



**TRANSNATIONAL  
SOCIAL**

**STRIKE**

**PLATFORM**



# **Georgia, Europe and the Transnational Dimension. Struggling in a Changing Scenario Tbilisi, Georgia 28th-30th June**

პლატფორმის  
“ტრანსნაციონალური სოციალური  
გაფიცვა” შეხვედრა //

**28 – 30 ივნისი; თბილისი,  
საქართველო**

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## Call-Out: Transnational Social Strike Platform Meeting // Tbilisi, Georgia 28th – 30th June

Georgia is connected to the European Union by an Association Agreement that is being implemented since 2016. Almost unnoticed in the West, the agreement entails a plan of reforms of economy, society and public policies that is shaking the Georgian political landscape. As other countries today and in the past, Georgia is meant to match European “democratic standards”, strengthening the market economy, creating a business-friendly environment, changing its visa policy and tightening border patrol. After a war and almost two decades of savage neoliberal reforms, that have deserted labor and social rights, now the EU intervenes with the aim of promoting stability in favor of business expansion.

We think what happens today in Georgia is telling of the transnational and global dimension of contemporary politics. Georgia is through and through integrated in a transnational scenario. More than half a million Georgian women work in Europe, mostly in the private care sector, covering the lack of basic welfare benefits and sending home remittances that are a crucial part of the national economy. Major infrastructural plans linked to the Belt and Road initiative and European TEN-T network are portraying the country as a crucial transit zone between Asia and Europe, and a country-wide tax-free economic zone is created to attract foreign investments; financial institutions control the lives of hundreds of thousand Georgians who got indebted in order to be able to satisfy their most basic needs, while EU backed financial institutions have been key to the European intervention in the country. Currently Georgia is the first recipient of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) funds, these, alongside investments from the European Investment Bank have contributed to fuelling a spree of investment in infrastructural projects, resting on a legislation that places investors at the highest point of the chain, protecting their perceived rights against the most basic workers rights and placing the state as a guarantor for profit. Even if the industrial conversion of Georgia seems still not in sight, the reproduction of Georgian society is in multiple ways connected with transnational dynamics that make any attack to the prospect of a EU integration on the basis of a national closure politically useless.

Georgia is not in the EU, but the Association Agreement with the EU is producing real effects: references to the agreement are systematically used by the government, the NGOs taking care of the alleged “democratic transition” and the major trade unions to channel labor and social struggles into a more controlled and benign form. In this way, the Agreement is suspending the political time and erasing the present in sight of a supposedly better future. It goes without saying that this future is being built completely above the heads of those who are going to be affected. The right to strike is under attack in Georgia as everywhere, but here the EU Association Agreement plays a specific role: the strike is pictured as a barbaric weapon, not fitting the civilized dialogue between the social partners, while the central European model of co-management between unions and enterprises is presented as the key to the Georgian dream. The very negotiation model that has tried to rule out the possibility to strike in the EU member states is one of the pillars of the EU enlargement towards East.

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The Agreement with the EU assumes that reforms will be accepted silently by Georgian workers, women and men, because the market democracy and the prospect of becoming a reservoir of migrant and cheap labor is the best they can expect. The plan of infrastructural investment in the region echoes the infrastructural hype that lies behind great projects all across the globe, making Central Asia a junction for future developments that will affect the East as well the West, and looms as a blackmail and a warning: the environment is business friendly only if there is social peace, only if those who populate it do not talk to each other, do not advance common claims. This shows at the highest magnitude how the logistics of exploitation builds its own environment upon the fragmentation of workers' collective power. The question is therefore how to build workers' power in this situation, and the similar situations that constellate the transnational space, without letting the legalistic perspective of the agreement between governments own the monopoly on the present and mortgage the future.

This question does not simply concern Georgia as such: we believe that this poses us new problems when addressing the central issue of how to organize transnationally. This shows how a new EU 'business acquis', while imposes neoliberal reforms in the West is extending its transnational grip across the East and the Balkan region. While shaken by deep political crisis – see the Brexit negotiation or the French insurrection –, the EU is continuing its structural integration and enlargement process. This process goes hand in hand with the erosion of rights and of welfare benefits and the general precarization of labor that is by now a reality in every member State. In order to forge a transnational strategy, without chasing nation-based illusions, we need to gain a political understanding of this process and how it affects our capacity to strike and struggle, in order to turn the transnational dimension into a source of force instead of weakness. It is for these reasons that, after holding the first meeting in Poznan to foster the participation from the Eastern countries of Europe and meetings in several European capitals, we decided to hold a meeting in Georgia to enlarge the scope of the TSS to the outsides/insides of the EU.

