

Research project objectives/Research hypothesis

The aim of the project is to analyse the visual articulations of political resistance in Croatia and Serbia after the year 2000. I construe the term "visual articulations of resistance" as any images aimed at expressing resistance: both used as communication tools during the acts of protest, as well as visual representations of the acts of resistance appearing in the media which are simultaneously discursive and rhetorical acts. To this group I also include images bearing the idea of change, i.e. triggering disputes, destabilising the current political landscape, and moving conflicts to the sphere of visibility. All the types of images I have mentioned play not only an important role in the narrativisation of the acts of opposition, but also become a stimulus to the emergence of new forms of protest. In turn, I understand the political resistance as all kinds of manifestations of critical attitude to political reality such as *disagreement, dissent, nonviolent actions*. This project is intended to show resistance as a category that accumulates multiple meanings and visual representations. The initial caesura (2000) – the end of presidency of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia and the end of presidency of Franjo Tuđman in Croatia – makes the research a challenge for several reasons: the transformational reality restores the conflict to the public sphere and it is the time of formation of a new hegemonic culture of the rulers and, therefore, political resistance is conducted against a new, not fully defined or just self-defining anew hegemony. The result of the project will be an open-access monograph supplied with a comprehensive visual appendix, illustrating the visual grammar of political resistance.

I put forward a hypothesis that the visual articulations of political resistance encode not only an ad hoc content of an act of opposition, its object and subject, but also the idea of resistance as such. Images applied as tools in the acts of resistance and produced in their course are used for the management of political imaginarium. They primarily serve to ask questions of ideological nature, which express political resistance and play a critical role at the same time, and thus contribute to the development of "agonistic public spaces". They are part of the divisions and disputes between opponents whose political subjectivity and identity is transformed during the conflict. Assuming that antagonisms are a key factor constituting a democratic society, and conditions of the democratic public sphere, I intend to check to what extent the acts of resistance in Croatia and Serbia after 2000 are the articulation of a self-defining civil society.

Research project methodology

The study includes three levels: reading visual materials, decoding perivisual discourses regarding the resistance, and analysis of the manners of presenting new forms of political subjectivity, which lie behind pictures and discourses. The analysis of pictures will require the reference to the external systems: cultural, historical, and political. I will explain the dynamics of the relations in the visual field, the relation between one who is watching and an object that "is being watched", the conditioning of visual articulations through visual codes and regimes rooted in both cultures. The key category is the concept of "iconic moments" (WJT Mitchell), i.e. images reproduced most frequently, overcoming their locality and penetrating into the global circulation, essentialising the moments the representations of which they are. The study will consist in recognising how images undermine and break the existing regimes and discourses of power (M. Foucault) and how they introduce new ones. An important point of reference is Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, assuming that things (in this case images) belong to the human world and are mediations and mediators of social relations. So these images are not passive, but they acquire a certain subjectivity in relations. I will search for the images-actors, as well as the networks they create and the manners of mediating meanings. I will also use Jacques Rancière's concept, which says about a social space divided into what is "visible" and "invisible". In this light, politics is an activity aimed at disturbing this "police" division of space, an opportunity to change social configuration and a new beginning. I will strive to determine how the acts of resistance are a response to police practices, how they dismantle the scope of the perceived, breaking the existing social divisions and outlining potential spaces in which it becomes possible to create new political subjectivities.

Expected impact of the research project on the development of science

The proposed research will be an important contribution to the reflection on the European cultural imaginaries. Although the Croatia and Serbia did not have a significant impact on the politics of the European centres, the experience of margins which dominates in these cultures can be inspiring for the examination of the centre. This margin is not clean and ready to be filled with writing, there is a dense text in it, written under the influence of the centre. It always remains in a dialogue with the mainstream, and what is located in the margins it also affects the centre. The elaboration of the method of researching the visual articulations of resistance has got a universal potential and could be used by cultural studies experts, sociologists, political scientists and art historians. The novelty in relation to the research undertaken so far will also be to include the reflection on the so-called conservative resistance, the presence of which in the contemporary Serbian and Croatian societies (but also in France, Hungary, Poland) is becoming more and more visible.