

ZAGREB – a node in the network of anti-capitalist mobilization?

By Marijana Antunovic

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Supervisors: prof Jakob Rigi

prof Don Kalb

Budapest, Hungary

2012

Abstract

This research is designed as ethnography on anti-government protests launched in Zagreb on February 28th, 2011 which eventually spread through the whole country and ended at the beginning of April 2011. The aim of this research is to answer what lies behind Zagreb's protests and whether and how they were part of a global wave of anti-capitalist mobilizing. With the literature review and the methodological tools I used, namely participant observation, interviews and analysis of media discourse, I argue that we witness the birth of a new form of global anti-capitalist mobilizing and that Zagreb's anti-government protests in spring 2011 were part of that broader story of the possible emergence of new anti-systemic movements. I also claim that protesters in Zagreb recognized the anti-systemic potential of their protests, but they did not realize it, and as a reason for that I see the strength of the ruling structures and consequently of ruling discourse in Croatia.

Key words: anti – government protests, anti – capitalist mobilizing, anti-systemic potential, ruling structures, ruling discourse

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	ii
Introduction.....	1
1. Literature review	6
1.1. Contentious politics and social movement's theories	6
1.2. From „old“ and „new“ towards contemporary social movements.....	8
2. Methodology	14
3. Ethnography	17
3.1. Course of events.....	17
3.2. Point of View of Actors.....	23
3.3. Media discourse	33
4. Analysis.....	40
4.1. Organization, leaders, banners, slogans and routes	41
4.2. Anti - systemic potential or not ?	45
4.3. Similarities between Zagreb's protests and protests globally	49
Conclusion	53
References.....	56

Introduction

There is an old Chinese curse which says: „May you live in interesting times“. We sure live in interesting times; just over the past year we could read in newspapers and on the Internet about the Arab spring, protests in Spain against the economic crisis, strikes and protests in Greece, Portugal, and Italy in response to severe austerity measures, occupation of Wall Street against financial greed and corruption, anti - cuts protests on the streets of London... Inhabitants of Barcelona, Athens, London, New York and others went into the streets to show their discontent with the exacerbated economic and social conditions of living and to fight against ruling systems for their dignity, freedom, social justice and global change. In spring 2011, residents of Zagreb joined this global parade of dissatisfaction; on February 28th they launched anti-government protests which ended in the beginning of April. What is common to all these uprisings that emerged in different places, is that those who occupied streets, those who were rebelling and protesting - all reacted with rage and scream.

„In the beginning is the scream. We scream. „, John Holloway writes at the outset of his book *Change the world without taking power* (2002, p.1) He argues that most of us feel that something is wrong with our world and our lives which are mutilated and violated by capitalism. In the absence of other means, he continues, we first scream and thus actually react to the exploitative environment. Following his logic, I suggest that today people in the streets of various cities react to the situation in which the neoliberal, global capital has escaped the influence of political power which led to the situation in which the laws of society, i.e. the maximum state law, are replaced by impersonal market rules. The state's policies are completely in service of global, corporate players, who make decisions that affect the survival of almost all the people in the world, and they make such decisions without the consent of those affected (Harvey, 2005). In this situation those affected often have nothing else to do, but scream. Still, the scream usually is just the beginning of the fight.

People protest, rebel, march, demonstrate and occupy streets all around the world because they want to know who is responsible for the negative economic, political and social outcomes of the neoliberal turn since the 1970s, according to which market exchange is an ethic in itself (Harvey, 2005). The streets again have become arenas of struggle; this time against increased inequality and polarization, mass unemployment and underemployment, exclusion of masses of people from certain spaces and flows of goods, services and finances, widespread poverty and accompanying criminalization, privatization of social services and a shrinking social sector. At the same time while they have been struggling against these common enemies, people in the streets of various cities have also tried to find answers to common question on alternatives to ruling economic and political systems. I want to see whether a similar struggle was fought and similar questions were posed in spring, 2011 by residents of Zagreb.

Anti – government protests in Zagreb in 2011 were actually just the continuation and, in a way, an epilog of a series of various protests and initiatives which had shaken otherwise sleepy Croatian democracy. Among different citizens' actions that preceded anti-government protests in Zagreb, two students' blockades in 2009, protests of peasants / jacquerie in 2010 and civic action - *Right to the city* in 2011 preoccupied academic and political circles' as well as the media's attention in Croatia. Thus I found a few academic articles written on student's blockades in 2009 (Mesic 2011, Kurelic 2011), while two young intellectuals and activists Štiks and Horvat, inspired by these blockades, even wrote a book „ Right to Rebellion – Introduction to the Anatomy of Civil Resistance“ (2011).

On the other hand, anti-government protests which ensued in spring 2011 have provoked fewer reactions from intellectuals and formal political and economic subjects. I found just a few academic articles on these protests; one by Mate Brautovic (2011) in which he actually does not even deal with protests themselves, but with media discourse concerning

them and the other two by Suzana Kunac (2011) and Dražen Lalic (2011) in which they do not try to connect Zagreb's protests with protests globally. I believe that this lack of previous research on Zagreb's anti – government protests in 2011 is a result of the (un) intentional misrecognition and negligence of the importance of these protests for local and global political culture. I believe that Zagreb's anti-government protests were just the overture to future protests in Croatia, which, on the other hand, could be part of a broader global wave of contention. In order to confirm this assumption, it is necessary to understand what exactly happened in Zagreb in spring 2011, i.e. it is necessary to fill this gap.

Zagreb's anti - government protests were covered in *The Economist* in the story named *E tu, Zagreb?* (Mar 6th 2011, by T.J). My thesis will deal exactly with this question. I intend to focus on anti-government protests launched in Zagreb on February 28th, 2011 which eventually spread through the whole country and ended at the beginning of April 2011 with the objective to answer what lies behind these Zagreb's protests and whether and how they were part of a global wave of anti-capitalist mobilizing. I wish to find out what the real causes, motives and outcomes of anti-government protests were in order to see whether Zagreb was a node in the network of new contentious politics. In short, I will examine whether there is something more than Holloway's scream that connects all these cities in which various forms of collective action emerged. What connects, besides the rage and mass of dispossessed, Zagreb with New York, Barcelona or Athens?

In order to answer these research questions, I will rely on different methodological tools. First I will rely on participant observation; I will expose my insights and experiences as a participant of anti-government protests in Zagreb. Since this series of protests happened more than a year ago, and I did not make research notes at that time, I will try to supplement and enrich my personal view on protests in Zagreb by using additional qualitative research methods: unstructured and semi-structured interviews and analysis of media discourse. I

believe that a combination of these three methods enables me to answer my research questions. Participant observation may limit my claim to objectivity, but my insider's insight may contribute to the thesis. Besides, I argue that my impartiality is moderated by other methods, which taken together strengthen my self-reflexivity. I see my thesis as a late ethnographic journey.

I argue that we do witness the birth of a new form of global anti-capitalist mobilizing and that Zagreb's anti-government protests in spring 2011 were part of that broader story on the possible emergence of new anti-systemic movements. I also claim that protesters in Zagreb recognized the anti-systemic potential of their protests, but they did not realize it and as a reason for that I see the strength of the ruling structures and consequently of ruling discourse in Croatia. I contend that "after fifty years of living under communism" Croatian citizens still see the young Croatian state, representative democracy and capitalism to be appealing structures, especially if we take into consideration that those "structures" were achieved through "bloody, defensive war". I argue that because of this specific Croatian historical context, ruling economic and political structures in Croatia still succeed in imposing hegemonic discourse and consequently in disabling the emergence of alternative discourse and alternative vision of the world. Still, I suggest that this "crisis of alternative" is not just a Croatian problem.

By describing, analyzing and interpreting Zagreb's anti-government protests in spring 2011, I attempt to contribute to the development of the culture of protesting in Croatia, which is still at a low level. Thus I intend to encourage the building of a more open, democratic, and participatory political culture in Croatia which will, in turn, affect political culture on global level since global and local are mutually intertwined today. Further, this work will give my contribution to the debate and theory of a new type of contemporary social movements which is still in the making. By showing that seemingly futile, weak, unobserved or "unsuccessful"

social movements or protests can actually form part of the broader story, i.e. of a global political project, I intend to highlight that there is still space for collective action and changes. Finally, I want to suggest with my thesis that if alternatives to currently ruling systems exist, it is our responsibility to find, name and define them, for which, I argue, we need more than words. I appeal for courage and imagination.

Still, in order to identify alternatives, first we must detect the current state of things. Thus I will in the first chapter give the literature review; I will offer the main definitions of contentious politics and social movements (Tarrow 1998, Diani, 2011) so that I can later expose differences between so called “old” and “new” social movements (Holst 2011, Castells 2009) and today’s grass roots movements described by Tarrow (2011), Harvey (2011), Sassen (2011), Hard and Negri (2011), Klein (2012). With the view to answer what lies behind Zagreb’s anti-government protests in spring 2011, in the second chapter I will introduce the data that I got through my methodological tools; participant observation, interviews and analysis of media discourse. The third chapter will be devoted to the analysis of data collected and exposed in the previous chapter. Finally, in the conclusion by showing the real nature and characteristics of Zagreb’s protest, I will try to tackle the open debate on possible alternatives to the currently ruling systems.

1. Literature review

1.1. Contentious politics and social movement's theories

In order to answer my research questions; what lies behind Zagreb's anti –government protests in spring 2011 and whether and how they are connected with global insurgency, I will first focus on authors that deal with social movements and other forms of contentions in general (Tarrow 1998, Meyer 1998, Diani 2010). I will try to see in brief the main definitions of contentious politics and different theories on social movements. Then I will focus on the distinction between “old social movements” and “new social movements” in order to find differences between them and contemporary social movements which are still in the making and thus have not been defined or placed within the framework yet (Holst, 2011). In other words, first I will expose the main classical ideas and concepts concerning contentious politics and then I will use more current sources from the Internet and other media in order to cover contemporary forms of social movements.

Sidney Tarrow claims that the basis for all social movements, protests and revolutions is contentious collective action, which occurs when ordinary people, often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities and opponents. (1998, p.2). From Tarrow's point of view, contention turns into social movement when it comprises social networks and connective structures, collective culture frames and collective identities which together entail the capacity to maintain sustained interaction and contention with powerful opponents (1998, p.23). Mario Diani criticizes Tarrow's definition of social movement; he claims if we accept it, than most of the episodes of collective action don't satisfy the requirements listed above. Social movement, he concludes, is just one form of collective action (2010, p.230) On the other side, as for Tarrow's definition of contentious

politics, it is obvious that that kind of collective action dates back to the dawn of history; there were always those who rule and those who deny them that right.

Still, Tarrow warns, for a very long time conflicts between challengers and authorities were seen as abnormality and aberration in society. (1998, p.11) In the 1950s it was still believed that protests and social movements are irrational and dysfunctional, but the burst of protests in the 1960s in industrial, advanced democracies prompted scholars to examine these forms of collective action more closely. According to the collective behavior theory of the 1960s grievances and individual deprivation was found responsible for mobilization. Later in the 1970s it was thought that grievance was not enough; the theory of resource mobilization claimed that protests could be seen as a possible rational choice and rational political resource for the disenfranchised. (Meyer, 2004, p.7) At that time the question was moved from *why* people protests to the *how*: *how* organizers mobilize support and avoid “the free rider” problem (Olson 1965 in Meyer 2004, p.127). In order to answer these questions, scholars started considering the context in which strategic politics for mobilizing took place. Focus was placed on political structure and political opportunity, which in the end led to the currently dominating political opportunity process approach.