Moreover, in Tbilisi we will discuss the political use of the strike in the context of Georgia as a means to take back the initiative in workplaces and society and bridge the borders between sectors and countries. In this we rely on ongoing movements that have a strong transnational character: the feminist strike, that has set in motion mobilizations in dozens of countries all over the world starting from the fact that the sexual division of labor and male violence against women are not national, but global facts. Migrants are daily living a transnational reality by crossing the borders and posted and care workers are daily using their mobility to take advantage of wage differentials. Nurses in Bulgaria recently went on strike in more than 30 cities declaring that if the government does not grant better working conditions, they will leave the country. Industrial workers in the foreign factories located in Eastern European countries, transport workers and social workers are striking and fighting against the policies that populist governments are enforcing for the sake of foreign investments, as the protests in Hungary against the *slave law* show. New experiments of transnational coordination between Amazon warehouses in several European countries are taking place that could build a model for organizing against multinational companies. Starting from this mobile situation, and placing our discussion in a country where pressures from the West merge with pressures from the East to impose a new logistics of exploitation, we want to discuss what tools and strategy are needed to produce and give a common direction to our transnational communication.

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## განცხადება: პლატფორმის “ტრანსნაციონალური სოციალური გაფიცვა” შეხვედრა // 28 – 30 ივნისი; თბილისი, საქართველო

საქართველო ევროკავშირთან დაკავშირებულია ასოცირების ხელშეკრულებით, რომლის აღსრულებაც 2016 წლიდან მიმდინარეობს. ხელშეკრულება ითვალისწინებს რეფორმების გეგმას შემდეგ სფეროებში: ეკონომიკა, საზოგადოება და საჯარო პოლიტიკა, რომლებიც, თავის მხრივ, არყევენ ქართულ პოლიტიკურ ლანდშაფტს. ყოველივე დასავლეთისთვის თითქმის შეუმჩნეველად მიმდინარეობს. როგორც სხვა ქვეყნები, ამჟამად და წარსულში, საქართველოც იღწვის ევროპულ “დემოკრატიულ სტანდარტებთან” მისაახლოვებლად, საბაზრო ეკონომიკის გასამდიერებლად, ბიზნესისთვის მეგობრული გარემოს შესაქმნელად, სავიზო პოლიტიკის ცვლილებებისთვისა და სასაზღვრო კონტროლის გამკაცრებისთვის. ომისა და დაახლოებით 20 წლიანი ნეოლიბერალური რეფორმების შემდეგ შრომითი და სოციალური უფლებები თითქმის აღარ არსებობს. ახლა კი, ევროკავშირი შიდა პოლიტიკაში ბიზნესის გაფართოებისთვის სტაბილური გარემოს შექმნისთვის ერევა

ჩვენ მიგვაჩნია, რომ, რაც დღეს საქართველოში ხდება, არის თანამედროვე პოლიტიკის ტრანსნაციონალური და გლობალური განზომილებით განპირობებული. საქართველო უფრო და უფრო ინტეგრირდება ტრანსნაციონალურ სცენარში. მილიონნახევარზე მეტი ქართველი ქალი ძირითადად კერძო სექტორში, მომვლელად მუშაობს ევროპაში. ისინი თავიანთი ოჯახების ბაზისურ საჭიროებებს, რომლებიც კეთილდღეობის სახელმწიფოს ნაწილი უნდა იყოს, გზავნილებით ფარავენ. ეს გზავნილები ეროვნულ ეკონომიკაში გადამწყვეტ როლს თამაშობს. ძირითადი ინფრასტრუქტურული გეგმები, რომლებიც დაკავშირებულია “ქამრისა და გზის” ინიციატივასთან და ევროპულ “TEN-T” ქსელთან, წარმოაჩენენ საქართველოს, როგორც აზიისა და ევროპის უმნიშვნელოვანეს ტრანზიტულ ზონას, სადაც უცხოური ინვესტიციების მოსაზიდად გადასახადებისგან თავისუფალი ეკონომიკური ზონები მთელი ქვეყნის მასშტაბით იქმნება. ფინანსური ინსტიტუტები აკონტროლებენ ასობით ათასი ქართველის ცხოვრებას, რომლებიც ვალებს ბაზისური მოთხოვნების დასაკმაყოფილებლად იღებენ. ამავე დროს კი, ევროკავშირი ევროპის მიერ მხარდაჭერილი ფინანსური ინტერესებით ახორციელების ინტერვენციებს. ამჟამად საქართველო არის ევროპის რეკონსტრუქციისა და განვითარების ბანკის (EBRD) კაპიტალის პირველი მიმღები, რაც ევროპის ინვესტირების ბანკის ინვესტიციებთან ერთად, ხელს უწყობს ინვესტიციების ნაკადს ინფრასტრუქტურულ პროექტებში, სადაც კანონმდებლობით უპირატესი ადგილი უკავიათ ინვესტორებს და მათი უფლებებიც მშრომელებთან შედარებით მეტად დაცულია. ამ ყველაფერში კი, სახელმწიფო გვევლინება, როგორც მოგების გარანტორი. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ საქართველოს ინდუსტრიული გარდაქმნა ჯერ არ ჩანს, საქართველოს საზოგადოების კვლავწარმოება არის ტრანსნაციონალურ დინამიკებთან მრავალმხრივ დაკავშირებული, რაც ხდის ნებისმიერ შეტევას ევროკავშირთან ინტეგრაციის პერქექსტივაზე, რომელიც დაფუძნებულია ეროვნული ჩაკეტილობაზე, პოლიტიკურად გამოუსადეგად.

