

# Alternative Imaginaries: Feminist Transformative Politics in the Global South Conference

18 MAY

CONFERENCE CONVENER  
Dr Fatemeh Sadeghi



CO-CONVENERS:



Dr Sertaç Sehlíkoglu



Dr Yuan He



Burcu Kalpaklioglu

Online programme



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## INTRODUCTION

This conference is organised to examine how feminist imagination is changing the face of the Global South by challenging gendered socio-political structures, legal systems, and development trajectories in the Global South.

On the one hand, the existing normative attitudes around gender are protected by advocating misogynist tradition and law, thus leading to feminist critique of constitutionalism, especially in Malaysia, India, Iran, and Afghanistan. On the other hand, feminists in the Global South, including Africa, Asia, and South America, encounter the challenges of colonial feminism.

We are keen on understanding feminists' response to this situation:

- What are the prospects that feminists in the Global South offer for addressing democratic, social, epistemological, cultural, and political relations?
- How do feminists in the Global South imagine a more egalitarian future for themselves and the younger generations, and
- how do they build solidarity networks and future collaboration?
- What are the backlashes and responses to gender equality demands? How do feminists deal with them?



The participants of this conference aim to understand these tensions: first, the existing norms being appropriated to the new politics and thus deepening normative attitudes, including gender inequality, misogyny, gender-based violence, and pro-natalist policies; second, the invisibility of feminists of the Global South and the forms of resistance towards changing their society and politics, and third, the masculinist backlash against them exemplified in right-wing populism, religious fundamentalism, and conservative politics.

Based on:

- 1) several years of collaborative work with scholars across Balkan-to-Bengal Complex working on the TAKHAYYUL Project,<sup>1</sup> norms and challenges to legislations in the Muslim contexts,  
and
- 2) a number of scholarly conversations drawing parallels across Islamic and non-Islamic contexts of the Global South, this conference is to understand the tensions between the gender norms and politics.

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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### 9.30 - 10.00 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

9.30 - 9.40 Opening remarks  
Prof. Henrietta Moore, Director of the institute for Global Prosperity,  
UCL

9.40 - 9.55 Introduction  
Dr Fatemeh Sadeghi, UCL

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### 10.00 - 11.45 **PANEL 1: FEMINIST FUTURES: AN INTRODUCTORY CONVERSATION**

Chair: Dr Juliana Demartini Brito, UCL

Speakers:

- Not So Gender-Neutral: The New Right and Its Populism, Dr Sertaç Sehlíkoglu, UCL
- A Silent Reproductive Revolution: “We are the last generation”, Dr Yuan He, UCL
- Women's Sense of Their Hak (Rights), Divine Justice, and Economies of Divorce in Istanbul, Burcu Kalpaklioglu, University of Amsterdam
- Feminist Alternative Imaginaries in the Global South, Dr Fatemeh Sadeghi, UCL

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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11.45 - 11.45 **LUNCH BREAK**

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13.15 - 15.00 **PANEL 2:  
POLITICS OF INTIMACY: GENDER, LAW AND  
THE PERPETUATION OF INEQUALITY**

Chair: Prof. Silvia Suteu, UCL

Speakers:

- Beyond Imagining: Shifting Paradigm in the Iranian Protest Culture and an Inclusive and Women-centric Constitution, Prof. Homa Hoodfar, Concordia University
- Who's Afraid of Marriage Equality? India's Same-Sex Marriage Decision and Its Implications for Women, Prof. Vrinda Narain
- Women's Rights Reform in North African Constitutions, Prof. Aili Mari Tripp, University of Wisconsin
- Feminist Resistance Against Undemocratic Structures in Iran and Turkey, Dr Mona Tajali, Stanford University

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15.00 - 15.15 **AFTERNOON TEA BREAK**

## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

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15.15 - 17.00

### **PANEL 3: SUBALTERN FORMS OF FEMINIST RESISTANCE**

Chair: Prof. Alex Hyde, UCL

Speakers:

- Challenge of Islamic Feminism, Prof. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, SOAS
- Political Imagination of the Kurdish Women's Movement, Dr Nazan Ustundag, Independent scholar
- Rethinking Violence, Emerging Subjects: Indigenous Perspectives in Central America, Dr Silvia Posocco, Birkbeck University of London
- Anti-Racism, Intersectionality, and the Struggle for Dignity, Prof. Mónica G. Moreno Figueroa, Cambridge University

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17.00 - 17.15

### **AFTERNOON TEA BREAK**

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17.15 - 18.30

### **ROUNDTABLE: FUTURE COLLABORATIONS & PUBLICATIONS**

## ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

### Professor Aili Mari Tripp

Prof. Aili Mari Tripp is Vilas Research Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research has focused on gender/women and politics, women's movements in Africa, transnational feminism, and authoritarian politics in Africa. She is author of several award-winning books, including *Seeking Legitimacy: Why Arab Autocracies Adopt Women's Rights* (2019), *Women and Power in Postconflict Africa* (2015), *African Women's Movements: Transforming Political Landscapes* (2009) with Isabel Casimiro, Joy Kwesiga, and Alice Mungwa, and *Women and Politics in Uganda* (2000). She has served as the President of African Studies Association and Vice President of the American Political Science Association. She currently is an Editor of the American Political Science Review.

### Professor Alex Hyde

Prof Alex Hyde is Associate Professor in Gender Studies and Co-Director of UCL Gender and Sexuality Studies at the Centre for Multidisciplinary and Intercultural Inquiry. Her research focuses on gender relations in war and the everyday operation of military power. Her research monograph, *Regimented Life*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in Dec 2023.

### Burcu Kalpaklıoğlu

Burcu Kalpaklıoğlu is a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Amsterdam, with a thesis on economies of marriage and divorce in Istanbul. Her research interests are at the intersection of family and kinship, gender, and Islam. She is the author of the book *Fetvayla Yol Göstermek: Alo Fetva Hattı, Vaizeler, Gündelik Hayat Tavsiyeleri* (Guiding through Fatwas: Hello Fatwa Hotline, Female Preachers, and Their Advice on Everyday Life Issues).

### Dr Fatemeh Sadeghi

Dr Fatemeh Sadeghi is a political scientist specializing in political thought and gender studies. She is a Research Associate and academic facilitator at [TAKHAYYUL](#), an ERC-funded project at the Institute for Global Prosperity. She is also the deputy editor of the Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice.

Her research is on political imagination (takhayyul-e siyasi تخیلی سیاسی) (as a collective constellation inspired by political, theological, philosophical, and historical forces and traditions aiming at envisioning a different future and making it possible. Focusing on Islam and contemporary Iran, she studies political constellations that allow individuals and groups to define their aspirations by remaking and redefining collective fantasies. She studies the intersubjective and socially constructed mentalities aspire to a different future in a creative and cognitive process typically concerned with what is unreal, unknowable, hypothetical, or yet-to-be. She has also researched gender and power in today's Iran, gender in ethical thoughts in the early Islamic era, gender in Zoroastrianism, and gendered nationalism. Her research includes the Iranian revolution, the unveiling campaign of the first Pahlavi Iran and the compulsory hijab of the Islamic Republic.

### Professor Homa Hoodfar

Prof. Homa Hoodfar is a Professor of Anthropology, Emerita, at Concordia University, Montreal. Her field-based research and expertise are in political economy and legal anthropology; focusing on reproductive rights; Afghan women and youth refugees in Iran and Pakistan; women in formal and informal politics; hijab and dress codes as political institutions; gender and citizenship; Muslim women's sports as politics; and gender and the public sphere in Muslim contexts. Describing herself as an academic in the service of civil society, Professor Hoodfar has also been actively involved in the Research for Advocacy and Publication Division of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) Network, whose mission is to promote gender equality and plural democracy, since the 1980s. She has published seven books, edited volumes, and authored numerous scholarly articles on women's rights and social and political change in Muslim societies. In 2016, she was arrested and imprisoned on the charges of dabbling in feminism.

