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Mediating Change: Changing Media

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Mediating Change, Changing Media: Dimensions and Perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

Societies (have to) deal with change permanently. They struggle over the nature of change and its desirability, and they strive for, and resist, change. But analyzing change is far from easy, given its complex nature, especially when looking at all communication and media changes related to the aftermath of the 'Fourth Industrial' (Floridi, 2014) and the 'Data-Driven' revolutions (Manovich, 2013; 2019). In this introduction – and through the Special Issue of the "Central European Journal of Communication" (CEJC) – we propose a broad definition of change, approaching it as an alteration of a condition, situation, state or phenomenon, that constitutes a difference over time (Kopřivová et al., 2021). Change is dealt with in configurations of the present and societies' future visions, entailing struggles of the presents and pasts with the ongoing re-constructions of cultural path dependencies. Moreover, we can look at change via the lenses of persistence, adaptation, or transformation. Change can be embedded in continuity or manifested as a rupture with existing or past conditions (Herrfahrdt-Pähle & Pahl-Wostl, 2012). Our apprehension of the features and dimensions of change drives specific political, economic and cultural responses at the highly interwoven individual, organizational and collective (societal) realms. Furthermore, change is perceived as a positive or negative outcome or prospect, as an opportunity or a threat, driving the social actors' struggles for maintenance or reconfiguration of power positions (Freedman, 2014), technology (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) and the values of communication (Lowe, 2016).

This Special Issue of CEJC, entitled "Mediating Change, Changing Media", looks at change processes taking a broad approach to media, mediation and communication. Our holistic view on change enables us to illustrate a wide range of communication and media (studies) approaches that address change, which open up future, more integrative research trajectories advancing our knowledge of institutions, policies and organizational/media systems (Deuze, 2021). The salient questions to be addressed are:

- How phenomena and dimensions of change are represented, negotiated, resisted, contested and redefined in media and communication? (**Mediating Change**)
- How do communication and media scholarships approach adaptation and change? (**Mediating Change**)
- How media and practices of communication are adjusted and modified (or fail to do so), in order to address or respond to new or emerging phenomena and conditions? (**Changing Media**)
- How to approach communication and media practices to address and respond to the complexity of societal and technological conditions? (**Changing Media**)

This Special Issue of CEJC widely demonstrates the blend of Mediating Change and Changing Media. It brings together studies concerning various types of media and communication practices (e.g., public service media, newspapers, social media, music, photography, poetry, and so on), and subjects of investigation (e.g., climate change, pandemics, homelessness, social protests and activism). All the while the Special Issue maintains an international perspective – with studies situated in Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Sweden, the Netherlands), Africa (Egypt) and Asia (Lebanon, China, Indonesia). Furthermore, these studies on change comprise a diversity of methodologies (e.g., semi-structured interviews, arts-based research, interventions, content analysis-quantitative and qualitative) and theoretical premises (embedded, e.g., in discourse studies, critical theory, journalism studies, participatory theory, alternative media studies). To this end, we believe that the scholarly contributions of this collection address the complex and multidimensional character of change. We also hope that the specific case studies shed light on the diversity of dimensions and concepts of change.

DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE

In a film essay, Kopřivová, Carpentier and Doudaki (Kopřivová et al., 2021) identified five main conceptual and theoretical dimensions of change. Their multidimensional prism can serve—also in this Special Issue—as a point of departure to understand the interdisciplinarity and plurality of today's communication and media scholarship that addresses change. These five dimensions are the following:

- Normativity,
- Scale and intensity,
- Focus and context,
- Control,
- Time.

First, as argued by the authors of the film essay, any attempt to study change – at, for instance, the micro or personal level or at the broader societal level – engages with **normative evaluations** about change. On the one hand, change is sometimes evaluated as constructive, as an (aspired or even necessary) evolution, as progress, or as a pursuit or struggle aiming to improve one's situation, position, or the overall well-being and public good (Murdock, 2021). On the other hand, change can also be evaluated negatively, as threatening or as destructive, and thus to be stopped or reversed. In a related manner, a wide range of scholarship highlights protectionism and resistance against change in the media and societal fabrics. For instance, Marxist and liberal ideologies have historically been evaluating societal processes of change differently regarding what is desired and what is a threat to societal order (see e.g., Devine, 1989; Friedman, 1988). More recently, the normative lens has been used to understand the clash of conservative and liberal values in the field of media, concerning, for example, the sustained attacks on the democratic visions of pluralistic and inclusive media, in Poland or Hungary (see, e.g., Bajomi-Lázár, 2017).

Second, change varies as it concerns **scale and intensity**. Large-scale change can be structural, sometimes changing the status-quo in an entire society, impacting on large parts of the population or even having a global impact, as with the case of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Small-scale change may impact on specific population segments or sectors, as in the ongoing adaptation of legacy media's organizational structures, as production and distribution blend (Głowacki & Jackson, 2019). Large-scale or structural change might be the outcome of a forceful disruption (e.g., through a violent conflict, a revolution or regime change) but it might also concern slow and hardly noticeable processes. The latter can, for example, reflect the broader democratic changes, which followed the introduction three decades ago of democratic governance systems in Central and Eastern Europe (Jakubowicz, 2004).

Third, the interest in change is usually focused on novelty, while stability, continuity or the importance of cultural path dependencies seem to generate less attention. Therefore, such a narrow **focus** on change might lead to the overestimation of the role and impact of alterations in societies, and to deterministic interpretations of how a single or small set of factors, or forces, can enact structural change. For example, in communication and media studies, technologically-centered approaches have led scholars to evaluate 'new' technologies of media and communication as drivers of structural change and as revolutionary, disregarding societal, cultural, political and economic (co-)determinants (Fuchs, 2013, pp. 201–203). Whatever is defined as 'new' or 'old' is part of the same problematization; whereas the 'new' tends to be seen as an agent of progress, the 'old' is translated as outdated, reactionary or anachronistic. Furthermore, while overestimating change and how easily it can be achieved, such approaches underestimate the force of established practices, cultures, networks and institutions, and how societies function through elaborate webs of connective tissue. Also, given that change is inextricably tied with stability and continuity (Herrfahrdt-Pähle & Pahl-Wostl, 2012; March, 1996), we tend to apprehend it through its relation to stability and continuity, in an interplay between pasts, presents and futures.

Fourth, the **control** dimension of change addresses whether change is planned, organized and intended, or whether it is accidental, not orchestrated and informal. Therefore, researching change requires examining whether it is controlled or not, and whether it is externally driven or organic. Similarly, identifying the subjects and objects of change, but also who benefits and who is harmed by the outcomes of change, is needed. The evaluation of processes of change as successful or as destructive is often dependent on who has (relative) control over these processes, and who manages change. For instance, the management structures of today's media have implications on the media's ability to be adaptive to varying conditions. The same applies to proactive or reactive media policies and self-regulation, which now need to deal with digital phenomena, such as fake news, misinformation, filter bubbles and increased polarization (Farkas & Schou, 2018; Pérez-Escolar & Noguera-Vivo, 2021; Spohr, 2017).

The fifth and final component in the examination of change is its **temporal dimension**. History is formed through long-lasting processes of alteration and short eruptions that produce distinct shifts and modifications in social formations. The field of communication and media studies engages with these longitudinal change processes and short-term outbreaks. Furthermore, by identifying start-points and endpoints, one constructs the duration of a phenomenon of change. History and historiography, archeology, but also scientific fields such as evolutionary biology or paleontology, function on the basis of decisions about defining the beginning and end of eras, historical periods, evolution periods, but also of events, such as wars, during which significant changes occurred (see, e.g., Gerschenkron, 1962). A related scholarly challenge is whether specific events in time are isolated or these events are viewed as part of a long process of evolution. What matters is to look at communication and media change as a nonlinear, multidimensional process, and further acknowledge the importance of social, cultural, political, and historical embeddedness (Peruško, et al., 2020; Siebert, et al., 1956).

These five dimensions point to a number of questions and approaches to capture the contingent nature of change. Change is developing in a dynamic fashion, shifting in shape and form. It does not follow linear patterns, nor does it maintain a steady pace and rhythm, but it evolves through (altered) continuations, disruptions, reboots and reappearances. Time and intensity, space, context, involved actors, issues of contestation and power dynamics impact in always specific ways on change, producing unique outcomes.

A major challenge in studying change across disciplines, and in communication and media studies in particular, concerns its pervasiveness; change is everywhere, being an integral part of the social, cultural and communicative contexts (both national and international). Hence, researchers themselves are both actors and recipients of change, not always being in a position to dissociate or distance themselves from the phenomena they study. For example, researchers who experience the 'Fourth Industrial' revolutionary processes and the related erosion of traditional media models (such as the sender → receiver model, or the classical distinction between production and distribution) are subjected to change themselves (Deuze, 2021). Similarly, change is elusive in nature, and thus difficult at times to grasp and study in a concrete fashion. On top of that, new theories and methodologies call for new ways of capturing the dynamics of the mediation of change, alongside the complexities of an ever-shifting communication and media environment. The practices of mediation themselves may function as aesthetic and ideological filters that add particular color or light, soften or highlight contrast, or even edit objects and actors in, or out, of the picture, complicating the researcher's task of deciphering the workings of change and their outcomes. At the same time, we think that addressing change in our field allows to further explore how societies are organized, how they were organized in the past, and how they may change.

PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA CHANGE

The focus of this thematic CEJC issue is on mediating change, changing media and the entanglement of the two. While the Special Issue's contributions are embedded in communication and media studies, they do not adopt a media-centric position (see, e.g., Moores, 2018). This is translated in a twofold fashion. First, the contingent, ever-shifting, dynamic and pervasive nature of change is acknowledged, coupled with the recognition that forces and processes of societal, cultural, political, and economic change exist and occur outside and beyond the sphere of media. Media is only one of the spheres in which change is addressed, reflected and given visibility, represented and co-constructed. Hence, the mediation of change is not privileged over other processes and practices in defining the social reality of change.

Still, recognizing that the media is one of the spheres in which the struggles over the framing and the definition of the time and scope of change take place, is important. Media and communication spaces function as a significatory battlefield, in which involved actors propose their preferred understandings and interpretations of change, reflecting different ideological positions and interests. Hence, identifying and giving visibility to phenomena of change may impact policy or action taken, and the resources and forces that will be mobilized to address them (see, e.g., Allan et al., 2000; Cottle, 2006).

Secondly, our non-media-centric position acknowledges the interplay between change phenomena, media and society, and the future-oriented communication scenarios. The contributions of this Special Issue demonstrate that media are not outside the societal realm, and that they do not escape the forces and workings of change that are sometimes manifested in unprecedented ways, causing significant disruptions in how media and practices of communication are organized and performed. While we suggest two lenses to look at today's change processes, we argue that mediating change and changing media are highly interwoven. This means, among many other things, the need for an exploration of the media change phenomenon, alongside the practical implementation of new practices of communication.

MEDIATING CHANGE

Two key areas of investigation that are addressed in this thematic issue, in relation to how phenomena and aspects of change are represented in media and practices of communication, are news media and social media. Legacy news organizations tend to use established norms and practices of dealing with, and reporting change. When journalists are asked to report on evolving, unprecedented phenomena, such as, for instance, an erupting war, they are confronted with a high degree of uncertainty. One way of dealing with uncertainty is the deployment of established and top-down newsgathering and news-reporting routines and practices (Gans, 2004; Tuchman, 1978) but, alternatively, it is also possible to turn media organizations into more agile, hybrid and community-oriented structures (Głowacki & Jackson, 2019). A related role of journalism and news media is their attempt to create a sense of order or stability in either rapidly evolving and unprecedented phenomena (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic) or long-term phenomena (e.g., climate change). Such practices serve journalistic performance and the delivery of news about the world in a steady, uninterrupted fashion. Still, the legacy of organizational cultural routines might be proven to be outdated, inadequate or not appropriate when reporting on, and trying to make sense of, novel phenomena of rapid transformations, that call for social entrepreneurship (see, e.g., Karayianni, 2018; Marques & Dhiman, 2020).

Furthermore, as highlighted by numerous scholars, mainstream news media tend to use a narrow pool of news sources, who represent the established political, economic and other elites, and who are given the opportunity, through their privileged presence in the news to offer the interpretative frameworks that support their positions and interests (Doudaki & Boubouka, 2020; Hall et al., 1978). Such elites tend to resist structural change and attempt to dominate the public discussion about how the phenomena of change shall be interpreted and evaluated. In the case of news organizations that operate in environments that have close ties with the political establishment, maintaining a critical distance from the political elites' and the governments' policies, views and rhetorics, is not easy. This is highlighted in the analyses regarding both the single-party-rule government of China (see the article by Zhang), and countries with democratically elected governments such as the Czech Republic (see the article by Motal) and Poland (see the article by Gajlewicz-Korab and Szurmiński).

For example, **Jan Motal**'s critical analysis of Czech public television news during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the narrow range of perspectives regarding the social dimensions of the pandemic. Employing post-political rhetorics, the public broadcaster is shown to privilege a technocratic discourse that helped to naturalize the measures that the Czech government adopted for the management of the crisis, dissociating these measures from their political and social foundations. This type of news coverage created a false sense of consensus, concealing the fact that the pandemic, as all major crises, are the object of political struggle. One of the conclusions of the analysis is that Czech public service media did not create the conditions for a public discussion and democratic dialogue that can accommodate the diversity of voices and perspectives over such a complex and pervasive phenomenon as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, **Mengrong Zhang**'s critical discourse analysis explores how the Chinese newspapers reported on, and discursively constructed, the climate change phenomenon in 2000–2020. The analysis highlights that in China's system of tight media control by the state, news reporting on climate change has consistently been functioning as a vehicle for promoting the ruling Communist Party's environmental policies, constructing its image as a global leader in environmental policy and management, and consolidating its political hegemony. Zhang further argues that the mediation of change through the reporting on climate change, is instrumentalized to maintain stability and the status-quo.

Hence, Motal's study concerns the media's response to rapid and unexpected negative change—that of the COVID-19 pandemic which is large-scale and of high intensity, affecting all parts of the population and spanning a then undetermined time period. As illustrated in his analysis, the Czech public broadcaster constructed a narrow space, in which this major crisis would be discussed and debated upon; this, combined with the naturalization of the measures adopted by the government, attempts to construct and attribute a sense of control over the handling of the pandemic crisis, to the government, legitimating its authority. Zhang's study deals with a long-term and pervasive phenomenon of negative change, namely that of climate change. Its discursive handling by the Communist party-affiliated newspapers in China shows that these media tend to mediate change by either resisting or denying it. At first, climate change is largely absent from the newspapers' coverage, or heavily downplayed, hardly presented as a negative phenomenon with destructive repercussions. Later on, it is presented as a phenomenon successfully controlled by the Chinese government.

At the same time, we observe alternative communication spaces and means of change. For example, **Vaia Doudaki** and **Nico Carpentier** studied how environment-focused Facebook groups in Sweden address environmental sustainability. The study highlights the strong support by the majority of the groups for counter-hegemonic, ecocentric positions towards sustainability, apprehending humans as part of, and in co-existence with nature. At the same time, these groups resist the hegemonic anthropocentrism, which positions humans at the center of all sustainability discussions, privileging human needs and economic interests, over nature's wellbeing. The anthropocentric and ecocentric positions towards sustainability reflect opposing understandings of change. Anthropocentric sustainability on the one hand promotes technological change and interventions in the environment, as the means to human progress and prosperity (in economic terms), and opposes any rebalancing of the prevailing capitalist model of socio-economic organization. Ecocentric sustainability, on the other hand, apprehends human intervention in nature as damaging and resists it, supporting the structural reconfiguration of the dominant socio-economic model of organization. Still, the study addresses a plea not to overemphasize the potential of social media to mediate and facilitate social change, as the latter requires broad societal alliances and the mobilization of a multitude of affordances, resources and actors, that extend the media sphere.

CHANGING MEDIA AND PRACTICES OF COMMUNICATION

The second cluster of articles included in this collection focuses on how organizational settings and practices of communication deal with change themselves; how media settings may be altered, subjected to forces of change, that drive them to reconfigure their practices, rituals and modes of organization, or how they resist change or fail to change. Taking a broad approach to media, mediation and communication, the contributions of this cluster look at media practices that suggest alternative models of communication and novel means and modes of expression, which may also have the potential to facilitate processes of societal change. Still, a dichotomization of mainstream versus alternative media, with the former always resisting change or failing to change and the latter being constantly open to change, is to be avoided. This Special Issue's contributions demonstrate that all types of media are constantly subject to forces of change, resisting some of them and being receptive and adaptive to others, being the instigators of some of these forces and the recipients of others.

The article by **Katarzyna Gajlewicz-Korab** and **Łukasz Szurmiński** addresses the difficulties of established public service media that operate within a media culture of close ties with the political system, to engage in self-change. Analyzing TVP's news program "*Wiadomości*" in two time periods (with two years' difference), the authors aimed to explore whether the Polish public service media serves its societal mission or the government. The findings show that the Polish public service media are consistent in their employment of propaganda techniques and rhetorics, supporting the government, while also being subjects of cultural path dependencies (Jakubowicz, 2008). The analysis by Gajlewicz-Korab and Szurmiński points to an increasing news media politicization and the dominance of an old media logic, which renders unsuccessful TVP's remit of objectivity, impartiality and balance (Donders, 2021). Public service media in Poland are shown to be struggling with fostering processes of democratization. Rather, they seem to contribute to the deepening of polarization in political life and social divisions reflected in, and created by, the blend of politics and media.

Moving further, **Nico Carpentier**'s article offers examples of alternative and transformative practices of communication. Employing a discursive-material analysis, the author reflects on the findings from the "*Silencing / Unsilencing Nature*" project. This is a research project with arts-based research and educational components, that explores the human-nature relationship in both its discursive and material dimensions, sheds light on how nature tends to be silenced by humans, and experiments with creative ways that open up paths and spaces where nature can be unsilenced. The study presented in this collection looks at one particular species, wolves, and explores the wolf's position in the zoo assemblage. The research first critically addresses how wolves are silenced in the zoo assemblage. It then deploys interventionist arts-based research methods and tools to suggest ways the wolves' voices may be rendered audible, regaining some of their agency (even through human intervention). The "*Silencing / Unsilencing Nature*" project exemplifies how to use artistic means of expression to communicate research output and theoretically embedded reflections, and perform academic research moving beyond the sometimes narrow scope of scholarly written text-based communication. More broadly, it illustrates how to develop and implement creative and transformative means and ways of communication, moving beyond the legacy media, to instigate societal and media change.

