them.10 As Archil noted,

We debated on identity, and many agreed that it is an evil. It creates in itself a foundation for violence. I agree with this thought. Their attitude towards the self annoys me as if they were trying to isolate themselves...I agree that violence is horrifying, and I am in solidarity with them, but I do not support when you come on the streets because of your identity and not for some other problems, which really exist. (Interview, 2013)

Finally, many Laboratory 1918 activists argued that identity politics actually divide the masses as they wage fragmented struggles instead of uniting for the “larger” struggle against the current economic order. For instance, Levan, Laboratory 1918 activist and member of Social-Democratic party, explained that some activists fiercely opposed the radical statement in support of the LGBT community on May 17, 2013, since they considered the homophobic counter-demonstrators as their allies in the “larger” struggle, whereas “identity politics” only would have damaged this possible alliance. In such a way, activism within the permissible boundaries was complementary to their ideological reasoning:

The reason was that these people [counter-protestors] actually are our allies in the larger struggle, than this narrow issue... They are low- and middle-class people like us who, due to socialization, have acquired intolerance... however, we have common economic hardships, [and] that is why we did not want to break the bridge between these people [counter-demonstrators] and us. These kind of identity politics only divides the left-wing groups. (Interview, 2013)

At the same time, Laboratory 1918 activists acknowledge that as leftists, they should have demonstrated their solidarity with any oppressed section of society, including LGBT and women. As Levan stated, “We had to introduce this discourse; as leftists, we should have supported these minorities.” However, Laboratory 1918 members faced a dilemma since they could not develop a framework, which, on the one hand, would have enabled them to stay true to the “righteous” left-wing politics, that considers identity politics as superstructure and, therefore, “secondary,” and concurrently, to practice progressive left-wing politics, that equally addresses identity-based issues. This dilemma reveals ideology as schematic and dogmatic, which is consistent and logical, but immune to the everyday life. This kind of
functioning of ideology interpolates human beings as subjects,¹¹ who become subjects from their performances.¹²

Thus, both ideology and gender are constituted through the discourse and entail elements of performativity. On the one hand, ideology operates through the ideas and beliefs that have to be consistently “performed” in order to be congenial to it. When Laboratory 1918 activists repudiated identity politics and marked it as “secondary” and “divisive,’ I read these renunciations of identity politics as performances of ideology through which, in turn, performative enactment of gender and heteronormativity occurs. Moreover, “permissible boundaries” that complement their ideological reasoning allowed male activists to avail themselves of male privileges and leave unaltered the comfort zone of patriarchy. For instance, in order to “perform” leftist ideology, some Laboratory 1918 activists did not support the statement of solidarity with the LGBT community on May 17, 2013, and did not participate in the rally since explicit solidarity statements or participation in the demonstration would have challenged Marxist and neo-Marxist (in some cases postmodernist) paradigms. Thus, they would have failed to “perform” the adhered ideological framework, which in turn justified their activism within the permissible boundaries. On the other hand, through performativity of ideology, these activists actually performed gender and heteronormativity in the following way: performativity of gender and heteronormativity is sustained through reiteration of norms and practices. The necessity of repetition, in turn, implies that repetition may fail to replicate. As one of the activists told me in personal conversation: “If I would have gone there, May 17 rally, then for the whole of my life I would have had to prove that I’m not gay.” Therefore, radical statement of support or participation in the anti-homophobic rally would have disrupted the replication since activists’ gender and sexuality would have been questioned and they may have failed to reiterate. In addition, to raise issues related to gender and sexuality would have altered not only the state and political-economic system, but also the whole patriarchal society including activists’ own performativity of gender and heteronormativity.

Conclusion

Georgian left-wing activists’ (Laboratory 1918) path can be described as an experiment. Laboratory 1918 made less effort in terms of social networks and development of rationale. Their purview of mobilization was limited to “low-cost” action, which in turn minimized chances of encounters. The main contribution of Laboratory 1918 is the promulgation of left-wing discourse and politics. Laboratory 1918 succeeded in depicting politics as indispensable by bringing the discourse of social justice, yet it remained mostly gendered, with issues of sexuality and gender justice never receiving importance in their loop of legitimate grievances.

Laboratory 1918 considered gender-related and overall identity-based issues to be a “secondary,” “reactionist,” and fragmented battle. Instead, the organization aimed at the larger struggle against the current economic order, which is viewed as a primary cause of all oppressions. The interrelationship with ideology predominantly defines Laboratory 1918’s stance apropos to gender oppression. Laboratory 1918 activists’ employment of ideology as an instrument sustained performativity of gender and heteronormativity. Laboratory 1918 chose the way of subsuming the feminist struggle, instead of entailing it.

In my view, the variances between the left-wing organizations with regard to gender can be elucidated by the oscillating character of ideology. On the one hand, ideology can construct the “subjects”. On the other hand, student activists can reconstruct the ideology and make ideas and beliefs resonant with local context. However, those who view ideology as schema or script to be adhered and are cut off from the current reality become mere “subjects” of ideology and are therefore restricted to the performance of ideas congenial to that ideology. In contrast, those who connect ideology with their cognitive system and negotiate between ideas, beliefs, and reality are able to eschew shackling dogmatism, which has the potential to render activists immobilized in cases of “fragmented” struggles, while they ache for “larger” battles. For feminist praxis to take place, it is indispensable to maintain equilibrium between being shaped by ideology and re-shaping the ideology.

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Bibliography