### Dr Juliana Demartini Brito

Dr Juliana Demartini Brito is lecturer in Gender and Sexuality Studies, teaching on the MA in Gender, Society and Representation at SELCS-CMII. She received her PhD and MPhil at the University of Cambridge, where she also worked as an Affiliated Lecturer at the Centre for Gender Studies. Juliana researches creative decolonial strategies that disorient sexual politics in Brazil.



## Dr Mona Tajali

Dr Mona Tajali is a social scientist with expertise in gender and politics, human rights, and women's movements in Muslim countries. She is the author of *Women's Political Representation in Iran and Turkey: Demanding a Seat at the Table* (EUP 2022), and coauthor of *Electoral Politics: Making Quotas Work for Women* (WLUML 2011) with Homa Hoodfar. Since 2019 she serves as the executive board member of the transnational feminist solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), and is currently the director of research of WLUML's multi-sited Women and Politics project and its Transformative Feminist Leadership Institute. She is an associate professor of International Relations and Women's Studies at Agnes Scott College, and for this academic year, she has been researching institutionalization of women's rights in Iran and Afghanistan at Stanford University's Center for Democracy, Development and Rule of Law (CDDRL) as a visiting scholar.

## Professor Mónica G. Moreno Figueroa

Prof. Mónica G. Moreno Figueroa is a Black-mestiza, Mexican-British, woman, Professor of Sociology at the University of Cambridge. She is also a Fellow in Social Sciences at Downing College, Cambridge. Her research focusses on the intersectional lived experience of 'race' and racism in Mexico and Latin America; antiracism and academic-based impact; feminist theory, intersectionality, and racism. She is an expert in qualitative research methods, visual methodologies and thrives in interdisciplinary collaborations. Mónica is currently leading the development of a new research institute on Global Race, Racism and Anti-Racism in the Department of Sociology, and has secured seed funding from the W.K.K. Foundation. Mónica has been awarded a British Academy Mid-Career fellowship 2022-23 for the project: "Internalized Oppression, Defensiveness and Resentment". Her other latest research projects are: a project on blackness, representation and women's economic trajectories in the Costa Chica in Mexico; a British Academy funded project on Institutional Racism in Oaxaca, Mexico; and a recently-completed large ESRC-funded research project, which she directed (together with Prof. Peter Wade), Latin American Anti-racism in a PostRacial Age, LAPORA, on antiracist practices and discourses in Latin America, comparing experiences in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico.

## Dr Nazan Üstündağ

Dr Nazan Üstündağ received her Ph.D. in 2005 from the sociology department at Indiana University Bloomington. Between 2005 and 2018 she worked as an Assistant Professor at Boğaziçi University, Department of Sociology. Between 2020 and 2023 she received a 8 fellowship from the Gerda Henkel Foundation Patrimonies program. Between 2018 and 2020 she was affiliated with the Transregionale Studien in Berlin as an Academy in Exile and IIEScholar Rescue Fund fellow. Currently, she teaches at Alice Solomon Hochschule in Berlin and broadcasts in Jin TV on worldwide news on women. Nazan Üstündağ's work concerns feminist political theory, political imaginaries, gendered subjectivities, and state violence in Kurdistan. Her most recent book with the title, *Mother, Politician and Guerilla: Political Imagination in the Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement*, was published in 2023, by Fordham Press. Üstündağ worked as a columnist in the journal *Nokta* and the newspaper *Özgür Gündem* and her opinion pieces appeared in venues such as *Bianet*, *T24*, *Roar Magazine* and *Jadaliyya*. She is a founding member of *Women for Peace* and *Academics for Peace* in Turkey. She is also a member of the *Global Prison Abolitionist Network* and *Women Weaving the Future*.