Some proponents of that approach stress expanding opportunities as a precondition for mobilization (e.g., McAdam 1982, Tarrow 1989, Costain 1992 in Meyer, 2004), while others think that threat and constricting institutional opportunities could also induce mobilization (Meyer 1990,1993a,b; Smith 1996 in Meyer, 2004). Thus Tarrow argues that people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and create incentives for action by bringing to light the vulnerability of opponents and thus the potential for alliances. Social actors that lack resources on their own take advantage of political opportunities that are external to them, and they act using the known repertoires of contention (Tarrow, 1998). On the other side, Diani (2010) argues that even under

unfavourable political conditions it is possible to use various strategies to maximize capacity and chances of success. If we take into consideration contemporary grass roots movements, it seems that Diani has a point: despite the global economic and political crisis, we witness a boom of various forms of contentious actions and social movements (Castells, 2009), i.e. we witness the emergence of new social subjects who use constraints of ruling structures to put that structures in question (Holst, 2011).

1.2. From „old“ and „new“ towards contemporary social movements

In his famous book “The power of identity” (2009), Castells describes how people in a “networked society” and in the “Information age”, resist negative economic and social opportunity, i.e. fight against deteriorating conditions of living; “people all over the world resent the loss of control over their lives, over their environment, over their jobs, over their economies, over their governments, over their countries, and, ultimately, over the fate of the Earth.” (p. 72.) Therefore, he continues, we witness a boom of various forms of social movements. Using Alain Touraine’s classic typology that defines a social movement by three principles, namely - the movement’s identity, the movement’s adversary, and the movement’s vision or the goal, Castells claims that social movements such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, al-Qaeda, or the movement for global justice are different in their identity, in their goals and in their ideology. Still, he points out, they are similar in their explicit opposition to the new global order which is identified as the enemy in their discourse and in their practice (Castells, 2009, p.74)

By describing “new social movements“ which put in question the ruling order, Castells has paved the way towards a contemporary form of social movements. At first sight it may seem that “new social movements“ such as the anti-globalization movement are actually the same form of contention as contemporary grass roots movements such as Occupy Wall

Street; they all put in question the ruling order, i.e. the ruling neoliberal structures of representative democracy, state and capitalism, or in Castells words, they all have the same enemy. Still, there are authors who claim that contemporary forms of contention are completely new from of social movements which cannot be equilized neither with Castells' "new social movements" based on identity nor with some other movements (Holst 2011; Tarrow 2011; Hard and Negri 2011; Harvey 2011; Sassen 2011, Klein 2011). Writing on Occupy Movement Sidney Tarrow emphasize how "... the civil rights movement is not a precedent one can use to understand Occupy Wall Steet. Neither is this movement a Tea Party of the Left, as some observers have suggested. Occupy Wall Street is a movement of completely new type" (2011, no page).

According to Castells, behind each social movement lies some collective identity as a fundamental lever of social change (2009, p.xxvi). By emphasizing identity, Castells wants to point out "the prevalence of cultural values over structurally determined economic interests in constructing the meaning of human action." (2009, p. xviii) On the other side, authors who claim that we now witness a new form of social movement, argue that contemporary movements, such as Occupy Movement or movements in Greece and Spain are dealing with the problems of material reproduction; they are fighting against deteriorated socio-economic conditions, and not, as in the case of "new identity movements" against the problem of cultural reproduction. Thus Mike Davis emphasizes in his article on OccuPAY Movement (2011) that we should "...keep our eyes on the real prize. The great issue is not raising taxes on the rich or achieving a better regulation of banks. It is economic democracy...If the debate isn't about economic power, it's irrelevant!" (2011, no page)

In short, many authors argue that new contemporary grass root movements neither fit within "old/ classical social movements", wich refer to labour movement and working class, nor within " new social movements" based on identity. John. D. Holst (2011) notes that for

some time social movement research has been framed by the distinction made between old and new social movements; “ Old social movements (OSMs) are considered to advance working-class-based, social democratic or socialist political projects, while new social movements (NSMs) are considered to advance non-class-based or cross-class-based political projects oriented toward identify formation or autonomy.” (Holst, 2011, p. 119)

From Holst’s point of view there are methodological deficiencies of the old social movement/new social movement framework because it does not reflect the socio-political economic reality anymore. Analyzing protests of immigrants and poor people’s marches in the USA, he concludes that there is an emerging new social sector, i.e. new social subjects with their own organizational forms and new demands, which do not fit in with this framework imposed since 1980s. These new social subjects, Holst continues, are a part of the socio-political economic transformation which has taken place in the last 30 years. Still, he warns, there are authors who already “have understood as Antonio Gramsci (1977) did that the ‘masses indicate the precise direction of historical development’ (p. 173)(2011, p. 118.). He states that these new social actors have been identified by various authors under various names; thus, he alleges that the United Nations uses the term “ informal sector“ Mike Davis uses the phrase “planet of slums“, Bieler, Lindberg, and Pillay uses the term “precarious and pauperized working class“, while David Harvey (2010) uses the term “dispossessed“ to speak of this new sector (Holst, 2011, p. 118 -119).

Holst wants to point out that after working-class-based organisations of old social movements which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and after the emergence of new social movements in the 1960s to the 1980s purportedly centring on issues of identity, now we have another form of social movements and social organizing which is a result of profound sociopolitical economic transformation. These new social subjects, Holst asserts, are emerging globally and they raise demands that directly confront the existing order.

In distinction to the labour movement, he continues, whose goal has generally been to improve the conditions of workers within the employee/employer relationship, and not to challenge that relation itself, new emerging social subjects aim exactly at that – to challenge existing relations; “ The new social subjects are objectively outside the prevailing relations, their movement for basic demands poses a challenge to the prevailing relations because they cannot be resolved within these relations.” (Holst, 2011, p. 124.)

In brief, Holst claims that new social subjects are forming social movements of a new nature and that nature is “objectively revolutionary, but not inevitably revolutionary“ (2011, p.124) because new social subjects can be unaware of their revolutionary potential. This new collective subject which Holst is talking about can be seen thus in a way as a continuation of what Castells calls “anti-globalization movement“ ; as a new stage in the historical development of social movements. In distinction from anti-globalization movement or Zapatista which questioned the ruling structures of capitalism, representative democracy and the state, contemporary social movements went a step further; these movements struggle, in one way or another, against increased inequality and polarization by occupying streets of various cities “Since all other channels of expression are closed to us by money power, we have no other option except to occupy the parks, squares and streets of our cities until our opinions are heard and our needs attended to” (Harvey, 2011).

To summarize: contemporary social movements share the same enemy with Castells’ identity movements such as anti-globalization movement; both forms of movement challenge neoliberal economic and political structures. Panagiotis Sotiris (2010) thus shows how exactly neoliberal turn and following aggressive restructuring of the educational system led towards worsening employment prospects for young people and thus to rebellion in the streets of the Greek cities. On the other side, authors who deal with the Occupy Movement, describe how exactly struggle against corporate greed, boosted by neoliberal ideology, has induced

“thousands of Americans from no single social class or region” (Tarrow, 2011, p.1) to unite “despite significant differences in age, in social class and race” (Davis, 2011, p.1). Hardt and Negri (2011) added that, besides indignation which contemporary insurgents express against economic injustices and corporate greed, even more important is their indignation directed at political system - at the state and the ruling system of representation.

In distinction to movements based on identity, contemporary social movements don't have specific identity, constituencies, demands, programs and goals. “The civil rights movement...were created to serve specific constituencies...In contrast, Occupy Wall Street puts forward few policy proposals and has a shifting configuration of supporters as it spreads across the country“ (Tarrow, 2011, no page) As for identity, contemporary insurgents of “rebel cities“ (Harvey, 2012) differ concerning their “social“ or “symbolic” capital in Bourdieu's sense (1999), but they are similar concerning “economic“ capital“. In Harvey's words, they are all “dispossessed“ due to privatization, commodification and financialization of every segment of their lives, and due to the management and manipulation of crisis and state redistribution (2005, p. 160-165). Consequently, contemporary grass roots movements' demand is “We are demand“; emphasis is on “we“ and thus these movements in distinction to previous ones tend to be leaderless and multivocal relying on horizontal network structures. (Kennedy 2011, Sassen 2011, Hardt and Negri 2011)

Most authors emphasize that leaderless, multivocality, horizontal organizing and decision making in contemporary movements are enabled by new technologies, i.e. by social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Sassen 2011, Hardt and Negri 2011). Still, they also warn of limitation of new media in “creating“ movements. “Such network instruments do not create the movement, of course, but they are convenient tools, because they correspond in some sense to the horizontal network structure and democratic experiments of the movements themselves” (Hardt and Negri, 2011, no page) From Saskia Sassen's point of view these new

technological tools, serve as a useful weapon in the hands of contemporary insurgents since “Social media magnifies this urban visualness, further circumscribing power. Police action against the Occupy movement is instantly documented by countless cameras, with photographs tweeted and video streamed live to cries of “ the whole world is watching.” (Sassen, 2011)

While new social movements such as anti-globalization movement have pointed to the enemy, i.e. to corporate capitalist global order, contemporary social movements go step further; they approach the enemy in the streets and take them to task by using new digital technologies and different structures of organization. “ The Street is a space where new forms of the social and the political can be *made!*” (Sassen, 2011, no page) Some authors even propose further steps which should be done by these movements; thus Hardt and Negri (2012) suggest establishing of guaranteed income, the Right to global citizens and a process of the democratic reappropriation of the common, while Davis (2011) suggests that contemporary movements should continue confronting the predators with their victims and should continue to democratize and productively occupy public space. Whatever will be the outcomes of new forms of contention, it is important to emphasize that these protesters ”may not have gained power... but they are making a history and a politics“ (Sassen, 2011). Or in Sotiris’ words it is important to emphasize that they at least “ have led to cracks and fractures in the articulation of the neoliberal hegemony” (2010, p.207) .

2. Methodology

With the view to answer my research questions, i.e. to detect what lies behind Zagreb's anti-government protests in 2011 and whether these protests were connected with global "rebellion", I have relied on three sets of methodological tools. The first methodological weapon I have used was a participant observation. I participated in three Zagreb's anti-government protests; on the 6th, 8th and 10th of March, 2011, but I described here just the first protest in which I participated on the 6th of March, since I best remember it. I have tried to harness my memory to expose my personal insights and perspective on that protests and thus consequently contribute with my own experience to this thesis. However, since these series of protests happened more than a year ago, and since I did not make research notes at that time, and I did not participate in all protests, I relied on two additional methodological tools to support and supplement my personal memories; on unstructured and semistructured interviews and on analysis of media discourse in Croatia on Zagreb's anti-government protests in 2011.

