



Artivism and Creative Resistances: New Research Methods and New Alliances between Art and Activism

Final Conference ERC ARTIVISM, Lausanne, 12-14 April 2022

Whereas the level of participation in elections is declining in many countries, recently developed innovative forms of resistance are constantly growing. Various art forms such as carnivalesque and disruptive performances, appropriation of political symbols and temporary audio-visual, physical and material occupations of public spaces constitute creative means of expression to convey political criticism and demands for civil rights. The 21st century has seen increasing engagement in civil resistance in Europe, Africa, America, Asia and other parts of the world (Mc Garry et al. 2020; Bouchier & Dehais 2020; Steirischer Herbst & Malzacher 2014; Weibel 2014; Lemoine & Ouairi 2010), in the context of protests against the logics of colonialism and racism, globalisation and neo-liberalism (Mbembe 2019, 2020; de Cauter, de Roo & Vanhaesebrouck 2011). Protesters have been denouncing the current and anticipated consequences of global warming, the increase in political violence and forced migration, covert support for authoritarian regimes, the effects of gentrification and excessive tourism, and other causes of various crises affecting an increasing number of global citizens (Serafini 2019; Duncombe and Lambert 2018, 2014). A central and common issue in many of these crises is that of participation in politics where democratic institutionalisation is either non-existent or non-effective (Mouffe 2000; Graeber 2013). Furthermore, these various crises increase and widen the range of vulnerability (Butler & Athanasiou 2013) not only for a majority of the affected populations, citizens and non-citizens alike, but for artists and activists who engage in social and political struggles.

Given these global and local predicaments and struggles, the role of art and activism in social and political transformation is at the centre of many debates (Lachaud 2015). A growing number of social movements, academic conferences and publications deal with artivism and engaged art as ways of protest and resistance. Many artistic engagements aim to defy repression and censorship and experiment with new forms of democracy and creativity. Discussions on the Effects of the arts (Duncombe 2016) and the politics of aesthetics (Rancière 2010) have examined the impact of activist art or artistic activism and its consequences for social and political change.

The ERC ARTIVISM conference builds on these discussions and experiments, seeking to go beyond them by asking how citizens mobilise art in activism, and activism in art, to create belonging and multiple forms of resistance. It also aims to explore the kinds of alliances generated by these two forms of social practice in super-diverse places. Focused on these two central questions, the project **ARTIVISM Art and Activism: Creativity and Performance as Subversive Forms of Political Expression in Super-diverse cities** funded by the **European Research Council** (www.erc-artivism.ch, Salzbrunn 2015) invites discussion and theorising of new forms of political expression in super-diverse cities in times of crisis, in conditions of precarity and/or oppression.



The ERC ARTIVISM project has tested different kinds of visual, audio-visual and sensory ethnography (Causey 2016; Elliott & Culhane 2016; Pink 2006, 2009) and has developed interactive methodological approaches through apprenticeship and field-crossing (Salzbrunn 2019, 2021). The visual and performative arts have emerged and proliferated as particularly powerful means of communication in protest, resistance, and subversion strategies in super-diverse cities. The conference therefore also addresses the issue of how to investigate new alliances in art and activism. What methods and methodologies do artists, activists and social scientists develop to create, prompt, and investigate old and new forms of activism? How does reciprocity inform the research process? What do restitution, dialogue and ethical accountability mean in research on activism?

Inspired by new methodological approaches in urban studies, migration studies, carnival studies, comic studies and the anthropology of the arts (Schneider & Wright 2005, 2010, 2021; Bakke & Peterson 2016), the ERC ARTIVISM conference invites the broader academic community to discuss the dynamics of activism with a focus on the visual and performative arts, innovative strategies, and experimental methods and methodologies of research, collaboration and restitution.

Activist and artist groups or collectives organise festive events in urban spaces (Salzbrunn 2021, 2020) to create new spaces for social and political expression in societies increasingly characterised by migration, super-diversity and new ways of creating belonging (Vertovec 2007; Salzbrunn 2017; Yuval-Davis 2006). In seeking to avoid ‘ethnic’ and other essentialising ‘lenses’, which methods and methodologies help us investigate these spaces, events and new cultural practices in art activism? How do we take into account growing vulnerability in and of the field?

The three-day conference will be structured around the following key areas:

- Activism and freedom of expression/rewriting history
- Activism and migration/multiple ways of performing belonging/visions of the future
- Activism and the transformation of the urban
- Activism and gender/intersectionality
- Activism and religions/new spiritualities

These key aspects will be framed by the above mentioned epistemological and methodological questions on interactive collaboration, apprenticeship, field-crossing, restitution and feedback through event-centred, multi-sensory, and audio-visual methods and approaches in research on activism (Salzbrunn 2020, 2021; Pink 2011, 2009).

We are interested in the visual arts, artistic styles, means and modes of expression such as festive events and carnival(istic) parades, murals, cartoons and comics, and also in other innovative forms of multi-sensory and performative (street) art. We are particularly interested in bottom-up approaches in seeking to understand the evolution of activist events and actions.

The final conference of the ERC ARTIVISM project invites the submission of academic proposals and artistic workshops addressing the theme “Activism and Creative Resistances: New Research Methods and New Alliances between Art and Activism”. We aim to bring together social scientists and activists to engage in mutual exchange in textual, performative, and/or audio-visual ways. Alternative modes of presentation (exhibition, films,

performances, concerts, etc.) are explicitly encouraged, in accordance with current efforts in anthropology to develop non text-centred modes of expression. The conference will be structured around artistic workshops in interaction with citizens of Lausanne and round table discussions with artists, activists, social scientists, and a broader academic and non-academic public. It will be accompanied by an exhibition on Artivism and screenings of filmed ethnographies.

Invited scholars are asked to send an outline of their argument (max. 5-6 pages), to be discussed by conference participants. It is intended to publish the full contributions in a Handbook for Art and Activism in 2022.

An in-person conference is currently planned. Conference planners will abide by all health and safety protocols of the Cities of Lausanne and Renens. A hybrid digital version will be in place if travel and sanitary restrictions do not allow the in-person conference.

Deadline for sending the outline of arguments: 1 February 2022

Conference website: <https://wp.unil.ch/erc-activism-conference>

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Chaire "Religions, Migration, Diasporas"

ERC Project ARTIVISM <https://www.unil.ch/issr/home/menuguid/Projet-Europeen-ERC.html>

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