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## **Protest Event Dataset for Croatia, Portugal, Serbia and Spain: Focus on Strike Data**

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‘Disobedient Democracy: A Comparative Analysis of Contentious Politics in the European Semi-periphery’ is a research project implemented by the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Zagreb, in the period 2016-2021, led by Principal Investigator Danijela Dolenc and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (IZ11Z0\_166540 – PROMYS).<sup>1</sup> The overall objective of the project is to explore how protest politics advances democracy by collecting and analyzing data on protest mobilizations in four countries: Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Serbia.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Information about the funding programme available at: <http://www.snf.ch/en/funding/careers/promys/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> As part of the project the Faculty of Political Sciences established institutional cooperation with the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidade Nova de Lisboa and the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory in Belgrade.

## About the Protest Event Dataset

The protest event analysis (PEA) dataset covers the period 2000-2017, recording protest events in Spain, Portugal, Croatia and Serbia. Best described as “a type of content analysis” (Hutter, 2014: 335), PEA systematically captures properties of protest events such as frequency, timing, duration, location, claims, size and others (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002). Our dataset of protest events is based on domestic daily newspapers’ reports in each of the four countries. Notwithstanding selection and description bias inherent to media reporting (for reviews, see McCarthy et al., 1996; Koopmans, 1998; Earl et al., 2004; Ortiz et al., 2005; Hutter, 2014), newspapers remain the best available source of data on overall protest dynamic for comparative studies. To address the issue of bias, we selected two quality national dailies of different ideological stance as data sources for each country: *Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list* (Croatia), *Politika* and *Danas* (Serbia), *Diário de Notícias* and *Público* (Portugal), and *El País* and *El Mundo* (Spain). Each printed daily newspaper issue was examined in full for reports on protest events for the period between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2017.

Aiming to detect a broad variety of occurrences and include contextual specificities of each country in the dataset, we deliberately avoided strict definitional criteria of protest event, such as a minimum number of participants or a specific form of action. Instead, the coding manual<sup>3</sup> contained a list of contentious repertoires and performances, such as demonstrations, marches and similar,<sup>4</sup> which served as a guideline in the identification process. Each event was coded in the database consisting of 40 variables, 6 of which are technical (identifying the event, listing exact sources within newspapers, and information on who coded the event), while the rest collected descriptive information about the event.<sup>5</sup> Other variables are the geolocation, the identity of participants, identity of organizers, allies of protest, strategies and methods, demands and grievances, slogans and songs, direct targets and ulti-

<sup>3</sup> Available from authors on request.

<sup>4</sup> The list included: marches, demonstrations, mass meetings or gatherings (and specific types: escraches, caceroladas, etc.), direct-democratic meetings of citizens (and specific types: assemblies, plena, etc.), occupations, sit-ins, sieges, obstruction of roads-public spaces and infrastructures-transport, rioting/uprising, hunger strikes, symbolic/theatrical performance, boycott, strike, petitions (signature gathering), press conferences, leafleting, cyber-attacks (e.g. netstrike, mail-bombing, hacking, DoS attack), hanging banners/placards on public or private buildings, hostile confrontations, sabotage, assaulting, beatings, attacking people or facilities, self-harming and chaining.

<sup>5</sup> In the preparation of our protocol for data collection we consulted several similar projects, and we gratefully acknowledge Grzegorz Ekiert, Jan Kubik, Mark Beissinger, and Martin Portos for providing us with their codebooks.

mate objects, character of intervention by authorities, casualties and damage, information on whether negotiations with authorities took place and the responses and reactions of other actors to the protest event.<sup>6</sup>

Coders observed rules with regards to spatial and temporal demarcation of protest events. Occurrences which happened in different locations simultaneously, sharing the same goal, identity or organizer, were treated as a single protest event with multiple locations. Only events which had at least one location within one of the four country cases were included in the dataset. Also, events in the dataset have geolocations, enabling various types of spatial analysis. Each event was coded as a single unit notwithstanding its duration, since duration itself is treated as a variable in the dataset. Some types of events that last for days and weeks, such as occupations, were treated as single protest events. However, when for instance a long-lasting occupation of public space led to the emergence of a march or similar, those were coded as separate events.