With the view to fill the gaps in my personal insights on Zagreb's protests and their (possible) connection with a contemporary global wave of contention, I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews a month ago; three with "organizers" of the protests and eight with "ordinary participants". I wanted to find out what they think about these anti-government protests in Zagreb in 2011; how they define these events and how they define their role in it. To be more concrete, I was interested to see why they personally participated in protests; what was their motivation, how they were mobilised and who were organizers and the leaders from their point of view. Further, I wanted to see what were the goals of their participation and whether they were satisfied with outcomes of these protests. In the end of this first set of questions which was directed towards protesters' personal view on protests, I asked them to evaluate the importance of Zagreb's protests for local, Croatian context and to assess possibility of the emergence of new protests.

In that way I tried, in accordance with my research questions, to step towards new set of questions which was designed to detect possible connections between Zagreb's anti-government protests in 2011 and a global wave of contemporary protests and movements. Thus I asked "organizers" and "ordinary participants" whether they thought that these protests in Zagreb were important not just for local, but for global context too. I was interested to see whether they could detect links between Zagreb's anti-government protests and other contemporary movements and protests such as protests in Spain, Greece or Occupy Wall Street Movement. In brief, I wanted to see whether Zagreb's protestors saw "bonds" between themselves and insurgents in the streets of other cities round the world, i.e. whether they see Zagreb's protests as a part, an episode of broader global rebellion, and as such, as the part of new, global anti-capitalist social movement in making.

The third set of questions was focused on possible anti-systemic nature of Zagreb's and protests globally. I tried to find out whether Zagreb's protesters saw anti-government protests in Zagreb to be directed against the system, i.e. against ruling economic and political structures - capitalism, state and representative democracy, or they saw it as directed just towards eliminating the currently ruling government. I also wanted to see whether interviewees thought that other global protests and movements, such as protests in Spain and Greece and The Occupy Movement, had anti-systemic potential. Finally, by discussing with my respondents about possibility of organizing different mode of production and relation, I was interested to see what was their perception on system in general, i.e. on state, representative democracy and capitalism in order to see what was their perception on possible alternatives to these ruling structures.

Besides participant observation and semi-structured and un-structured interviews, I have used the third methodological tool - the analysis of media discourses in order to answer my research questions. I focus on the way protests in Zagreb were covered, labeled and

named by four different media in Croatia; two which I see as “mainstream media” and two which I define as “alternative media”. I intend to emphasize the important role of old, mainstream media – daily newspapers and national television, in underpinning ruling political and economic structures and consequently ruling narrative. On the other hand I want to show how alternative, new media in Croatia, in reporting on Zagreb’s anti-government protests, played an anti-hegemonic role and thus made the first step from ruling towards possible alternative discourse.

3. Ethnography

3.1. Course of events

As far as I remember, some friends told me that on the 6th of March 2011 there would be another protest against the ruling government and that we should go all together. Although I did not like how the beginning of this series of protests looked like; first two protests were marked with violence between police and football fans and were imbued with right, nationalistic ideology, I decided to join the protest. I was encouraged by the protest which happened on 4th of March and which was completely different from previous two; without violence, a lot of people were marching the streets of Zagreb to express their discontent. I remember national television reported on that event, informing us spectators that there were just one thousand protesters. Protesters, due to new technologies such as i-phones, reacted immediately and went in front of the building of The Croatian National Television while the news still were going on; around ten thousand protesters were claiming “There are just a thousand of us”. Inspired by this manoeuvre, I had decided then to participate next protests, so when my friends called me to join the protest on the 6th of March, I accepted immediately.

Beside this, I had personal reasons for participation; situation in the country was miserable – there were 350 thousand unemployed and I was one of them along with many other high educated young people. On the other hand, people who had jobs did not receive their salaries for months and were forced to work overtime in order not to lose their unpaid jobs. Pensioners were forced to collect garbage to survive, while students were forced to fight against commercialization and privatization of education. In contrast, the ruling economic and political elite did not have these problems; regularly overpaid, they sent us, by means of mainstream media, ridiculous messages how “we needed to tight our belts to pull the country out of recession” in which they and their greed and incompetence had pushed us in the first

place. In short I was sick and tired with the economic, political and social situation in Croatia; I was furious and I wanted that charade to stop, so I joined the protest.

On 6th of March, 2011 I met with my friends on main square at 6 pm. There was a group of 10 of us; four of us were unemployed high-educated ex-students, three of us were underemployed, while another three were working for government against which they decided to protest that day. Also, a friend's mother, Mrs. Marija, joined us that evening; she is 54 years old woman employed as an accountant in one private company and she is working for twelve hours a day to repay her mortgage on small apartment. She told me she was dissatisfied with her job, with the situation in the country, and with the fact that she saw no future for her son, so she decided to join us. The atmosphere was energizing and in that strange, optimistic mood we proceeded together to the headquarters of the ruling party - The Croatian Democratic Union (in Croatian - Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ) where other protesters had already arrived.

I remember that I was thrilled with the picture; in front of the headquarter of The Croatian Democratic Union, there was a mass of people who were peacefully asking for resignation of the ruling government. A lot of young people, but also older citizens with their grandchildren and young parents with their children, were calling for pre – elections and were requiring in the rhythm of drums, through songs, rhymes and speeches, the ruling government to leave. However, despite this half - carnival atmosphere, I noticed that people in the streets were actually furious which was evident in speeches they proclaimed and in the messages on their banners. Besides the claim for new elections, I remember that the most frequent parols were “Thieves”, “ You betrayed us”, “You are afraid of people”, “ Jaco¹, go away!”. Besides, protesters also addressed their anger towards the corridor of police which were protecting the headquarters of the ruling party, by acclaiming “You are watching for

¹ Jaca – it is pejorative which refers to the name of the ex - Prime Minister and the leader of then ruling government Jadranka Kosor

mafia”. It was obvious that there was a mixture of hope, joy and anger in the streets of Zagreb, and I felt the same.

After protesting for around a half an hour in the front of the headquarters of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), we moved further in the next street where The Croatian Employment Service was situated. While we were marching that street, we were climbing – “Give us some jobs”. I remember I noticed some people appearing on the windows of their apartments; they were waving to us and smiling, while we called them to join us. The whole street and the traffic were blocked due to the number of protesters, but people in automobiles were waiting peacefully for us to pass and were even honking and in that way saluting and supporting the parade. However, I remember I heard some protesters expressing their dissatisfaction with those „passive supporters“ for not joining the march. I agreed with them; although people on the windows and those in the cars were expressing their sympathy for us, they decided to stay in their warm cars and apartments and wave at us from secure distance.

The next location which we visited that night was the house of one of the members of the ruling government - Dr. Andrija Hebrang². I remember the trip was long since his house was in an elite part of the city, a little bit on the hill, so when we finally reached it, because of the length and mountain nature of the tour, I felt no cold anymore. That part of the march was very interesting; we were marching very slowly because of the old people, and between drums and speeches, I was listening to comments of other protesters. Many of them complaining about deteriorated economic and social conditions; especially about the fact that there were no prospects for young people. They mostly blamed the ruling government for the state of things; they called the government “corrupt”, “immoral” or “incompetent”. Still I noticed that protesters were also expressing distrust towards other parties and possible solutions. There was one expression that I heard so many times that evening, that it stuck into

² Dr. Andrija Hebrang – a member of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), who became target of Zagreb's protesters after declaring that people protest because opposition actually had paid them to do that by giving each of the protesters 200 kuna, i.e. around 25 €

my memory; different people were repeating the same parole: “They are all the same” trying to express their distrust towards politician in general.

I also remember that people commented on that part of the city. And really; it looked almost unbelievable; beautiful big, old houses with big gardens in “pittoresque” street full of still unflourished trees of magnolia. That night on the 6th of March 2011, noisy crowd from the “valley” occupied quite, peaceful street on the hill and spoiled that magic reserved for minority which were not dispossessed. Finally, when we arrived Hebrang’s house, people were singing songs in which they called him a thief and they were also calling his neighbours to join us. I found that last call a little bit ironic, since I thought that the neighbours, as well as Dr. Hebrang, enjoyed the same magic of their separated world on the hill, unaware of those “beyond” them. In the end I was right since none of neighbours accepted our calls, and we decided to return “in the valley”.

The protest march continued and the next target was the Syndicates’ house where protesters were proclaiming the same slogan “We want elections”, and took the syndicates to task, by calling them “ Betrayers” because of their cooptation with the ruling government. Namely, in 2010 syndicates succeeded, by means of citizens and non-governmental organizations, in collecting necessary number of voter signatures for having referendum against changes in Working Law announced by the ruling government. These changes presented the next step in shrinking of workers’ rights in service of private capital and citizens were willing to help syndicates to fight against that; around 800 thousand voters’ signatures were collected within a fifteen days, but in the end syndicates decide to make an agreement with the government and gave up on referendum, which citizens saw as a betrayal and as a sign that syndicates and citizens were not on the same side anymore.

After syndicates, we continued to march towards the Croatian National Television. I remember I was very tired since we were walking for more than two hours, and it was really

cold, but I continued because I was inspired and encouraged by all those people who were still marching peacefully, calling other citizens to join the protests with the slogan “ All on the streets!!!“ The traffic was completely blocked and in front of the building of the *Croatian National Television* protesters tried to warn on censorship which some editors imposed on the national television, so besides usual slogans such as “Jaco go away! “ , “HDZ – thieves!!“, “We want elections“, they were also scanning “Hloverka³ go away!“. I remember I heard from protester which was marching next to me that, in distinction from the last time, this time national television had reported on the Right number of protesters. He obviously got that information due to new technology, and information that editor Zoran Sprajc had informed spectators of national television that around ten thousand people were protesting in the streets of Zagreb, spread among us very fast and provoked wave of satisfied whoops.

We continued to walk towards the main square where all previous protests usually had finished. On our way there, we stopped in front of the Ministry of the Interior; protesters were yelling “Karamarko⁴, go away“. The next stop was the Croatian Chamber of Economy in front of which protesters were claiming “Nadan⁵, go away“ and “Nadan - a thief !“ We were walking almost for three hours and I noticed that some people started to go away and that the number of protesters drastically declined. The rest of us continued towards the main square where the protest finished at around 9 pm with the words “ Good night Croatia! See you in two days!“. I was tired and frozen, but I was also very excited; I thought how something important was going on. Still, I remember, there was something which bothered me that night and, in a way, spoilt my excitement concerning the protest; I realized that not many people shared completely my enthusiasm.

³ Hloverka – it refers to main editor of Croatian National Television Mrs. Hloverka Novak - Srzic

⁴ Karamarko – it refers to Tomislav Karamarko who was a Minister of Interior then, and now is a new leader of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ)

⁵ Nadan – it refers to Nadan Vidošević – a president of Croatian Chamber of Economy

The conversation with my friends later that night just confirmed something that I had noticed during the protest; besides excitement, joy and rage which were marching in the hearts of protesters that night on the 6th of March 2011, there was another feeling; a suspicion which prevented hope to develop. I felt as if people went into the streets to express their dissatisfaction and fury, but at the same time they were suspicious concerning the real, positive outcomes of their insurgency. Hence I had heard during the protests and later from my friends that “Nothing real and important will change” because “They are all the same”. I remember that one friend elaborated on complex, intertwined relations between economic and political sector and then expressed distrust that ruling elite would let change anything. He concluded that “they will just wait until people get tired...”