საქართველო არ არის ევროკავშირში, თუმცა ასოცირების ხელშეკრულებას რეალური ეფექტი აქვს ქვეყანაზე: მთავრობა პოლიტიკურ არგუმენტაციაში სისტემატურად იშველიებს ხელშეკრულებას და მასში შემავალ დადგენილებებს, არასამთავრობოები “დემოკრატიულ ტრანზიციაზე” საუბრისას იყენებენ მას, ხოლო მხსვილი

პროფკავშირები აპელირებენ ხელშეკრულებაზე შრომითი და სოციალური ბრძოლების უფრო კონტროლირებად და რბილ ფორმებში მოსაქცევად. ამ გზით ასოცირების ხელშეკრულება გადადებს პოლიტიკურ დროს ნავარაუდები უკეთესი მომავლის ფიქრით და კლავს აწმყოს კრიტიკის შანსს. ეს მომავალი კი მათ ხარჯზე შენდება, ვინც ამ რეფორმებს თავის თავზე გამოივლის. გაფიცვის უფლება საქართველოშიც და ასევე ყველგან დისკრედიტირებულია. ევროკავშირთან ასოცირების ხელშეკრულებას ამაში განსაკუთრებული როლი მიუძღვის: გაფიცვა წარმოდგენილია, როგორც ბარბაროსული იარაღი, რომელიც არ ჯდება სოციალური პარტნიორების ცივილიზებული დიალოგის ფორმატში. ცენტრალური ევროპული თანამმართველობის მოდელი პროფკავშირსა და კომპანიის მენეჯმენტს შორის არის წარმოდგენილი, როგორც ქართული ოცნების გასაღები. სწორედ ეს მორიგების მოდელი, რომელიც გაფიცვების თავიდან არიდებისთვისაა ევროკავშირის წევრ სახელმწიფოებში, არის ევროკავშირის აღმოსავლეთით გაფართოების ერთ-ერთი წინაპირობა.

ევროკავშირთან ხელშეკრულება მოიაზრებს, რომ ქართველი მშრომელები, ქალები და კაცები უხმაუროდ მიიღებენ რეფორმებს, რადგან საბაზრო დემოკრატია და ქვეყნის პერსპექტივა, რომ ის მიგრანტებისა და იაფი მუშახელის რეზერვუარად გადაიქცევა, არის საუკეთესო, რასაც შეიძლება მოელოდნენ. რეგიონში ინფრასტრუქტურული ინვესტირების გეგმა არის გამოძახილი მსოფლიოს დიდი პროექტების ინფრასტრუქტურული აჟიოტაჟისა, რაც სახავს ცენტრალურ აზიას სამომავლო განვითარებების კვანძად; ეს ზემოქმედებას იქონიებს როგორც აღმოსავლეთზე, ისე დასავლეთზე. ის ატარებს შანტაჟსა და გაფრთხილებას: გარემო ბიზნესისთვის მეგობრული მხოლოდ მაშინაა, როდესაც არსებობს სოციალური მშვიდობა; როდესაც მოსახლეები ერთმანეთს არ ესაუბრებიან, არ ავითარებენ საერთო მოთხოვნებს. ეს სურათი ყველაზე თვალსაჩინოთ აჩვენებს, თუ როგორ ქმნის ექსპლუატაციის სტრუქტურა საკუთარ გარემოს მშრომელთა კოლექტიური ძალის დანაწევრების ხარჯზე. აქედან გამომდინარე, ჩნდება კითხვა, თუ როგორ ჩამოყალიბდეს მშრომელთა ძალა ტრანსნაციონალურ სივრცეში ისე, რომ რომ მთავრობებს შორის ხელშეკრულების ლეგალისტურ პერსპექტივას მონოპოლია წაართვას და მომავალი საფრთხისგან დაიცვას.