Country teams of coders held regular meetings in order to address the dilemmas emerging during the coding process and to increase the reliability of the coding process. While we cannot claim to have identified the whole universe of protest events in the given time period, given the inherent source bias, a compiled list of events does enable us to identify cycles and trends in selected countries. Descriptions of events captured in our dataset are detailed, and the biases that exist at the level of describing events are mainly due to the character of media reporting. Furthermore, our event database stores all source news items that were coded, enabling easy retrieval of original sources for re-coding purposes, or to undertake other types of media and discursive analyses.

Several PEA datasets already exist for countries in our dataset, as Table 1 (on the next page) summarizes in order to enable comparison with our data.

Beissinger and Sasse (2014) and Kriesi et al. (2020) are large multi-country PEA datasets, covering 18 and 30 countries respectively, which collected data from international newswires such as Reuters and the Associated Press. Their main advantage is that they provide cross-country comparable data since information is collected from the same news sources. Their main weakness is that international newswires capture only large protest events, and collect scant descriptive information about the context in which the protest takes place. In addition, Beissinger and Sasse (2014), though tremendously important as a source of comparative protest data for

<sup>6</sup> Given the broad criteria for inclusion in our dataset, modifications in the definition of protest event will lead to different total event counts. For example, media sources do not always specify dates when a protest started or finished, and in such cases we used the newspaper issue date as the proxy for the date of the event. If instead the inclusion criteria for a protest event is that it contains a specific start and end date, the overall event count will be smaller.

**Table 1.** Existing PEA datasets, in order of publication

Accornero & Pinto, 2015	1 daily newspaper, 3 issues per week	2010/01-2013/07	Portugal
Portos, 2016	1 daily newspaper, electronic search	2007/01-2015/02	Spain
Carvalho, 2019	2 daily newspapers (1 per country), all issues	2009/01-2015/12	Spain and Portugal
OWID, 2018	1 daily newspaper (1990-1999) and 1 weekly (1993-1999), all issues	1990/1999	Croatia
Grdešić, 2019	5 daily newspapers, all issues	1988/06-1988/11	Serbia
Kriesi et al., 2020	10 international newswires, electronic search	2000-2015	30 European countries; includes Spain and Portugal, not Croatia and Serbia

post-socialist countries, covered a short time period during the Great Recession 2007-2010. On the other hand, datasets such as Accornero and Pinto (2015), Portos (2016), OWID (2018) and Grdešić (2019) are much richer in descriptive detail, but they cover only one country and substantially shorter periods of time.

Beissinger and Sasse (2014) collected data from newswires for Croatia and Serbia in the period 2007-2010, OWID (2018) recorded workers' mobilizations during the 1990s, while Grdešić (2019) collected protest data for Serbia in the brief period of the anti-bureaucratic revolution (June to November 1988). In other words, our PEA dataset is the first that collected comparative longitudinal data on protest mobilizations in Croatia and Serbia.

In comparison to existing datasets, our PEA dataset has several advantages. First, since we included all newspaper issues in the given period, rather than sampling like, for instance, Accornero and Pinto (2015), our dataset captures all protest events reported in the selected national print media for each of the four countries. Second, we cover 18 years, allowing us to capture long-term dynamics. Finally, our dataset is based on two quality national daily newspapers per country, which means we applied a finer tooth comb in detecting protests than is the case when relying on newswires. As a result, we are able to look at both country and comparative trends in considerable detail, and substantially expand the possibilities of analysing various dimensions of protest mobilizations.

### Summary Description of Data

In total our dataset records 12,882 protest events. The highest number of protest events was recorded in Spain, with 4,042 events, 3,170 protest events were recorded in Portugal, 2,870 in Serbia and 2,800 in Croatia.

Table 2 provides summary information averaged across the entire period, while Table 3 contains information about annual number of protests and annual number of participants in protest mobilizations for each of the four countries.

**Table 2.** Protest Events and Participants – Annual Averages and Ranges

	average number of events	mini-mum	maxi-mum	average number of participants	mini-mum	maxi-mum	number of events per 100 000 people
<b>Croatia</b>	155,56	98	295	84766,06	13358	183889	3,63
<b>Portugal</b>	176,11	48	243	805173,22	23725	3430145	1,67
<b>Serbia</b>	159,44	63	354	509409,83	6906	3975961	2,22
<b>Spain</b>	224,56	112	331	3484005,06	365995	10902160	0,48

The average annual numbers of protests are higher in Spain and Portugal, but when these numbers are weighted for population size, Table 2 suggests that the levels of contention in Croatia and Serbia are overall higher.