I shared some of these suspicions, but on the other side I was very positive concerning these protests; I saw them as spontaneous suffusion of citizens' discontent into the streets. It seemed to me as if heterogeneous subjects just erupted into the streets claiming for different things with one lowest common nominator - they all wanted the ruling government to leave. Still, I saw this common claim just as a top of the iceberg; I was under strong impression that protest in Zagreb in which I participated had put in question more than just the ruling government. Thus I saw the fact that we protested in front of the Croatian Chamber of Economy as very important moment; I thought that in that way protesters showed that besides ruling political elite and corrupt media in their service, they detected another important “enemy”. In short, it seemed to me that Zagreb's protest had an anti-systemic potential as for example The Occupy Movement, since protesters were not attacking just the ruling political elite, but also the economic one with which the former is deeply intertwined.

Still I realized that night that not all shared this impression with me. I saw this protest as the beginning of the fight, as the first step towards challenging ruling political and economic structures. On the other hand, I saw that many protesters were focused just on

evident enemy – corrupt, immoral government which they wanted to get rid of, although they did not believe that something better would come after. Haloway says: “ Our scream, then, is two-dimensional: the scream of rage that arises from present experience carries within itself a hope, a projection of possible otherness”. (2002, p.5) Due to my participant observation, it seemed to me that in the streets of Zagreb on the 6th of March 2011 there was distinction between people who screamed to let the rage out and to start building something new and people who screamed just to let out their rage and eliminate immediate threat. It seemed to me as if there was distinction between those who believed that the scream is just the beginning of the fight for further structural changes and those who believed that the scream was just for scream – for denial of current state of things without vision of alternative.

3.2. Point of View of Actors

Since I did not know many things concerning the protests; how the protests had started, what were “official” goals of the protests, who exactly were the organizers or leaders and whether there were the leaders at all, I decided to conduct interviews to supplement my personal insights and to fill the gaps in my memory and knowledge of the protests. I was actually just a temporary participant and sympathizer and I did not know what was happening “behind the scene“, i.e. before protesters took the streets and after they left them. In order to find out answers to these questions, I arranged interviews with three people which, I thought, might be connected with the organization and background of these anti - government protests. These “ organizers“ are actually activists who tried to push through their ideas and narrative and thus consequently launched the protests. In addition, to widen further my personal perspective on these protests, I also conducted interviews with ten other “ ordinary participants“ which in a way presented different deprived groups which had erupted into the streets of Zagreb in spring 2011; the unemployed, the underemployed, students...

First of the three “organizers“ that I interviewed was Srećko (29), who was also one of the organizers of Students’ Blockades in 2009. He told me in our unstructured interview that everything had started as the protests of people from the Right. According to his view, exactly this group of people, among which there were many veterans, right-wing activists and ordinary people who sorted themselves on the Right wing of political specter, started protests against the government. He told me they were induced by the Hague’s accusation for war crimes against Tihomir Purda – also a veteran in the Croatian War of Independence which was fought from 1991 to 1995. From his perspective the Right thought that the ruling government had sold the veterans for positive points of European Union. Thus, he continued, the first two protests were marked with nationalistic ideology, but also with the violence since sports fans, which also inclined towards right ideologies, joined the protest and took opportunity to express their anger at police.

Then, he told me how the Left in Croatia, which consisted mainly of left-wing activists and intellectuals and ordinary people with left orientation, realized that they should also go into the streets and not let right ideology to spread again. So, he continued, the Left, which he was also a part, joined the protests, but none of them Leftists did not dare to step out and make the speech on Cvjetni Square (Flower Square). That was why, from his point of view, “clowns such as Pernar⁶ and Golubić⁷ succeeded in distinguishing themselves and in imposing themselves as the leaders at the beginning of the protests“. Still, he proceeded, the Left succeeded later in sending their messages; he emphasized how “we from the Left tried to show that corrupted, ruling government was just a part of the problem“. He highlighted a few times that they Leftists tried to point to the spots of the ruling “Regime“ and thus to induce fight against “problems of the whole system“. Consequently, he continued, they tried to

⁶ Ivan Pernar – 26 years old medical technician; leader of party “Alliance for Change” and self-proclaimed initiator and leader of Zagreb’s anti-government protests in 2011

⁷ Dean Golubić – ex-member of The Croatian Democratic Union’s Youth and other self-proclaimed leader of anti-government protests in Zagreb in 2011

direct marches towards not just headquarter of the ruling party, but also towards headquarters of corporate, economic players with which the former are deeply intertwined.

He told me how in their attempts to detect important “systemic spots” as the main sources of crisis in Croatia and broader and to direct protests towards them, they had to struggle with opposite attempts from the Right which also tried to direct protests towards the locations in the city that they found to be important. Thus, he elaborated, people from the Left thought that going to the house of doc. Hebrang was completely “unnecessary and stupid move”, but he explained that “protesters were following that direction which was imposed by people from the Right and we also did, although we did not agree on that”. In that way he tried to highlight again how, from the Leftists’ view, the point was not about particular government and particular politicians, but about the ruling economic and political structures. On the other side, he showed how there was constant struggle between the right and the Left streams of the protests, and I realized from his talk that both sides were apparently ready for different compromises in order to achieve their final goals.

His conclusion was that these anti – government protests in 2011 were definitely important event since they opened “space for new debates and completely new discourse”. He said how a few years ago it had been impossible to talk about disadvantages of neoliberalism, while now the public space was open for that debate. “For example”, he pointed out, “you can watch Žižek tomorrow and his critique of capitalism in prime time on our national television”. He even proudly emphasized how he had participated in the Occupy Movement and how actually Zagreb’s anti-government protests had preceded the Occupy Wall Street. He also said how debates on private property, on capitalism and representative democracy were even “more progressive here in Zagreb than on the West”, which, he added, testified that something big was changing in Croatian society. He concluded that Zagreb’s anti-government protests had anti-systemic nature because they put in question not just ruling political elite,

but also ruling economic system – neoliberal capitalism and representative democracy and the role of state in general. Because of that, he told me, they fit in with the story on new social movements, which from his point of view, were also anti-systemic.

Still, at the end of our conversation, he expressed his concerns about the future; he warned of possible boom of right, fascist ideologies in Croatia and even global “especially if we take into the consideration what history teaches us“. According to him, the future might be marked with the fight between the Left and the Right, although, he added, he would like to witness “as someone who grew up reading Bakunin and other anarchists“ the fight of completely other advanced discourses on higher level. But, he pointed out, now he was aware that “the system can only be changed through the system“. Thus he expressed finally his suspicion that maybe it was necessary that the progressive Left in Croatia started thinking of establishing the party with the leader and in that way try to get the power through elections, “following the rules of the system in order to change the system in further step.“

The next “organizer“ I interviewed was Vedrana (29), who was also, as Srećko, one of the organizers and participants of Students’ blockades and who sees herself also as the Leftist. She gave me similar information as Srećko, but she was more informed about the organization of the protests since“ Srećko was on the trip then, so he actually was not here when all these meetings concerning anti-government protests were happening.“ She told me how the whole story on these protests started with the meetings which had took part in the building of syndicate called *The Revival*. She said how on these meetings, which she also participated in, appeared different subjects; “the people from the Right and from the Left“ and that variegated group, she continued, consisted of members of various syndicates, veterans, students, individuals such as Pernar and people from the Citizens Actiona and other associations. She told me that she did not know who exactly organized those meeting but she emphasized that

these meetings had gathered together people who were „ideologically different , but who wanted to organize citizens action against ruling government.“

She also emphasized as Srećko how people from the Left were dissatisfied with the fact that two first protests were colored with nationalistic agenda and therefore they decided to react, so „We went into the street with that big transparent “300 thousand without job, 75 thousand without salary. Capitalism - no thank you“.“ She wanted to point out how they did not want to let people from the Right direct the whole protests just towards the fight against the ruling government; “...we wanted to show that the real problemes are the systemic ones and I think we have succeded in that“. The same as Srećko, she put emphasis on discourse; “The things that people before made joke about, now are out on the public agenda; for example importance of unification of working class, or flaws of capitalism.“ She added that in this changing of discourse and in anti-systemic potential she saw importance of Zagreb’s anti-government protests and their similarity with protests and social movements globally; according to her “we all put in question rulling structures and old rules of the game.“

In the end of the interview Vedrana tried to emphasize how it was important to build progressive movement which would offer alternative discourse. She warned me how there was no instant solution but that “ we are those who have to build alternative society together“. She also added that she had “nothing against the state“ , especially “the social state in which social rights such as the right to work, right to free education, health insurance and pensions rule“. Still, she ended our conversation with the same admonition as Srećko; she warned me of importance of struggling against fascist ideologies which, from her point of view, might try to take advantages of this global crisis. Because of that, she concluded, the Left must be prepared to answer this time the global crisis of system.

The last person I interviewed as an “organizer“ of Zagreb’s anti – government protests was Svibor - an activist and member of the non-for-profit organization Citizens’ Action. He

told me that the protests were actually launched first by a group of anonymous which were organized on Facebook and which tried through that social network to invite people to protest against the ruling government. He said how these “organizers” wanted to organize leaderless protests which would be modeled on Student’s blockades and thus, he added, “they tried to contact with the leaders of blockades”. Still, he said, their call was first accepted by the people from The Right and by the “figures like Pernar and Golubić” and just later, he continued, The Left joined the protests. In short, from his point of view, different “marginal political actors” decided to take part in this event because of “citizens duty” and because of the “resentment against Croatian government and imposed tributes”.

According to Svibor, the main problem of these protests was the fact that they were not actually organized well and that they encompassed different demands, so, from his point of view, many people who would have maybe participated, decided in the end not to do that, because they were confused with some messages. He tried to point out that many right-wing symbols such as flags against EU and initial violence actually had diverted many people from joining the protests. Because of that lack of organization and competence, he continued, there were no “critical mass” in the streets of Zagreb, and therefore, he concluded, these protest did not succeed in achieving their goals. “They did not succeed in obtaining their first goal – resignation of the ruling government, let alone some broader, systemic goals.” Still, he added that these protests still were not pointless and unimportant and that they “had moved something in our society”.

Besides, he noted that these anti – government protests in Zagreb shared some similarities with social movements globally because “profiles of people who participated are the same – students, high-educated and all those who did not find their way in capitalist society”. Still, he also highlights how “in distinction from Zagreb’s protests, those in Spain, Greece or United States were supported by critical mass “. Exactly because of that lack of

mass response, he thought that protests in Zagreb did not actually realized their possible anti-systemic potential which global protests succeeded. According to him, anarchists were those who tried to push that systemic story while some “other currents tried to push their vision of society“. He concluded in the end that mass of citizens just followed these different streams although “they did not understand their messages; the only thing people understood was the fight against the ruling government.“

As one of the reasons for such state of thing, he saw the lack of alternative. “We in Croatia still do not know whether the democracy or capitalism are working , let alone to deal with alternative models. Currently alternative to this system is the system itself.“ On the other hand he personally favour “state interventionism“ and “green economy“ but he thinks that “people here are just too much subsumed to local, private problems to think about these things“. Because of that he expressed his suspicion concerning possible future protests in Zagreb, but even broader. Thus he was the only of the “organizers“ who expressed some suspicions concerning a role of Zagreb’s anti-government protests in future fight for changing the ruling systems such as capitalism or representative democracy. In that way, he actually paved the way for data that I got from “ordinary participants“, i.e. from six men and two women who participated in Zagreb’s protests in 2011.