In a similar vein, the article by **Loes Witteveen, Pleun van Arensbergen** and **Jan Fliervoet** reflects on mediated participation for environmental governance. The authors argue for the need to enhance experimental and innovative approaches concerning participation in environmental governance. Such approaches, the authors argue, need to move beyond the development and implementation of externally designed interventions that do not include the involved communities throughout the entire process and all stages of design and implementation, and rather treat them as simply beneficiaries of implemented interventions. To counter this, this study reflects on projects and spaces where participatory and deliberative governance processes have been deployed more structurally, in order to support environmental governance transformation. Drawing on experiences from two specific mediated participation methodologies – community art and visual problem appraisal – the authors address the potential relevance and challenges resulting from such practices towards more inclusive and participatory forms of environmental governance.

MEDIATING CHANGE – CHANGING MEDIA

This Special Issue contributions include scholarly approaches that address the interwovenness of the changing media and mediating change perspectives. Still, the final two studies lie more explicitly at the intersection of these perspectives, demonstrating their entanglement. These studies reflect on alternative practices of communication that challenge organizational structures and cultures of the legacy media and further offer genuine opportunities for public participation and the ability to foster media change (creation + production + distribution). These cases not only address change in their content, but also practice change in the ways that they are organized and operate.

For example, **Vojtěch Dvořák** studies the preparatory stages of a participatory media project involving homeless people. This research explores homeless people's attitudes towards self-representation and enhanced participation in the prospective publication of their community-driven media. The analysis highlights that homeless people are positive towards self-representation, through the creation of their news stories about themselves and about other homeless people. At the same time, they are reluctant towards the prospect of them managing 'their' newspaper. Looking at change, two equally important issues are raised here. Firstly, the community-driven media of a certain societal group can serve as a participatory media outlet, offering opportunities for a polyphony of voices and for genuine participation and empowerment of marginalized groups. Still, instigating and implementing long-lasting positive societal change, by engaging vulnerable and marginalized societal groups in participatory processes of empowerment, involves the creation of mutual respect and spaces of trust, and a culture of inclusive and democratic participation.

Finally, **Sahar Bou Hamdan**'s and **Bouthaina El-Kheshn**'s article focuses on protest media and revolutionary music in Egypt and Lebanon. Their study lies at the intersection of mediating change and changing media, as, on the one hand, revolutionary music mediates the societal claims for change, and, on the other, it is a mobilizing tool itself, facilitating protestors and civil society to contest and oppose the hegemonic forces of suppression (political elites), or the institutions of engineering consent to the suppression (media close to the political system), demanding change. This article concludes that revolutionary bottom-up movements can serve as an alternative route for legacy media and journalistic practices. It is at the same time an example of a means of communication and expression, that is changing itself, using different and novel musical forms and content, in its efforts to mediate and mobilize systemic change. The case studies in this article illustrate the complex relationship between societal changes and the media's ability for change, and the potential, but also the limitations, of societal change spillovers.

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This volume marks the 30th issue anniversary of the "Central European Journal of Communication". Over the last 15 years, the Journal's team has worked hard to provide a forum for communication and media change, and we agree with them that we can already see significant research shifts resulting from these dynamics of change. We are happy that the 30th volume was given the opportunity to provide spaces for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, allowing the opening up of new ways and areas of investigating change. Moreover, this volume is the result of international collaboration and dialogues with(in) a global scholarly community – one of the most important values of CEJC. Finally, we are grateful for the financial support we received from Mistra, the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (through its Mistra Environmental Communication research program) and from the 4EU+ European University Alliance. The latter supported the "Mediating Change" project – a research collaboration of Charles University, Czech Republic, the University of Copenhagen, Denmark and the University of Warsaw, Poland, which generated the initial discussion platform, where the ideas behind this Special Issue could come into fruition.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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"Not a Political Virus": Manufacturing Consent by Czech Public Service Media in the Pandemic

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Abstract: The article presents an analysis of the news broadcast on Czech public television during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Based on the concept of post-politics, the analysis illustrates how Czech Television created consensus, naturalized the measures adopted by the government, and transformed a potentially political space into one that privileged instrumental and technical solutions. The author argues that the later emergence of protest movements in Czechia may also be related to the first wave of the pandemic being presented in a consensual, post-political form in public service media. This activity prevented society from recognizing the socially unequal impact of the pandemic and the measures aimed at reducing its impact. Dealing with the question of how to represent a world that went through a rapid change, because of a pandemic, the article ends with a plea for agonistic media pluralism.

Keywords: Post-politics; pandemic; television; news; critical discourse analysis; deliberative democracy.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic hit the Czech Republic. The onset of Czechia's epidemic was mainly linked to the return from winter holidays in Italy, with the first three diagnosed cases returning from northern Italy. The media closely covered these and subsequent cases as they gradually mounted. The government's response in March 2020 was rapid, significantly restrictive and affected the whole of society. Most citizens in the Czech Republic agreed about the means to fight the pandemic, in supporting the government and its delegation of the solution to scientific experts (epidemiologists).[1] This article is based on this consensus and aims to show by what means it was manufactured and how the image of the pandemic was constructed as a technical and administrative problem, and not a political one.

Our study draws on the theoretical framework provided by the concept of post-politics, which it understands as an example of risk depoliticization. Media presented the pandemic as an issue that transcends social and political antagonisms, or as a non-political, technical problem for which society must reach a post-political agreement, similar to the apocalyptic imaginary of the environmental crisis (see, e.g., Swyngedouw, 2010). The media and academic discourses of COVID-consensus contributed to the concealment and neglect of the deep and complex systemic interrelationships created and developed by the crisis, including the deepening of inequalities (Benach, 2021). One of the key public figures of the time, the epidemiologist Roman Prymula declared as Minister of Health[2]: "Covid is not a political virus" (iDnes.tv, 2020). However, by then, the depoliticization discourse could no longer be sustained, as protest movements against the government measures had emerged in society (ČTK, 2020).

This article argues that these post-political dynamics are one of the mechanisms by which Western societies respond to the conditions of a changing world. The change that we[3] are discussing here lies, above all, in the global dimension of the crises humanity faces and their connection to the conditions of the post-Fordist economy. Arguably, the initially depoliticizing discourse is offset over time by disruptive forces, which (re-)introduce forms of politicization that primarily originate from voices opposed to modern liberalism. This study starts from the premise that there is a need to understand how depoliticizing representations of consensus are constructed (in the first phase of the pandemic) and how the media contribute to this levelling of risk as an administrative and technical problem. For this reason we analyze public service media news at the onset of the pandemic, where the consensus-building mechanisms were most apparent.

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[1] As National Pandemic Alarm shows, in March-April 2020 trust in the state apparatus was 62–70% (European National Panels, 2021). CVVM research shows that the societal consensus was strong – 86% of people responded that they considered the government's anti-epidemic measures to be effective, 52% considered the economic measures to be adequate, 70% considered the work of the Central Crisis Staff to be good, 64% considered the work of the government to be good, and 86% declared their satisfaction with the performance of experts (scientists) (CVVM 2020).

[2] Prymula was Czechia's Minister of Health 21.09–29.10.2020.

[3] A Slavic language tradition forbids the author of an academic text to use the first-person singular (I) but allows the use of the first-person plural (we) as a replacement. Our text abides by this tradition.

THE DEPOLITICIZED RISK SOCIETY

The sociology of the risk society claims that the conditions of every late modern crisis must be socially recognized and this process of recognition is scarcely linear. Instead, researchers should understand it as a field of struggle between diverse actors. This contrasts with how authors working within the field of deliberative democracy, such as Habermas (1996), paint an impressive picture of social change based on public reflection and consensus. The latter position implies that crisis solutions should rely on social homogeneity, beyond all the class or ethnic conflicts, as the old social struggles and collective identities are to be postponed when the risks affect everyone. But this perspective, Mouffe (2000) argues, has serious disadvantages because it ignores structural conflict and thus legitimates post-political strategies. The procedural model of the public sphere as put forward by Habermas (Mouffe, 2000, p. 84), which is in line with the neoliberal individualization of responsibility, makes the decision-making process merely a technocratic issue of setting the rules. The rise of right-wing populism and the collapse of trust in public institutions (Mouffe, 2005, pp. 64–65) are just some of the symptoms of the dysfunctionality of this vision: collective identities are not collapsing, and societies are not transforming into groups of rational and impartial individuals making decisions together, about commonly experienced risks. In contrast, consensus is generated in society using political strategies that either negate or side-track diversity, arguing that specific areas or topics are beyond politics. These post-political strategies (see post-democracy in Rancière 1999) imply a profound negation of the political in contemporary Western society. For Rancière (1999, p. 97), the power of parliamentary politics erodes, as the political power of unaccountable authorities (experts, judges, commissions, etc.) rises. Moreover, issues can be constructed as 'objective' and as transgressing all social discontinuities, which opens up spaces for technocratic solutions, that are still deeply political, but defined as outside or beyond politics.

SOCIAL HOMOGENIZATION

While there is no denying the severity of the pandemic crisis, it must also be recognized that the catastrophe is constructed in a universal way, which is "socially homogenizing" (Swyngedouw, 2010, p. 221). Contrary to the idea of homogeneity, the available research provides evidence of how the "consensual body" disintegrates into different groups with distinct attitudes and feelings (Bish & Michie, 2010; Bolarinwa et al., 2020; Carlucci et al., 2020; DiGiovanni et al., 2004; Rattay et al., 2021; Shinan-Altman & Levkovich, 2020). High fear accompanied by a lack of trust in government can lead to reduced lockdown measures, compliance in the environment of social and economic inequity (Atkinson-Clement & Pigalle, 2021), low self-confidence and uncertainty in social institutions (Storopoli et al., 2020). However, other research, among tech-savvy people, suggests that trust in government and age are not the predictors, but belief in the efficacy of the measures and concern for personal health are (Clark et al., 2020).

The media and academic discourses of the COVID-consensus contribute to a neglect of the deep and complex systemic interrelationships created and developed by this late-modern crisis, including the deepening of inequalities (Benach, 2021). In media, the vulnerability to COVID-19 of elderly and those suffering from life threatening illnesses was widely discussed, but Davies et al. (2021) inform us that these vulnerabilities also have social and environmental aspects in that socially and environmentally deprived communities tend to have more significant increases in mortality. For instance, preventive measures, such as social distancing or a "stay-at-home" rule, do not affect everyone equally, because as Chang et al. (2021) found these measures are often difficult to maintain in lower income neighborhoods. Ignoring this diversity, supports social homogenization, which, in turn, supports post-politics. Arguably, this transformation of conflicting zones in society, into mere moral or argumentative issues, comes with a great cost, as it suppresses particular voices in society.

JOURNALISM IN THE POST-POLITICAL WORLD

There are many locations where these post-political strategies are deployed, but our focus here is on journalism, as it contributes significantly to the construction of symbolic frontiers in the public sphere. For this reason journalism merits particular attention, from scholars and the public at large. However, the research on how post-politics is reproduced in media discourse is sporadic. Our argument is like Herman and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), albeit we differ in both the adapted model and epistemological position. There is some research pointing e.g., to the recontextualization of class conflict into a corporate perspective (Abalo & Jacobsson, 2021), or the articulation of consensus in dealing with climate change, reducing the field of disagreement to being merely the pros and cons of the agreement (Kumpu, 2016). Gackowski (2013) discusses how the image (including visions, hopes and desires) gains importance in political communication, overshadowing electoral programs, statements, and facts. Post-politics' anthropocentricity and orientation towards a personal axiological code enables theorists to deploy the concept also as a network game in the present multimodal communication field, when social actors transform their communicational influence into political power (Kostyrev, 2021).

Of note here is the work of Pieter Maeseele and Daniëlle Raeijmaekers (2020), who deal systematically with the problem of post-political journalism. In order to apply their analytical framework in a study of depoliticization of media, researchers must evaluate the *ideological cultures* and the *scope* and *form* of media texts. Maeseele and Raeijmaekers (2020) suggest analyzing the former as instances of "fault lines" representing "a struggle between competing analyses about what constitutes progress regarding particular politico-ideological categories" (p. 1598), and the latter concerning "whether different sides of (a debate on) a social issue are addressed" and "the way these different sides are portrayed" (p. 1599).

Key to this approach is the idea that journalism is not outside ideology, but rather that journalism is a professional ideology. Professionalization is a distinctly ideological development, resulting in journalists (working in elective democracies) holding similar values: public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, ethics (Deuze, 2005, pp. 445–447). But journalists are also prone to aligning with the political hegemonies of their time, and sometimes support post-ideological consensual understandings of society. Raeijmaekers and Maeseele (2015) argue that researchers (and journalists) need to be sensitive to these reductionist journalistic practices. Rather than staying in the scope of "pluralism within the box" and producing evaluations "*within* the limits of social consensus", alternative analytical approaches are necessary to reach "pluralism outside the box", i. e. the evaluation of journalism "*about* and *beyond* the limits of social consensus" (p. 649).

METHODOLOGY

To analyze how journalists produce a post-political consensus in the news, we chose the Czech public broadcaster Česká televize (Czech Television, ČT) for two reasons. First, ČT was the most trusted television station in Czechia during the pandemic (Macek, 2020), and secondly, ČT relies heavily on traditional objectivity, as enshrined in the broadcaster's code of ethics (Česká televize, 2003). Despite the external political pressures and blurring borders between commercial and public service broadcasting (especially in lifestyle magazines and talk shows), ČT presents a benchmark of impartial and objective television journalism with its strict code of ethics and internal rules. These characteristics make ČT distinct from some of the public service media in other Central European states, e. g. Poland or Hungary (Herrera, 2019). Nevertheless, ČT's general manager—Petr Dvořák—did mention in a press interview at the beginning of the crisis that he was asked by the Czech prime minister (together with other media representatives) to back the government's decisions and to avoid anything that could hamper its crisis management (Klímová & Frouzová, 2020).

We selected six broadcasts from ČT's main news program Události (Latest Happenings) from March 2020, when the pandemic crisis started in Czechia, and the government ordered a national lockdown. We chose broadcasts on days of significant pandemic-related domestic events.[4] Every program was 54 minutes in length and on average consisted of 33.2 units.[5] The material, both visual and aural[6], was coded. In the first iteration, relevant fragments were marked and their timecodes registered. These selected codes were transcribed by the author and their language analyzed. The saturation of the data (Saunders et al., 2018) was achieved quickly, as the discursive formations in the programs were often repeated and their form was stable.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

This study employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the six case studies. The foci were the consensus-generating mechanisms, as well as the gaps in them, revealing inequalities in the decision-making process between politicians, entrepreneurs, experts and citizens. Fairclough (2019, p. 17) explains, representations and identities must be understood in the context of action, which is "a way of reasoning from critique of discourse to what should be done to change existing reality, by way of explanation of relations between discourse and other components of reality" (Fairclough, 2019, p. 14). By applying Maeseele and Raeijmaekers (2020, p. 1600) argument to our study, we want to show how the pandemic was depoliticized, closing off the democratic debate by mechanisms of exclusion, presenting privileged (or established) actors as the only rational, moral or natural ones. In terms of the text's scope, the privileging of social actors will be analyzed; in terms of the text's form, the discursive strategies constructing "no valid (political) contestation" will be analyzed (p. 1601).

Fairclough understands discursive practices in terms of networks called *orders of discourse*, which are "constituted by all the discursive types which are used there" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). In the sample, we can distinguish three orders of discourse relevant for this analysis: television news, medicine and politics. There are two main constituent categories of these orders of discourse: genres (using a language associated with a particular social practice) and discourses (representing a social practice from a specific perspective). Orders of discourse strive to establish cultural hegemony, because as Fairclough (1995, p. 56) argues, "dominant groups struggl[e] to assert and maintain particular structuring within and between them." Critical discourse analysis combines a focus on the orders of discourse with the analysis of communicative events.

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[4] The date of the broadcasts in March 2020 and (the significant events) were: 10.03 (first case of infection of unknown origin); 11.03 (closing schools); 12.03 (declaration of a state of emergency); 16.03 (closing borders), 20.03 (other measures); and 22.03 (first deliveries of material from abroad). All six broadcasts were aired at 19.00–20.00 on ČT1. Sports news and weather forecasts were not included in the study.

[5] A unit is a clearly delimited sequence of the program, which its creators have separated from other sequences (by editing). Units are presented in the internet archive as separate videos, but they do not always form a complete news item, as they may only contain auxiliary or supplemental items such as a headline, a follow-up report, a human-interest story, etc.

[6] Aiming to avoid a microscopic perspective, which is common in qualitative research (Figueroa, 2008), we initially analysed the audio-visual data as a unity to identify the main discursive formations. Next, language analysis was performed, identifying representations and identities, inspired by Fairclough's "third" model (Fairclough, 2019, p. 17). The discourse analysis aimed to reveal practical reasons for political action, simultaneously interpreting its structure in connection with events in Czech society at the time.

THE NEWS COVERAGE OF COVID-19 AND ITS POST-POLITICAL LOGICS

PEOPLE AS PATIENTS OR OBJECTS OF LAW

Czech media covered the pandemic as the first COVID-19 patients appeared. Thus, the defining identity from the beginning was of *an infected person*. This identity of ordinary people was constructed in the relationship towards (a) the virus and (b) the preventative measures. Oscillating between legal-administrative and scientific-health discourses, both constructions were combined and employed the genre of investigation:

> REPORTER (10.3.2020): According to the published information, he [the patient] is a male, born in 1976, of Czech nationality. He drove around Prague as a driver for Uber, one of the alternative taxi services. In the days before he was hospitalized, he gave rides to 90 passengers, according to the authorities, and arrived at the Hospital Na Františku in a more serious condition than previous patients.[7]

In this case, the journalist's words were complemented by those of the Minister of Health, clarifying the patient's condition with medical data (inflammatory disease, oxygen deployment, etc.). In this fashion, the government confirmed its role as the central authority, uniting administration and science.