**Table 3.** Annual Number of Protests and Protest Participants per Country

year	Croatia		Portugal		Serbia		Spain	
	events	participants	events	participants	events	participants	events	participants
2000	295	54190	216	156105	161	3975961	320	4943331
2001	278	155371	223	89418	232	1595808	235	3402697
2002	177	95138	218	2313061	114	210531	245	3173264
2003	157	41768	170	264454	270	182906	178	10902160
2004	112	123096	217	139932	354	111039	143	9141468
2005	141	82198	208	142498	252	65166	112	1238585
2006	163	93278	186	279065	221	1775716	217	2395920
2007	166	24211	177	1808006	199	121831	246	2054760
2008	178	183889	221	777843	156	243452	134	365995
2009	198	70320	161	925623	141	62217	248	2375995
2010	132	48181	181	3430145	71	29242	280	1294920
2011	126	141044	178	1304339	66	118743	331	2356454
2012	126	141943	243	1264286	79	6906	315	3451523
2013	114	77965	221	1272972	63	41989	269	2443501
2014	100	32997	126	90319	69	46794	233	5094385
2015	116	23652	99	23725	110	298076	145	791445
2016	123	89988	48	148768	131	190120	137	677811
2017	98	126480	77	62559	181	92880	254	6607877

Though there are many directions in which numbers from Table 3 could be explored, an obvious one is a historical contextualisation of protest mobilization waves from the period of the Great Recession 2008-2015. Studies have established the surge of mass mobilizations in this period in Spain and Portugal (Accornero and Pinto, 2015; Portos, 2016; Romanos, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2017; Della Porta et al., 2017; Portos and Carvalho, 2019), and our data reconfirm these findings. In Portugal the relative stability in protest numbers between 2000 and 2008 made way to a general strike mobilizing 3 million people in 2010 and a peak in protest numbers in 2012. In Spain the anti-austerity protest cycle started in 2008 and reached its peak in 2011-2012 with the movement of the “indignados”. However, the longer time period we capture contrasts the anti-austerity wave in Spain with very large mobilizations in 2003 and 2004 due to massive protests against the war in Iraq and in reaction to the Madrid terrorist attack.

In contrast to Spain and Portugal where the largest protest mobilizations happened during the Great Recession, in Croatia and Serbia the early 2000s were the most contentious. Between 2000 and 2004 both countries were undergoing regime change (Dolenec, 2013) and were implementing economic programmes directed at liberalizing labour relations (Grdešić, 2008, 2015; Greskovits, 1998; Upchurch and Weltman, 2008). During 2000 and 2001 Croatia recorded the largest number of protest events for the whole period. In Serbia the fall of Milošević in 2000 drew nearly 4 million people to the streets, while in 2003 and 2004 the country experienced the largest volume of protests of the observed period.

### Comparing Strike Trends

The scope and detail of our PEA dataset enables us to pursue various avenues of investigation into contentious politics, as well as pursue paired and cross-regional comparisons. We illustrate the dataset’s potential by zooming in on strike data.

Strike data is notoriously incomplete and rife with problems of incomparability of both within-country data over time, and cross-country comparisons. ILOSTAT database, which is the primary source of strike data, contains considerable gaps, with time series available only for a minority of countries.<sup>7</sup> Some countries simply do not collect this data – and this is true of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia; or they do not collect it on a regular basis (Dribbusch and Vandaele, 2016). Furthermore, in countries where strike data is collected, this is primarily done by employers and employers’ associations. This information is not possible to cross-check against alternative sources, so the volume of under-recording is very difficult to assess (*ibid.*). It is very likely that an unknown number of small-

<sup>7</sup> The European Commission’s statistical office, Eurostat, on the other hand, stopped its time series in 2009.

scale strikes and strikes of short duration are not reported. Finally, in addition to the fact that only larger strikes get recorded, countries employ various recording thresholds (i.e. number of people participating, duration in days, etc.) or they exclude certain economic sectors, and these definitional decisions further aggravate data limitations. For instance, in Portugal public administration is excluded from the statistics, while in Spain they do not record general strikes since 2009, and they exclude certain strikes from the education sector (*ibid.*).