First of all, all of these seven interviewees adduced personal dissatisfaction with the ruling government and the situation in the country in general as the main motives for their mobilization. Consequently, all of them alleged the subversion of the ruling government, i.e. scheduling of pre – elections as the main goals of their participation. Just two of them stated that, besides they had wanted current government to leave, they had also wanted “ the changing of the system“ (Frane, 30, unemployed Professor of History) and “the changing of hopeless socio-economic situation in country by subversion of system“ (Adela, 30, ex-expert in government, now employed in one non-for profit organization). Further, all of them

declared that they were dissatisfied with the immediate results of the protests because “they did not lead to fall of HDZ and they actually dried up in the end“(Kristijan, 35, Public Official), and because “the government should have left right after the protests and they did not“ (Marija, 54, accountant).

Besides complaining about immediate results of Zagreb’s protests, all my interviewees complained also about the organization of the protests. They saw protests to be disorganized or organized badly and most of interviewees did not know who exactly organized them and how protests had started. Two of my respondents suspected that anti-government protests were organized by means of social networks such as Facebook, while three of them alleged Ivan Pernar⁸ as possible organizer; “he was the first figure that was distinguished from the mass“ said Kristijan (35). Pernar was also alleged two times as the possible leader of the protests, but those interviewees who alleged him, added that they did not have good opinion of him. Other respondents saw Zagreb’s protests to be “leaderless“ but they detected that as a flaw and tried to emphasize the necessity and importance of having leader for protests to succeed; “These protests in Zagreb did not have a man with the vision and that is why they failed“ - asserted Kristijan (35).

The fact that they could not define organization or leaders behind protests, and the fact that the only persons they could detect were “some clowns which wanted to be on the stage“⁹ (Frane, 30), contributed to the interviewees’ dissatisfaction with the Zagreb’s protests as well as the fact that “concrete results were absent“(Zeljko, 29, Professor of Philosophy). Still, despite all these alleged shortcomings, most of the interviewees found something positive concerning Zagreb’s protests. Thus some of them stated that these protests contributed to the country because “they helped to rise the consciousness of the nation“ (Igor, 29, unemployed)

⁸ Ivan Pernar – 26 years old medical technician; leader of party „Alliance for Change“ and self-proclaimed initiator and leader of Zagreb’s anti-government protests in 2011

⁹ It refers to self-proclaimed leaders Ivan Pernar and Dean Golubić

and because “they were positive act for development of democracy“ (Mladen, 60, custodian). The other stated that they were important for “they led to shift in political culture“(Marin, 35, lawyer) and because “people have finally moved“(Marija, 54), or in Adela’s, 30, words “we were finally yelling in the streets .“

Despite these positive comments, most of my respondents were pretty much reserved and suspicious when I asked them whether they saw these Zagreb’s anti-government protests to be connected with global social movements such as protests in Greece and The Occupy Movement. Although most of them stated that there were some move in political culture and democracy on local level, most of them also highlighted that Zagreb’s protests nothing real have changed on local level, let alone on global level because “protests in Zagreb were not radical enough..“ (Marin, 35, lawyer). Still, they all in the end detected some similarities between protests globally and Zagreb’s anti-government protests. Thus Kristijan (35) suggested that “they all want to get rid of the restrictive measures“ , and Igor (29) stated that “the government everywhere function under the same rule of capitalism“, while Adela (30) concluded that “The link is dissatisfaction..“

However, most of my interviewees stated in the end that Zagreb’s protests were “narrower“ then those which happened worldwide. They told me that the Occupy Movement or the protests in Spain were anti-systemic since “they question the ruling structures such as the state and capitalism“(Mladen, 60) while, protests in Zagreb “ missed something idelistic - an idea of better world, which, from my point of view, have protests in N.Y.“(Marin, 35). In short, most of my respondents agreed that Zagreb’s protests did not have anti-systemic nature, while four of them added that they “maybe had some anti-systemic potential“. Two of my respondents recognized that “ there were the Left and the Righ streams in the protests“ and that exactly the Left tried to challenge the system. Thus Frane (30) said ’there were skirmishing between people from the Left and people from the Right and the progressive Left

actually led the masses with their big transparents while, in the middle there were small groups with their own transparents.“ In that way, he concluded , “those from the Left actually tried to educate people. „

Still, when they were asked about possible alternatives to currently ruling political and economic systems - capitalism, representative democracy and the state - most of my respondents were not completely sure what to suggest. Three of them alleged that what we needed was a social state, i. e. welfare state and nationalization since “we had communism, but it did not work“ (Frane, Igor, Kristijan). They actually claimed for better state – “state which respects laws and social rights such as right to work, to free education, to free health insurance and decent pensions“ (Marin,35) and better capitalism, “competition and capitalism are not bad, but there must be some kind of rules and not this wild capitalism “(Frane, 30). Kristijan (35) even mentioned that “we have not even experienced the real capitalism yet – we are still in transition.“

This mentioning of fail of communism served for most of my interviewees as voice for capitalism, democracy and the liberal state since “ actually there is no third option“ (Igor, 29). Željko, 29, stated that “History has showed that communism failed, but our consciousness is on that level that we cannot think something better“. However, despite this mistrust towards alternative, three of my respondents alleged socialism as alternative socio-economic system to currently ruling capitalism - Marija (54), Mladen (60) and Adela (30). “Despite all flaws, the worker was protected in socialism“ said Marija (54) and then she told me the story about her colleague who was fired during socialism, but he had sued the company and after two years of suing they had to return him to work and give him all previous salaries. “Today“, she added, „somethin like this is not possible“ and then she added how her colleague was fired a month ago after she had took maternity leave. “No one protects worker anymore“, she concluded.

Interestingly, whatever alternative my interviewees suggested, they all stated that they did not believe that it would come through peaceful protests or reforms. They all actually claimed for revolution; “if we want to have real changes, we need a revolution“ (Željko, 29). On the other side, none of them could not imagine that the revolution would happen in Croatia, especially “in my lifetime“ (Igor, 29, Frane, 30) . Thus, most of them consequently expressed their suspicious regarding importance of Zagreb’s anti-government protests for some possible future revolution or changing of the ruling capitalist system. Just two respondents (Adela, 30 and Željko, 29) saw Zagreb’s anti-government protest as the possible beginning of the future revolt. Other interviewees were suspicious; „We don’t have strength for that“ stated Kristijan, 35, while Frane, 29, warned how “There is no solidarity - people are focused on their own problems and how to survive“. Still, most of them agreed that it was possible that recent global protests would lead to changes of the existing world order “Maybe those outside will stretch the match and set the fire“(Marin, 35)

3.3. Media discourse

I have analyzed two internet portals which called themselves – “independent media“, but which are actually more “alternative“; H-Alter and Advance.hr. On the other side, I have also analyzed another internet portal called T-portal and one daily newspaper called Jutarnji list; I see both as representative of “mainstream media“ and both were “victims“ of Zagreb’s anti-government protests; Jutarnji list’s publishing house Europapress Holding was one of the targets of the protesters as well as the owner of T-portal who is actually the owner of the privatized Croatian Telecommunications. I will try to show how these different media have covered, named and labeled Zagreb’s antigovernment protests with the view to see how media discourse affected outcomes of the protests and our perception of them.

Since the first two protests were marked with violence between police and sports fans, both T- portal and Jutarnji list took advantage to proclaim that protests were in general violent and to emphasize violence rather than messages. Although all other protests were peaceful, they did not cover any of them without mentioning the word “violence“ at least to say that “there was no violence“. Besides, both outlets were very “stingy“ when they reported on the number of protestors; although they reported mainly on right number, they always emphasized when there were less protesters especially at the end of the protests when they highlighted that “no more than one hundred people came“. Both, Jutarnji list and T-portal also used every opportunity to point out that protesters were “confused, heterogeneous, without any common demand“ (Čadež in Jutarnji List, 04.03.2011). They also tried to define protesters by separating them into groups, namely students, anarchists, the old and sports fans, in order to emphasize differences between protesters and thus to give fragmented vision of the mass which was marching in the street of Zagreb.

Besides, both T- portal and Jutarnji list had the habit to use media space to deal with certain participants of the protests. Thus for example, Jutarnji list regularly reported on politicians from the opposition which participated in the protests and on their speeches, while T- portal felt responsible to report on the 4th of March on “famous figures who ask for resignation of Jadranka Kosor“. In that article the reporter gave names of intellectuals and actors who participated in protests, but most important, he put emphasis on journalists from the Croatian National Television who were also protesting, which is an interesting maneuver if we take into consideration that the main editor of the Croatian National Television - Hloverka Novak Srzić, was also one of the targets of Zagreb’s protests. Protesters regularly visited the national television building asking for her resignation after she had reported that on the 4th of March there were just one thousand protesters when actually there were around ten thousand.

Apart from reporting on certain politicians and journalists who participated in Zagreb's anti-government protests, both Jutarnji list and T-portal also gave a lot of space to self-proclaimed "leaders" Ivan Pernar and Dean Golubić. Both media called them "organizers", but at the same time they tried to discredit them and in that way to discredit the protests. Thus one journalist of Jutarnji list called Ivan Pernar „the first victim of revolution which he himself launched“ (Jutarnji list, 04.03. 2011) because protesters had refused to follow him, and then he cited one of the leaders of the Left (he did not cite his name), who allegedly asked himself “What kind of people are we, when someone with special needs has to organize our protests?”.(ibid) So after the journalist suggested that even the leader of the Left had admitted that Pernar was the organizer of Zagreb's protests, that journalist went a step further and described Pernar as a lunatic who had accused his high school professor of being a killer who had torn her own mother into pieces. Besides Pernar, Jutarnji list also regularly reported on whether or not Luka Hodak - a self-proclaimed shaman and seer - participated in Zagreb's protests, and in that way again tried to discredit protests. It looked as if just lunatics and freaks were on the front line of Zagreb's protests, which implied that those who followed them were no better.

As far as describing the routes of the protests, T-portal and Jutarnji list had the same tactics. In their reports they mentioned every location in front of which protesters stopped and protested, but they were selective concerning reporting on speeches and slogans which were used in front of these places; they report just the ones which were in line with their interests. Thus, for example, on the 4th of March, protesters stopped in front of the Europapress Holding, which is the media corporation and publishing house of Jutarnji list, and they were chanting “Jutarnji -you have made people become stupid“ and “EPH10 – mafia!“ In Jutarnji list's report on that event, there was just this sentence: “Protesters came to the building of

¹⁰ EPH- it refers to EuropaPress Holding – a Croatian media corporation

Europapress Holding in Koranska Street and then they proceeded towards the city center.“
The same was done by T-portal; on the 6th of March protesters stopped in front of the T-com building in Savska Street, whose owner is also the owner of T-portal, and they were yelling „Mudrinić¹¹- the thief“. T-portal reported that event with this sentence: “Protesters moved through Savska Street towards the city center“

Besides avoiding reporting on their own bosses and firms, these two media also put emphasis only on slogans and banners which were connected with the ruling government such as: “HDZ - the thieves“ “Jaco - go away“ or “We want elections“. On the other side, they did not report any slogans or banners which had anti-systemic messages such as “We do not need leaders to make decisions – direct democracy“ or “330 thousand without job, 75 thousand without salary. Capitalism, no thank you!“. In that way both, T-portal and Jutarnji list, tried actually to degrade protests to just a political problem, i.e. a problem with the currently ruling government and thus to shape Zagreb’s protests as just what their name says “Anti-government protests“, without any further content or message. They tried in that way to conceal some other, more systemic demands which emerged during the protests and which tried question not just the currently ruling government, but also some other political and economic subjects and mainstream media intertwined with them.