ეს საკითხი მხოლოდ საქართველოს არ ეხება: ჩვენ ვფიქრობთ, რომ ეს წამოჭრის ახალ პრობლემებს ტრანსნაციონალური ორგანიზების გზაზე. ეს აჩვენებს, თუ როგორ ვრცელდება ევროკავშირის ახალი “ბიზნესის ნორმები” დასავლეთ ევროპაში გატარებული ნეოლიბერალური რეფორმებიდან აღმოსავლეთითა და ბალკანეთის რეგიონში. მიუხედავად ღრმა პოლიტიკური კრიზისისა (ნახ: ბრექსიტის მოლაპარაკებები ან ფრანგული ამბოხება), ევროკავშირი აგრძელებს სტრუქტურული ინტეგრაციისა და გაფართოების პროცესს. ეს პროცესი მიმდინარეობს უფლებებისა და კეთილდღეობის ჩამორთმევასა და ზოგადად შრომის პრეკარიზაციასთან ერთად, რაც უკვე ყველა ევროკავშირის წევრ ქვეყანაში რეალობაა. იმისათვის, რომ ჩამოყალიბდეს ტრანსნაციონალური სტრატეგია (ეროვნულ დონეზე დაფუძნებული ილუზიების დევნის გარეშე), გვჭირდება ამ პროცესის პოლიტიკური გაგება, თუ როგორ ვნებს ის ჩვენს გაფიცვისა და ბრძოლის უნარს. ტრანსნაციონალური განზომილება უნდა გამოვიყენოთ როგორც სიძლიერე და არა სისუსტე. სწორედ ამ მიზეზების გამო, პოზნანში ჩატარებული პირველი შეხვედრის შემდეგ, რომელიც მიზნად ისახავდა აღმოსავლეთ ევროპის ქვეყნების ჩართვას და რამდენიმე ევროპულ დედაქალაქში შეხვედრის ჩატარებას, გადავწყვიტეთ ჩავატაროთ შეხვედრა საქართველოში, რათა გავზარდოთ “TSS“-ის მოქმედების ფარგლები ევროკავშირის შიგნით თუ მის გარეთ.



თბილისში განვიხილავთ გაფიცვის პოლიტიკურ სარგებელს ქართულ კონტექსტში, როგორც სამუშაო ადგილებზე ინიციატივების დაბრუნებისა და სექტორების და ქვეყნების ერთმანეთთან შეკავშირების საშუალებას. ამით ჩვენ ვეყრდნობით არსებულ მოძრაობებს, რომლებსაც აქვთ ძლიერი ტრანსნაციონალური მახასიათებელი: ფემინისტური გაფიცვა, რომელმაც დაიწყო მობილიზება ათობით ქვეყანაში მსოფლიოს გარშემო, რაც განპირობებული იყო იმ ფაქტით, რომ შრომის სქესობრივი დანაწილება და ქალებზე ძალადობა მამაკაცების მხრიდან არა ეროვნული, არამედ გლობალური პრობლემაა. მიგრანტებს ყოველდღიურად უწევთ ტრანსნაციონალურ რეალობაში ცხოვრება, როდესაც კვეთენ საზღვრებს, ხოლო კონტრაქტორი მშორმელები და მომვლელები ყოველდღიურად იყენებენ მათ მობილიზებას, რათა სათავისოდ გამოიყენონ განსხვავებები ანაზღაურებებში. ექთნები ბულგარეთის 30-ზე მეტ ქალაქში გაიფიცნენ და მოსთხოვეს, მთავრობას უკეთესი შრომის პირობები, წინააღმდეგ შემთხვევაში, ისინი დატოვებდნენ ქვეყანას. აღმოსავლეთ ევროპაში მდებარე უცხოურ ქარხნებში მომუშავე ინდუსტრიული მუშები, ტრანსპორტის მუშაკები და სოციალური მუშაკები იფიცებიან და იბრძვიან იმ პოლიტიკის წინააღმდეგ, რომლებსაც პოპულისტური მთავრობები ატარებენ უცხოური ინვესტიციების მისაღებად, რაზეც მეტყველებს *“მონური კანონის”* წინააღმდეგ გამართული პროტესტები უნგრეთში. გვხვდება ტრანსნაციონალური კოორდინირების ახალი ექსპერიმენტები ამაზონის საწყობებს შორის ევროპის რამდენიმე ქვეყანაში, რაც შეიძლება გახდეს მულტინაციონალური კომპანიების წინააღმდეგ ორგანიზების მოდელი. ამ მოძრავი სიტუაციიდან დაწყებით და დისკუსიის იმ ქვეყანაში ჩატარებით, სადაც დასავლეთისგან და აღმოსავლეთისგან წამოსული ზეწოლები ადგენს ექსპლუატაციის ახალ სტრუქტურას, ჩვენ გვსურს, განვიხილოთ, თუ რა საშუალებები და როგორი სტრატეგიაა საჭირო ტრანსნაციონალური კომუნიაკაციის შემუშავებისა და მისთვის მიმართულების მიცემისთვის.