This genre combines the two discourses through objective framing, showing to the audience information, evidence, and clues leading to the apprehension of the abovementioned individual as a perpetrator, being identified as the source of infection. For instance, the infographic accompanying the broadcast showed a silhouette of a man, with the caption "infected taxi driver", and data about his nationality, “possible place of infection”, “place of capture”, and information that he had come into contact with 90 customers and 6 family members.

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[7] All news excerpts included in this article have been translated into English by the author.

The careful placement of the whereabouts and movements of patients and their nationality is typical for the reporting during the beginning of an epidemic – journalists used narrative techniques familiar in criminal genres, which allowed them to link the legal-administrative and scientific-health discourses, positioning the patients at the discursive node. This created a tension between (a) the identity of people *as patients* or *objects of law* and (b) the government as a regulatory force. For instance, in the following fragment, the reporter holds drivers responsible for the tightening of the rules:

> NEWS ANCHOR (20.03.2020): The government is tightening the rules for so-called [cross-border] commuters. As of midnight tonight, no one will be allowed out of the country without a cross-border worker’s book. Border police will stamp it when they leave and when they come back. We have Andrea Čandová [Reporter] on the scene. Andrea, what is this measure supposed to help with?
> REPORTER: The regime that has been in place so far has been abused by some drivers, according to the Interior Ministry, so they have been trying to prove with fake or old certificates that they are working abroad, in order to shop or visit relatives abroad.

The news translated basic human needs, including meeting with relatives, into a legal discourse unconcerned with personal feelings and the context of everyday life. There might have been an allowance for the democratic-institutional fault line between people’s everyday lives and government action. However, this space (and the opportunity for potential conflicts and negotiations) was closed through the legal claim of objectified measures, the violation of which has a moral character (“the regime has been abused”), and not a political one. Any private action thus becomes depoliticized, interpreted in *moral* or *legal* terms and patients become objects of investigation rather than human beings with their own narratives and knowledge.

GOVERNMENT AND PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

The government’s measures (which included closing schools, restricting movement, wearing masks, lockdowns, etc.) became personified, as all social reality was presented being moved by “objectively” understood regulations, without revealing a further causal link to politics and the particularity of decision-making. The government (synonymous with “Czechia”, “the state”, “ministers” or “the Security Council of Government”) was identified as a mere executor of the demands, imposed on the nation by “the virus”, an external and inscrutable actor coming from abroad. The political character of the governmental decisions (with the possibility to disagree) was omitted in favor of a focus on the instrumentality of power: “the state” was “deciding”, “declaring”, or “tightening up”.

The active voice, used to speak about authorities (including the police, army, firefighters, and health workers), was in sharp contrast with the passive voice used to refer to the social effects of the measures and emerging issues: “schooling *is* interrupted”, “there *are no* reserves”, “*there is* an urgent shortage” (emphasis added by the author):

> NEWS ANCHOR (16.03.2020): Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Czech Interior Minister Jan Hamáček is a guest on Události. You have advised people to wear medical masks. But how should they proceed? What should they do when there is a shortage of masks in the Czech Republic?
> INTERIOR MINISTER: Good evening. I have tried to appeal to our citizens to keep their noses and mouths covered when they leave their homes. Of course, the best thing would be a mask, but in the current situation, there is a shortage of medical masks, and I want to assure everyone that we are doing our utmost to import millions of masks into the Czech Republic as quickly as possible, but the only country that is able to export this material today is China, and we are working on setting up a supply of masks from China.

The news coverage ignores the structural and systemic conditions of the shortage (e.g., the abandonment of local production in favor of a globalized market), while portraying China as the only possible supplier of medical devices. This line of supply is presented in the ensuing days as international aid, and proof of China’s goodwill and the government’s excellent negotiating skills. The symbol of this translation of a structural problem into an administrative-logistical one was the government’s press conference at the airport, beside the plane that brought the material to the Czech Republic on March 20. News reports then spoke of an “air bridge” between China and the Czech Republic; this term can be understood as “bridging” the global structural issues of the pandemic, reducing it to the problem of cooperation, negotiation, and agreement between governments, again neglecting the political dimensions of this kind of global solidarity.

A COLLECTIVE “WE”

In television broadcasting, the language that journalists use regularly mingles with the information they mediate. In our study, the coverage was enriched by the rhetorical figures and propositions employed by the Czech government. This had a profound effect on identifying the actors in the news, because the borders between the government, administration, journalists, and facts became blurred, as were the boundaries between the utterances of the news anchors and politicians. That is how a collective "we" was constructed, omitting citizens as actors able to act independently:

> NEWS ANCHOR (20.03.2020): More than ten thousand people have already died worldwide due to the coronavirus; in the Czech Republic, health officials are currently registering 833 cases of infection and no deaths. A total of four people have been cured. The state is also considering a complete lockdown because of the disease. According to Roman Prymula, head of the Central Emergency Committee, this would be an extreme decision if people ignore the existing prohibitions.

This example shows the ways television news broadcasts intertwined not only health information with the government's intentions but also an objective tone with apolitical decision-making. The handling of the crisis became a mere technical problem. The journalist's report was accompanied by quotes from the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Emergency Committee, followed by a "warning before the weekend" report (urging people not to travel). The use of this legal-administrative discourse again obscured the distinctions between journalists, government, state, and certain politicians.

The television news discourse did construct binary opposites other than "we, Czechs" versus "them, the measures and the virus". One such binary opposite became apparent when the identity of "other countries" (mainly in Europe) was sharply distinguished from the collective "we". Often the genres of statistics or reportage presented other countries as "failing" and "mishandling" the pandemic. This strategy enabled the public to understand "we" as successful and decisive, even when serious issues emerged (i.e., the lack of health material, the unpreparedness of the health care system, etc.). This construction reflected also global power relations and divisions. The discourse was however overtly nationalist, even anti-European, as "they" (including European countries) were portrayed as detached entities, i.e., the places from which the virus came.

REPRESENTATION OF CITIZENSHIP

Citizen agency in *decision-making*, as we have seen, was very limited in these representations. In the context of binary opposites there was a middle-ground between "we" and "they" which ordinary people filled. The language of the television broadcasts used modal verbs, such as "have to", "must not", "can" or "cannot" for representing citizens' actions. Television news did not construct citizens as active in making decisions about their common future, at the policy level, but more as consumers, or subjects of law or rules the government imposed, which government's expert (mainly health oriented) discourse emphasized in speaking about the everyday issues.

The news coverage presented people as active in the contexts of demonstrating against the measures, volunteering to mitigate the impact of the crisis, especially by helping the elderly and vulnerable, filling material shortages, etc. Therefore, solidarity was linked to the logistical nature of the crisis and did not take on any structural significance. As a volunteer, the individual was seen to complement the state, to help in contexts the state could not operate. But this inability of the state was not presented as a structural problem, but was seen as a necessary consequence of the immensity of the crisis. As the systemic dimensions of the pandemic became naturalized, citizenship was often confused with loyalty and assistance to the state, and solidarity was stripped of its subversiveness. People were thus deprived of the possibility of actively shaping the world in times of crisis.

The news coverage employed a similar strategy in translating the legal-administrative and scientific-health discourses into an economic issue. In the afore-mentioned example (20.03.2020) concerning the taxi driver, the broadcast ended with a report about his employer's measures to restrict the spread of the virus, which included the purchase of disinfectant. The same mechanism is visible on 22.03.2020, when the news discussed the economic effects of the government measures and a serious political fracture almost occurred. The trade union's demand for the suspension of economic production was, however presented as mere information, not as a conflict between employees or employers, nor did the news coverage place the demands in the context of the structural problems of late-capitalism:

> NEWS ANCHOR (22.03.2020): Jaroslav Souček, chairman of Kovo, the most powerful Czech trade union, called on company owners and managers to suspend production for at least two weeks. He said only companies whose production deals with life-threatening situations should be exempted. Souček said the government should provide their workers with protective equipment such as masks or disinfectants.

A typical aspect of this representation strategy was to relegate customers, patients, or employees to a passive role, or omit them altogether. Conflict between any social groups or classes did not emerge. Whenever society or an institution made a demand, the news coverage focused on economic, administrative and technological solutions and did not present it in the context of a democratic-institutional fracture. The solution to managing the virus was thus negotiated along economic and techno-scientific fault lines, with logistics being its crucial node. The news coverage did not reference employees' or customers' personalities, lives or emotions but constructed them as signifiers of, and representatives of actions, by employers (government, institutions, businesses or the law):

> NEWS ANCHOR (11.03.2020): Some institutions and companies have arranged contactless delivery of letters and food for people in quarantine. The Czech Post is extending the time of deposit at the counter and now also puts parcels intended for the recipient's hands in the mailbox. Today, it also began distributing almost five million health information leaflets.
> REPORTER: Marcela Bačinská [Czech Post employee] is making sure that these leaflets reach every mailbox in Prague's Průhonice [municipality]. She came out with a bag full of them this morning.
> BAČINSKÁ: It will probably take all morning to distribute them throughout Průhonice.
> REPORTER: She also delivers regular mail for people in quarantine in the so-called contactless mode. Even parcels addressed directly to the addressee are left in the mailbox or at the post office.

In this example, the identity of the employer or institution was transferred onto the employee, through an action that was presented as a solution to the crisis, or as a response to the naturalized situation of the spread of the virus. The mail was the node that connected the infected (people in quarantine), the employees, the institutions, and the government (who ordered the quarantine), but it signified an economic and administrative entity in the news. Because the dominant administrative discourse dominantly employed the language of law and logistics, even the volunteers were absorbed into this discourse, as role models of civic activity. The need for masks, which could be depicted as the government's failure, was transformed into heroic acts of national self-help and the evidence of national integrity.

DISCUSSION

In the analyzed news broadcasts, the transformation of an administrative discourse into economic discourse was apparent, omitting the democratic-institutional fault line. In a global context, this is situated within the background of an overall convergence of news narratives, which in March 2020 were focusing on economic, social and mortality concerns and mitigation measures (Ng et al., 2021). In presenting the crisis in primarily logistical terms (e.g., "where we get masks"), the objectification of the crisis resulted in the technologization of the solutions. The administrative discourse, in absorbing all the questions in relation to solutions, depoliticized the crisis and proposed entrepreneurship as the key solution.

Moreover in the news broadcasts, objectivity—the traditional principle of journalism—became detached from the morals and emotions of the people, restricting the public discussion to mere instrumental rationality.[8] In this manner, the news order of discourse enabled the democratic deficit and closed off the debate. We can suggest that this alignment of media with the state arises from the traditionally *paternalistic* role of the public service media in Europe (Fickers, 2012), which is different from the situation in America where COVID-19 news was highly politicized and polarized (Hart et al., 2020).

If we are to ask—with Maeseele and Raeijmaekers (2020)—which discursive strategies were employed to close off the debate and who was excluded from the representation of the crisis, the answer lies in a focus on the identities (with their respective relationships) that were featured in the news broadcasts. Firstly, there was the strong presence of the *virus* and the preventive *measures*, which were both personified and active. The character of measures as an outcome of the decision-making process was overshadowed by the instrumental rationality of the *government*, which ceased to act as a political body and became instead an institution of crisis management. This strategy also connects with how the identity of *ordinary people* was constructed in relation to the virus and the measures. The news coverage in both cases did not present ordinary people as active, but merely as reactive or passive "objects". A collective identity, in its political sense, did not emerge as the public was translated as private. The news presented the e*xperts, businesses,* and *technology* as participants in governmental solutions, as the expected economic ideological fault line was transformed into merely technical problems of logistics or administration.

Hence, the first strategy the news broadcasts employed was to naturalize the measures and governmental decisions. Secondly, they privatized the governmental and economic solutions, translating them to the private realm, as stories of patients, employees, volunteers, or abusers. Arguably, this public-to-private translation is typical for the news' order of discourse (Fairclough, 1995, p. 37), as this "communicative ethos" presents the world as "ordinary, mundane, accessible, knowable, familiar, recognizable, intelligible, shareable and communicable for whole populations" (Scannell, 1989, p. 152). In this study, the translation between private and public was asymmetric and unidirectional. The government was in charge of the public agenda, not as an actor *per se*, but as the executor of *vis maior*, through a cluster of naturalized and objectified demands. The private domain was constructed only as a mirror to this public agenda, deprived of its activity levels and deliberative power. The private was translated into the public only when its language was adjusted to the dominant lexicon and binary opposite discourses (administrative: logistics, health: experts). The economic and scientific-technological ideological fault lines were not presented as a struggle or a negotiation between antagonists but as frontiers of morality. In other words, those who consented to or cooperated with the government's measures were moral, whereas those who did not were amoral, illegal or non-rational.

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[8] For the discussion on the public sphere employing Aristotelian notions of ethos, pathos and logos, see Chambres (2009).

The news thus established a clear separation between public and private with the latter being translated into these legal-administrative, scientific-medical, and economic discourses. Even volunteering was recognized as an expression of loyalty, not as a form of subversion or as an alternative political attitude. That is how the public became post-political – as the realm "where an overlapping consensus can be established over a shared conception of justice" (Mouffe, 2000, p. 90). The news did use the tropes of "war" or "struggle", but mostly to support this process of naturalization. The only war to wage was with the virus, which "was not a political one".

CONCLUSIONS

Critiques on post-politics in journalism emphasize the need to shift from maintaining professional distance to paying attention to a synthesized and contextualized diversity (race, gender, sexuality, class experience), not only at the level of media content but also in the way media are organized (Nettleton, 2015). Our analysis shows how a public service media participates in manufacturing consent—to use Herman and Chomsky's (1988) formulation—rather than in helping to recognize social differences. The collective "we" merges the government with journalists' voices and the nation but omits many discussions on the diverse experiences with the pandemic and the government measures.

Although the news did not address and articulate private emotions and everyday experiences as public matters, the "objective" distance of journalists perpetuated this separation between the public and the private. However, as Mouffe (2000, p. 91) argues, it is impossible to separate the two, and to operate in a detached realm of mere instrumentality, procedurality and expert knowledge. In conclusion, we want to suggest that the rise of the protest movements against the COVID-19 measures, which occurred in the fall of 2020 should be understood as an effort to re-politicize the pandemic, and not as a mere manifestation of irrationality or irresponsibility.

As Maeseele (2010) also argues, journalists should avoid "the consensual type of science journalism" (p. 4) in favor of "a conflictual type of science journalism that frames risk conflicts as conflicts between opposing responses to uncertainty, by revealing the competing sets of assumptions, values, and interests underlying these responses and making them subject of public debate" (Maeseele, 2010, pp. 4–5). This argument does not mean breaking down all the boundaries that protect journalism, and letting in unsubstantiated opinions, disinformation, or propaganda. Research on pandemic news informs us that providing an unfiltered diversity of perspectives is equally problematic, because in a polarized environment (as in the U.S.) it reinforces individual beliefs rather than challenge them (Dhanani & Franz, 2020). The solution may be to strive for *agonistic media pluralism*, as media present different preferences in the form of politicizing discourses (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2020, p. 1604). The alternative actors and demands can thus be introduced, and as a result, "several discourses of action are presented as alternative ways to move forward" (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers, 2020, p. 1600).[9]

Česká televize (ČT), the Czech public service media broadcaster revealed itself, at least in the broadcasts we studied, to be a rather hegemonic actor, both in scope and form, instead of a media organization that opens up the public discussion to diverse experiences and political expressions. In a normative sense, our analysis should be understood not merely as a warning but rather as an encouragement for media change.

In a changing world, societal risks should be recognized, discussed, and allowed to be the subject of political struggle. To paraphrase Roman Prymula "every virus is political". Therefore, media also needs to change. This will help to increase the participation of ordinary people in the future world, which might help society to deal better with forthcoming crises, in more just and truthful ways. The COVID-19 pandemic is hardly just a scientific or technological issue, and a neoliberal instrumental consensus on solutions could not be considered democratic. Media coverage of moments of crisis and the change they bring should recognize these aspects and include a broader diversity of social experiences, and thus promote a more democratic handling of the risks we are facing. Otherwise, media are scarcely anything more than government heralds.

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[9] The authors elaborated this approach empirically in their previous research (Maeseele et al., 2017; Pepermans & Maeseele, 2014).

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Climate Change in Chinese Newspapers 2000–2020: Discursive Strategies of Consolidating Hegemony

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Abstract: Since China's environmental policy is defined as top-down "authoritarian environmentalism", political propaganda and media censorship heavily affect the communication of climate change. Hence, conducting an investigation of climate change communication in the context of China is a valuable exercise. This article uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how the Chinese Press reported on, and discursively constructed climate change through the employment of a series of discursive strategies, over a 20-year period, 2000-2020. The findings indicate that news reporting on climate change was in consistent alignment with the ruling Communist Party's environmental policies during these two decades, facilitating the consolidation of the government's hegemony.

Keywords: climate change; discursive strategies; China; Chinese newspapers; Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

INTRODUCTION

Climate change is a complex phenomenon connected to a series of environmental hazards, which constitute a major threat to the planet (IPCC, 2021). Inevitably, threats to the ecological environment bring multi-layered changes both to society and individuals, such as in global or domestic climate change policies, economic development strategies, social structures, culture, energy development, or resource allocation (cf. Dryzek et al., 2011). As the hazards of climate change are mainly invisible to humans, most people access relevant information through the media. Therefore, in this era of unprecedented environmental change, the issue of how change is constructed in media and communicational practices has become significant. A parallel challenge is how to mediate the world under the impact of climate change.

Ever since anthropogenic climate change first appeared in public agendas in the mid-1980s, questions about climate change communication and how to effectively communicate this issue to the public have increased considerably (Moser, 2010). Since the mid-1990s, research about climate change communication has appeared in academic journals. Communication scholars have begun to study how climate change can be given meaning through language, discourse, and media technology, as it mediates people's thoughts and behaviors. Initially, the research mainly focused on the public's understanding of climate change and risks, and then gradually expanded to a wider range of research fields, such as rhetorical analysis, explanatory qualitative research, and quantitative investigation and experimentation (Chadwick, 2017). Among these studies, a large number focus on content analysis of media news reports to determine themes and frames (e.g., Schäfer & O'Neill, 2017; Spence & Pidgeon, 2010; Vu et al., 2019); observe newsrooms and study news norms reflected in media reports (e.g., Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Schäfer & Painter, 2021); or explore information design and persuasiveness (e.g., Bolsen & Shapiro, 2017; O'Neill, 2020).