In distinction to T-portal and Jutarnji list, two “alternative“ internet portals H-Alter and Advance.hr, in their reports on Zagreb’s anti - government protests, put emphasis exactly on those demands and characteristics of Zagreb’s protests which the former tried to conceal; for example the anti-systemic messages of protesters. On the other hand, they tried to conceal what the former tried to highlight. For example, while T-portal and Jutarnji list tried to diminish the Right number of protesters, both H-Alter and Advance hr. were not shy about the numbers of people in the streets and they regularly reported how “ Today there between eight

¹¹ Mudrinić- the owner and director of T - com and T - portal

and ten thousand protesters walking the Zagreb's streets" (H-Alter, 06.03.2011) Still, when the number of protesters started to decline, both H-Alter and Advance. hr, stopped reporting exact numbers, and started using euphemisms' such as "there were a few hundred protesters today" (Advance.hr, 23.03.2011), " there were a few thousand people" (H-Alter, 12.03.2011) or "there were less protesters today than last time" (H-Alter 10.03.2011).

Besides, in distinction to Jutarnji list and T-portal, H-Alter and Advance. hr did not put emphasis on violence, but they tried to point out the "peaceful nature of the protests". Also, they did not try to define and push into the focus of the news certain leaders or organizers. Instead both "alternative" media tried to highlight the "self-organizing" principle of the protests and its "leaderlessness". Hence, they reported with disdain and mock on self-proclaimed leaders Ivan Pernar and Dean Golubić, calling the former "a revolutionary" because of his unbelievable statements, and the latter "President" alluding to his unsuccessful attempt to become president in the last elections. In H-Alter's report on protests on the 4th of March, it was emphasized how these two figures had tried to manipulate and direct protests by using megaphones and Croatian flags, which according to the reporters, resulted in part of protesters' dissatisfaction. In addition, it was described how Pernar "took advantage of being photographed in front of the police corridor with his thumbs up" (in H-Alter, 3. 2011).

Also while describing the routes of the protests, H- Alter and Advance hr., the same as Jutarnji list and T-portal, reported on the political "spots" which were targets of the protesters; headquarter of HDZ and politicians' private houses. Still, these two portals were pointing out how protesters visited also the headquarters of oppositional parties, yelling " We do not want you either!!". Besides, H-Alter reported very negatively on protesting in front of politicians' private houses; thus protesting in front of dr. Hebrang's house on the 6th of March was described in H-Alter as the "Right – wing orgies". In addition, in the same article it was emphasized how this move of going in front of Hebrang's house was imposed by " the few

right-wing groups which had stood at the head of protests, against peoples' will ". Because of that, an unknown reporter concluded that "the Leftists did not have any chance with their messages on direct democracy and leaderlessness against these standard bearers and fans of acclamation" (in H-Alter, 4.3.2011)

Exactly this emphasis on anti-systemic slogans, banners, messages and locations is what mostly distinguishes H-Alter and Advance on the one side from T-portal and Jutarnji list on the other. In distinction to T - portal and Jutarnji list which, in their reporting on Zagreb's anti-government protests, put emphasis on political players, i.e. on the ruling government and corrupt politicians in general, H-Alter and Advance in their reports tried also to detect economic and media player, other than only political ones. Thus in describing the protest routes, these two "alternative" media regularly reported on all "systemic spots" visited during marches, but in distinction to Jutarnji list and T-com they also reported on all speeches and slogans given there. Of course, in emphasizing certain "systemic demands", these two alternative portals were less keen to report nationalistic songs and speeches, which also formed part of the full repertoire.

As for locations and accompanying speeches of Zagreb's anti-government protests, besides mentioning the headquarters of ruling and oppositional parties and the visits to politicians' private houses, H - alter and Advance.hr put emphasis on other locations which were also the targets of protesters' anger: The House of Syndicates in front of which protesters were scanning " You have betrayed us", the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts in front of which people were yelling "Where are you smart guys now; why are you quiet?", the Croatian National Television where people called for main editor's resignation and were singing "We won't pay you subscriptions", the Croatian Fond for Privatization where protesters were whooping "Thieves!!" and the Croatian National Bank where the main words were "We won't give you our bank!" and "Nationalization of banks". These two media gave

additional attention to elements of the protests directed against certain private banks, private companies and corporations, and private media corporations where protesters were regularly chanting a unanimous “ Thieves!”

Besides phrases directed towards specific subjects, and those that were most frequently shouted such as “Jaco - go away“, “All in the streets“, “We want elections“, H-Alter and Advance also reported on some other speeches and banners which emerged in the masses. Thus in H-Alter’ s report on protests on 4th of March, the unknown reporter stated that the biggest banners were “ Electricity, Water, Forest, Health, Education...Stop privatization ! Down with capitalism and the EU“ and “ 300 thousand without job, 75 thousand without salary. Capitalism - no thank you“. Besides, in other reports these two media put emphasis on these banners: “Not in the EU“, “Academic solidarity - one world - one fight“, “ We want to work and manage our work“ and “General strike!“ Apart from spreading these messages and speeches, H-Alter also used its space for criticizing mainstream media; describing their selective and incomplete reports on Zagreb’s protests and the journalist concluded ironically “Let the truth live” (in H - alter, 04.03.2011)

4. Analysis

What I got from my data, i.e. from participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews and from analysis of media discourse, stirred me up completely; I have realized that this “late“ ethnographic journey from the beginning was marked with duality of perspectives on Zagreb’s anti-government protests in 2011. Thus during my participant observation, I detected a distinction between my vision on Zagreb’s protests and some of my friend’s vision; I saw Zagreb’s anti-government protests as the protests which were putting in question not just the ruling government, but also ruling political and economic structures - capitalism, representative democracy and the state. On the other hand, some friends of mine and some other participants defined Zagreb’s anti-government protests exactly as their name said - just as protests against the curenly ruling government.

This distinction between those who saw Zagreb’s protests as the beginning of the fight for broader structual changes and those who saw them just as the fight against immediate threats, i.e. against the ruling government - emerged also between my interviewees, i.e. between the “organizers“ and “ordinary participants“. The “organizers“ put emphasis on the “anti-systemic nature of Zagreb’s protests“, trying to take to task not just the ruling government and political elite in general, but also economic subjects and media in their services. The “ordinary participants“, on the ther hand, saw these protests also firstly as directed against the ruling government, although some of them regarded them as potentially anti-systemic. Finally, the same distinction in perspectives on Zagreb’s protests appeared between “alternative media“ and “mainstream media“, i.e. between *H-Alter* and *Adavance.hr* on the one hand, and *Jutarnji list* and *T-portal* on the other. The former in their reports put emphasis on anti-systemic demands, messages and locations of Zagreb’s protests, while the later highlighted messages directed against the ruling government.

I want to argue here that the distinctions that emerged in Zagreb's protests between different subjects; between me and some of my friends, between "organizers" and "ordinary participants", between participants themselves, between organizers themselves, between the Right and the Left and between the mainstream and the alternative media, actually reflect the main struggle in these anti-government protests – a struggle between the ruling, discourse and emerging alternative discourse or in Bourdieu's (1991) words - the struggle between orthodoxy and "heretical discourse" or finally in Gramsci's (2000) sense struggle between hegemony and counter - hegemony. Further, I claim that the struggle between these two discourses; the ruling one underpinned by the right stream in the protests and by mainstream media, and the alternative one underpinned by the left stream in the protests and by alternative media – was reflected in all segments of Zagreb's protests; from organization, leaders and goals of the protests to its banners, slogans and routes.

4.1. Organization, leaders, banners, slogans and routes

As for the organization and leaders of Zagreb's protests, from the beginning there was confusion between participants and even between organizers about who had organized and launched the protests and whether there were organizers and leaders at all. I argue that this confusion was the product of the struggle between the right and the left stream which tried to launch Zagreb's protests, i.e. between their discourses. Srećko and Vedrana – "organizers" of these protests, both leftists - confirmed this in our interviews, emphasizing that Zagreb's protests were launched by the Right and that the Left joined the third day with the view "not to let the Right discourse to prevail". Further, they both highlighted how people from the Left did not want to let the Right direct protests towards just one enemy – the ruling government; The Left wanted to show that problems in Croatia were structural and systemic. From this I suggest that the Left, by pushing this "alternative, systemic discourse", tried to challenge the

ruling discourse underpinned by the Right, according to which the problem was within the system, i.e. with the corrupt government, and was not the system itself.

Still, what I found interesting here is how this struggle between right-wing and left-wing “organizers” and between their discourses, reflected on other participants of Zagreb’s protests and on their perception of these protests. Thus I, as a participant, was under the impression that Zagreb’s protests were mostly spontaneous and that there were no leaders. Consequently, I was surprised when I got different information from the Leftist “organizers” ; both Srećko and Vedrana indicated that behind “ spontaneous protests” there was a lot of organization and ideologically different actors who tried to push their messages and who were united only by one slogan “Jaco - go away!”. Thanks to my interviews I became aware that I, as an outsider, i.e. as an ordinary participant, knew about these protests exactly what I was supposed to know, i.e. what the different media served. So, since I read alternative media and socialized with activists from the Left, my vision of Zagreb’s protests was imbued by the alternative, leftist discourse according to which these protests were “spontaneous”, “self – organizing” and “leaderless”, although in reality they were not, as ironically was confirmed by the Leftists themselves.

On the other side, many friends of mine and other participants were more under the influence of mainstream media and hegemonic discourse, since their perceptions of Zagreb’s protests were actually often a reflection of the image of protests created by the mainstream media. Thus, in my interviews with “ordinary participants”, most of them named Ivan Pernar as the possible organizer or leader of Zagreb’s protests. In addition, they regularly added that they did not take him seriously, or that he was actually just “a clown”. In that way, by calling Ivan Pernar at the same moment the organizer of Zagreb’s protests and a clown, my respondents were actually just reproducing the image of him which had been produced, very carefully, and obviously successfully, by the mainstream media. By discrediting Ivan Pernar ,

the mainstream media such as Jutarnji list or T-portal, tried to discredit anti-government protests in Zagreb in general.

