

*There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context.*  
Mikhail Bakhtin

# EGALITARIAN MOVEMENTS IN A NEOLIBERAL CONTEXT: THE CASE OF FEMINISM, CO-OPTED OR INSTRUMENTALIZED BY NEOLIBERALISM?

**Drs. Catherine Eschle, University of Strathclyde, Scotland & Bice Maiguashca, University of Exeter, England, United Kingdom**

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## Interview by Ana Fonseca

**Ana Fonseca:** Hello and welcome to Radio Heteroglossia, I'm Ana Fonseca and our guests today are Drs. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca. [Dr. Catherine Eschle](#) is a Senior Lecturer in the [School of Government and Public Policy](#) at the [University of Sthartclyde](#) in Gasglow, Scotland, United Kingdom. [Dr. Bice Maiguashca](#) is a Senior Lecturer in the [Department of Politics](#) at the [University of Exeter](#), in Exeter, England, United Kingdom. Today, we'll be discussing the article written by these two academics entitled, "[Theorising Feminist Organising in and against Neoliberalism: Beyond Co-optation and Resistance?](#)," published in 2018 in the *European Journal of Politics and Gender*. Their article provides insights into the ways the co-optation and resistance dichotomy has prevented us from understanding feminist organizing in a neoliberal context, and urges us to move beyond this dichotomy in order to more fully understand the relationship between neoliberalism and feminism. Drs. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, welcome and thank you for joining us today.

**Bice Maiguashca:** Thank you for inviting us, Ana.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah, thank you.

**Ana Fonseca:** My pleasure. Central to your article is a discussion of how the creation of dichotomies in conceptualizations of feminism and neoliberalism have prevented us from understanding more fully the relationship between neoliberalism and feminism. I wonder if you can talk more about this.

**Catherine Eschle:** Sure. We weren't intending with the article to offer a thorough critique of dichotomized thought per se. What we were trying to do was offer a critique of a very particular dichotomy which we think is structuring the debate on feminist organizing in a neoliberal age. And basically, what we argue is that there is a core dichotomy at work which is between co-optation and resistance. So, what we're saying is that, from around 2008 and the economic crisis, there is an increasing feeling that neoliberalism is intensifying, accelerating and changing its form. It's in that context that there is a great surge in feminist theorising about the co-optation of the feminist movement.

So, what we have is a literature that is suggesting that feminism is being undone or remade in neoliberal forms. As well, we have responding to that, we have a smaller body of work which tries to instead bring feminist resistance into the center of the frame and what we're saying is both of these literatures are interdependent. The co-optation literature carries within it an implicit assumption that there is a pure or resistant feminism, which they hold up as an ideal, but which they often don't explicitly theorize, which is the implicit ideal to which they hold neoliberal feminism lacking. And then, in the resistant literature, again, it kind of works in the reverse that they are offering an alternative to what they see as a co-opted feminist form. So, basically, we're arguing that neither side really theorizes the terms of this debate fully. It's an implicit way in which the debate is being structured, and also that it has harmful political effects. Bice is going to talk more about that.

**Bice Maiguashca:** So, we argue in the paper that three different binaries function to hold the stories together. The first binary that merges in this literature, and I think we need to be clear and I think Catherine mentioned it, that we're not talking about individual pieces here, we're talking about the literature taken as a whole and our arguments are about the cumulative effect of this literature as a whole. So, the first binary that enters into the frame has to do with the splitting of feminism into "good girls" and "bad girls." In the "good girl," camp, if you like, are those feminists who are fighting against neoliberalism effectively, and who are providing some sort of pushback to neoliberalism. And in each of these different bodies of literature there are different kinds of

heroines that emerge. So, for what we call the strong thesis - this is the work of Nancy Fraser, Hester Eisenstein etc.,- the “good girls” end up being socialist feminists.

Then, on the other side, we're presented with the "bad girls" of the story. In other words, those feminists who for one reason or another, are allowing themselves to be co-opted by neoliberalism, and again, depending on the literature, different feminists come into the frame. So, for some, you might be third wave feminism, for others it might be other forms of identity politics, but that's the first binary. Then there is a second binary that operates to sustain the story, and that has to do with where the activism takes place. So, the “bad girls” of the story often are situated within institutions, more specifically global governance institutions. The "good girls" on the other hand, are often associated with social movements and grassroots activism. So, you have a second binary that's been created between organizations on the one hand as a site of co-optation, and social movements on the other as a site of resistance politics.