China has become the world's largest emitter of CO2 annually since 2006, and climate change has seriously affected its ecological environment (Third National Assessment Report, 2015). Gilley (2012, p. 287) defines China's environmental policy as top-down "authoritarian environmentalism", in which, as Lynch (1999) argues, political propaganda influences communication about climate change in China's controlled media environment. Thus, investigating climate change news reporting in the Chinese context is a valuable exercise. Wang (2021) investigated 81 Chinese studies on climate change communication and found that they mainly focused on media content and discourse frameworks, and public awareness strategies analysis adopting primarily content analysis methods and approaches (e.g., Han et al., 2017; Xie, 2015).

To add to the existing literature from a critical perspective, this article adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), combining textual and contextual analysis to investigate how the Chinese Press reported on, and discursively constructed, climate change, through the employment of a series of discursive strategies from 2000 to 2020. The findings indicate that news reporting on climate change was in consistent alignment with the ruling Communist Party's environmental policies during these twenty years, facilitating the consolidation of the government's hegemony.

CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS AND MEDIA IN CHINA

The media plays a central role in terms of informing public knowledge. Reporting on the environment and on climate change is challenging for journalists and news media, as it involves communicating "risk in the context of uncertainty" (Painter, 2013, p. 31). The challenges relate to the complex nature of the climate change phenomenon, the high degree of uncertainty, the difficulty of communicating scientific information, and sometimes the journalists' lack of adequate knowledge (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Moser, 2010; Painter, 2013; Schäfer & O'Neill, 2017; Schäfer & Painter, 2021). These challenges impact journalists' ability to evaluate information properly, which makes them dependent on their sources for the evaluation of information, increasing the risk that journalists adopt specific aspects and interpretations that promote certain economic interests and political agendas on environmental issues.

In China, where the state controls the media, climate change news reporting seems to have been supporting the Chinese government's political project of maintaining its hegemony. The literature shows that the media in China have followed the prioritizations in the environmental policy set by the state. China ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1993, and since then the Chinese government has commemorated the "China Environment Centennial Journey" to support media reports on environmental issues, sponsoring also reporters to conduct investigations on selected environmental topics (Yang & Calhoun, 2007). During the same period, the Chinese media gradually began to pay some attention to environmental issues, and the number of pertinent news reports showed a mild increase.

Although China signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1998, its policies did not show any positive intent to protect the environment until 2007 due to the country's economic development priorities (Kwon & Hanlon, 2015). At the Kyoto conference, the Chairman of the Committee on International Relations of the U.S. House of Representatives, Benjamin Gilman, described China's position on climate change as a "Three Nos" policy, in which China would have a) no obligations, b) no voluntary commitments, and c) no binding negotiations in the future (Zhang, 2013). While international media were fairly critical of China's policy (Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2018), the Chinese media in this period were very cautious when reporting climate change issues (Ji & Dan, 2017).

After the United Nations Climate Change meeting held in Bali in 2007, China promised energy-saving and emission reduction measures. At the Copenhagen Summit in December 2009, the Chinese government faced severe criticism for its delaying tactics and refusal to support mandatory targets. From 2010, China's position gradually changed to take voluntary and effective actions to adapt to climate change and to work with western countries on this issue.

In addition, China began to support the least developed countries, in Africa and Asia, in climate change adaptation and migration (Zhang, 2013). The "Twelfth Five-Year Plan" (2011–2015) signaled China's policy shift to a new low-carbon development model (Li & Wang, 2012).[1] This shift was reflected in the Chinese media coverage, as climate change was no longer treated as a politically sensitive topic (Ji & Dan, 2017), receiving increased media coverage and attention.

Before elaborating on the theoretical and methodological foundations of this study, it is important to briefly address the specificities of the Chinese media system. China's media environment is characterized by an elaborate system of control, supervision, and censorship (Tang & Iyengar, 2011). The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses the media as a propaganda apparatus, limiting dissent (Zhu, 1990), by formulating political discourse agendas, publicizing official policies, monitoring public opinion, and obtaining political support from the press (Tang & Iyengar, 2011).

The state supervises the media through a management pyramid structure, in which the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee is at the highest level and supervises media propaganda strategies. The Publicity Department of the Central Committee supervises the operation of various media (Tang & Iyengar, 2011), while party-sponsored newspapers such as the *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily* set the agenda for other media. After the Chinese economic reforms of the 1970s, China's media industry began to be commercialized and decentralized. The cultural system reform in 2003 enabled some media to gain economic autonomy (Sukosd & Wang, 2013). Market-oriented news outlets, such as the *Caixin Weekly*, emerged and developed. However, the CCP's close supervision and control of the media has not been abolished and is still operative.

EXPLORING HEGEMONY THROUGH CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Climate change communication takes place in an environment of pressures and influences by domestic environmental policies, international relations, and corporate interests. As already mentioned, environmental communication takes on specific characteristics in China, being influenced by the country's political, social, and cultural specificities, and the state's control of the media's environment. All of these enable China's leadership to use climate change communication in the political project of maintaining its hegemony.

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[1] The Twelfth Five-Year Plan was formulated by the People's Republic of China to develop the national economy from 2011 to 2015. Introduced in May 2011, it listed anti-corruption, deepening reforms, and environmental protection issues as the key objectives of the initial transformation of the economic structure.

Hegemony, a broadly used concept with Gramscian foundations in its applications in political studies, and in communication and media studies, relates to the consolidation of systems of power and domination in broad socio-political environments (Bates, 1975; Scott, 2001). Scholars exploring the concept emphasize the role of consent in securing hegemony, but also the role of culture, and its institutions, through which consent is largely orchestrated and operationalized (Dow, 1990; Reese, 1990; Scott, 2001). As struggles over hegemony take place in the social realm, they are never finalized and resolved (Fairclough, 1992), even in political systems of tight control. Renewing consent and approval for policies and governance is important, which is the case also in the Chinese context of the single communist party rule.

Part of these struggles of securing or renewing consent take place in the field of media and are of a discursive nature. Discourse as a concept has been used in diverse ways, ranging from narrow linguistic micro-textual to broad macro-textual and contextual approaches (see Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). This study aligns with critical approaches to discourse that move beyond the micro-textual and micro-contextual frames of reference and look into how meaning and ideological messages are constructed and communicated in texts and social practices. Consistent with this standpoint, is critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001), which forms the foundation of this study. Discourse in CDA is a language form of social interaction that is embedded in the social context. In CDA, discourse is defined as social practice (Fairclough, 1989; 1992). Therefore, when conducting CDA, researchers focus not only on the text itself but also on the relationship between the text and social conditions.

In CDA, ideology, critique and power are key interrelated components, to explore and address. Ideology consists of “mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes and evaluations” about the social world and its optimal organization, shared by members of a specific social group (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). Textual messages often bear traces of different ideological positions and can be considered as a discursive battlefield (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) where these positions are negotiated, legitimated, contested, or reconfigured. As CDA aims to reveal both the obvious persuasive and hidden manipulative intentions in the practice of discourse, it critically analyzes the language use of those in power and is concerned with issues of explicit and hidden domination, discrimination and control, embedded and mediated in discourse (Ietcu, 2006, p. 75; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Thus, CDA is an appropriate research tool to explore “the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96), as well as the potential of resistance, the overthrowing of hegemonies, and the consolidation of new ones.

METHODOLOGY

The present study undertakes a textual and contextual analysis inspired by the principles and tools of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) examining how the Chinese newspapers reported on, and discursively constructed climate change, through a series of discursive strategies, between 2000 and 2020.

The analysis of this research is inspired by Carvalho's (2008) framework of textual and contextual analysis, which is adjusted to serve the purposes of this study. Textual analysis in this study focuses on analyzing discursive strategies, lexical choices, thematic focus, and certain formal features, such as genre and text length. The contextual analysis was carried out along two axes: Comparative-synchronic analysis (simultaneous description of the problem in various newspapers) and historical-diachronic analysis (time series and evolution).

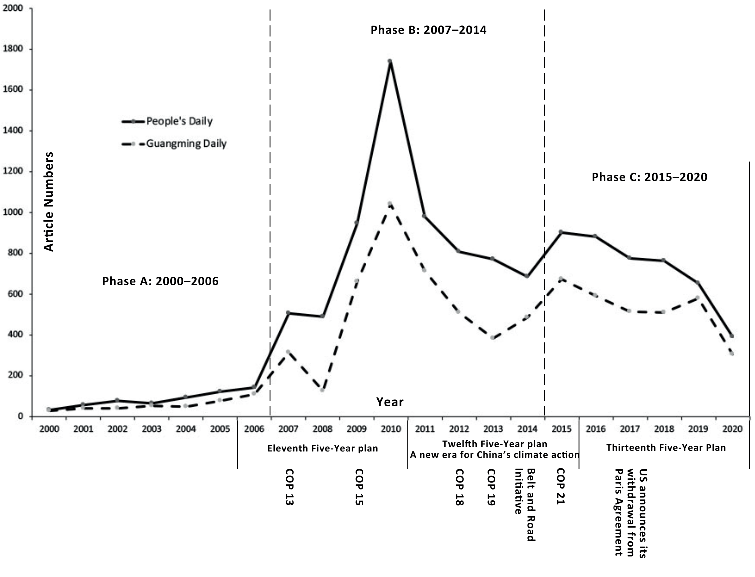
The research has a special focus on discursive strategies, and how they are implemented in the news in order to propose specific ideas, suggest specific interpretations, legitimize or delegitimize certain ideological positions (Doudaki & Boubouka, 2020; Van Leeuwen, 2007). These strategies can be both text-specific and broader, pertaining to the selection of specific themes, aspects, actors, sources, within texts but also across texts, time, or media.

Among the discursive strategies that have been identified by scholars engaging in critical analyses of discourse, of high relevance for this study, are the following: expertise (use of experts in the news to provide special knowledge or frameworks of interpretation); quantification (use of data and numbers as tools of persuasion); dramatization (use of emotional language aimed to communicate urgency or intensity); moralization (use of language evoking values, morality or immorality); mystification (use of generalizations and abstraction, creating a vague, opaque environment, helping to conceal practices and information); euphemization/valorization (emphasizing values and merits, and creating a positive image) of self; condemnation (blaming, accusing, creating a negative image) of the other; and, denial (denying the existence of a phenomenon, an attitude or an attribute) (Doudaki, 2018; Doudaki & Boubouka, 2020; Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1992; Van Leeuwen, 2007; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 2015).

This study analyzed climate change news articles in *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily* from 2000 to 2020 (news reports on this topic were rare before 2000). Both newspapers are considered Chinese organ newspapers; they represent the propaganda intention and direction of the Chinese Communist Party and set the agenda for other media (Chan, 2007). The analysis also included a small sample of non-party-sponsored newspaper articles, published in the same period, to facilitate the contextual analysis component of the study.

News samples were gathered from the WiseSearch database[2] by entering the following keywords: *climate change*, *global warming*, *climate risk*, and *low carbon*, which resulted in a corpus of news articles (N=19,676) from the *People's Daily* (n=11,874) and the *Guangming Daily* (n=7,802) addressing climate change in 2000-2020 (see Figure 1 for a graph of their distribution over time). As indicated in Figure 1, three main phases were identified: 2000–2006, 2007–2014, and 2015–2020. In 2007, the level of news on climate change began to rise significantly, reaching a peak in 2009–2010. The three identified periods are in line with the time nodes of important climate change events, both domestic and international, such as the annual United Nations Climate Conferences (1997-onwards) and the promulgation of the Chinese government's climate policy (2010-onwards). Figure 1 highlights the dates of these climate change events.

Figure 1: Distribution of articles from People's Daily and Guangming Daily on climate change, 2000–2020



Among the corpus of news articles (N= 19,676), a sample of articles of the *People's Daily* (n=35) and the *Guangming Daily* (n=35) were subjected to CDA. The sample was spread across the three periods (2000–2006: n=10; 2007–2014: n=30; 2015–2020: n=30) and was selected by topic relevance, popularity, newspaper layout, news article length and source of information.

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[2] WiseSearch is a continually expanding media database, known for its comprehensive coverage and data integrity. The database comprises 1,500 printed media and over 10,000 web media news and is updated promptly. Accessed from: https://lib.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/1184/3788.htm Tsinghua University

As it concerns the analysis of the non-party-sponsored newspapers, it focused on three outlets, the "outspoken media outlets" (Zhao, 2008, p. 93) *Beijing News* (n=10) and *Southern Weekend* (n=10), and the market-oriented *Caixin Weekly* (n=10). The criteria used to select and analyze the articles from these outlets were the same as for the articles from the *People's Daily* and the *Guangming Daily*. It shall be noted that the focus of this study is on party-sponsored media, given their prominence in the Chinese context, and the complementary analysis of the non-party-sponsored outlets facilitates the contextual analysis of the media environment and adds to the broader reflective analysis of the study. Its aim is not to serve as a comparative study of party and non-party sponsored media. Thereby, non-party-sponsored newspapers are only selected for reference in a small number of instances based on the number of articles in each of the three periods and the time when each outlet was established (2000–2006: n=4; 2007–2014: n=16; 2015–2020: n=10).

MEDIATING CLIMATE CHANGE UNDER A CHANGING CONTEXT

2000–2006: UNCERTAINTY AND RISK ARE BEING DOWNPLAYED

China has experienced remarkable economic growth since the 1990s. Coal consumption doubled between 2002 and 2008 (Stensdal, 2012), which caused carbon dioxide emissions in 2008 to be more than double compared to 1990 (Wang, 2012). In 2004, former president Hu Jintao promulgated a change of economic development policy. Aiming to better balance economic development and environmental protection, Hu proposed the "Scientific Outlook on Development" (Communist Party Member website, 2017). Still, before 2009, China's leadership viewed economic benefits as an important driving force for climate change formulation and consequently climate change policies were practically absent (Weiner, 2008).

Although China signed the Kyoto Protocol in 1998, it did not promise emission reduction as part of the Protocol, and its policies had almost no investment plan to reduce carbon emissions (Ji & Dan, 2017). The Kyoto Protocol, with all its limitations, officially came into effect in 2005. Yang and Calhoun (2007, p. 211) describe the concomitant transformation of environmental discourses in China in the early 2000s as a "green sphere". In direct contrast to Mao's "war against nature", this new type of rhetoric emphasized China's responsibility to protect a fragile environment. In 2005 and 2006, terms such as *risk* and *disaster* began to appear in the media frequently. The *People's Daily* (14.12.2006) was the first to employ the term *environmental refugees* in a report named "What is an environmental refugee?".

The Chinese newspapers analyzed during this first period under study aligned with the official approach to climate change and tended to downplay uncertainty when describing climate risk, using several discursive strategies. This finding echoes Geall's (2018, p. 6) observations that, "top-down approaches to climate change in China tend to underplay incertitude or incomplete knowledge".

The first identified discursive strategy is quantification: the instrumental use of data as a means of persuasion. Hence, the discussion on climate change was only based on past data to explain the seriousness of the problem, instead of future forecast data. For example, in the article "Our country's meteorological experts analyze the root causes of severe high temperature and drought in Chongqing and Sichuan, global warming causes frequent disasters" (*People's Daily*, 30.08.2006) data measured in the past 100 years was used to explain the negative impact of climate change.

The second strategy involved downplaying risk through expertise, which consists of the strategic presence of experts in the news, whose specialized scientific knowledge can ease concerns about future developments. During this first period, the newspapers often included suggestions and evaluations by domestic experts in news articles containing uncertain information about the environment. As the following article emphasizes, "Experts pointed out that although there are still major disputes on the ecological and environmental impact of super large reservoirs in the world, in the general view, there is no obvious evidence showing that reservoirs impact the climate" (*People's Daily*, 30.8.2006). The reference to experts combined with the abstract phrase "in the general view" are used in the article to ease environmental concerns and downplay uncertainty.

The third discursive strategy, which was already introduced in the previous example, was mystification. General and abstract references are often used to alleviate readers' worries about climate risks, as becomes evident in the following article excerpts: "This impact can be minimized through technological improvements and increased adaptability", and "In the next few decades, climate change will not have a major impact on my country's food security" (*People's Daily*, 31.12.2003).

The fourth strategy aimed at downplaying risk involved counterbalancing or overshadowing risk and uncertainty by valorizing and praising China's key ecological protection projects. For example, the article "Xinjiang: Seeing Again the Clear Streams in Shahe" (*People's Daily*, 14.12.2003) described how the Chinese government was spending 10.74 billion RMB to solve the ecological deterioration of the Tarim River Basin. This news article is relatively long (2,986 words), but only about 200 words were used to explain the negative impact of climate change. Instead, the article mainly focused on euphemizing the Chinese policy of ecological protection.

Since there were no market-oriented media during this period, the study examined for reference newspapers such as the *Beijing News* and *Southern Weekend*, both of which have relatively left-leaning political views. Although these media do not use overly politicized words, their content is very close to the party-sponsored media. For example, in the following *Southern Weekend* (22.9.2005) news article, the discursive strategy of euphemization was adopted, praising a national project to downplay risks:

> the government's 'lighting project' brings solar products and technology to thousands of households in remote pastoral areas in Xinjiang […] after a long period of worshipping nature, human beings discovered that it is better to create a sustainable solar energy source than to follow the example of *Kuafu chasing the Sun*.

In citing the mythical story of Kuafu, who symbolizes the desire of the ancient Chinese to conquer nature, the report conveys the government's confidence in climate change governance. The two newspapers also contain some popular science content, which is not included in the party-sponsored newspapers of the same period, as in the article "How do we mitigate climate change?" (*Southern Weekend*, 22.9.2005).