This fight between the Right and the Left, i.e. between the ruling and alternative discourse and between mainstream and alternative media in their service, was fought at the frontline of Zagreb's protests. Literary, Leftists and Rightists were struggling in the first line of these protests, but the weapon they were using were not any kind of "cold weapon"; instead, I argue, these two different streams in Zagreb's protests were fighting each other by using symbolic weapons. In order to attract ordinary participants to follow them, and thus to impose themselves as leaders and to impose their direction of protests and thus consequently their discourse, the two opposite streams were using slogans and banners. In this struggle for the hearts and minds of protesters who poured out into Zagreb's streets in spring 2011, the right-wing and the left-wing streams rely on their assistants; on mainstream and alternative media which were also using symbols - words and pictures – to push their messages.

Thus mainstream media, in service of the ruling hegemonic discourse, put emphasis in their reports on Zagreb's protests on those banners and slogans which were directed towards the ruling government and political actors in general. Therefore Jutarnji list and T-portal regularly reported how protesters were screaming "We want elections!" or "Jaco – go away!". On the other hand, these two media were ignoring slogans and banners which pointed to problems connected with the economy, privatization and corrupt media such as "Reversal of the privatization", "General strike", "Capitalism - no thank you!" or "Censorship is forbidden by the 38th article of Croatian Constitution". As opposed to mainstream media, alternative media, in service of counter - hegemony, reported exactly on these "anti-systemic" banners and slogans. Thus H - alter and T-portal tried to highlight all political, but especially economic subjects "honored" by protesters with the whoop – "Thieves!".

From my participant observation and from interviews with other “ordinary participants” I suggest that mainstream media did a better job. Namely, I remember that when protesting on the 6th of March, the most frequent words and the most accepted ones I heard and also was singing were those directed against the ruling government. Besides, most of my interviewees, i.e. most “ordinary participants” alleged that their first goal was the elimination of the ruling government, so it is understandable why masses were noisiest when demanding “Jaco –go away”. Still, I must add that the resignation of the ruling government was actually a shared goal of the Right and the Left in Zagreb’s protests; distinction was in the fact that for the Left that resignation should have been just the first step towards further political and economic structural changes. Thus, although slogans and banners underpinned by mainstream media provoked the greatest reaction, this does not mean that the alternative discourse was not recognized at all.

I claim exactly the opposite; I argue that alternative slogans and banners were recognized by Zagreb’s protesters because protesters followed them. Banners and slogans served in Zagreb’s protests as signposts, and the Left and right streams were swinging with them to impose their direction and thus their vision of protests, i.e. their discourse. Thus the direction and routes of Zagreb’s protests actually reflected these opposite discourses. I argue that the routes were in fact the opposite discourses written by protesters on Zagreb’s asphalt. The Right stream was directing protests towards political spots by means of Croatian flags and other right-wing banners and slogans; the route which they tried to impose, consisted of headquarters of ruling and oppositional parties and of politician’s houses. In contrast, the left stream saw this insistence on political subjects as hiding or missing the real problem; thus they disagreed, as „organizers“ confirmed in our interviews, about going to politicians’ private houses of and instead they tried to direct protests towards economic subjects such as banks, corporations, closed factories and privatized media.

4.2. Anti - systemic potential or not ?

The fact that ten thousand people, not excluding myself, followed Leftists' routes directed towards "systemic spots", i.e. towards political and economic hubs of power, showed that alternative messages and discourse were recognized by Zagreb's protesters. Ten thousand protesters were marching behind the banners on which was written "Jaco go away" "HDZ – the thieves", but also "Capitalism - no thank you", "European Union - no thank you", "We do not need leaders to make decisions!". Around ten thousand people protested in front of the headquarter of the ruling party, but also in front of headquarters of oppositional parties yelling "We don't won't you either". Because of that, and because one of the most frequent statements I heard were "They are all the same" and "Nothing will change no matter who represent us", I argue that in this way people in Zagreb expressed not just distrust towards political elites, but towards, what Hardt and Negri (2011) call, the ruling system of representation. Further, around ten thousand Zagreb's insurgents were protesting against important economic subjects yelling "Thieves!", "Conversion of privatization", "Nationalization of banks", "Factories to workers" etc., showing in that way distrust not just towards economic subjects, but towards capitalist's rules of the game which enabled them to dispossess ordinary people.

I argue that the fact that Zagreb' protesters followed the routes imposed by the left stream, shows that protesters recognized alternative discourse which put in question the ruling structures such as capitalism and representative democracy, i.e. which challenged ruling hegemonic discourse underpinned by the right stream in the protests. Further, I contend that exactly because of the existence and recognition of this alternative, anti-systemic discourse, Zagreb's protests in 2011 had anti-systemic potential. Still, on the other hand, I claim that although Zagreb's protests had this anti-systemic potential, that potential was not realized because of the strength of the ruling structures and consequent ruling discourse. In other

words, I argue that in the struggle between ruling, hegemonic discourse, and alternative, counter-hegemonic discourse, ‘the winner’ in the case of Zagreb’s protests in 2011, was the hegemonic discourse. I see the reason for that in the fact that the ruling structures which produce and reproduce that ruling discourse - capitalism, representative democracy and the state – are still very strong and appealing in Croatia due to the specific Croatian historical context and due to the imposed notion that “there is no alternative“.

Historically, Croatia was a part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and was ruled by the Communist party for almost a half century. In 1991, during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the main goals of Croatian people became a sovereign Republic of Croatia and an open, capitalist market as opposition to a centrally planned economy and federal state. Since these goals – national state, representative democracy and capitalist economy - were in the end achieved through bloody war, it is understandable that Croats today cannot relinquish them without much further ado. Because of that, I claim that when people were protesting in the streets of Zagreb in spring 2011, they were not ready to put in question these ruling structures, although they recognized that the structures do not work in their favor. I argue that the ruling structures, namely the young national state, democracy and capitalism, or at least their idea, are still deeply embedded in the hearts and minds of protesters in Zagreb and because of that their slogans and speeches were not primarily directed against them, but against ruling political elite.

In addition, I argue that mainstream media found in this historical context a fertile ground for nourishing and reproducing ruling structures and consequently the ruling discourse. Mato Brautović (2011) confirmed in his analysis on media discourse that the old media – national television and daily newspapers, played a key role in Zagreb’s anti-government protests in 2011, while the new media such as Facebook or Twitter were not so important as in some other protests worldwide. If we take into consideration Barutovic’s

findings and the fact that most alternative media in Croatia appear in the form of internet portals, while mainstream media mostly take the form of daily newspapers, then we can find another reason for the prevalence of the ruling discourse among Zagreb's protesters. Besides, the Croatian National Television and its editor were one of the targets of protesters exactly because of boycotting Zagreb's protests and because of ubiquitous censorship which is in favor of economic and political elites and thus in service of the ruling discourse.

In short, I claim that mainstream media, or in Barutovic's words, the old media played an important role in sustaining ruling structures and ruling discourse; therefore in Croatia it is still hard to impose any alternative discourse without risking the accusation of being "Yugonostalgic" "Communist", "Red" etc. Thus Ivan Pernar, self-proclaimed organizer and leader of Zagreb's protests, in one of his speeches accused the left-wing participants of "invocation of communism" (in H-Alter, 04.03.2012) In a country which still suffers because of the blood spilled in the Croatian War of Independence (1991-1995), it is not easy to put in question the "achievements" of that war. Besides, according to the ruling discourse spread by mainstream media, "there is no alternative" anyway; after fifty years living under communism, it seems that the only possible alternative is ubiquitous democracy, which almost naturally always comes in the same package with capitalism and free market (Klein, 2008)

Even my interviewees, both "organizers" and "ordinary participants" confirmed this "lack of alternative". Thus, for most "ordinary participants" the failure of communism served as reason for trying to detect what doesn't work with capitalism and the state and representative democracy. In the interviews it seemed to me as if all my respondents were struggling to find a solution and the cure for the ruling system, because "actually there is no third option" (Igor, 29). If we don't fix ruling systems, what is the alternative? Thus, most of my respondents demanded some kind of a better state, i.e. a social state, and eventually

nationalization or even a “better capitalism”. Even “organizers”, who present themselves as leftist “who grew up reading Bakunin”, stated that it was necessary “to change the structure through the structure”, i.e. thorough the legitimate mechanisms of the state and democracy. Interestingly, only those of my interviewees who really lived under communism (Marija, 54, Mladen 60), dared to openly claim it; they still think that socialism is an alternative to capitalism in contrast to young interviewees who have suspicions, although they do not have first-hand experience of socialism, which just confirms the strength of the ruling ideology nourished since 1990 in Croatia.

To make my point, I argue that although protesters in Zagreb recognized the alternative discourse, i.e. although they recognized that their problems were not connected just with the ruling government, and thus they followed the leftist stream which tried to detect other “systemic enemies”, due to the strength of the ruling structures and ruling discourse, they were not in position to challenge further those enemies. In short, I claim that Zagreb’s protesters recognized but did not actually name their enemies. According to Bourdieu (1999), language is a main symbolic tool which plays an important role in construction of reality, so he argues that the act of naming helps to establish the structure of the world; by naming we produce structure which, in return, enables us to name and thus further reproduce or change that structure. Following this logic I contend that because of the historical context and the notion that “there is no alternative”, Zagreb’s protesters did not succeed in naming the structural enemies that they were actually fighting against; instead, they just succeeded in naming the lowest common nominator – the ruling government.

Further, from Bourdieu’s standpoint, a new kind of discourse - “heretical discourse” (1991, p.129) - can emerge in a crisis situations when the meaning of the world is not clear anymore. For it to emerge, he argues, we need “heretical break” with the established order, and beside this, heretical discourse must also produce a new common sense; it must change

the representation of this world by offering “a paradoxical pre-vision, a utopia, a project or program...” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.129) Following Bourdieu’s logic, I will conclude here that the “heretical discourse”, i.e. alternative discourse or counter – hegemony in Gramsci’s sense, which was underpinned by the left stream in Zagreb’s protests, did not have chance to really challenge ruling structures and discourse for two reasons; first, there were no “heretical break” with the established order since the ruling structures are still too strong in Croatia. Secondly, the “utopia” offered by the progressive left seemed similar to something that people in Croatia had already tried, and it did not taste that good.

4.3. Similarities between Zagreb’s protests and protests globally

After I have described and analyzed what happened during anti-government protests in Zagreb in 2011, I will try to show whether and how Zagreb’s protests were connected with global anti-capitalist mobilizing. I contend that Zagreb’s anti - government protests fit within this story of contemporary social movements, but just partially. Protests in Zagreb in 2011 shared some common features with movements such as the Occupy Wall Street or with protests in Spain and Greece. I argue that they all actually had a similar socio - economic context, enemies, goals, and similar methods of fight and organization. Still, in contrast to some contemporary grass roots movements, anti-government protests in Zagreb did not succeed in naming their real enemies and goals and thus they failed to challenge the ruling structures in the same way as some global movements such as Occupy succeeded - at least for a while. As one of the reasons for that, I see the strength of ruling structures and ruling discourse in Croatia. In brief, because of specific historical context and notion that “there is no alternative”, it was easier for Zagreb’s protesters to direct their rage and fight against the ruling government, than turning against the ruling capitalist and political system which movements such as Occupy did.

