Women’s emancipation and human emancipation:
new approaches to an old question

International Conference, Budapest, 11-12 November, 2015

CALL FOR PAPERS
Please send your paper proposal of no more than 250 words and a short CV to esi
eszmelet1989@gmail.com (Eva Nagy), no later than Monday 21 September 2015.

Applicants will be notified by the beginning of October.

After 2008, leftist thinking globally has been restored as one socially acceptable or tolerated
world vision – and it is time therefore to rethink the past and present of various projects of women’s
emancipation. While the old left had always subordinated the solution of the ‘women’s question’ to
the project of class liberation, mainstream post-1989 feminism has prioritized progressive gender
policies over other elements of the struggle for social transformation, and thus separated the quest
for gender equality from the systemic question. In other words, within these political currents various
axes of oppression have been constructed as subordinated to each other rather than mutually
constitutive. Both feminist and leftist activism and theorizing have suffered from the ensuing political
and intellectual tensions. While the new left has tolerated feminism rather than building sustained
coalitions mainstream feminism has been adopted into capitalist democracy. Scholarly analysis of
various projects of women’s emancipation in present and past more often than not has got caught up
in the old partisan struggles over hierarchies of oppression, or it has tended to ignore the larger
contexts into which the struggle for women’s emancipation has been embedded.

At this conference we probe new approaches to the analysis of struggles for women’s
emancipation which overcome these difficulties. The papers, comments and the roundtable
discussion aim to critically interrogate how gender, class, ethnicity, and global inequality together
have shaped women’s lives, and how gendered social struggle has been shaped by these and other
elements of hierarchal social difference. The questions addressed include: How has the situation of
women in Hungary and elsewhere, in the labour market and in the household, been shaped in the
past 25 years by gender, class, ethnic and global difference, and how have women struggled to
overcome these intersecting inequalities? How do those many mostly activist young people who seek
to bring together feminism and the struggle for social emancipation for all in post-socialist Hungary
challenge into their daily activism and conceptually oppression which is organized along many axes of
hierarchical difference? How can we rethink productively the history of women’s and gender policies
and activism in the pre-1989 state-socialist world when many women and men were convinced that
class-emancipation was already well under way? How can we rethink, in a productive manner, the
often hostile debate in Eastern Europe after 1989 about ‘Western’ feminism, and the reluctance of
the new left to seriously engage with the challenge of struggles for women’s emancipation?

The Conference is organized by Eszmelet (http://eszmelet.hu/en/), a quarterly journal for social
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