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SNSF-Research Project
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Conflicting Identities. Politics of Representation and Counterculture in Yugoslavia during the Cold War

The research project “Conflicting Identities – Politics of Representation and Counterculture in Yugoslavia during the Cold War” asks about cultural identity politics in socialist Yugoslavia between 1946 and 1989. It aims at analyzing the contribution of arts and culture to identity construction by examples of architecture, urbanism, visual arts, photography and film. Yugoslavia was in a very specific political situation during the Cold War. The country had a strong anti-fascist grassroots movement that led to its liberation and enabled its early detachment from the Soviet-Union. Henceforth, Yugoslavia worked on its politics of the “third way” in relation to the two ruling blocks and super powers. The project is an attempt to examine whether this special political status during the Cold War was mirrored in arts and culture. It is looking for a specific Yugoslav image production. Yet at the same time it also focuses on artistic practices, which refused to contribute to national identity politics. They searched for their own language and principles and defined their role within and for society differently. Especially in the field of avant-garde music, visual arts, film, and drama there are artists and institutions that act within a field of tension with the official cultural policies. This widens and further complicates the study about the culturally and historically dense microcosm of Yugoslavia.

“Conflicting Identities” is a research project of the chair of Prof. Dr. Philip Ursprung. Three doctoral students are working on its topic.