To confirm this, I will start from facts, i.e. from common socio-economic conditions. I assert that the same happened in Zagreb and in other “rebel cities“ and countries; ruling neoliberal economic and political structures and their policies succeeded in turning against themselves agents who were necessary for their reproduction (Giddens,1987) In Zagreb, young people, pensioners, veterans, teachers, officials and many others went into the streets, because of deteriorating socio-economic conditions of living. The youth occupied streets because of lack of jobs their abundant hope that something might be changed. In Croatia, as in Greece or Spain or actually everywhere where the rebellion has emerged, young people and their families put much effort and sacrifice in education, which in the end turns out to be worthless because they just cannot find jobs. Besides, if and when young people enter the labor market, they face low wages, part time posts and harassment. In addition, there is a fear among Croatian youth that educational reform will, as in Greece, lead to complete privatization, commodification and entrepreneurilisation of higher education (Sotiris, 2010).

On the other hand, the old joined Zagreb’s protests because of neoliberal reforms of the pension system, which made them the new poor. Veterans were protesting in the streets of Zagreb because the country they were fighting for turned its back on them and the future of their children. They felt that the ruling government, in its attempt to indulge requirements of the European Union and Hague’s tribunal and thus get political points, actually betrayed veterans who in fact enabled that ruling government to rule Croatia for almost two decades by voting for them. In short, all those who poured out into the streets of Zagreb that spring were, as insurgents in other cities, deeply dissatisfied with the socio-economic conditions, but in Zagreb most of them directed their rage mostly towards the currently ruling government.

One of the reasons for that was the fact that people were provoked by the government’s announcement of a new wave of privatization and austerity measures in this situation of global crisis. Since the first wave of privatization, happening in the 1990s after the

disintegration of Yugoslavia, was seen by Croatian people as “legitimized pillage”, the announcement of a new wave of privatization, directed this time towards common, public goods such as electricity, water, forests etc., provoked utter rage. That rage was additionally reinforced by the fact that ruling government asked people to “tighten belts and thus pull the country out of the recession”, in which that ruling government has pushed the country in the first place. Thus the first reaction was establishing of a Facebook group “Tighten you your belts, gang of thieves!” in 2008, which gathered around eighty thousand members and which actually was overture to Zagreb’s anti - government protests in spring 2011, together with two students’ blockade in 2009 and peasants’ rebellion and citizens action „Right to the city“ in 2010.

I argue that Croatian people directed their rage in all of these actions towards the ruling government because it was implementing unpopular economic measures and as such was the easiest target to detect as responsible for bad socio-economic conditions. In addition, that ruling government, headed by the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), has been seen lately by most Croats not just as “corrupt, immoral and non - transparent“ (Lalić in *H-Alter*, 29.08. 2011), but also as incompetent. Thus it was additional thorn in the side when that kind of government asked people to tighten their belts and pull the country out of crisis, while at the same time, it benefits together with the economic elite from that crisis. This insistence on the ruling government, i.e. naming it as the main enemy without naming the system which enables that enemy to rule in the way it rules, is the point which distinguishes Zagreb’s protests from other contemporary movements.

I claim in this thesis that although protests in Zagreb were in the same socio-economic conditions as insurgents of other “rebel cities“ (Harvey, 2012) and although they had the same targets and enemies as they, protesters in Zagreb did not recognize those enemies as structural and because of that they did not realize protests’ anti-systemic potential. Protesters in Zagreb

were claiming both economic and political responsibility and changes, but they did not direct their claims against dominant structures - capitalism and the state, but against the currently ruling political elite. So, although people in the streets of Zagreb and in the streets of New York or Athens were fighting against the same enemies – against corporate capitalism and ruling economic and political elites - they just named them differently. Although all contemporary insurgents were struggling against the dehumanization of human life, protesters in Zagreb, due to the strength of the ruling discourse, took to task corrupt ruling government, and not the ruling structures.

To summarize, I argue that “anti-government” protests in Zagreb in spring 2011, were part of a web of contemporary social movements and as those new movements had anti-systemic potential. People who were marching in the streets of Zagreb were under the same socio-economic conditions as people who occupied Wall Street or Syntagma Square in Athens. Besides, as protesters in New York or Barcelona, Zagreb’s protestors were also using new digital social media such as Facebook and mobile phones for the organization and coordination of protests. Finally, I claim that Zagreb’s insurgents had the same enemies and goals as their comrades in other cities; although they did not declare capitalism or the state to be their official enemies, they were marching against them. In short, in both scenarios, the global one and the local one, there are the same actors and the same story; on the one hand there are the 99% “dispossessed” (Harvey, 2005) who tried to challenge the 1% on the other side.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have focused on anti-government protests launched in Zagreb on February 28th, 2011 which eventually spread through the whole country and ended at the beginning of April 2011. I intended to answer what lies behind Zagreb's protests and whether and how they were part of a global wave of anti-capitalist mobilizing. I wanted to see what connects, besides the rage and mass of dispossessed, Zagreb with New York, Barcelona or Athens? With the literature review and the methodological tools I used, namely participant observation, interviews and analysis of media discourse, I argue that we witness the birth of a new wave of global anti - capitalist mobilizing and that Zagreb's anti-government protests in spring 2011 were part of the wave which tried to challenge ruling streams. Still, I also contend that although protesters in Zagreb recognized the alternative anti-systemic discourse and thus confirmed the anti-systemic potential of Zagreb's protests, they did not realize that potential, i.e. they did not put in question the ruling structures as some other movements such as Occupy Wall Street succeeded at least for a while.

I argue that due to the strength of ruling structures, Zagreb's protesters directed their anger primarily towards the currently ruling government, although they recognized other structural sources of crisis. I contend that "after fifty years of living under communism" Croatian citizens still see the young Croatian state, representative democracy and capitalism as appealing structures, especially if we take into consideration that those „structures“ were achieved through „bloody, defensive war“. Because of this specific Croatian historical context which is connected with, by ruling discourse imposed notion that "there is no alternative", ruling structures in Croatia succeed in imposing of ruling discourse and consequently in disabling alternative discourse to challenge the system.

Still, I would like to add here that maybe in this thesis I have underestimated Croats concerning their ability to question ruling structures because of "indoctrination".

Consequently, maybe I overestimated the role of history and communist legacy for sustaining ruling structures. In fact, the last reports on the Occupy Wall Street Movement showed that Americans, as actually more or less all insurgents in various countries today, also have problems with challenging the ruling structures although they did not “live fifty years under communism” or were at war on their own territory in last twenty years. It seems that, as the author Marcus Demery points out, the ruling structures, i.e. “the status quo has shown itself to be much more resilient than many of us expected” (Adbuster, 24 May 2012). It seems that the ruling order is ready to fight hard for its global position, no matter which country we are talking about; the United States, Spain, Greece or Croatia. Because of that, Demery continues, the Occupy Movement, which tried to put in question that order, is now struggling through an existential moment; people within the movement and spectators are in a dilemma - is Occupy Wall Street dead now or has it barely begun?

The same dilemma can be applied to Zagreb’s anti-government protests; were protests in Zagreb just the beginning of future protests or were they just spark which won’t ignite the fire? If the first option is true, if anti-government protests in Zagreb were just the overture to future protests, it means that alternative discourse which emerged in Zagreb’s protests may have lost the battle on the streets of Zagreb in spring 2011, but that does not mean that it lost the war against the ruling discourse. Ruling structures may be, as Demery says, more resilient than many of us expected, but on the other side those 99% of dispossessed in New York, Athens, Madrid or Zagreb have less and less to lose. People become more and more entrapped by the ruling structures or in Hallway’s words “ We are flies caught in a spider's web... Flies caught in a web of social relations beyond our control... We can only try to free ourselves by hacking at the strands that imprison us. We can only try to emancipate ourselves!” (Hallway, 2001, p.5) I have tried in this thesis exactly to do that: by describing from a fly’s perspective

Zagreb's anti-government protests in 2011, I have tried to detect strands and to cut them by words with the view of emancipation.

References

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic power*. Polity Press
- Brautovic, Mate. 2011. "Reporting of Croatian Daily Newspapers on 2011 Antigovernment protests" UDK 316.774:323.269.3(497.5)
- Castells, Manuel. 2010. *The Power of Identity*. Blackwell Publishing
- Davis, Mike. 2011. "No More Buuble Gums". *Berkley Journal of Sociology*
- Diani, Mario. 2010. "Struggling movements in Dubious Opportunities - An Afterword to "Surviving Neoliberalism: The Persistence of Australian Social Movements", *Social Movements Studies, Vol 9., No.2*
- Giddens, Anthony. 1987. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: Vol. 2, The Nation State and Violence*. London: Polity
- Holloway, John. 2002. *Changing the world without taking power*. Pluto Press
- Holst, John D. 2011. "Frameworks for Understanding the Politics of Social Movements". *Studies in Education of Adults Vol.43, No. 2*.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2011. "What to expect in 2012". *Adbusters*, December 5.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2011. "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street, The Encampment in Lower Manhattan Speaks to a Failure of Representation", *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, October 11
(<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136399/michael-hardt-and-antonio-negri/the-fight-for-real-democracy-at-the-heart-of-occupy-wall-street>)
- Harvey, David. 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press
- Harvey, David. 2012. *Rebel cities. From the Right to the City to the Urban revolution*. Verso
- Harvey, David. 2011. "The party of Wall Street meets its Nemesis". *Berkley Journal of Sociology*
(<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/777-david-harvey-the-party-of-wall-street-meets-its-nemesis>)

- Klein, Naomi. 2008. *The Shock Doctrine. The rise of disaster capitalism*; Penguin Press
- Klein Naomi and Yotam Merom. 2012. "Why now? What's next? Naomi Klein and Yotam Maron in Conversation about Occupy Wall Street" *The Nation*. January 9
<http://www.thenation.com/article/165530/why-now-whats-next-naomi-klein-and-yotam-marom-conversation-about-occupy-wall-street>)
- Kunac, Suzana. 2011. "Zagrebacki prosvjedi. Korak ka omasovljenju građanskih zahtjeva" *Političke analize Vol.2.No.6*
- Kurelic, Zoran. 2010. "Srećko Horvat and Igor Stiks, The Right of Rebellion". *Politička Misao Vol.47.No.5: 203-206*
- Lalic, Drazen. 2011. "Klasične demonstracije, političko gibanje ili novi društveni pokret". *Političke analize Vol.2.No.6*
- Mesic, Milan. 2009. "Croatian Student Movement – An Attempt at Theoretical Analysis" *Politička misao, Vol.46.No.4: 79-101*.
- Meyer, David. 2004. "Protest and Political Opportunities". *Annual review of Sociology* 30:125-45
- Sassen, Saskia. 2011. "The Global Street Comes to Wall Street". *Berkley Journal of Sociology, December 5*
- Sotiris, Panagiotis. 2010. "Rebels with a Cause: The December 2008 Greek Youth Movement as the Condensation of Deeper Social and Political Contradictions". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34: 1.
- Stiks Igor and Srećko Horvat. 2010. *Pravo na pobunu (Right of Rebellion)*.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1998. *Power in movement; social movements and contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2011. "Why Occupy Wall Street is not the tea party of the left?" *Berkley Journal of Sociology*. October 10

(<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136401/sidney-tarrow/why-occupy-wall-street-is-not-the-tea-party-of-the-left>)