The final binary that comes into play is one between feminism and neoliberalism itself. In this picture, you have feminism presented as a discreet form of agency and neoliberalism as a separate form of agency. So, you have two different discreet actors pitched in a battle against each other in which feminism is either entirely overwhelmed by neoliberalism. Or, the other option, it's untouched by neoliberal capitalism. So, we take issue with all three sets of binaries in our article.

**Ana Fonseca:** What do you think that this particular set of binaries has prevented us from seeing in the relationship between neoliberalism and feminism?

**Catherine Eschle:** One of the things that I find particularly problematic analytically is that it erases from view much feminist activism. Actually, we don't see a lot of what's going on. We get very narrow empirical pictures of the contemporary landscape of feminist activism. So, whole rafts of feminist work disperse from view. For example, just to draw on our own work, we were writing a while ago on what we called, “feminist anti-globalization activism,” we undertook an empirical project working on feminists active within the Global Justice Movement, and our strong reaction when we first started reading the co-optation literature was that it entirely erases from view the kinds of activists that we had spent several years talking to. So, that's the first, I suppose, analytical cost. It's that a lot of feminist activism is missing in action, disappears from view. A second, I guess, more normative problem that we have is that it's a disciplining dynamic. It basically splits feminism in a way that is politically problematic which doesn't help build solidarities

between different kinds of feminists, and which in fact constitutes them as separate subjects. It kind of misrepresents historically the way in which feminism has developed and the connections between different parts of the feminist body, if you like, but also normatively is problematic when it comes to building solidarity and thinking about ways forward for feminist politics.

**Bice Maiguashca:** And I'd probably add a third issue into the mix and that has to do with how we conceptualize power and agency. I'm not suggesting for a second that in the paper we offer up alternative conceptualizations of either, that's not the aim of the paper, but I think we try to suggest that it's very limiting in terms of how we understand how power works. So, power ends up being presented as a monolithic object, if you like, rather than as working through social practices; and agency equally is simplified to a very kind of narrow, intentional, conscious agency, and it doesn't allow as much room to think about unintended consequences of our practices. I think even conceptually, it limits our imagination in terms of making sense of both, how power might in fact constrain us, and how resistance might also have some kind of reach.

**Ana Fonseca:** And I wonder how this nostalgic view that is somehow implied in this idea of the "good girls" that were protesting and resisting in the streets in the past versus the "bad girls" that are now being "co-opted," which you addressed earlier, is also quite limiting in terms of agency and resistance. And that leads me to my next question, one of the main pitfalls that you in fact see in the strong neoliberal co-optation theory of feminism is that it denies, or it is oblivious to people's agency or resistance while seeing them as passive receivers of neoliberalism. I wonder if you can talk more about this.

**Catherine Eschle:** Firstly, I just wanna respond to the nostalgia point, actually, which is definitely connected to your question. Bice and I talked about this more in an earlier piece that we wrote in 2014 in *Political Studies* where we had a more narrow focus on three particular texts: one by Nancy Fraser, one by McRobbie and one by Hester Eisenstein, all published in 2009. We felt that all those pieces were very definitely marked by a nostalgia for a second wave socialist feminist past and quite narrowly conceived in a very particular context in the UK, US and Australia, and that this nostalgia is problematic. Firstly, I think it's perceived as very offputting or disciplining by a more recent generation of feminists. So, that's part of it. And the second is that it's, again, it's about finding us a way forward, where does it leave us? What we've being told is that what we need to do is reinvigorate a feminism like or fore-mothers had, instead of engaging creatively with what feminists today are doing and trying to look for the emancipatory or transformative potentials in those current resistances. I mean, and

interestingly, both Bice and I, I'm sure would agree about our earlier book on the Global Justice Movement, that many of the activists that we interviewed would actually self-define as socialist feminists, anyway. Ironically, contemporary socialist feminism was entirely missing from this anxiety, this 2009 expression of anxiety about the loss of socialist feminism.

**Bice Maiguashca:** Yeah.

**Catherine Eschle:** We're not opposed necessarily to using nostalgia creatively to thinking about feminist possibilities, but there's certainly a problem in how it's been mobilized in the co-optation literature.