# Program

## Friday 28th of June

5pm-5.30pm: Welcome from Solidarity Network and introduction of TSS

6pm-8pm: Roundtable

### ***Georgia, Europe and the Transnational Dimension: Struggling in a Changing Scenario***

In this opening roundtable we want to discuss the transnational dimension as the changing scenario in which we are struggling today beyond easy alternatives between nationalism and global neoliberalism and beyond geopolitical readings. The Association Agreement with the EU setting the rules for Georgian 'development', the neoliberal reforms precarizing labor and privatizing welfare benefits to meet transnational standards of efficiency, the attempts to cripple the right to strike and discipline repulsive workers to build a 'business friendly' environment, the integration in transnational circuits of capital and the state's entanglement with foreign investors, massive migration of women to Western European countries. Georgia is by now through and through integrated in a transnational scenario and invested by processes that have trends in common with what is happening in other European and non European countries. These transformations influence the capacity to strike and organize and we need to find collective ways to cope with them and look for connections between struggles addressing different, but interconnected aspects of the changing scenario we live in.

*Interventions by Solidarity Network, Ertoba 2013 - metro workers' unions, social workers' union, Chiatura miners on strike protagonists of the protests in Pankisi Valley against hydropower plants, workers' Initiative union (Poland), and more.*

## Saturday 29th of June

\*Morning session\*

10.30am Welcome with coffee

11am-1pm: Workshop #1

### ***Rethinking the strike: experiments, conflicts and organizing in Georgia, Europe and beyond***

The transformations of labor and society, and of their relationship, affect our capacity to fight and require to think anew forms of organization and unions' practices. Starting from the different struggles that are erupting in Georgia, in this session we want to stress the possible connections with the multiple struggles and strikes that have happened over the last few years in Europe.

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We are interested in discussing what it means to organize a political and social strike and what it means to politicize the strike today, so to make it a way to struggle against the more general conditions that determine the position of workers in society. During this session we want to discuss about how to enhance connections between struggles to face the common challenges that we share in spite of national and sectoral differences.

1pm-2.30pm: Lunch break

\*Afternoon session\*

2.30pm-4.30pm: Workshop #2

### ***Global Women's Strike***

The last three years have seen the rise of a global movement under the banner of the strike hitting both production and social reproduction. In dozens of countries around the world women are protesting against male violence, catalyzing a general opposition against neoliberalism, patriarchy and racism.

Together with millions women in the world, Georgian women have taken to the streets on the 8th of march this year refusing sexual violence and oppression, but also exploitation and precarization of women - resulting, for instance, in a total deregulation of surrogacy, the dismantlement of welfare and the tightening of sexual division of labour. In this way feminist strike is connecting Georgia with a transnational movement bringing together all those who are rising up against the violence of patriarchal and racist neoliberalism.

How to foster and enlarge the transnational movement of the feminist strike? What are its perspectives? How to connect and boost different experiences of struggle along transnational chains of care? How to strike against production and social reproduction? What does the women's strike say about possible ways to connect the struggle against exploitation with wider social issues?

5pm-7pm: Final Plenary

### ***Building a transnational strategy against exploitation and impoverishment***

Starting from the reflections of the previous sessions in this plenary we would like to continue the discussion on how to foster and increase our transnational communication and how to turn the transnational from a crucial dimension of our exploitation to a strategic element of struggle and opposition.

## **Sunday 30th of June**

11am-3pm: **TSS Platform Coordination Meeting**

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# Georgia, Europe and the Transnational Dimension.

## Struggling in a Changing Scenario

The TSS meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia on 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> June 2019 is the first assembly of the platform outside the borders of the EU. We are heading to Tbilisi while the city is shaken by an uprising, pointing directly to the Parliament. The reasons that sparked this wave of protests relate to an unsatisfaction with the government that takes the shape of offended national pride, while opposition parties feed on the anti-Russian sentiments present in the country. **As TSS, beyond national pride and geopolitical interpretations, we see the necessity of assessing the current situation within a transnational framework, and we affirm that geopolitics and nationalist sentiments are increasingly used to cover the real nature of social conflict, in Georgia as elsewhere.** In front of global capitalism, there is no other way for radical change than to recognize the transnational dimension we live in, beyond easy alternatives, and to build an autonomous perspective that finds enemies and allies for the interest of workers, men and women, citizens or migrants, and not of national



representatives. In fact, what is clear is that this instrumentalization unites the supposed enemies: both neoliberals pro-West reformers and nationalist conservatives, both foreign interests and local supporters, aim at

preventing workers' discontent from turning into a transnational fight against exploitation, precarity and impoverishment. With this meeting, we address the need to frame the transnational dimension differently, also in order to cope with the issues that are hidden behind the protest in Tbilisi, and help building an autonomous political perspective.