Between 2000 and 2006, climate change appears gradually in the news, however, it is not clearly labeled as an issue of public concern. The discursive construction of climate change into a public risk is contrary to the government's economic development strategy at this time, and scientific uncertainty is used in the news to maintain the government's value stance.

2007–2014: POLITICAL EVENTS DRIVE REPORTING TO SHAPE THE NATIONAL IMAGE

Figure 1 demonstrates that news reports on climate change have experienced significant growth since 2007, a watershed year in China's climate change policy. Since the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) for the development of the national economy introduced renewable energy and air pollution goals, China's climate policy started to develop rapidly (Stensdal, 2012, p. 4). The Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2011–2015) contained, as Kwon and Hanlon (2015) emphasize, ambitious environmental goals and is widely regarded as the most environmentally friendly of the previous five-year plans, setting goals to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and improve energy efficiency.

It was during this period that the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held in October 2007, proposed the construction of an ecological civilization. At the same time, the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bali, in December. These major climate events prompted the publication of news reports on climate change, by Chinese media.[3] The terms *emission reduction* (first appeared in 2007) and *low carbon* (first appeared in 2009) began to gradually appear in the media during this period.

Driven by major climate events, news articles during this period were related to political events, both international and domestic. China appeared in the news as showing a positive attitude towards the mitigation of climate change at a global level, especially in 2007. For example, the article "Wen Jiabao [the then Prime Minister of China] talks with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda" (*People's Daily*, 29.12.2007) appeared on the news page with a broad picture of the two leaders' meeting. Similarly, the article "Xi Jinping Meets British Guests" (*People's Daily*, 20.12.2007) reported on the meeting between the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, emphasizing cooperation on climate change issues. The party-sponsored newspapers' coverage of climate risks during this period appeared to echo the political leadership's strategy of building China's national image and international reputation through the communication of its climate change policy, frequently using the discursive strategy of euphemization.

A noteworthy aspect is that after the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15), China received considerable negative coverage around the world (Rauchfleisch & Schäfer, 2018). This was addressed by the Chinese party-sponsored newspapers with the implementation of the two interconnected main strategies of euphemizing the self and condemning the other. The first strategy consisted of the continuous representation of China's positive image, through the reporting of the cooperative attitude described above. The second strategy's focus was the fight back against international negative coverage by attempting to de-legitimize the accusations, sometimes also by reversing blame and re-attributing the critiques back onto Western countries, such as the USA. The news articles by the party-sponsored newspapers did not omit the international negative coverage against China, but instrumentally included parts of it, in order to challenge and delegitimize it. For example, *Guangming Daily*'s article "China's performance on climate change is commendable" (25.12.2009) stated that "the British and American media recently hyped China's 'hijacking' of the COP 15. This conference was a failure, and the failure was attributed to China." This news article quotes Professor Lin Zhicong (Ateneo University, Philippines) confirming that China is to be commended on the issue of climate change. The undermining and de-legitimization of the western accusations are put to effect through the use of verbs such as "hyped" and "'hijacking'" (the latter put in quotation marks, which adds to the de-legitimization of the western media's claims).

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[3] In 2007, a series of major events took place in the field of environmental protection both within China and internationally. China established the National Leading Group for Addressing Climate Change, issued the "China National Plan for Addressing Climate Change", and put forward the requirements for controlling greenhouse gas emissions in the "Eleventh Five-Year Plan" for National Environmental Protection. The Chinese Academy of Sciences also released the National Climate Change Assessment Report.

The use of experts is again instrumental. For example, in the article "The international community positively evaluated the Copenhagen Accord" (*People's Daily*, 24.12.2009), Knut Alfsan, director of the Norwegian Climate Research Centre, was cited as saying he believed that the accusations against China were "unfair" and that "China has done much better than the United States." This is an example of combined expertise, denial, and moralization, where an expert denies the accusations against China, labeling them as "unfair".

During this period, the non-party-sponsored newspapers gradually began to pay more attention to the issue of climate change, following the general trend. In the following example, quantification, euphemization and condemnation are used as discursive strategies, to demonstrate China's positive attitude towards climate change governance:

> China can easily surpass the 2020 wind and solar energy targets and may even triple these targets [...] a large share of the government's '4 trillion [RMB] economic stimulus program' is allocated for low-carbon projects. 210 billion [RMB] will be used for environmental protection and greenhouse gas emission reduction (*Southern Weekend,* 25.6.2009).

The article then adopts an accusatory tone: "In fact, to achieve these goals, China needs more technical and financial support, but Europe has not yet reached an agreement on the amount of aid. The EU's assistance to China's environmental funds is not unconditional" (ibid.)

Compared with party-sponsored newspapers, non-party-sponsored newspapers are more likely to adopt a human-interest framework (Luther & Zhou, 2005; Yang, 2009). The *Beijing News* and *Southern Weekend*'s climate change news articles were no longer limited to popular science or political issues; instead, they tried to report climate risk from an economic perspective, as indicated by the following article, which encouraged low-carbon and environmentally friendly lifestyles: "Low-carbon households share their books and discuss energy-saving coups to support 21 households to carry out energy-saving renovations such as with water and electricity" (*Beijing News*, 20.11.2011). Still, these news articles, even if they expanded the range of genres and thematic angles, did not diverge from the official policy's prioritizations and representations.

In summary, the national and international agendas of climate change politics moved forward in 2007 and gave considerable impetus to the news coverage of the issue. The Chinese media seemed to align with the country's strategy in using the climate change policy as a means of building its national image as environmentally conscious and responsible.

2015–2020: A NEW LEADER OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE WORLD

The Paris Agreement was adopted at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21). Chinese paramount leader Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of the Paris Conference entitled "Work Together to Build a Win-Win, Equitable and Balanced Governance Mechanism on Climate Change". This was the first time a Chinese paramount leader attended the UN Climate Conference. In this period, China's Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2016–2020) was also initiated.[4] In the State Council's notice on the Thirteenth Five-Year Plan regarding the Control of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (gov.cn, 2016), it was clearly stated that 2015 was a crucial year for the negotiation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and that it was necessary to insist on "common but different responsibility".

Figure 1 shows that the number of news articles on climate change began to level off from 2009 to 2015. The third period from 2015 to 2020 is similar to the second in terms of volume but also in that political events, such as climate conferences and government reports, drove the news stories. However, a key difference is that the main focus of the newspapers' coverage during this period was to demonstrate China's leadership in the world.

China issued the "China–Africa Policy" in 2006, which aims to strengthen cooperation with African countries, and according to which China is committed to establishing a new type of strategic partnership with Africa (Ajakaiye, 2006), which includes environmental aspects. Correspondingly, China–Africa relations feature in the news during the same period. As one article mentions, reflecting the idea of China's international leadership, "China provides tangible support to African countries (…) for addressing climate change" (*People's Daily*, 7.12.2015).

During the tenure of U.S. President Donald Trump, relations between the United States and China deteriorated sharply. After the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement in 2017, the image of joint Chinese-American efforts portrayed by the Chinese media was deeply disrupted. At the same time, Chinese media began to refute the "China threat theory", consistently employing the discursive strategies of positive self-image representation and negative other-image representation by reversing and re-attributing responsibility and blame to the USA. As the image of China as a world leader in climate change policy began to develop, the portrayal of the relationship between China and the U.S. changed from collaborative to antagonistic. While in 2013, news articles would stress that "China-U.S. relations maintain a positive and stable development trend" (*People's Daily*, 16.11.2013), in 2018 they would emphasize that "The U.S. leaders stigmatized China in their speeches and deliberately labeled China's diplomacy as 'expansionism'… all absurd statements full of arrogance and hypocrisy" (*Guangming Daily*, 18.10.2018).

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[4] The Thirteenth Five-Year Plan aims for the development of the national economy from 2016 to 2020.

The news sampled from this period shows that moralization was applied frequently as a discursive strategy, following President Xi's advocacy for the "Community of Common Destiny", when reporting on the issue of climate change. Statements such as "We call on people from all over the world to work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind" and "We must adhere to environmental friendliness, cooperate in tackling climate change, and protect the earth" repeatedly appeared in the news (*People's Daily*, 28.10.2017).

Self-euphemization combined with expertise was also used as a discursive strategy, to defend the Communist Party's political hegemony. For example, on 8.4.2018, *Guangming Daily* reported on the Chinese Academy of Sciences' work on carbon sequestration in China's terrestrial ecosystems. The article concluded that the research "supports China's international negotiations on climate change and provides enlightenment for other countries. It conveys Chinese wisdom in coping with global climate change".

After 2015, Caixin News Corporation gradually began to gain influence and became a representative of market-oriented news media. This research analyzed news (after 2015) from *Caixin.com* and *Caixin Weekly*. Similar to the party-sponsored news media, *Caixin*'s news coverage hardly talks about the actual climate change crisis and its related disasters. However, in a unique way, *Caixin* did discuss low-carbon development and green energy in an economic frame. For example, in a *Caixin.com* (26.8.2019) news article, the following sentences arouses people's attention to climate change:

> The overemphasis on the market makes people ignore and underestimate the impact of climate change. Economists regard climate change as an external problem or market failure, which means people cannot fully realize that it is a matter of life and death.

In this example, which uses the strategy of dramatization to enhance the sense of urgency, while there is no direct critique addressed towards the state, criticism is orientated towards business and economic activity.

In conclusion, during the 2015–2020 period, international political events such as the signing of the Paris Agreement and the United States' exit from the Agreement, largely drove the media's news agenda on climate change. In China, climate change was used as a political slogan for shaping China's image through the news media, as a world leader in environmental protection.

CONCLUSIONS

In today's mediated and mediatized world, news media performs a key role in the mediated journey of climate change. Over time, climate change has gradually transformed from an early public debate within the scientific community to a political issue and a global crisis discussed widely by the media (Lester & Cottle, 2009).

This article studied how Chinese newspapers covered the issue of climate change between 2000 and 2020. Following the principles of critical discourse analysis and combining textual and contextual analysis, the study explored how the Chinese news coverage of climate change evolved in the 20-year research period, following broader socio-political trends, but more importantly, aligning with the Chinese government's shifting attention toward the issue. In the early 2000s, the issue of the environment and climate change began to appear in Chinese media. However, until 2006, newspapers downplayed the risks and uncertainties of climate change by reporting highly praised environmental protection projects and criticizing climate change mitigation efforts in Western countries. Since 2007, the news media's agenda has been strongly influenced by political events, such as climate conferences, international cooperation, and national policies. There are very few news reports on the actual climate change risks and threats. After 2015, the newspapers studied used climate change to demonstrate China's leadership in the world.

As the analysis showed, climate change communication is operative in the realm of political struggles for the consolidation of disparate ideological positions. The news coverage of climate change in China by the party-sponsored newspapers has been in consistent alignment with the official state environmental policy over the issue, facilitated by the use of specific discursive strategies, such as expertise, self-euphemization, and other-condemnation. The non-party-sponsored newspapers' coverage points to a slightly diversified media environment, which might be raising some critical issues in relation to environmental risks, but is still not directly critical towards the state, following the official agenda trends. The news coverage of climate change, which would be expected to include diverse and comprehensive reporting on this complex phenomenon, appears to be in the service of the official communication of China's environmental policy both domestically and internationally. The state uses the media coverage to build China's image as a major actor in global climate governance and to consolidate the Chinese government's hegemony.

This research provides empirical insight into changes in climate change news reporting by Chinese newspapers. However, it must be acknowledged that one of the limitations of this study is that the analysis focuses on newspapers. It shall be mentioned that from 2008 to 2011 the internet – and especially social media – played an active role in Chinese politics and public life. Mainstream newspapers such as the *People's Daily* and the *Guangming Daily* started to use the internet to disseminate their news, including setting up accounts on social media platforms. An exploration in the context of multiple and hybrid media could therefore provide a productive direction for further research. At the same time, focusing on party-sponsored media given their prominence in the Chinese context is considered valuable, despite the limitations.

In conclusion, this study explored the discursive construction of a complex phenomenon that deals with change. The media under study mediate change through the reporting of climate change-related news. While mediating change, they construct change as a phenomenon with dimensions, risks, actors, failures, and successes. At the same time, the mediation of change is put in the service of maintaining stability. There is consistency across time as it concerns the deployment of discursive strategies through which climate change news coverage is set in alignment with the state environmental policies and the preferred way of their communication. This consistent alignment serves to maintain the status quo, by consolidating the Chinese government's hegemony, in this case through the construction of the country's image as a global leader in climate change policy and management.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Facebook Groups in Sweden Constructing Sustainability: Resisting Hegemonic Anthropocentrism

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Abstract: This article examines how Facebook groups in Sweden, that focus on the environment, address issues of sustainability. The research, conducted over a one-year period (May 2019–April 2020) combines mapping analysis, which identified a population of 152 environment-focused Facebook groups, and quantitative content analysis, which gives the overview of how these groups represent sustainability and human-nature relations. The analysis pointed to an overwhelming support for counterhegemonic, ecocentric positions, coupled with a strong critique against the hegemony of anthropocentrism. These findings relate to the general discussion concerning the potential of social media to function as spaces where hegemonies are contested and the vision of social change, in this case about the environment, takes shape, but also to the limitations of such possibilities.

Keywords: Facebook groups; sustainability; ecocentrism; anthropocentrism; hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

A key concept in the debates on environmental issues is that of sustainability. In the already complex issues of safeguarding the environment, and the discussion of the optimal means to achieve that aim, sustainability is an important signifier, as it captures both the need for intervention and an agenda for the future (Bartlett, 2019; Borgström Hansson, 2003; Kopnina, 2013). At the same time, the sustainability concept does not always help in addressing problems, proposing solutions and organizing actions, as it has many, often diverging or even opposing, significations (Cooper et al., 2012; McManus, 1996; Peterson & Norton, 2007). What these diverse approaches to sustainability do have in common is that they address issues of desired or undesired change, reflecting particular visions of the future.

This article examines how Facebook groups in Sweden address issues of sustainability, and whether they engage with anthropocentric or ecocentric approaches to sustainability. In order to achieve this aim, the research first employed mapping analysis (see Voniati et al., 2018), which identified 152 Facebook groups that focus on the environment and are related to Sweden. The collected data of the mapped Facebook groups were then subjected to quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004), offering a broad overview of how these groups address sustainability in Sweden. As the findings indicate, the great majority of these groups resist the hegemony of anthropocentrism and articulate a counterhegemonic ecocentric discourse towards sustainability, seeing humans as equal to, or as part of nature. At the same time, there is a minority of Facebook groups that align with the hegemonic anthropocentric view of sustainability, prioritizing humans' entitlements over nature.

Interestingly, in these specific types of Facebook groups and in the Swedish context of environmental concerns, the counterhegemonic ecocentric approach towards sustainability becomes dominant. This relates to the broad discussion on the potential of social media to provide space for the articulation of voices and discourses that contest hegemonies, pointing to the possibility of social change and of the formation of new, alternative hegemonies. At the same time, one needs to be careful not to assume that specific communicative spaces (in this case, the environment-focused Facebook groups in Sweden) are representative of broader societal settings and alliances and that their ideological projects are automatically – or even easily – translated into public policy.

APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY

This study is embedded in a social constructionist paradigm[1] (Burr, 1995), which argues that reality and knowledge are not fixed but are socially constructed, being the product of social struggles. The study focuses on how nature and the environment, and more specifically, sustainability are socially and discursively constructed (see, e.g., Dryzek, 2013; Hajer, 1995) through political processes. The study's social constructionism reflects not only its regards towards measures and policies concerning sustainability and the protection of the environment, but also what nature is and is not, and how human-nature relations should be apprehended and manifested.

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[1] We believe that our use of quantitative methods is not at odds with this paradigm, even though it requires a non-positivist reading of the research results.

As a concept, sustainability is a broad term, articulated within environmental, economic and social dimensions (Bartels & Nelissen, 2002), which, as we shall see, also enables the discursive struggles over its meanings. Environmental sustainability, in particular, has been described as "the act of consuming natural capital at a rate equal to – or less than – that at which it can be naturally replenished" (Pal & Jenkins, 2014, p. 390). The broad diversity of approaches to environmental sustainability that have been adopted by scientists and scholars are clustered around anthropocentric and ecocentric positions, echoing hegemonic and counterhegemonic positions respectively, to nature and human-nature relations.

HEGEMONY AND COUNTERHEGEMONY

Before presenting in more detail the arguments of the hegemonic and counterhegemonic camps to sustainability, a short reflection on how hegemonic orders are established but also contested is deemed useful. Hegemony, in Gramscian terms, is understood as ideological dominance through "the organisation of consent based upon establishing the legitimacy of leadership and developing shared ideas, values, beliefs and meanings" (Longhurst et al., 2008, p. 73). Hegemony consists of "the power to frame alternatives and contain opportunities, to win and shape consent, so that the granting of legitimacy to the dominant classes appears not only 'spontaneous' but natural and normal" (Clarke et al., 1976, p. 38). The engineering of consent is performed through signifying processes and practices of articulation that successfully connect ideas with groups and institutions. As Stuart Hall argues, "[i]deas only become effective if they do, in the end, *connect* with a particular constellation of social forces. In that sense, ideological struggle is a part of the general social struggle for mastery and leadership–in short for hegemony" (1986, p. 42, emphasis in the original).

The contingency and the openness of the social (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) make all struggles over hegemonic dominance incomplete and only provisionally resolved and sedimented:

> [T]he dominance of certain groups, who are engaged in particular struggles and who manage to fixate their discursive-material positions as hegemonic – at least temporarily – does not exclude other social groups from producing counter-hegemonic discourses with their own truth claims. (Carpentier & Doudaki, 2018, p. 4)

In certain contexts, these counterhegemonic discourses manage to subvert the dominant hegemonies and replace them (temporarily or for longer periods) as the new hegemonies.