**Bice Maiguashca:** I think the first point that I would make about some of the limitations of the strong neoliberal co-optation thesis in light of this agency is that a lot of this co-optation literature, and particularly the texts that sustain what we call "the strong thesis," in our article, are expressing anxieties - and understandable ones - that have to do with the stage of US feminism, American feminism, Anglo-centric feminism. For instance, as Catherine just pointed out, the "good girls" of their story, socialist feminists, are everywhere, but these narratives miss them, because they are perhaps not as visible in the US context, but they're certainly visible and active in the Latin American context or the Asian context. But because of these texts, the strong thesis, if you like, because they focus mainly on the limits of US feminism, they miss them entirely. Agency is erased because the only agency that really comes into view and that's foregrounded is the agency of the "bad girls" in the United States. So that's one of the problems, I think, it's an Anglo-centric discourse. So that's the first one.

I think there's a second reason why agency tends to get missed and that has to do with the sort of conceptual framing of capitalism. Here, I don't wanna suggest that Fraser and Eisenstein are reductionist Marxists. Fraser's work is very interesting and rich, but the piece in which she articulates this angst about the state of feminism replicates a mechanistic view, if you like, of capitalism or neoliberal capitalism, which focuses primarily on this power of economic forces. In that context, what one visualizes reading her piece, is that capitalism is emerging in some sense, in the United States context, and literally steamrolling over the rest of the world as it encompasses and expands over the globe. And so, what you get is a picture of the power of structures and economic structures. In that context, agency becomes less visible because the righteousness of capitalism, its ability to, in some sense, crush all before it, is the overriding feeling one gets.

The third thing has to do with, again, getting back to the US-centric sort of spatial dynamics in these texts, which does neoliberalism as something that is expanding outwards to the margins, i.e., the South. So, it moves from the North to the South. And again, in that context, it sort of pushes out the agency of Southern activists.

**Catherine Eschle:** Perhaps I could add to that, that maybe there's something in the concept of co-optation itself. We don't develop this argument in the paper but just thinking out loud - it's a kind of structuralist concept, it's an all or nothing concept, co-optation is about being absorbed by forces beyond your control and once you are coopted, that's it, you're doomed. So, it's possible that there's something also within the parameters of this concept, which is not helpful in terms of thinking about agency. We were in our conversations with Sara de Jong as well, she's written a book called *Complicit Sisters*, which runs with this concept of complicity where she's addressing many of the same problems. But we were wondering if perhaps there's more mileage in the concept of complicity as being a more agent-centered approach, whether it's possible to use complicity in a way which acknowledges that we are all, to different degrees and in different ways, but all to some level, imbricated in the neoliberal project, so we're all to some degree complicit; but that nonetheless complicity implies that you can recognize that complicity and you can perhaps act in different ways that changes the implications of whatever political action you're undertaking. So yeah, I'm wondering if there is something in the concept of co-optation itself which underscores this effect of removing agency from view.

**Ana Fonseca:** Along those lines, in response to current literature that sees feminism as being co-opted by neoliberalism, your article draws attention to the importance of distinguishing between co-optation and instrumentalization of feminist ideas. What is the difference between these two, and how does it complicate current understandings of this issue?

**Bice Maiguashca:** Well, I think, and we're still working out our thought processes about this notion of co-optation, so, I think we're still at early stages trying to think through the utility, the potential utility of this concept. I think it's highly problematic, and the reason why I think it's problematic is because, for me, it implies a process in which a self-identified feminist agent is somehow converted or derailed from her project and somehow drafted to actively contribute to a project that's not of her own making. In other words, feminists are somehow taken over and convinced to participate in a politics that they otherwise wouldn't have. Appropriation, because that's the term we use, appropriation means instrumentalization for us. Appropriation is a very different process, in my view. It's a process that refers to, if you like, a



