Selfies as citizen media

Bolette Blaagaard, associate professor, Aalborg University.

The project explores visual self-representations as political acts and in particular the genres of the *selfie*, *gesture*, and *re-enactment* as visual genres of resistance. These genres of resistance circulate as sites of political and mediated contestation and involve social and ethical implications with which the project is concerned. Specifically, a case study of the contemporary US civil rights movement *BlackLivesMatter* (BLM)is employed to elaborate on the personal and political aspects of images of inclusion and exclusion – i.e. the agonistic process of subjectivity formations – and the role of visual self-representations. The images from demonstrations and political interventions of *BLM* challenge as well as mirror the political visuality (Mirzoeff, 2011) of liberal democracy (Hooker, 2016). They draw on historical visualities and imagery of conflict and on the gestures and slogans of the civil rights movement of the 60s (Berger, 2011; Apel, 2014), while they moreover allow for new visual interventions to take place. In this way, the project examines how visual self-representations may be seen as political acts and strategies of resistance traceable in time and online, digital space.The project uses a cartographic reading (Braidotti, 2011; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994) of imagery of resistance and draws on theories of the subject and subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013; Jones, 2006) and race- and postcolonial theories (Bhabha, 1994; Gilroy, 2004; Berger, 2011), in order to contribute to the field of visual citizen media with a new and conceptual understanding of self-representations as embodied and political witnessing.