**We insisted since the beginning on the need to overcome the usual political maps of social and labor movements in order to grasp the transnational dimension we live in and within which we need to fight.** This has brought us to pay particular attention to Eastern developments – since Eastern European countries have been a place of experimentation of neoliberal policies, industrial restructuring and precarization of labor for the past thirty years. The inclusion of these countries in European and global production chains, their integration in the EU and the mobility of labor have made this part of Europe crucial for any political project that aims at changing the present state of things. The same aim has taken us to the Balkans, following migrants' movements after 2015 refugees' 'crisis'. Beyond the alternative between neoliberal or 'social' Europeanism, on the one hand, and nationalist anti-Europeanism, on the other, the TSS project sees Europe not as its exclusive horizon, but as the first transnational space of struggle.

**By heading to Georgia, the TSS adds other elements to the transnational collective force we need in order to confront the effects of logistical integration on labor and society and to cope with the ways in which they impact on the possibility to strike and organize.**

After the crisis of 2008, the policies of privatization, precarization and welfare cuts that



affected the East during the transition period spread to all European countries with heavy consequences on the capacity to struggle for better conditions. While considering the differences, we have discussed the common trends that link together Italy's Jobs act, France's Loi travail and Macron's ordonnances, the law against the strike in Sweden, Hartz IV in Germany, and the several attacks to grass root unions.

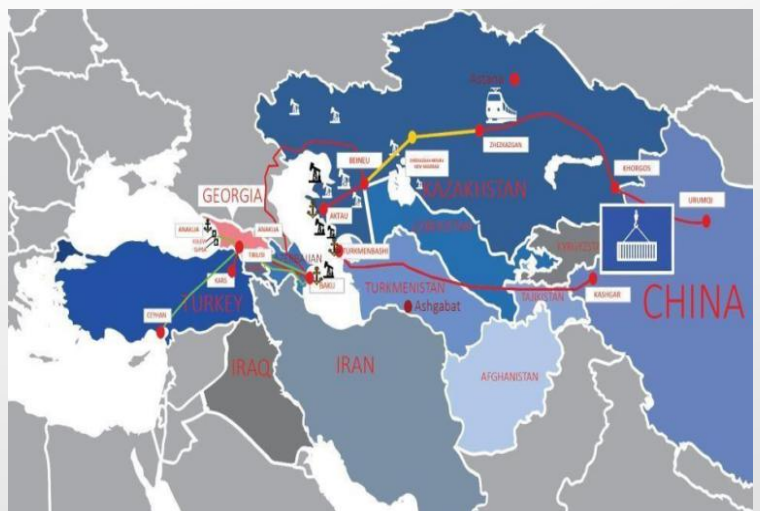
We have detected how welfare cuts are

a reality in every European country and pose new questions on how to formulate our demands and address the State. We have denounced how anti-immigration political forces and institutional racism contribute in the structural exploitation of migrant labor, and how the anti-immigrant and nationalist discourse works to further precarize and keep labor under the yoke of employers and policy makers. In turn, increased mobility is one of the main forces used by workers to strike with their feet, change their condition and seek better salaries. We have taken part in women's uprisings that in the last years radically contested the patriarchal pillars of production and social reproduction.

These changes went together with a fundamental shift in the way institutions and states work, with the increasing centrality of governments versus parliaments and the rise of nationalism. Also in this regard, what happened in the Eastern states of the enlarged EU was the sign of a general transformation. This does not imply that the EU is now a homogeneous space: on the contrary, **EU logistical integration works by exploiting differences in economic and social conditions between countries.** Now this exploitation is stretching beyond its institutional borders, to a farther East that helps balancing the political instability of Eastern Europe and provides new expectations on profits and cheap labor. In this direction, the transformations affecting Georgia as a post-soviet country and a crucial passageway between Europe and Asia, and the struggles

erupting there pose us new questions and new challenges.

**Since 2006 Georgia is connected with the EU through an Association Agreement** that is telling of the way in which the ongoing European logistic integration is taking place and reveals the deep transformation of the EU as a political project. The Agreement contains a set of rules Georgia needs to adopt in order to have a privileged economic relationship with the EU.





**This Agreement is presented as the true promise of a better democratic future and the EU as a realm of rights and well-being ensuring a civilized and continuous progress**, an alternative to the savagery of both the socialist past and the violent deregulation of the 1990s and early 2000s. Besides, Georgia is presented as an ideal gateway country between large markets, a potential reservoir of cheap labor and a perfect site for tourism industry. Consequently, all the efforts need to be concentrated on being ready for this uncertain prospect of integration, all the sacrifices are legitimized therefore. As a consequence, the Association Agreement is in reality used as a tool to discipline and calm down attempts to raise a voice on the conditions of integration and 'development', also in sectors that are not materially included into transnational circuits. **The Agreement goes hand in hand with the attack to the right to strike and the political project to discipline repulsive workers.** And this applies to all sectors, including public sector workers, transportation workers and service sector. As we saw elsewhere, and as the metro workers on strike in Tbilisi last year showed, the problem is how to practice the strike in changing conditions and overcome the legal constraints through which it is limited and made ineffective.