hijacking of something that is produced by other actors without their approval or even knowledge. In other words, co-optation requires the act of participation, whether it's conscious or not, or witting or unwitting, of self-identified feminist subjects, it requires a collusion. While the appropriation of feminist ideas does not require feminist participation in any way. That appropriation can be undertaken by organizations or by actors, who are not remotely feminists, who are not interested in the feminist project in any way, shape or form. Now, but you don't need feminists there for appropriation to happen. So, they're very different processes. I think with co-optation comes a politics of blame, so people who are co-opted are therefore blamed for their collusion. When we think in terms of appropriation, that politics of blame is less evident. It's a different kind of judgment. For me, well I think Catherine and I agree on this, but Catherine jump in if you don't, I think the literature has tended to focus on and become somewhat obsessed with the co-optation process, and the irony for me is that, I think, the thing we really should be worrying about is the appropriation process. I think feminism as a set of ideas, discourses and images is being appropriated in a variety of very complex ways, which poses a very serious challenge to the well-being of feminism as a movement. I think we're, in some sense, worrying about the wrong problem; I don't think feminists are easily co-opted. There is a very rich literature on feminist activism, which suggests that in fact that rarely happens, but there is all also equally a very rich literature that suggests the appropriation of feminist ideas and practices is becoming more widespread. So, I think we need to turn our attention to how appropriation works and to find ways of challenging that.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah, I would agree with Bice that we're still working out some of our ideas on this. When we wrote the paper that we're discussing, for me personally, it was very much the dichotomy between co-optation and resistance that I was concerned with. I felt that it was the way in which co-optation implies resistance and resistance implies co-optation that was bothering me about the current debate. Since we wrote the piece and I have been talking to other people, I'm not sure currently what I think about this co-optation terminology. I think it's true that co-optation is used very loosely, in the literature or used in a variety of different ways. And the work of Sara De Jong, she has adopted a different kind of strategy, where she parcels out the co-optation concept along a variety of different analytical axes and says, you know, we need to use the terminology of co-optation much more carefully. So that's maybe an alternative way forward, but certainly we need to think about it much more carefully. And I think there's something at stake - I suppose it's thinking about feminist agency again, isn't it? As we were just talking about - there's something at stake in how we pass verdict on different

feminist actors. Or, actually, whether it's feminist ideas, discourses, and practices being taken and used in different contexts without actually a feminist in sight. There's something at stake in that distinction because, certainly, in the co-optation literature, often many of the processes that are being described such as, forced sterilization of women in India, or Ivanka Trump's self-help guide for working women in America, these kind of practices or literary products aren't necessarily being produced by feminists. So, this is where feminist ideas may be being used to justify them, but that doesn't mean that they're being undertaken by feminists. So, we think there's something at stake in this distinction between co-optation and appropriation that we need to pay more attention to.

**Bice Maiguashca:** And I think the final perhaps point I'd make is that the notion of co-optation somehow implies, at least in my mind, an integrated singular subject. In other words, co-optation, to the extent that you think about it as a process of swallowing up or hovering up a subject, requires this kind of singular subject, this pure subject that can be consumed in its entirety. So, feminism has to be rendered a singular subject for co-optation to happen. But, if on the other hand, you prefer to think about feminism as a project which is polymorphous, which has multiple strands that somehow converge around a shared project but manifest themselves in a variety of different ways, then the notion of co-optation becomes much harder to, in some sense, evoke because you cannot swallow whole a movement that has many tentacles, if you like. So, I think that the notion of co-optation does something to feminism in its own terms, it disciplines feminism into something that can be in fact consumed whole, if that makes sense, and I worry about that kind of move.

**Ana Fonseca:** When you say that it disciplines feminism, you mean that it simplifies it or... in which way exactly is that it disciplines feminism?

**Bice Maiguashca:** Because for co-optation to happen, feminism has to be treated as a singular subject, as one collective agent, and it also has to be treated as a subject which is about one power relation. In other words, it becomes a movement only about gender. It requires a simplification, a reduction of feminism for it to work. And this is a concern that it's not just me or Catherine, it's a concern that's been expressed by other feminists, particularly feminists from the South. Inderpal Grewal, for instance, suggests the language of co-optation demands a singular or pure feminist subject for it to make sense.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah, that's Inderpal Grewal. She is pushed back against the co-optation literature as well, arguing that it implies a subject that's around a single power vector that is gender, and therefore mis-represents more complicated



intersectional feminist politics, oversimplifies it, that it implies a kind of pure and singular subject and a pure and singular power relation.

**Ana Fonseca:** So, when you say that feminists are not being co-opted but rather that feminist ideas are being used and instrumentalized, would you say that it is more about a misuse of feminist ideas?

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**Catherine Eschle:** Sure.

**Bice Maiguashca:** Yes, a misappropriation, a complete misappropriation.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah.

**Bice Maiguashca:** It's basically taking feminist ideas and images and using them for non-feminist ends.

**Catherine Eschle:** Often to sell us things, of course, this is one axis of which the co-optation debate is played out. Feminist ideas about empowerment, or choice, or feminist slogans, or feminist T-shirts are being sold. Feminism becomes then a way in which we sell things to consume. Feminism becomes a desirable object that people can consume rather than a social struggle that you participate in. So, that might be one way in which feminism is being appropriated by non-feminists, by big corporations using feminist slogans to sell their products. The purpose of these corporations is to make profit, it's not to end patriarchy.