In other words, contemporary research on industrial conflict remains hampered by severe data limitations, and this is even more true of post-socialist countries of Central and Southeast Europe. In this context, comparable longitudinal data on strikes in Croatia, Portugal, Serbia and Spain between 2000-2017 provide a valuable source of information for identifying trends over time and between countries. The PEA method of data collection, which records strikes reported in the national print media dailies, suffers from some of the same limitations as the statistical records in that it under-records an unknown number of small-scale strikes. However, compared to existing multi-country statistics it has the advantage of applying a unified method of data gathering for four countries, and over a long period of time, that way substantially increasing our confidence both in terms of making comparisons and in establishing temporal trends. Table 4 shows the annual numbers of recorded strikes and participants in strikes.

**Table 4.** Annual Number of Strikes and Participants in Strikes per Country

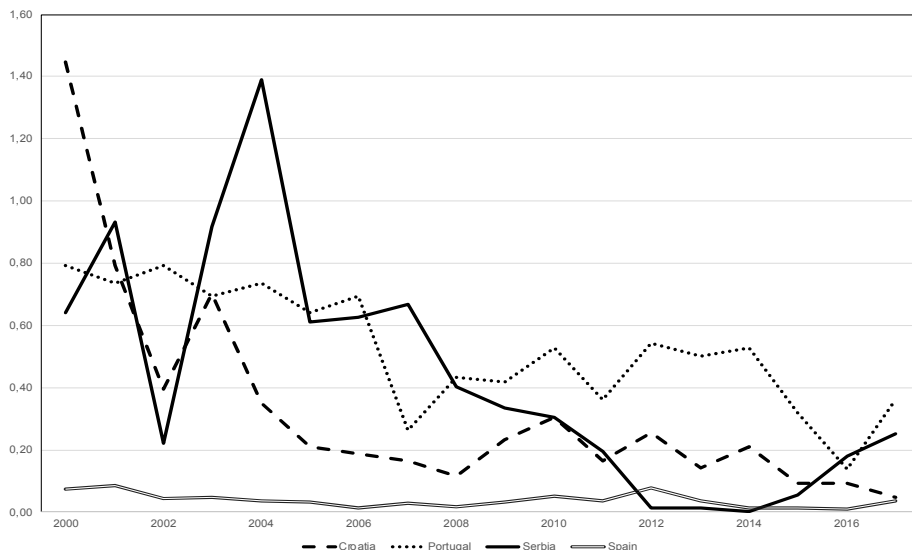
year	Croatia		Portugal		Serbia		Spain	
	strike	participants	strike	participants	strike	participants	strike	participants
2000	62	19094	57	400	46	1693155	35	122335
2001	34	44307	53	2541	67	1247174	39	1719273
2002	17	34565	57	2239364	16	4247	20	532050
2003	30	21851	50	9439	66	41178	22	5124883
2004	15	4650	53	1233	100	14107	17	58720
2005	9	17260	46	14265	44	1641	15	47140
2006	8	80870	50	2425	45	5785	7	31700
2007	7	4010	19	1401316	48	19903	13	350350
2008	5	9113	31	38733	29	8927	8	36097
2009	10	2376	30	2025	24	12294	15	35273
2010	13	953	38	3038060	22	8473	23	140451
2011	7	60	26	660	14	103110	16	98151
2012	11	71962	39	2984	1	100	37	644025
2013	6	1050	36	200	1	0	17	88572
2014	9	107	38	220	0	0	7	5200
2015	4	225	23	100	4	50047	6	2000
2016	4	130	10	20	13	562	5	10400
2017	2	40	26	40	18	4120	16	788650



Table 4 shows how adding information about participant numbers influences our understanding of the overall dynamic of industrial conflict.<sup>8</sup> The example of Croatia shows that in terms of strike numbers 2000 and 2001 stand out, but in terms of size of mobilization 2006 and 2008 were by far the largest, mobilizing 80,870 and 71,962 people respectively. In Serbia strikes in 2000 and 2001 mobilized over a million people each year. On the other hand, though the population of Spain is four times the size of Portugal, industrial conflict in Portugal has stronger capacity, drawing out millions into strike, as was the case in 2002, 2007 and 2010.