## Dr Sertaç Sehlíkoglu

Dr Sertaç Sehlíkoglu is a social anthropologist and an associate professor at UCL's Institute of Global Prosperity. Her work focuses on intangible aspects of human subjectivity that enable humans to change and transform social life. She is the recipient of a European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant (2019), the author of "Working Our Desire: Women, Sport and Self-Making in Istanbul" (2021) and the co-editor of several journal issues and collected volumes, including "The Everyday Makings of Heteronormativity: Cross-Cultural Explorations of Sex, Gender and Sexuality" (2020). She is also the editor of the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies' Reviews* Section and the associate editor of the journal *Contemporary Islam*.

## Dr Silvia Posocco

Dr Silvia Posocco is a social anthropologist with interdisciplinary research interests in gender and sexuality studies and violence, conflict, and genocide studies. She has studied ethnographically insurgent movements in Guatemala, the archives of transnational adoption across sites and temporalities, and most recently, forensic archives, bioinformation and cultures of evidence.

## Professor Silvia Suteu

Prof. Silvia Suteu is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Laws, University College London (UCL). She specializes in comparative constitutional law and constitutional theory, with a focus on comparative constitutional change, gender equality, and participatory constitutionalism, on which she has published widely. She is particularly interested in gendersensitive constitution-making and reform in post-conflict and transitional settings. Her monograph, *Eternity Clauses in Democratic Constitutionalism*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2021 and won the 2023 ICON-S Book Prize. She has provided legal expertise to a variety of international organizations including: UN Women, UNDP, the Euromed Feminist Initiative, International IDEA, Democracy Reporting International, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

## Professor Vrinda Narain

Prof. Vrinda Narain is a Research Fellow at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Professor Narain's research and teaching focus on constitutional law, social diversity and feminist legal theory. She is the author of two books: [Reclaiming the Nation: Muslim Women and the Law in India](#) (University of Toronto Press, 2008) and [Gender and Community: Muslim Women's Rights in India](#) (University of Toronto Press, 2001). She was Associate Dean, Academic, at the Faculty of Law from 2016 to 2019. She is a Board Member of the transnational research and solidarity network, Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), a member of the National Steering Committee of the feminist law reform organization, National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL), Canada, and President of the South Asian Women's Community Centre (SAWCC) in Montreal.

## Dr Yuan He

Dr Yuan He is a lecturer and MSc Global Prosperity program lead, co-leads the Asian Prosperity Hub and is editor of the 'Global Prosperity Thought and Practice' book series at UCL Press.

She currently leads a joint project with the India Institute of Technology Delhi on 'transformative research' funded by the British Academy and the Indian Ministry of Education. Her diverse contributions span research and academia, exploring the impact of democracy on rural livelihoods in India and China, the developmental trajectories in East Asia including South Korea, and public value generation through technological innovation.

She emphasizes grassroots politics, women's transformative political engagement, and economic value reorientation towards the social good. Beyond academia, she has also delivered gender training to over 1,000 employees at UK and Asian branches of international companies. She holds 10 MPhil and PhD in Development Studies from Cambridge University, and have previously studied or worked at Nanjing University, the Hopkins Nanjing Centre, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and New York University Shanghai.

## Professor Ziba Mir-Hosseini

Prof. Ziba Mir-Hosseini is a legal anthropologist, specializing in Islamic law, gender and Islamic feminism, and a founding member of [Musawah](#). She has held numerous research fellowships and visiting professorships (most recently at NYU Law School) and received the American Academy of Religion's 2015 Martin E. Marty Award for the Public Understanding of Religion. Currently she is Professorial Research Associate at the Centre for Islamic and Middle Eastern Law, SOAS, University of London. She has published books on Islamic family law in Iran and Morocco, Iranian clerical discourses on gender, Islamic reformist thinkers, and the revival of zina laws. Her latest book is *Journeys Towards Gender Equality in Islam* (2022). She co-edited *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law* (2013), *Men in Charge? Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition* (2015), and *Justice and Beauty in Muslim Marriage: Toward Egalitarian Ethics and Laws* (2022). She also co-directed two award-winning feature-length documentary films on Iran: *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998) and *Runaway* (2001).