Taking a stand in times of violent societal changes: Belgrade and Zagreb feminists’ positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991-2000)

Miškovska Kajevska, A.

Publication date
2014

Citation for published version (APA):
Acknowledgements

It was both an immense privilege and a considerable challenge to do this research. I was able to engage with a topic which was very important to me, listen to the analyses and personal experiences of many inspiring women, and access wonderful rare original documents. At the same time, I had to produce a detached scholarly elaboration of the work of people whose political choices in the 1990s were made in a context of war violence, existential insecurity, suffering and diverse societal changes, and were often accompanied by anger, despair, disbelief, fear and grief – emotions which frequently resurfaced in these activists’ interactions with me during the data collection. Much to my fortune, though, I was surrounded by a large number of people (academics and non-academics alike) who assisted me in various ways. I am tremendously grateful to all of them.

My mentors and co-mentors are the first ones whom I thankfully single out here for the intense and profound intellectual engagement with my work and their emotional support when the seas were rough. I began this research under the supervision of Frances Gouda and the mentorship of Saskia Poldervaart and Francesco Strazzari. Following Francesco’s departure to Italy and Saskia’s illness, two new mentors entered the team in the third year: Annette Freyberg-Inan and Maria Koinova. In the last phase of the process, after Frances’ move to the United States, Marlies Glasius became my supervisor and very rapidly familiarised herself with my work. These alterations initially brought some instability to the process, but Frances and Annette skilfully provided the stable anchor during the first and the second change, respectively. Moreover, the new circumstances meant that I could enjoy the expertise of three other fantastic scholars, each of whom was sincerely committed to helping me solve the research puzzle. I wish to thank Annette in particular. It was foremost due to her apt and careful feedback and patience that I managed to produce the first dissertation draft.

I would further like to extend my enormous gratitude to all my respondents for their dedicated participation and interest in this research, as well as for their important feminist and/or peace work which I – as a member of the succeeding post-Yugoslav generations – benefit from and can engage with. I remain indebted to them and their legacy. Another group of people whose large contribution to my research I gratefully acknowledge consists of librarians, archivists and documentarians. Their generous help and, at times astonishing, resourcefulness were indispensible to my work, especially when the search concerned not easily accessible texts, documents and films.
The main financial support for this research came from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, via its Mosaic funding scheme. In writing my application for this excellent research scholarship, next to being given a lot of worthy advice from Frances Gouda and Saskia Poldervaart, I received many valuable insights and suggestions from Dubravka Žarkov. I am additionally obliged to her for the later conversations which helped me better understand and organise the data, as well as sharpen my analysis.

Another person whose knowledge increased the quality of my work was Annemarie Mol. The lucid observations which she made during our coincidental encounters in the corridors of the University of Amsterdam made it easier for me to walk through the labyrinths of my research. I consider myself quite lucky also because of all other occasions in which I was able to exchange ideas and receive feedback from experienced scholars: Nanci Adler, Ana Dević, Orli Fridman, Elissa Helms, Renata Jambrešić Kirin, Stef Jansen, Maja Korać-Sanderson, Stef Scagliola, Mattijs van de Port, Bart van Heerikhuizen, Petra Vries, Jolande Withuis and Susan Zimmermann. The same is true for my conversations with people outside of the academia, such as Klaas de Jonge and Ingrid Foeken. A special thank you note goes to Chiara Bonfiglioli, who belongs – just like me – to the newer generations of scholars of (post-)Yugoslav feminism. Our exchanges of experiences, ideas and findings were always very encouraging, instructive and inspiring to me.

My host institution, the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, was a great place to do a doctorate research. I profited from the professionalism of its kind former and present staff with whom I regularly interacted: Michiel Baas, Teun Bijvoet, Anneke Dammers, Roos de Jager, Joris de Vries, José Komen, Miriam May, Hermance Mettrop, Joanne Oakes, Philip Romer and Yomi van der Veen.

The pleasure which I experienced from working at this research institute was, furthermore, largely due to the committed, motivating and amiable fellow doctoral candidates whom I met throughout the years. I cherish in particular the academic exchanges with and the friendship of Bouchra Arbaoui, Marten Boekelo, Silke Heumann, Sanneke Kloppenburg, Katharina Paul, Tjerk Jan Schuitmaker, Victor Toom, Frank van As, Marcel van den Haak, Marieke van Eijk, Eline van Haastrecht, Marloes van Westrienen and Anick Vollebergh.

An endless number of non-work-related friends at diverse geographical locations (virtually) stood by my side and shared the joys and the difficulties which I encountered in this period. Since the risk of unwillingly omitting somebody is too big, I choose to play safe this time and not mention anybody by name, but exclaim from the bottom of my heart a general – and, yet, very personal – THANK YOU!
My final words of deep gratitude go to Heidi Henckels, a good friend of my mother’s, as well as to my parents Ljiljana Miškovska-Kajevska and Aleksandar Kajevski, and my brother Petar Kajevski. Their unceasing encouragement and sincere support helped me smoothly finish this dissertation and joyously embark on a new personal and professional journey.

Skopje, January 2014