Taking on board the substantial difference in population sizes among the four cases, Figure 1 shows the annual number of strikes per 100,000 citizens, indicating the level of industrial conflict on a comparable scale across the four countries.

**Figure 1.** Total Number of Strikes per 100,000 Citizens



Perhaps the most striking feature emerging from Figure 1 is that both Croatia and Serbia show evidence of strong labour conflict when compared to Spain and

<sup>8</sup> In our dataset not all strikes include information about the number of participants since this number is not as a rule reported in media reports, especially for smaller strikes. The shares are as follows. Croatia 55%, Portugal 17%, Serbia 47% and Spain 48%. The low proportion of strikes with recorded numbers of participants in Portugal is due to traditional practice in news reporting on the issue, whereby newspapers typically record only the percentage of workers of a certain sector/company that adhered to a particular strike, while specific numbers are rarely reported, with the exception of large-scale protests.

Portugal, despite the general account in the literature according to which post-socialist countries are characterised by labour quiescence (Greskovits, 1998; Ost and Crowley, 2001). In Croatia in 2000-2002 we seem to be observing the end of a period of contention, while in Serbia the highest number of strikes was in the early 2000s, peaking in 2004. After that the number of strikes goes down in both cases, but much faster in Croatia. In Spain the relative number of strikes to population is comparatively lowest, with two small peaks in 2001 and 2012, during the anti-austerity wave of contention. Finally, Portugal stands apart by showing consistency in the presence of strikes across almost the entire period, registering a drop only after 2014. Also, interestingly, like in Croatia and Serbia, industrial conflict in Portugal was more pronounced in the period before 2008.

### Strike Data for Croatia

Croatia is one of a small group of countries in the EU that does not maintain a national statistical account of strikes (Dribbusch and Vandaele, 2016). For that reason, researchers have had to devise indirect ways of assessing the levels of industrial conflict in Croatia. In the most comprehensive study of industrial relations in Croatia, Bagić (2010) relied on three sources of data: official statistics on arbitrage, survey data and media reports. Since 1995 Labour law in Croatia has stipulated compulsory state arbitration before workers are legally allowed to strike. The same legislation outlawed general strikes, so currently in Croatia it is only legal to organize a strike against an employer or employers' association after the completion of the compulsory state arbitration process.

The Sector for Social Partnership in the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy keeps a record of state arbitration processes on behalf of the National Economic-Social Council since 2003. In the absence of statistical data on strikes, Bagić (*ibid.*) relied on arbitrage statistics to assess levels of industrial conflict. The assumption is that the number of legal strikes should not be larger than the number of arbitration processes, and should be similar to the number of unsuccessful arbitrations. At the same time, unsuccessful arbitrations are not expected to automatically lead to strikes, since whether a union decides to strike in the end depends on their overall capacity, as well as cost and risk assessments (*ibid.*). To that we can also add that for smaller unions, especially given their weakness in the private sector, initiating the arbitration process could well be the maximum extent of the threat they can extend towards the employer.

For the period Bagić examines (2004-2009) there were an average of 30 unsuccessful arbitrations per year, which, he argues, points to quite a pronounced level of industrial conflict compared to other post-socialist countries for which data is available. In addition, Bagić (*ibid.*) complements the arbitrage statistics with a survey

he conducted among the employed. Survey participants were asked about the number of strikes they took part in during 2007 and 2008, and the number of days they spent on strike. According to his survey, around 3% of employed people struck in 2007, and 3,5% in 2008, which would suggest total numbers of between 40-50,000 employees. If we compare these numbers with the number of strike participants for the same years in Table 4, our PEA data substantially deflate these estimates. The discrepancy is surely there, in part, because for some strikes we lack information about the number of participants, but surveys on the other hand are prone to the opposite bias of overreporting. Background information we recorded for 2007 and 2008 were strikes in the private sector, mostly taking place outside Zagreb, with no larger public sector mobilizations.