**Bice Maiguashca:** And in the process of doing this, of trying to sell things, the outcome of that is, the de-politicization of feminism as a movement. So, what it's doing is, in some sense, evacuating being critical, political, the utopian and emancipatory dimensions from feminism as a political project, and rendering it into a means to sell, for instance, products.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah, so perhaps what we need to be crystal clear about here is that we do think there are very dangerous and worrying dynamics happening in and around feminism in this contemporary neoliberal context. It's not that we are trying to dismiss the fears being expressed in this debate. We think those fears have justification, that there are worrying dynamics that we need to pay attention to. However, what we're reaching for is a different kind of conceptual language to make sense of those dynamics in order that we don't close off the possibility of contesting them.

There is a normative, political dimension to our academic project. We are interested in feminist futures, in trying to strengthen feminist mobilizing or bring it to view and contributing to a feminist struggle. We are concerned that the current ways of thinking about the challenges facing feminism actually close down - not only misrecognize the resistance, or the feminist political responses that are happening, or evacuate them from view - but also close down political possibilities. We need to think more imaginatively, we need to think more carefully about the problem and more imaginatively about the response.

**Bice Maiguashca:** And limiting our conceptual tools, if you like, to actually articulate what's going on and articulate possible alternatives.

**Ana Fonseca:** Lastly, in your article you see feminism as a, "left-inspired project." Some would argue that by situating feminism on the left, you are following the left-right political dichotomy; thus, falling into the kind of binary thinking that you argue against or have an issue with. What would you say in response to this critique? What makes feminism coincide so much with the left?

**Bice Maiguashca:** I think the first thing I would wanna clarify is that in our paper we're not arguing against analytical distinctions, and we're not arguing against - or at least I don't think we are - typologies, or even binaries. I think the main concern that we have is the way in which certain binaries are deployed and the effect of those usages. That's the first thing I'd say. The second thing I would suggest is that the binary that we problematize in the paper, that is the one between co-optation on the one hand, and resistance on the other, has to be understood as a relatively recent academic construct, and that needs to be juxtaposed to the left-right distinction, which is not a recent academic construct, but rather a living, breathing, historical, political metaphor.

So, the left-right distinction for us is not an academic construct, rather a historical, political imaginary that has been at work for two centuries now and has animated politics across the globe. It's a historical force, it's a political imaginary, it's not an academic binary. So that's in a way the first point I'd make about that. It's different from the co-optation-resistance binary in that fundamental way.

A second thing, which is very different, concerns its temporality. So, cooptation and resistance, in some sense, the way it's been used in the literature at least, refers to a fixed state. You are either co-opted or you are not; You are a resistant subject. The left-right divide is historical by definition. In other words, it's fluid; The content of the left or the content of

the right changes over time. Its meaning changes over time, as well as in relation to each other. So, it's also context-specific, so I think it's different in that sense as well. And the third way in which I suggest it functions very differently from the co-opted-resistance binary, it's that it has to be conceived in terms of a spectrum, a political spectrum. So, the left-right divide, although it is a dichotomy, we're drawing on the work of Norberto Bobbio and Steven Lukes. And for Norberto Bobbio, he says, this is a dichotomy, make no mistake about it; you cannot be left and right at the same time, it captures a relationship that is fundamentally antagonistic.

Having said that, that antagonism plays out on a spectrum within which you can have so-called center-ground; and that center-ground, in fact, has emerged much more strongly in the latter half of the twentieth century. So, I think in that sense as well it functions very differently from the binary that we're criticizing in our paper.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah, with different political histories and different political effects. Both of us believe that there's something important politically as well as analytically in holding on to the left-right dichotomy. For example, just to return to Bice's work with Jonathan Dean on so-called "populism," part of the problem with that debate is the erasure of the left-right difference, actually, and the equation of different left and right political projects as if they are now somehow the same in terms of their content, as well as in terms of their form. We think that's really problematic. It kind of flattens out the differences between different political projects, and there's something important at stake in that difference.

It may also be important to add that Bice and I have both been writing, separately from each other, on the relationship of feminism to the left. So basically, our argument about claiming, defining feminism as part of the left - in terms of being a political project which is committed to egalitarianism - part of that is actually a pushback against efforts by other forces on the left to exclude feminism from that project to say, you know, it's not part of it, or it must be deferred until after their particular form of power has been overturned, so they're concerned with. That's in a different context we've been making that argument, but basically thinking about feminism as already part of the left makes us rethink then the terms of the debate about how you think about the relationship of feminism to other actors on the left; and we're trying to take that argument and bring it into this debate about co-optation and say, maybe actually also what this argument does is help us think about the normative boundaries or contours of feminism as a political project and help us lay claim to sort of certain shared values that feminists might hold on to, so enabling us to then differentiate between some political

agents in other contexts appropriating feminist projects who aren't feminist ideas, who aren't themselves feminists, who aren't trying to fight for an egalitarian project but here are using feminist ideas, feminist texts, feminist slogans, feminist discourses for their own non-egalitarian purposes.