HEGEMONIC-ANTHROPOCENTRIC APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental issues are not outside these struggles over hegemony, as they articulate, and intersect with, diverse, divergent and often conflicting social, political and economic claims about the organization of societies and their environments. Anthropocentrism, the set of ideas that positions humans in the center of their environments, has for centuries been the dominant guiding principle of human civilization and development. As Jan Aart Scholte and his co-authors (2020, p. 10) wrote: "Indeed, the hegemony of anthropocentrism is so strong – perhaps still more powerful than that of the state or capitalism – that most people are not even aware of this world-order structure and can imagine no alternative mode of ecology". Anthropocentrism echoes the hegemonic paradigm of sustainability, which focuses on humans' entitlement to use natural resources, to control and dominate their environment for survival and for profit. This premise is founded on the argument that "the natural world and all its resources exist solely for human use" (Corbett, 2006, p. 28), which are meant to serve primarily human needs. Katz (1999) argues that anthropocentrism expresses both the

> idea that human interests, human goods and/or human values are the focal point of any moral evaluation of environmental policy and the idea that these human interests, goods and values are the basis of any justification of an environmental ethic. (pp. 377–378)

The relations structured through these anthropocentric views on sustainability construct hierarchies between more and less important species, and articulate dualist and antagonistic positions between humans and nature.

Anthropocentric positions towards environmental sustainability are embedded in the hegemonic discourses regarding the organization of economy and the capitalist models of development (Kidner, 2014; Kopnina, 2013; 2016; Pal & Jenkins, 2014). Such approaches often use interchangeably the terms "sustainability" and "sustainable development",[2] focusing mainly on the economic aspects of development. In these hegemonic anthropocentric approaches, "nature" becomes transformed into and replaced by “environment”. According to Escobar (1995, p. 196), this transformation into “environmental managerialism”, which has its roots in the post-WWII’s rapid industrialization and urbanization processes, results in treating nature as raw material and a resource to be used by humans. Such a capitalist logic to sustainability (Foster et al., 2010) helps cement a market-driven approach to nature, prioritizing the exchange and monetary value of nature and its products, which “takes precedence over [any] other types of value” (Kopnina, 2013, p. 59). “The idea of manageable environment commodifies the value of nature’s economy for economic growth” (Pal & Jenkins, 2014, p. 401), which has serious repercussions on what is framed and prioritized as sustainable. Practices labelled as sustainable, in the name of efficiency and productivity, such as industrial agriculture, hide “the cost of depletion of soils, exploitation of groundwater, erosion, and extinction of biodiversity” (Shiva, 2005, p. 32, as cited in Pal & Jenkins (2014, p. 401)).

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[2] Still, earlier attempts to define sustainable development were not focused on economic criteria. For example, in the frequently quoted definition included in what is known as the Brundtland Report, "[s]ustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987).

Such anthropocentric perspectives to sustainability, that may even be seemingly environmentally aware, as the one of ecological modernization (e.g., Mol & Sonnenfeld, 2000), have been critiqued for overemphasizing economic growth and technological innovation and progress as the keys to solving societal and environmental problems (Hajer, 1995). Such approaches echo a solutionist or as per Dryzek (2013, p. 52) a “promethean” ideology, the strong belief in the ability of humans and their technological artefacts to overcome all problems. Kopnina (2013) argues that

> [a]lthough proponents of human ingenuity celebrate human capacity for invention and innovation, critics question whether technological fixes can lead to sustainable practices, particularly if powerful elites such as corporate leaders are still allowed to follow the business-as-usual trajectory. (p. 54)

Within this anthropocentric view of sustainability, human-made change instigated via, and instigating, technological and economic evolution, is considered beneficial and welcome. Humans intervening in nature and in their environment is seen as improving their living conditions. Especially when it is understood as necessary to protect humans or relieve them from danger, human intervention is unconditionally legitimated and expected, while the environment is given much less consideration.

Hegemonic prospects of sustainability that (over)emphasize the centrality of science and technology tend to prioritize Western knowledge systems, and marginalize non-Western forms of knowledge. Sustainability projects organized in various parts of the global south often impose a western philosophy, disregarding local science and local communities’ socio-cultural value systems, and devaluing local and indigenous forms of knowledge (Banerjee, 2011; 2000; Escobar, 1995).

COUNTERHEGEMONIC-ECOCENTRIC APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY

Ecocentric approaches start from the premise that humans are part of, and not superior to nature (Corbett, 2006, p. 27), aligning with a counterhegemonic view of sustainability. These approaches take on a long-term and broad approach to sustainability, not prioritizing economic value, but highlighting nature's intrinsic value. They also focus on the fragility, complexity and interdependence of ecosystems, and thus on the importance of protecting biodiversity (Dunlap, 2008). Ecocentricism promotes the idea of interconnectivity not only of species, but also of nature and culture, opposing dualist positions that separate nature and culture. The rejection of a human-nature dualism is articulated in Haraway's (2003) concept of "natureculture", which captures this "inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed" (Malone & Ovenden, 2017, p. 1).

One of the areas that adheres to a counterhegemonic ecocentric approach to sustainability is the environmental philosophy of deep ecology, that supports the idea of inherent value of all biotic and abiotic elements of nature. Deep ecology focuses on the interdependence of organisms in the living environment without prioritizing any of these organisms. This philosophy takes a holistic view, on the premise that the different elements of ecosystems (humans included) can only function as a whole, therefore, the survival of any part is dependent on the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem (Devall & Sessions, 1985; Naess, 1973; Sessions, 1995).

Ecocentrism also opposes the hegemonic hierarchization of species, which creates antagonistic relations among them, promoting instead symbiotic relations among species, but still acknowledging the possibility of conflict. The prioritization of an economic logic leads to the creation of hierarchies and to the classification of species and elements of nature, as being more or less useful, based on whether they serve direct human needs, resulting in the loss of biodiversity:

> Empirical evidence of rapidly disappearing biodiversity seems to suggest that explicit anthropocentric views, pure or mixed with neo-classical economic short-term market exploitation, have led to abandoning biodiversity conservation, other than conservation of species used by humans for consumption, recreation, medical experimentation, tourism or pet-keeping. (Kopnina, 2013, p. 59)

Ecocentric approaches to sustainability argue for the need of a strict environmental legislation that will enable the conservation and preservation of ecosystems, safeguarding biodiversity. Their understanding of sustainability focuses on "continuity and balance" (Kopnina, 2013, p. 53), and not so much on change, which is often seen as an undesired or feared negative evolution, associated with risk of degradation and loss. Some scholars staying close to this camp stress the need to understand sustainability in terms of stability. For them, "[t]o be in a stable state is not to be motionless; it involves movement and progression within an orbit" (Shiva, 2005, p. 51). Hence, "[t]he key to achieving stability is living within nature's limits, balancing with nature's ecological processes, and treating nature's economy as primary and the market economy as secondary" (Pal & Jenkins, 2014, p. 401). Thus, stability is not to be seen as stagnation, but as protecting continuity and balance in ecosystems, characterized by symbiotic relations that incorporate natureculture (see Haraway, 2003).

Even if continuity and stability are prioritized as safeguarding sustainability, while human activity is often seen as disruptive, and change is connected to negative evolution, at the same time, ecocentric approaches to sustainability argue for the need of a paradigmatic shift. Being connected with a counterhegemonic approach regarding the organization of societies and their models of growth, ecocentrism attacks globalized capitalism and neo-liberalism (Foster et al., 2010; Kopnina, 2013; 2016; Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016) as the main perpetrators of environmental destruction and calls for structural change. Its appeal for collective action spans the micro-macro spectrum (ranging from micro-individual action to coordinated policy action), and is also targeted towards more efficient environmental protection through stricter legislation and its implementation, so as to prevent, and if possible, reverse negative environmental change caused by human activity.

Ecocentrism is not spared the critique of being idealistic and inapplicable on a large scale. It is also attacked as insensitive to humanity's other urgent problems, that are manifested especially in the global South, such as extreme poverty and famines, and which are sometimes connected to rapid development solutions, prioritizing the wellbeing of humanity (Guha, 1998; Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997; Nations, 1988). Relatedly, ecocentrism is critiqued for being reactionary, for taking an anti-humanist position, even for being misanthropist, disregarding the value of humanity and of human progress and civilization (Bookchin, 1987; 1990).

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN SWEDEN AND ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Issues related to environmental sustainability occupy a prominent position in the Swedish public sphere. Sweden is seen as leading a number of sustainability and environmental policies, setting the example at the international level.[3] Also, Swedish society is considered to be sensitive towards environmental issues, and there is a long tradition of environmental struggles and the ecological movement in the country. This environmental consciousness is reflected in Swedish mainstream media's content (Magnusson et al., 2021; Shehata & Hopmann, 2012) but also in non-professional and personal media, online and offline, and social media platforms such as Facebook, where news, comments and discussions about sustainability and the environment abound (Haider, 2016; Joosse & Brydges, 2018; Olausson, 2018).

Social media, and Facebook in particular, provide spaces for expression and interaction around environmental concerns, addressing audiences' specific interests and perspectives. They offer visibility to issues and topics that do not always find their place in mainstream professional media, and attribute voice, authority (Boykoff et al., 2015; Cox, 2012; Lester & Cottle, 2015) and the expertise of experience (Joosse & Brydges, 2018, p. 697) to individuals. For all these reasons (self-expression, non-moderation, direct interaction, etc.), social media can, under certain conditions, serve as spaces where unpopular, radical, silenced and counterhegemonic voices are expressed, regarding a broad range of environmental issues (Arlt et al., 2019; Brüggeman et al., 2020; Häussler, 2019). Also, there are several studies indicating that "socially-mediated communication provides a novel forum for counter-hegemonic resistance" (Burch, 2021, p. 250) in the context of environmental struggles (Olteanu et al., 2015; Spyksma, 2019).

At the same time, a lot of environment-related content that circulates on these platforms is not professionally monitored and can contain unsubstantiated or distorted information about complex environmental issues (Bloomfield & Tillery, 2019). Furthermore, the social media environment, and particularly that of Facebook groups, supports the development of "echo chambers", facilitating audience exposure to content that is in line with audiences' pre-existing views and beliefs, strengthening fragmentation and polarisation around environmental issues such as climate change (Brüggeman et al., 2020; Edwards, 2013; Elgesem et al., 2015; Van Eck et al., 2020). Additionally, social media's accounts on the environment tend to offer fragmented and personalized approaches and concerns around complex issues, focusing often "on the individual as the location for change for the environment" (Joosse & Brydges, 2018, p. 697) and not so much on politics and coordinated collective action.

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[3] This positioning is not without critique. See, for instance, Hickel's (2020) argument that Sweden's "material footprint" is one of the largest in the world. Furthermore, it should not be neglected that despite its 'green' political orientation, Sweden's economic model is structured around a capitalist-led industrial organization of the economy and society at large.

METHODS OF DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

This research focuses on Facebook, and reports on a mapping analysis (see Voniati et al., 2018) which has identified 152 Facebook groups that explicitly relate to the environment, have a connection with Sweden, and have been sufficiently active[4] within a period of one year (May 2019-April 2020). The mapping analysis is supported by a quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) that locates the main elements, through which the identified Facebook groups address issues of sustainability.

The mapping research aimed to identify all Facebook groups[5] that explicitly focus on the environment in Sweden during the one-year period of study. Methodologically, it was guided by a previously developed model for mapping community media organizations (Voniati et al., 2018), which was adjusted to serve the purposes of this study. Briefly, the mapping procedure consisted of four main steps. The first was the development of an operational definition, deciding on which Facebook groups to include. Here, a restrictive definition was used focusing on active Facebook groups, public or private, that explicitly addressed the environment (as a primary concern) and that had an explicit connection to Sweden. In the next step, a diversity of search strategies was deployed, to identify all Facebook groups that matched this operational definition, with the objective to map the entire population, and not to sample it. These strategies consisted of: a series of online searches through keywords and key sites; a survey addressed to key actors related to the fields of study; an online search through the identified units' contacts and networks; a search in academic publications; an additional online search through keywords and in the identified unit's networks, until no more new units would be identified. Then, information about the 152 Facebook groups that were identified, was compiled in forms – called Mapping Index Cards (MICs). Finally, in the fourth step the information contained in the MICs was treated as data and analyzed using quantitative content analysis techniques, through the construction of variables and categories, and the coding of the data according to content analysis procedures (Krippendorff, 2004).

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[4] For a Facebook group to be defined as "active" there had to be a minimum of ten postings within the research period, and more than 25 postings in total from the moment the Facebook group was created until the end of the research period.

[5] This mapping exercise was part of a larger project that also mapped blogs, YouTube channels, documentary films, televisions series, art projects and exhibitions.

The reporting of the data collected through the mapping research was anonymized and did not reveal the identity of the Facebook groups and their members. Furthermore, in the case of private Facebook groups, being granted access to the groups was a condition for further investigation and inclusion[6]. It shall be noted that the research team provided information regarding the research project and its purposes, when requesting permission to join the private Facebook groups.

For the purposes of this specific study that focuses on sustainability, 14 variables were created, related to three thematic clusters pertinent to the purposes of the study, namely intervention–nonintervention of humans in nature, ecocentrism–anthropocentrism and human–nature symbiotic–antagonistic relations. One of the article's authors, who was also the researcher leading the mapping project, coded all 152 Facebook group MICs, across the 14 variables. A second researcher independently coded 26% of the Facebook group MICs content, following specialized training, with the purpose of checking the inter-coder agreement levels. Krippendorff's alpha range for the 14 variables of this study was 0.795 – 1.000, and Cohen's kappa range was 0.793 – 1.000, which are considered of adequate reliability. According to Cohen, coefficients in the range of 0.61–0.80 indicate substantial agreement, and of 0.81–1.00 almost perfect agreement (McHugh, 2012). Also, according to Krippendorff (2004), a coefficient of 0.800 is considered adequate for inter-coder reliability, while one of 0.667 is the lowest admissible limit for tentative findings.

THE 152 FACEBOOK GROUPS CONSTRUCTING SUSTAINABILITY IN SWEDEN

The 152 Facebook groups that focus on the environment in Sweden, which were identified through the mapping research, address diverse focal points including climate change, renewable energy, (pro and anti)-hunting, (pro and anti)-nuclear energy, different flora and fauna species, anti-mining, deforestation. They also focus on less recurrent issues and topics, such as climate change skepticism and denialism, rights of nature, opposing certain forms of renewable energy such as wind energy and hydropower. There are also some Facebook groups clearly combining certain party-political ideologies and ecological claims, and some other groups combining, among others, religion and ecology, antimilitarism and ecology, gender and ecology.

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[6] 28 private Facebook groups, which were initially considered for examination, did not grant access to the mapping researchers and were not examined further. As a consequence, there might be an underrepresentation of private Facebook groups in the mapping results.

As previously mentioned, the 14 sustainability-related content analysis variables composed three thematic clusters pertaining to issues and discourses of sustainability, which emerged via an abductive approach from the analysis of the empirical data, guided by the existing literature on sustainability. This abductive process led to the identification of the three clusters of intervention–nonintervention, ecocentrism–anthropocentrism and human–nature symbiotic–antagonistic relations.

INTERVENTION-NONINTERVENTION

As the quantitative content analysis results indicated (see Table 1), most of the Facebook groups (84%) contain references to human activity as being intrusive or destructive for the environment, and humans as perpetrators or as (the main) source of problems for the environment (82%). Such references communicate the idea that human activity (economic activity, urban living, fossil fuel dependency, excessive waste and pollution, deforestation, mining, etc.) is damaging the environment, causing changes or deformations to the environment, disturbing the balance of ecosystems, disturbing the living conditions of natural elements, leading to species extinction, global warming, and extreme climate change. Human activity is not seen, in most Facebook groups, as beneficial for the environment (90%), and human actions are not seen as contributing to solving environmental problems or improving environmental conditions.

Within this logic, the Facebook groups and their members communicate that there is a need to act in order to tackle environmental problems (84%). These references express the idea that action needs to be taken (and is not taken yet or not taken to an adequate degree) to produce change or to contribute to solutions to environmental problems. Such claims are presented as suggestions, recommendations, urges, appeals or demands for action that needs to be taken to improve the environmental conditions, or to stop further degradation or destruction of the environment. These claims also express the idea that nonintervention or human inactivity is damaging for the environment. In other words, they argue that humans not taking action to change the situation, or continuing the same practices and behavior, is damaging or destructive for the environment.

Some of the Facebook groups argue that nonintervention or human inactivity is positive or contributes to solutions to environmental problems (20%). In most cases, these groups argue for the benefits of leaving nature alone or of leaving wildlife undisturbed. These claims are expressed through the argument for the need to stop or significantly limit hunting, traveling by airplane or mining. Still, in most cases, human inactivity or nonintervention is considered negative, in light of the argument that people should act to prevent further environmental damage. In this vein, the idea that there is no need for humans to change habits or lifestyles (continuing to hunt as they have till now, mine or use fossil fuels to the same extent), is not significantly present (3%).

Table 1. Intervention–nonintervention

Does the Facebook group consider …	"Yes"		"No"		Total N
	n	per cent	n	per cent	
… human activity intrusive or destructive for the environment	127	84%	25	16%	152
… humans perpetrators or source of problems for the environment	125	82%	27	18%	152
… human activity beneficial for the environment	15	10%	137	90%	152
… it necessary to act to tackle environmental problems	127	84%	25	16%	152
… nonintervention or human inactivity positive (or contributing to solutions to environmental problems)	31	20%	121	80%	152
… it not necessary for humans to change habits or way of life	5	3%	147	97%	152

Source: Authors

ECOCENTRISM–ANTHROPOCENTRISM

In the context of the anthropocentric–ecocentric dimension (see Table 2), we can see that again a great majority of the Facebook groups express ecocentric ideas (92%), portraying humans and other species as equal to, or part of nature. In these cases, nature is seen as the shared home of plants, animals and humans. Ecocentric ideas are also communicated, e.g., through the need to take care of or preserve nature, and protect biodiversity, the ecosystems and (menaced) species. These arguments are based on the idea that humans have the responsibility to protect nature and act as stewards of nature's wellbeing. Ecocentric ideas also focus on ecology and (the need for) ecological ways of organizing life, economy and society at large. When we look a bit closer into how this ideology plays out in practice, we can see Facebook groups sometimes urging to change those models of organizing life that damage nature, and to shift to sustainable resources of energy that do not destroy the environment. There are also Facebook groups that do not employ explicitly critical positions towards human activity. These groups engage with ecocentric ideas through their exclusive or primary focus on the natural world, on wildlife, on ecosystems, and on the beauty and value of nature and its species. Ecocentric ideas are generally communicated in a positive or neutral light and are hardly ever critiqued (only in one case that was clearly arguing for the necessity of killing wolves, as they are seen as a menace to humans and to other species, and for the necessity of humans having more control over wild ecosystems so that they protect their own interests).