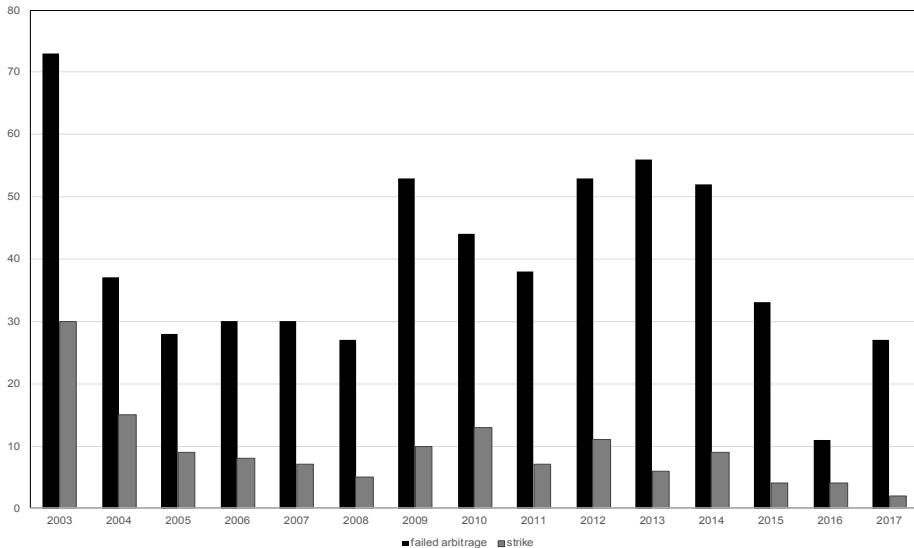
Apart from information about strike numbers and numbers of participants in strike, the length of strike is another feature that helps analysts better capture the level of industrial conflict. For instance, ETUI's Strike Map of Europe<sup>9</sup> estimates strikes based on information on days not worked per 1,000 employees. In our PEA dataset, length is recorded in 162 out of a total of 253 strikes.<sup>10</sup> The average length of strikes in the covered period was 7,4 days. A minority of 35% (89) of these were one-day strikes, in the public and private sectors. The longest recorded strike took place in Ilova factory in Split, and according to the media reports lasted for 100 days during 2000. Overall public sector strikes were shorter, mostly lasting one day. An example of a longer public sector strike took place in 2006 when over 80,000 workers participated in a three-day strike. Public-sector employees typically engaged in strike to demand better working conditions, increase in salaries and preservation of previously negotiated benefits. On the other hand, strikes in the private sector were provoked almost exclusively by privatization processes which led to redundancy procedures, unpaid salaries or salary cuts. They were often prolonged over a few weeks, and the strikes were combined with other protest methods such as factory occupations or demonstrations in front of local and national public institutions.

However, going back to arbitrage statistics published in Bagić (2010), it is important to stress that before the PEA data we compiled this statistic provided the only and quite indirect basis for an assessment of strike trends in Croatia. In Figure 2 we compare the annual statistics on failed arbitrage<sup>11</sup> with strike numbers for Cro-

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.etui.org/strikes-map>; last accessed November 22, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> To assess the intensity of industrial conflict, it would be optimal to juxtapose data about the length of strikes with data about the number of participants, but media sources rarely include both numbers. Only a quarter of our events comes with the full set of information.

<sup>11</sup> Official arbitrage statistics for the period 2011-2018 was provided by the Sector for Social Partnership at the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, while data for the earlier period 2003-2011 was reproduced with permission from Ivandić and Livada (2014).

**Figure 2.** Comparing Failed Arbitrage Processes and Strike Numbers

ata from our PEA dataset, for the period since 2003 (arbitrage data is not available for earlier years) until 2017.

According to Figure 2 the annual number of failed arbitration processes is consistently higher than the number of strikes recorded in our PEA dataset, with the correlation of 0,71. Taking on board the fact that our dataset relies on news reports in the national print media (*Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*), which arguably only capture larger and more visible strikes, the difference between the arbitration statistic and the PEA strike numbers forms the range within which the real number of strikes taking place each year in Croatia actually lies.

Taken together, the two trend lines suggest that the beginning of the 2000s was highly contentious in Croatia, and that it would be important to extend the strike data backwards in time. Existing case research on industrial conflict in Croatia during the 1990s suggests that there were high levels of workers' mobilization (Bahtijari, 2001; Grdešić, 2008; Bagić, 2010), so it seems worthwhile to revisit Greskovits' (1998) hypotheses about the economic transformation in the 1990s being "patient" and non-contentious. Finally, the rise in the number of failed arbitration processes and in the number of strikes between 2009 and 2014 confirms that in Croatia the Great Recession was met with labour resistance.

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