**Bice Maiguashca:** I'm just going to explain a little bit further what Catherine's point about feminism being on the left and what that sort of means. What we're trying to suggest is that feminism is a left political project to the extent that it's animated by an egalitarian ethos; and what we mean by that is that it conceives of inequalities as unnatural and socially constructed. In other words, they are not inevitable, which is Norberto Bobbio making this distinction. So, for him, the right political imaginary understands inequalities as natural and inevitable. The left does not; and because inequalities are unnatural and not inevitable, they must be rectified, they must be challenged. Feminism, in that sense, is a left political project, and it shares with other movements that ethos. So, we're suggesting that feminism as a left project shares space with a range of other left strands, from socialism and Marxism, to anarchism to certain strands of the environmental movement. So, there are multiple left strands.

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**Catherine Eschle:** Yes. What we perhaps need to stress is that while we're trying to find a normative basis for drawing boundaries around feminism and also for building political solidarity, we're not trying to entirely flatten out the differences within feminism, or between feminism and other political projects. So, of course, there are important ideological differences between these left projects, including feminism and other forms of the left, and there are also organizational tensions, which are well known or which keep re-appearing also within feminism. Of course, it's not to say that all feminisms are alike and that they're all exactly the same. Or that shouldn't be organizational autonomy between different kinds of feminism, or when feminism organizes as part of a left solidarity project. It is to argue that, overall, there is a shared normative content and we need to somehow find a way about articulating that to reach for those commonalities across our organizational ideological differences if we're to effectively contest some of the most egregious effects of neoliberalism that we've been talking about in our paper, and talking about with you today.

**Ana Fonseca:** Absolutely, reaching for those commonalities across different egalitarian movements and between different kinds of feminism, as you have pointed out, is extremely important. Especially in this context where we see this sense of...cynicism towards egalitarian movements and ideas because some people perceive them as being just rhetorics and no action, which has somehow led to the rise of all of these governments from the far-right in

different parts of the world, partly in the name of "pragmatism," which is quite worrisome.

**Catherine Eschle:** Oh, absolutely, and I think also - although I don't want to end on a pessimistic note - but I think it's even worse than that, because I don't think it's just a cynicism and desire for pragmatism. I actually think that it's a re-assertion of particular kinds of privilege and a pushback against social justice movements. So that's why I wanna stress again, I do think it is a dangerous moment; none of our arguments should be taken as saying that we're downplaying the kind of political concerns that people have. We wanna find a way that then doesn't lead to the kind of cynicism that you're talking about, and it's a more constructive political language.

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**Bice Maiguashca:** Or to the idea that revolution is our only alternative which is the alternate; those who don't become cynical decide the only way of bringing about change is through some form of radical revolution, right? So that's the other downside to it.

**Catherine Eschle:** Yeah. And I think the co-optation-resistance dichotomy could be seen as a revisiting of the reform-revolution dichotomy in a new form which worries me, not because I'm very interested in radical forms of politics. What I don't like is the kind of all-or-nothing way of thinking about political action, political ideas and social change. In fact, I think politics is a much messier, complicated, hard business; and it's also more mundane as in the here and now. So, it's not this something that you can constantly defer or has to take place in this pure form as we've talked about throughout this interview, I think. We are all imbricated within and shaped by neoliberal capitalist forces. We are not somehow gonna step outside of it and be able to overturn it from a kind of politically pure position. I am anxious that the co-optation-resistance dichotomy is a reawakening of the revolution-resistance dichotomy on the left. In fact, I want to push for political complexity, really; as well as, you know, we've talked about this notion of political imagination, that we want a different kind of political imaginary that will enable us to find a more constructive way forward.

**Ana Fonseca:** Excellent point to end our conversation for today. Drs. Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, thank you so much for your time and for sharing with us your knowledge and points of view on this issue.

**Bice Maiguashca:** Thank you very much, Ana

**Catherine Eschle:** Thank you for this opportunity to talk about our article.



Ana Fonseca: My pleasure.

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