The identified Facebook groups frequently contain references to anthropocentric ideas (88%), which position humans as superior to nature, as having the right, or as being entitled to control nature, but in most cases these ideas are directly critiqued (in 89% of the 134 Facebook groups that mention anthropocentric ideas). The critique targets the practice of dominating the environment on the premises of human superiority or entitlement over nature, with humans imposing their conditions on nature. This critique also contains references indicating that nature is treated and exploited as a source of profit by humans, causing in the process significant or irreversible damage. It should be noted that anthropocentric and ecocentric references are not mutually exclusive. A Facebook group may be addressing both anthropocentric and ecocentric claims, by e.g., critiquing the anthropocentric and supporting or not critiquing the ecocentric ideas, or containing only either neutral and supportive or only critical references for both.

Table 2. Ecocentrism–anthropocentrism

Does the Facebook group explicitly refer to …	"Yes"		"No"		Total N
	n	per cent	n	per cent	
… ecocentric ideas	140	92%	12	8%	152
(If so), is ecocentrism critiqued	1	1%	139	99%	140
… anthropocentric ideas	134	88%	18	12%	152
(If so), is anthropocentrism critiqued	119	89%	15	11%	134

Source: Authors

HUMAN–NATURE SYMBIOTIC–ANTAGONISTIC RELATIONS

Most Facebook groups contain references to symbiotic relations of humans and nature, or among different species (83%) (see Table 3). Symbiotic relations are characterized by recognition of (the need for) coexistence among species and elements of nature. They sometimes also relate to the recognition of dependence of humans on nature or of interdependence of humans and nature. Additionally, they may communicate the idea that nature is the place where 'we' (humans, animals, plants, etc.) live together. Symbiotic relations are not always seen as entirely harmonious, and tensions in these relations are not excluded. Symbiotic ideas are communicated in an either positive or neutral light, and they are not critiqued by the 126 Facebook groups that mention symbiotic relations.

Ideas about antagonistic relations of humans and nature, or among different species are also present in the Facebook groups studied (85%). Antagonistic relations are characterized by opposition, conflict, one side (humans, species) imposing its conditions on the other (nature, other species). In the great majority of these cases, antagonistic relations are critiqued (95%), targeting the practice of humans imposing their conditions on nature or over other species, damaging nature, treating nature as an enemy or opponent to be controlled or dominated. Again, symbiotic and antagonistic references are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist.

Table 3. Human–nature symbiotic–antagonistic relations

Does the Facebook group explicitly refer to …	"Yes"		"No"		Total N
	n	per cent	n	per cent	
… symbiotic relations of humans and nature, or among different species	126	83%	26	17%	152
(If so), are symbiotic relations critiqued	0	0%	126	100%	126
… antagonistic relations of humans and nature, or among different species	129	85%	23	15%	152
(If so), are antagonistic relations critiqued	122	95%	7	5%	129

Source: Authors

CLUSTER CO-OCCURRENCES

The three clusters' findings already indicate the strong (counterhegemonic) resistance against the hegemony of anthropocentrism. Most Facebook groups take ecocentric positions, pointing to human activity as being damaging on the one hand, and urging for action, to stop and reverse the destructive consequences of human activity for the environment, on the other. There are exceptions, though. A few Facebook groups diverge from these positions, addressing an anthropocentric discourse to sustainability that prioritizes human wellbeing, mostly in economic terms, and human freedom and entitlement, for example to hunt and use nature's resources. That discourse underplays or rejects any anthropogenic contribution to environmental degradation and destruction. Nevertheless, as Table 4 shows, there is a large segment of the Facebook groups (about two-thirds) that consistently and explicitly defend ecocentrism and synergetic relations, and which simultaneously (and equally explicitly) reject anthropocentrism and antagonistic relations.

Table 4. Co-occurrences among ecocentrism–anthropocentrism and symbiotic–antagonistic relations

Score level	Definition	n	per cent
Score 4	(1) Mentions anthropocentrism and critiques it; (2) Mentions ecocentrism but does not critique it; (3) Mentions symbiotic relations but does not critique them; (4) Mentions antagonistic relations and critiques them	104	68%
Score 3	Fulfils three out of the four criteria mentioned above	14	9%
Score 2	Fulfils two out of the four criteria mentioned above	19	13%
Score 1	Fulfils one out of the four criteria mentioned above	10	7%
Score 0	Fulfils none of the four criteria mentioned above	5	3%
N		**152**	**100%**

Source: Authors

CONCLUSIONS

A large majority of the 152 Facebook groups that focus on the environment in Sweden, identified through our mapping research, take ecocentric positions towards sustainability, understanding humans' and nature's well-being as interconnected. This is related to an understanding of human-nature relations as mainly symbiotic, but still not eliminating conflict. This construction of ecocentrism aligns with the breadth of theoretical and action-oriented positions of ecocentrism, of deep ecology, natureculture, interdependence and non-hierarchization of species, that were presented in the earlier sections of the article. Arguably, these findings concern those Facebook groups that fit our strict mapping criteria, and those people that feel motivated enough to speak out about the environment on Facebook, while any individual responses on other Facebook pages (or on other platforms) are not included. Still, an almost overwhelming majority of these Facebook groups critique hegemonic anthropocentrism and defend a discursive-ideological repositioning. This is one main location of discursive struggle we can identify, as the conversations in these public spaces aim to reconfigure current political and economic practices.

There are, however, Facebook groups that diverge from these ecocentric (counterhegemonic) positions, by defending the hegemonic anthropocentric discourse to sustainability, that prioritizes human prosperity, seen as disconnected from nature's wellbeing. According to these groups, human-made interventions in nature to improve humans' lives are positive and should not be problematized. These approaches to sustainability echo anthropocentrism as it has been defined by scholars and elaborated upon earlier in the article.

They focus on humans' entitlement to control and dominate nature, on the hierarchization of species based on the degree to which they cover human needs, and on the apprehension of human-nature relations as antagonistic. This is the second location of discursive struggle, identified through the analysis, through which the anthropocentrically positioned Facebook groups aim to counter the main thrust of counterhegemonic Facebook groups (and other public spaces), and protect the status-quo.

These two main camps, the hegemonic–anthropocentric and the counterhegemonic–ecocentric, maintain highly distinct, if not diametrically opposed, positions towards change. The first camp defends human intervention in the environment as positive, leading to progress and economic prosperity, while the second resists structural changes to the existing socio-economic and political establishment. The second camp regards human intervention in nature as undesired and destructive, and at the same time, argues for the need for structural changes to the capitalist-led model of development and economic growth. These positions reflect the struggle over the maintenance or change of the existing hegemonic paradigm over sustainability and human-nature relations.

While ideological diversity exists in these Facebook groups, and diverging positions are expressed both within the ecocentric and anthropocentric camp, we can still see a remarkable dominance of an ecocentric discourse and critique on hegemonic anthropocentrism within these public spaces. This points to the potential of social media to function as spaces where strong alternative positions are articulated, creating their own counter-hegemonies. Still, one needs to be careful to avoid generalizations and make claims regarding the findings' universality. Such possibilities are always context-specific. In this case, the publication platform (Facebook groups with a clear identity and not individual Facebook pages), the groups' orientation (primary focus on the environment), and the Swedish society, which, again avoiding generalizations, is considered sensitive towards the environment, all need to be taken into consideration in evaluating and interpreting the research findings. Hence, further research would be needed to evaluate the potential of social media to serve as spaces where counterhegemonic environmental positions are articulated, in other countries and in other contexts. Such research endeavors shall also take into consideration that social media do not function in a social vacuum, and that ideological and broader social struggles are not limited to one sphere, no matter how visible or privileged. At the same time, the strong dominance of the counterhegemonic positions towards sustainability and human-nature relations in the Swedish case brings us to the Habermasian argument that the translation of public sphere conversations, with all their incompleteness and omissions, to public policy, is not guaranteed. This non-rendering which becomes clear in environmental issues indicates that the struggle to change the anthropocentric organization of (Swedish) society still has a long way to go.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Politicizing Poland's Public Service Media: The Analysis of *Wiadomości* News Program

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Abstract: This study explores the tensions between the mission and pluralism of the media versus the participation of the public service media (PSM) in government propaganda in Poland. We present the results of the hybrid qualitative-quantitative content analysis of the propaganda techniques used in *Wiadomości* – the main public TVP1 news program. Two weekly blocks of news were analyzed. The first was randomly selected from 2015-2020. The second was subsequently chosen for the same seven days, two years later. We assumed that this chronological difference would reveal changes in narration and propaganda used in the news. The analysis refers to the mission of PSM, as defined by the law in the Broadcasting Act (1992). The changes that occurred after 2015 were also the result of new legal regulations and personnel changes. The conclusions confirm that the news from the PSM is controlled and manipulated by the government.

Keywords: Polish media, public service media, politicization, propaganda techniques; *Wiadomości* news program.

INTRODUCTION

The media system in Poland has always been closely related to the state, which made it difficult for journalists to be impartial. Lucyna Szot says that in Poland the media became a tool of political parties: "There is an abyss between the ideas of a neutral, impartial observer and practice deeply rooted in the tradition of biased, engaged journalism"[1] (Szot, 2020, p. 169). Public service media (PSM) in Poland have been treated as a kind of political target by the ruling party since the beginning of the political transformation. Poland’s Broadcasting Act (1992) enacted on 1 March 1993 assumed politicians’ influence on filling the main posts in public radio and television (Mielczarek, 2007). Politicization has been apparent not only in institutional but also in staff or program spheres. Each ruling party aimed to dominate the Polish PSM. However, changes made by *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS, Law and Justice) after winning the parliamentary elections in 2015 were so substantive that Poland has since become an object of interest at the international level. The changes made by PiS worsened the situation of the country not only according to EU politicians, but also in various studies, rankings, and reports (showing Poland departing from democratization processes).

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[1] All translations of Polish texts into English are the responsibility of the authors of this article.

Studies on media in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries initially referred to the authoritarian model that Siebert et al. (1956) describe in their book “Four Theories of the Press”. Since 2004, scholars analyzing media systems in the CEE consider the criteria devised by Hallin and Mancini (2004). At the beginning of the democratization process, European countries had much in common with the polarized pluralist model. In line with their development, the attributes of the liberal model have improved, for instance, in Poland. Referring to previous studies, Dobek-Ostrowska (2015) offers the concept of division of the media system in this region and classifies Poland (together with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia) as the liberal hybrid model. She emphasizes that, compared to other countries, Poland’s media market is relatively large and that the media are more pluralistic and competition-oriented.

THEORY AND CONTEXT

In the early 2000s, Poland’s media system displayed the characteristics of a liberal model with polarized pluralism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (2010) argues that over the ensuing decade Poland’s media system not only features strong political parallelism, a high level of state intervention, as well as media tabloidization and commercialization, but also deep politicization, partiality, and engagement in the political process. The outcome of Dobek-Ostrowska’s research into the Polish media system (2015, 2019) is that the most suitable model for Poland is a liberal hybrid model. Other researchers have focused on the high politicization of Poland’s PSM (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Wąsińska, 2014; Węglińska, 2018).

Political parallelism is the key concept for this topic in the context of Poland’s media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Coined by Seymour-Ure (1974) and developed by Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), political parallelism gained popularity in 2000 when Hallin and Mancini (2004) included the concept as one of the four analytical variables of comparative media systems. In the context of increased political parallelism, relations between journalists and political actors are very close, impacting on journalists' work. Additionally, as Dragomir (2005) argues, public media are more exposed to political pressure than privately owned ones. Political parallelism is more prevalent in post-Communist countries than any of the EU's stable democracies, as revealed by Freedom House between 1993 and 2012 (Bajomi-Lázár, 2015).

Lucyna Szot (2020) suggests that media-politics relations have always been conflicting. Changes in the nation's politics influenced the reorganization of PSM structures in Poland, consolidating the process of media politicization. Ryszard Herbut (2002) notes that politicians performing functions in PSM are a manifestation of this process, perceived as the colonization of public administration. Indeed, Oniszczuk (2011, p. 18) argues that politicization means determining the influence of the politicians on media, and the subordination of media to politics. However, as several researchers have found, politicization is multidimensional (see Bennett et al., 2007; Boykoff & Boykoff, 2007; Feldman et al., 2017). In the context of Poland's PSM, Jaskiernia and Pokorna-Ignatowicz (2018) contend that, despite the efforts of various communities, PSM have yet to be separated from politics, and Donders (2021, p. 273) suggests that Poland might be falling back into the abyss of State broadcasting.

The political party *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO, Civic Platform) won the parliamentary elections in 2007 and formed a coalition government together with *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* (PSL, Polish People's Party) with Donald Tusk as Prime Minister. The next parliamentary election took place in 2011, at which time the governing party (the coalition) held on to its power for the first time since 1989. These elections took place in an atmosphere of increasing social polarization, related to the aircraft catastrophe in 2010, in which the President of Poland, his entourage and more than 90 politicians, generals, clergymen, and families of people murdered in Katyń during World War II, all died. The next election took place in 2015, won by *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS, Law and Justice), which repeated its electoral success in 2019. After 2015, PiS took control of PSM and began to use them as a tool of political propaganda, which suggests that Donder's (2021) fears of Poland falling into an abyss are legitimate.

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA IN POLAND

The frequently cited World Press Freedom Index of the Reporters Without Borders shows that freedom of speech has been gradually restricted in Poland. The main criteria that define the positions of nations in the ranking are related to the level and character of the relationship between media and politics. Poland in 2020 ranked 62nd out of 180 classified countries, close to states such as Georgia, Armenia, and Argentina (Reporters Without Borders, 2020). Yet only five years earlier, in 2015, Poland was ranked 18th.

Justifying Poland's rank in the 2020 report, RSF points out that the decline was due to the growing criminalization of sanctions against the press in cases of defamation, hate speech broadcast in PSM, which was also utilized by the government as a propaganda tool, and the intolerance displayed by the heads of PSM for journalists wanting to stay neutral (Reporters Without Borders, 2020). The same index for 2017 stated that the new Broadcasting Act of 30 December 2015 "transformed PSM into state ones, and the heads of TV channels were rapidly replaced by people connected to the ruling party" (Dopierała & Ossowski, 2018, p. 6).

Freedom House (2020) also mentions the decline of democratization processes in Poland. In 2020, Freedom House evaluated Poland as 4.93 on a scale of 0-7 (and was thus classified as a semi-consolidated democracy). Yet just five years earlier, in 2015, the evaluation was 5.79 (a consolidated democracy). Numerous features responsible for the worsening situation in Poland are mentioned in the Freedom House (2020) report, like attacks on the LGBT+ community, extremism in public discourse, charges for local government budgets, and disciplinary systems applied to intimidate judges critical of the government's revision of the judiciary system. The report pays particular attention to the deteriorating situation of commercial media, which after the government took control of public broadcasters were next in line to have their autonomy restricted. The PSM continue to distribute propaganda content, promoting a positive one-sided image of the governing coalition. The report also criticizes budgeted financing for these broadcasters, which amounts to PLN2 billion. Freedom House (2020) evaluated the health of media as 5 on a 7-grade scale, down from 5.50 in 2015.

Inconsistencies in governmental financial support are notable. Broadcasting revenue and television subscriptions should be sufficient to finance TVP because the Polish media model assumes that a PSM can broadcast advertisements. However, various socio-demographic groups are exempt from having a TV subscription such as seniors aged 75 years and older, the unemployed, beneficiaries of care allowances, the deaf and the blind. Furthermore, because television subscriptions have a poor rate of collection (estimated at 31% of all viewers obliged to pay in 2018) (Owruszko (2019), PiS as the ruling party decided that the state would compensate public media losses. As media scholars in Poland have noted, the sum of compensation for all PSM was almost doubled over the next three years from PLN980 million in 2018 to PLN1.95 billion in 2021.

Kucharski (2019) suggests that the increase proves the lack of defined rules for this support, the abstractness of the amount, and that it is a hidden form of support for the propaganda tool of the governing party. The symptoms of the negative situation of the Polish PSM include not only restrictions of their autonomy, but also the level of public trust in them. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism surveyed trust in the main media brands in Poland in 2020 and found that trust in TVP Info (public news channel and portal) amounts to only 43%, and 39% of the respondents do not trust it at all (Reuters Institute, 2020). Two commercial channels are its main competitors, Polsat News with a trust level of 65%, and TVN24 – 63% (Reuters Institute, 2020). Importantly, TVP Info as a news channel has a weekly audience of 31%, while the competitive TVN News (TVN24 + TVNBis) have 50%. The report also states that independent media usually receive more trust than TVP, as the public broadcaster is often perceived as acting in the interest of the ruling party (Reuters Institute, 2020).

The changes mentioned above are mainly the result of the new political course, initiated after the parliamentary election in 2015, in which the conservative PiS took control of government. The PiS party is led by Jarosław Kaczyński, whom Zamana (2016) describes as an uncompromising populist politician focused on autocracy. Immediately after winning the parliamentary election in October 2015, the PiS-led government brought in a 'small amendment' to the 1992 Broadcasting Act, which allowed the party to take control of Poland's PSM before the end of the Board's fixed 6-year term. The primary controversial aspect of the 'small amendment' was that the competition for being a member of the PSM's Board, open to members of the public, was discontinued. The Minister of the Treasury was given the power to make the appointments. The second controversy was that the 'small amendment' abolished the fixed term (6-year) appointments of the members of the management board. Miżejewski (2018) explains that the amendment also provided the termination of the mandates of members of the supervisory and management boards of PSM, i.e., Polskie Radio S.A. (Polish Radio) and TVP S.A. on the effective date of the Act, and Miżejewski emphasizes that the Act gave the Minister of Treasury a lot of discretion and that the appointment of media authorities was no longer collegiate. Another significant change was the approval by Parliament on 29 June 2016 of the Act that created a new National Media Council, which took over the Minister of Treasury's powers of appointing members of the PSM management board. This legislative technique was necessary for two reasons. First, at the time the PiS party gained power in December 2015, the 6-year terms of office of the collegiately elected management boards of the PSM and the Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji (KRRiT, National Broadcasting Council) would be effective throughout the government's term of office. Secondly, PiS could not interfere with the competencies of KRRiT's board as it is a constitutional body, and PiS did not have the majority of votes in the Parliament the party needed to change the constitution. These new regulations allowed the PSM's politicization to develop in an unprecedented way for the first time since 1989.