In Georgia **the reality is far from the picture imagined by the EU and the Georgian state**: the discontent against the project of turning the country into a 'service-provider' with no say and no power is indeed mounting in different forms. Different struggles are erupting despite the rhetoric on development and the attacks on living and labor conditions: from miners' strikes to the protests against hydroelectric power plants devastating the country, from metro workers', nurses' and social service sector's strikes to the women's demonstration of March 8<sup>th</sup>. Each of these struggles is addressing different connected sides of the neoliberal attack that aims at turning Georgian workers, women and men, into exploitable and poor workforce at the mercy of investors, because this is the best they can get. But **while this takes the shape of the submission to decisions taken elsewhere, Georgia, the Georgian state and Georgian capital are increasingly interwoven with global capitalism.** Behind the struggle to secure

influence, profits and leverage within the country, at stake there is the way in which

Georgian labor and Georgian society are integrated in this global reality.

While the ongoing transformations are global, the forms of struggle and organizing remain largely sectorial, local or national.

Fragmentation and differences block most attempts to politicize labor and social

struggles beyond single issues. **The question for us is thus how to practice this field of tension where, on the one side, there are struggles addressing different but related aspects of the ongoing transformation and, on the other, there is a fully-fledged integration of Georgia within the world market and transnational circuits of capital, investments and power.**



We think that this question is crucial both for the struggles within Georgia and for transnational struggles.

We also need to assess what the state can do in the present condition and what the state has done in order to contribute to this situation. The website 'Invest in Georgia' assures foreign investors willing to start a business in Georgia that «the average monthly salary amounts to 430\$», including blue and white collars, and that «the country has quite a flexible Labor Code». As a matter of fact, «Georgia has one of the most liberal labor environments not only in the region, but globally». In the last decades, **Georgian governments have insistently claimed to be transforming the country into a 'business-friendly environment' while operating to dismantle any labor right** and, most importantly, any possible collective and autonomous power on the side of workers. While the post-soviet reality may suggest a withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities and a sell off of its capacities, the Georgian state is acting as a neoliberal state actively promoting the integration of Georgian labor and society within the world market.



This emerges clearly by looking at last month's [miners' strike in Chiatura](#), a big manganese extraction site. The miners have been asking for improved labor conditions and safety measures, involving the whole city in a social strike stopping any activity, from shops to schools and workplaces. In the struggle it was clear that workers are put under pressure by different agents: by the government, that considers the extraction site as a national resource to exploit in bargaining with foreign capital and in legitimizing its internal action; by foreign investors, who need to safeguard their investments; by speculators in raw materials markets; by the financial capital. While the government had taken control of the American-Ukrainian company managing the mine, it did nothing so far to improve the working conditions and to reduce the workload. **The strike in Chiatura, where in the end the miners had their demands met, shows that the promises of development may take unexpected twists:** workers and community revolted against working conditions and the environmental consequences of an economic activity that is at the same time a 'strategic' sector for Georgia and a testing ground for the type of its logistic integration in the world market.



Moreover, the Pankisi Valley has recently seen numerous protests against a hydropower plant meant to achieve energy autonomy. After the protests erupted, the government, while assuring a violent police repression through a criminal special operation, promised that it would better inform the population about the benefits of the plant and the employment possibilities it will originate. The local population knows, however, that while the construction of the plant might cause the hiring of around 80 people, after its completion only a handful will be hired for maintenance, while there will be irreversible environmental damages provoked by the overexploitation of soil and water. The same goes for the huge construction projects that are connected to the One Belt One Road initiative. Railways, highways and related infrastructures are being built throughout the country. **Expropriations of land and damaging of natural resources are the normal backlash of these projects, while people are hired only provisionally for the actual construction, and then dismissed when it ends.** This shows the need to connect the fight against exploitation and environmental degradation as different faces of the struggle against the construction of a 'business friendly environment'. To practice the transnational dimension as a battlefield thus means to look for and create autonomous connections between struggles, even when these seem at odds: across different labor sectors and countries, that are supposedly divided by different working conditions, including the sexual division of labour, and wage levels; between those who remain in the country and those who migrate abroad; between productive and reproductive labour.

This means to recognize that the transnational dimension is already shaping working-class composition and the conditions under which labor is reproduced. As a matter of fact, the Georgian 'labor asset' is not limited to the jobs that are carried out within the country, but also abroad, due to the increasing labor mobility. In turn Georgian migration policies are fostering the employment of migrant workforce, so that, as the website 'Invest in Georgia' declares, «no working permits are required and citizens of 94 countries can stay in Georgia without visa for 1 whole year».



This allowed, for instance, several Chinese companies building infrastructures in Georgia to directly employ Chinese workers. This is another aspect of transnational logistical integration: trading cheap workforce thanks to wage differentials often at the expense of those who are worse-off by unemployment, poverty and lack of social security, while at the same time

fragmenting the labour market, differentiating working conditions and letting the employers have a free hand. The question is how to pursue a collective force behind differences and build political connections against national and contractual divisions.

This interconnection does not limit itself to the field of labor but extends to social reproduction. **Even more than construction or factory workers employed abroad, the principal asset Georgia seems to be offering on the world market are women.**

More than half million women work in Europe as care or domestic workers. The remittances they send are a consistent part of the GDP, and often cover basic family needs. The care work done by women strengthens the sexual division of labor and connects Georgia to Western European countries. While women are employed, either as migrant wage workers or as unpaid reproductive labor, to fill the gaps of welfare, confirming that reproduction is a women's burden, the privatization of welfare, in Georgia amounting to up to 90%, has made the service sector boom as a place of precarious and poorly paid work, specifically performed by women. It is not by chance then that the service sector has been in turn a place of struggle of nurses and social workers, protesting both against labor conditions and the related lack of services. **Besides working in harsher conditions, the lack of welfare increases the load of reproductive labor and women need to be disciplined enough to endure this increased exploitation, at work and at home.** Additionally, thanks to the almost complete deregulation of the surrogacy business and its competitive prices compared to other locations, Georgian women are among the first providers of wombs for the international market. This is yet another clear example of how the Georgian state is turning the country into a 'business-friendly environment', while being apparently 'inexistent' and weak. As the March 8<sup>th</sup> demonstrations show, a new global movement is contesting the interlacement between labor exploitation and the position women are forced to



hold within society and along transnational reproductive chains. This shows another element of a transnational dimension where the very social reproduction is organized transnationally and requires a transnational response.

In search for common terrains of struggle that can politically connect dispersed forces, we recognize in the strike not simply a practice to be deployed within the workplaces, but a collective project connecting different forms of refusal of the neoliberal command. **The transnational logistical integration is crisscrossed by conflicts, whose connection can be found** when we grasp in all its width the entanglement between labor conditions and the overall conditions of reproduction of society, **when we are able to find threads linking the conflicts investing institutional agreements, migration policies, deregulation of the reproductive market, sexual division of labor, mobility, extractive and infrastructural projects, in Georgia and elsewhere.** It is only within the transnational dimension that we can develop a collective autonomous power that refuses to be a pawn in the hands of the rulers of the day.



## About the TSS Platform

The Transnational Social Strike (TSS) Platform aims at involving different kinds of workers – women and men, those employed in factories, those who experience the normality of precarity, locals and migrants – in a political process against subordination and exploitation. It is open to workers, groups and unions across Europe and beyond that share a common goal.

What do we mean by transnational social strike and why to start a process towards this goal?

We experience every day that things in the workplaces and in society have changed. Organization of labor struggles is weakened by the divisions between those who work in the same hub, factory, school, call center etc. Solidarity is challenged by the differences of contracts, time of employment, political conditions such as residence permits or welfare rights. Labour disputing is more and more difficult and it is often not enough to stop the increasing precarization. National divisions imposed on labor obstruct the capacity to fight back against the transnational dimension of production and exploitation. As a result, a little conquest by one can sometimes be a loss for many others: be they workers in other countries with lower wages and income or temp workers in the same factory, young interns or migrants and refugees forced to work for free to get their visa.

The TSS process is born from the assumption that there is no technical way out to this situation: only a political movement can overturn the state of affairs according to which we are just numbers and shares in the balance sheets of the European technocrats and capitalists. The strike is for us the name of a power that aims at damaging the pillars on which this unequal and unjust society is grounded. Building the conditions to exercise this power is what we need in order to overthrow the current state of subordination to employers and politicians.

Therefore, today the strike needs to be transnational and social.

Transnational because capital works and thinks transnationally, creating divisions among countries, wages and working conditions to weaken us and make profits. Only by facing and overturning these divisions we can aspire at increasing our power and make ourselves heard. In this, we refuse to be labeled either as anti-EU or pro-EU: we deem insufficient to organize at the national level, as the transnational dimension is our battlefield and Europe is for us a common space of organization where to find allies and enemies.

Social because the power of the strike cannot be restricted to some categories of workers, trade unions or groups of supporters. The strike is a weapon that everyone has to be able to hold and use throughout society: even those who are constantly changing jobs, the migrants who risk their residence permit, the students and the unemployed. The strike can become for them a chance to be in the frontline, to organize and to overthrow the political conditions of exploitation. There must be no exclusion from the strike movement: this is the basis of our understanding of solidarity and social strike.

The TSS Platform is a political infrastructure to confront these challenges. It is a reservoir of experiences and tactics to politicize labor struggles, to connect social and labour struggles, and make their claims heard well beyond each group's and union's capacity. It is a space of organization, communication and encounter where different figures of labour can think together about how to develop a common discourse, how to support common European claims capable of being instruments of emancipation and how to build the conditions of possibility of the transnational social strike.

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