It is worth noting that TVP S.A. is one of the three largest players in Poland's digital terrestrial television market. It dominates the audience alongside two commercial broadcasters: Polsat TV (Cyfrowy Polsat, Digital Polsat) and US owned TVN (Discovery). An extensive range of thematic channels and an extensive TV archive, developed over 70 years, give TVP a strong position in Poland's TV market.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this study is to explore the increasing politicization of *Wiadomości*, the main public TV news program (TVP), during the rule of *Zjednoczona Prawica* (ZP, United Political Right), led by the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS) party in Poland. Media politicization is defined firstly as an attempt by political forces to dominate media and the usage of media for the realization of own, specifically partisan goals (Oniszczuk, 2011, p. 18). Propaganda and persuasion are the tools of such politicization, used in either language or content organization and presentation. Other appearances or features of media politicization include open entry and activity of politics (in all its manifestations and types) in the everyday life of mass media (Adamowski, 2001, p. 67), as well as the active participation of the media in political life, through the order of the topics presented, selection of the interviewees, and the way the topics are presented (Dopierała & Ossowski, 2018, p. 7). Antonio Ciaglia (2013) argues in his comparative studies that media and political systems are always interdependent, although these relations can differ in forms and scale.

The broadcaster that is the subject of this research has a public status, therefore, it is obliged by the Broadcasting Act to enable "the citizens and their organizations to participate in public life by presenting different views and opinions and exercising the right of control and social critique" (art. 21, pass. 2 point 4 of the Broadcasting Act (1992)). The politicization of the content broadcast in TVP1 *Wiadomości* disrupts this process. The research findings discussed below present the main features of the content transmitted by the news program, potentially influencing public opinion.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

We formulated four research questions within the scope of the study:

- Q1: Are there any changes in the level of politicization of the news program *Wiadomości* between 2019 and 2021?
- Q2: If so, what is the character of these changes?
- Q3: What influenced the changes?

- Q4: Were any propaganda techniques applied?

Concerning these research questions, we composed four hypotheses:

- H1: The main hypothesis states that *Wiadomości* as the main TVP news program does not meet one of the crucial tasks of a public broadcaster, i.e., the realization of the duty of objectivity and impartiality, but rather it is increasing the politicization of its broadcast news.
- H2: News items broadcast in *Wiadomości* create a positive image of *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* and the government.
- H3: The tone of *Wiadomości*'s news is closely and positively related to the daily news of the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* party.
- H4: *Wiadomości* contributes to polarization and divisions in society.

METHODOLOGY

The research methods applied in this project are quantitative and qualitative content analysis, supported by contextual analysis. Quantitative content analysis aimed at providing a quantitative description of explicit content communicated through the analyzed material (see Berelson, 1952, p. 18), such as the frequency of appearance of main actors and key features in the analyzed news. Data were coded by two researchers and the average intercoder agreement, measured by Cohen's kappa, was 0.97. Qualitative content analysis (Silverman, 2011) aimed at exploring how language is used to promote persuasion or propaganda techniques. Contextual analysis supported the content analysis, by allowing to validate the findings through external sources, such as expert reports and academic literature.

For the purposes of the study, we developed a classification key according to criteria suggested by Walery Pisarek and based on the research method of Bernard Berelson (Pisarek, 1983, p. 103), which was applied to every one of the smallest constitutive units of a news program, i.e., a news item (Seklecka, 2017). Any study attempting to identify increases in the politicization of news requires a comparative analysis of the selected resource materials spread over time (see Klepka, 2018; Nowak-Teter, 2021; Seklecka, 2017). We chose to analyze daily news programs occurring in the same calendric week—4-10 February—of two distinct years, for which the initial choices were 2019 and 2016. The latter would have been relevant because the concept of the program under the new TVP Director was being developed at that time and the process of staff purges was just gaining momentum. Unfortunately, the official request of the authorities of the Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, at the University of Warsaw, for the release of archival *Wiadomości* programs from Feb 4-10 2016, remained unanswered despite repeated appeals. Consequently, we chose 2021. Both samples consist of seven consecutive daily broadcasts of *Wiadomości*. During each week, there was the same number of news items (n=71) making an aggregate for the two weeks (N=142).

A comparative analysis of two research sample periods enabled us not only to identify the characteristics of politicization in *Wiadomości*, the main news program of the PSM, but also if politicization is stable or intensifying.

Notably, *Wiadomości* has been the leader in audience figures of news programs. There has been, since 2018, intense competition between *Wiadomości* and the independent broadcaster *Fakty* TVN (Wirtualnemedia, 2018). In 2019, *Wiadomości* attracted 14.57% of the audience, but *Fakty* led with 22.69% (Wirtualnemedia, 2021). Although the figures for *Wiadomości* increased in 2021 to 21.16%, *Fakty* was still the leader with 22.58% (Wirtualnemedia, 2021).

The study collected the following data: release date, order of news, identity of the news presenter, content of the news ticker, the main – and second-order topics of the analyzed news, people presented in the news (journalist, expert, pundit, civil servant), and graphic materials supporting narration (infographics, diagrams, tables). Additionally, we applied, through qualitative content analysis, language analysis regarding persuasion or propaganda techniques used in the material. The study included contextual analysis, supported by additional literature and expert reports, aiming to relate the findings with the identified levels of politicization and political parallelism between politics and media, in Poland.

FINDINGS

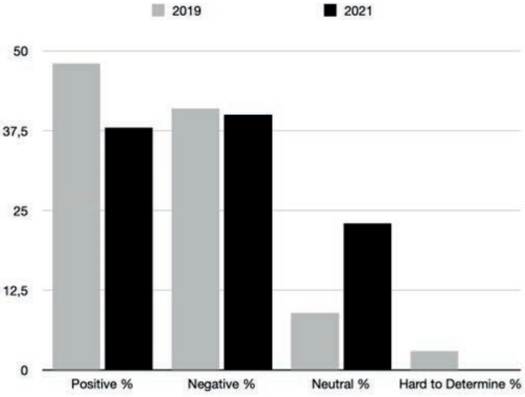
MEDIA SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT

The first group of identified issues consists of the content and forms that directly support the government. The first is the tone of the *Wiadomości* news items. The analysis of the material from the two periods did not reveal any significant discrepancies (see Figure 1) other than the rise of neutral tone news items.

The analysis reveals that the increase of neutral tone news was the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required the broadcaster to publish informational content. Three types of neutral information were determined for the 2021 period. The first (n=3) was of a commemorative character, related to the deaths of public figures, such as the outstanding Polish actor Krzysztof Kowalewski and the cartoonist Henryk Chmielewski (alias Papcio Chmiel). The second (n=3) was focused on the immunization of various social groups (teachers – at the time). However, there were quite a lot of news items concerning this topic, and most of them, despite their neutral character, had a slightly negative or positive tone.

The third type (n=16) did not refer to the pandemic, but to the wintry conditions, international topics and other issues broadcast during 4-10 February 2021.

Figure 1. Comparison of the tone of the news items on *Wiadomości* during February 4-10 in 2019 and 2021



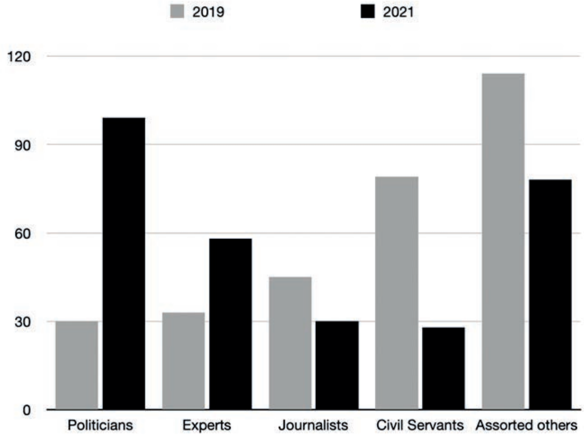
Source: Authors

Context was an important element in evaluating the credibility and reliability of *Wiadomości*. Almost all the positive news items mentioned the activities of the Polish government, individual ministries, and the Polish President. By contrast, the critical news items referred to activities of the Polish opposition and institutions of the European Union (EU Commission, European Parliament), as well as a few member states (France, Germany). The bias of TVP1 and *Wiadomości* was proved in the letter of Ombudsman Adam Bodnar (Bodnar, 2020) sent on 6.5.2020 to Witold Kołodziejski, President of the KRRiT, which oversees the electronic media market in the Polish legal system. The letter asked KRRiT to investigate a violation by the PSM of the 1992 Act on Broadcasting and Television. The Act obliges the PSM to carry out the mission of developing programs characterized by pluralism, impartiality, balance, and independence (Bodnar, 2020). The contextual analysis confirmed Hypothesis 2 concerning the promotion of the positive image of the Polish government and the PiS politicians.

Another element that was analyzed was the issue of people appearing in the news as pundits, in 2019 (n=301) and in 2021 (n=293) (see Figure 2).

The large number of 'Assorted others' is particularly noticeable, which results from the TVP production staff using the 'plain folks' technique, i.e., reference to opinions of the so-called ordinary citizens, who were mostly interviewed during street polls. The decrease of their number in 2021 is connected to the special circumstances during the pandemic, which required more consultations with health experts or politicians. However, the lack of information on the number of people surveyed and of the distribution of their opinion, clearly proved the manipulative character of this method.

Figure 2. Pundits (by profession and number) invited to appear on *Wiadomości* during 4-10, February in 2019 and 2021



Source: Authors

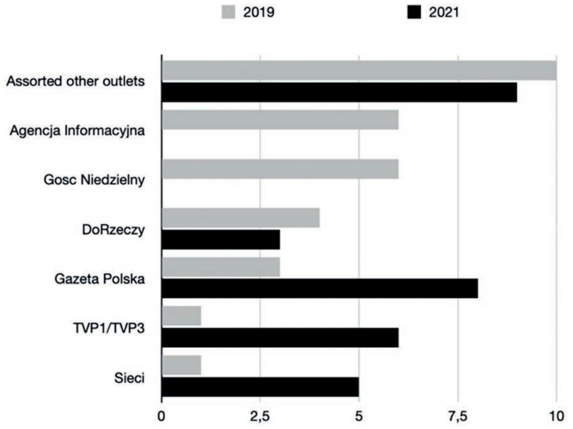
The increased number of politicians and experts in the news for this period was mainly related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to inform society about the situation and new restrictions. However, crises invariably have a significant influence on the image of politicians, either negatively or positively. Regarding the broad convergence between the positive tone and the increased presence of PiS politicians in the news, it is clear that *Wiadomości* ensured that the pandemic benefitted the ruling party. As Włodarczyk points out, the pandemic threat became an element of the political game:

> insofar as activities of the government at the beginning of the pandemic could have been perceived as information management, subsequent communications downplaying the threat or its resolution should rather be perceived as manipulation: due to short-term political interest, efforts were made to minimize the threat. (Włodarczyk, 2020, p. 140)

The pandemic situation complicated the search to find out whether the increase in the appearance of politicians in the news, compared to 2019, was only due to their greater activity. Another reason was radicalization of the political course because the PiS party had requested, in December 2019, the subordinated Constitutional Tribunal to tighten the abortion law in Poland. Zuzanna Dąbrowska (2021) argues that this was the main reason of the rapid fall in the PiS party ratings. The diminished presence of journalists and civil servants in 2021 may also be connected to the pandemics, and to the increased visibility of politicians and experts in the limited duration of the news programs.

Another identified issue was the presence of journalists acting as pundits in the TVP news program. Interestingly, in each period the pundit-journalists appeared on 31 occasions. There were no significant differences amongst the represented outlets (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Journalists (by outlet) acting as invited pundits on *Wiadomości*, during February 4-10 in 2019 and 2021



Source: Authors

Pundit-journalists in 2019 mostly represented outlets that sympathized with the authorities (n=21). The 'assorted other outlets' category consists of specialized media with narrow focuses (e.g., the military journal *Polska Zbrojna* and the sports review paper *Przegląd Sportowy*). Their pundits mostly had a neutral tone. Only 1 of the 31 journalists criticized the Polish government.

The situation was similar in the second period, with pundit-journalists representing outlets that supported the authorities (n=22). None of the aggregate (n=31) were critical of the government. The 'assorted other outlets' category included branch media (*energetyka24.pl*) or those favorable toward the government, but which appeared only once (e.g., *Gazeta Bankowa*, *Gazeta Gdańska,* and the Catholic weekly news magazine *Gość Niedzielny*).

There was a significant disproportion in the representation of different views and the overwhelming dominance of pro-government attitudes among politicians and journalists in *Wiadomości*. Qualitative analysis of the news revealed that journalists often act as experts whose task should be limited to a short description of an event (facts, contexts, statements of other people). On the contrary, they accepted the role of pundits and interpreters, even though they were not sufficiently competent. Additionally, this politicization was due to most of the invited journalists being associated to outlets, which supported the PiS government.

CRITICISM OF ENTITIES OPPOSING THE GOVERNMENT

The second group of identified issues consisted of the content and forms that directly criticized the government and PiS, and entities that were clearly not political, i.e., they did not belong to the opposition. This category includes any of the European Union institutions (e.g., the EU Commission) or media or public figures (e.g., journalists).

The qualitative analysis revealed that *Wiadomości* actively participated in a dichotomous perception of the European Union and the negation of its politics by the broadcaster. The critiques of EU politicians, as well as leaders of the largest member states (Germany and France), seems to be a permanent element of the policy of the news program. The negative tone in the news does not result from complex persuasion tools or methods, but from the explicit inclusion of evaluative statements of error and blame, such as the following: "[The] EU finally understood that it made a mistake forcing a pro-immigration policy" (02.10.21); "The EU Commission did not care for the timely arrival of the vaccines" (07.02.21). The negative tone was multiplied by the lack of comments from the EU representatives. Public opinion surveys carried out by CBOS (the government-dependent public opinion research center) in 2018 researched the social attitudes towards the PiS party[2] in the context of EU integration. According to the poll's results, PiS sought to suppress rather than strengthen EU integration, which meant that PiS aimed to limit integration and increase the role of national states in the EU (27% of respondents) or to maintain the status quo (25%) (CBOS, 2018). Furthermore, some of the respondents perceived the ruling party as pursuing Pol-exit (16%). Only a few respondents (3%) thought that PiS wanted to create a multi-speed Europe, where select states cooperate more closely than others (CBOS, 2018). The social awareness of the PiS party's reluctant perception to the EU was common. The distribution of anti-EU commentaries in TVP1 was perceived not only by public opinion but also in the result of the content analysis.

Hyperbole is also used to help exaggerate the tone of the described phenomena, and metaphors are used to make the message more expressive. Memorializing the late Prime Minister of Poland, Jan Olszewski (a lawyer, oppositionist, and Prime Minister of Poland in the years 1991-1992) and his government, *Wiadomości* used the following hyperboles: "monstrous attack on Olszewski's government" (02.10.19) (describing the critique it faced) or "he led the first really non-Communist government" (08.02.19). Metaphors were used to create an atmosphere of doom, besetment, and attacks. The activities of Frans Timmermans, Executive

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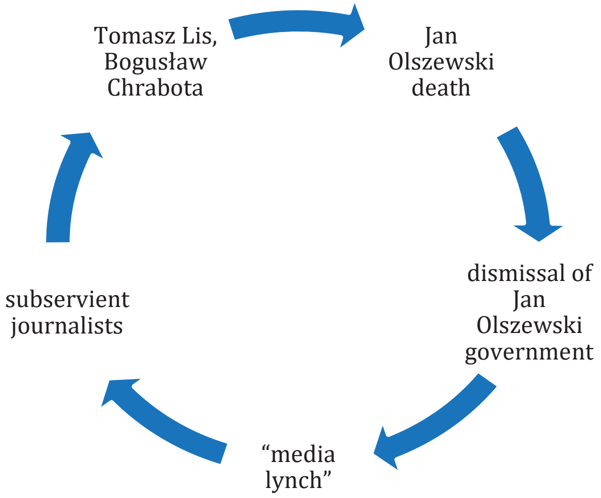
[2] PiS is identified as the ruling party in surveys.

Vice President of the EU Commission, were emphasized: "Timmermans attacked Hungary and the Polish authorities" (02.07.19). In a similar fashion, the local authorities of Warsaw led by Rafał Trzaskowski, the opposition politician of the *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO, Civic Platform), were presented as a group that had entangled the city with "mafia tentacles" (07.02.19).

In the news items of February 2019, three out of the seven programs mentioned two specific journalists. The first was Tomasz Lis, the chief editor of the Polish edition of *Newsweek*, who was presented skeptically as "journalist aristocracy" (the phrase comes from General Wojciech Jaruzelski, the leader of the Polish People's Republic in 1981-1989, who visited Lis on his TV program) (09.02.19). The second was Bogusław Chrabota, the chief editor of *Rzeczpospolita*, who hosted his program on the independent TV channel Polsat News, and who was presented in *Wiadomości* as "a grandson of a Red Army soldier" (08.02.2019). The 2020 film *Nocna zmiana* (Night Shift) about a journalistic conspiracy in 1992 was mentioned on all three occasions. The film shows the backdrop of the dismissal of the Jan Olszewski government. That one of the films authors, Jacek Kurski, has been the TVP chef since 2016, adds pique to the matter. Both Lis and Chrabota were critical of the PiS government. These examples clearly illustrate the process of linking completely different topics in one news item, to prove a predefined thesis (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Linking topics in the news on the death of Jan Olszewski


Tomasz Lis, Bogusław Chrabota
Jan Olszewski death
dismissal of Jan Olszewski government
"media lynch"
subservient journalists

Source: Authors

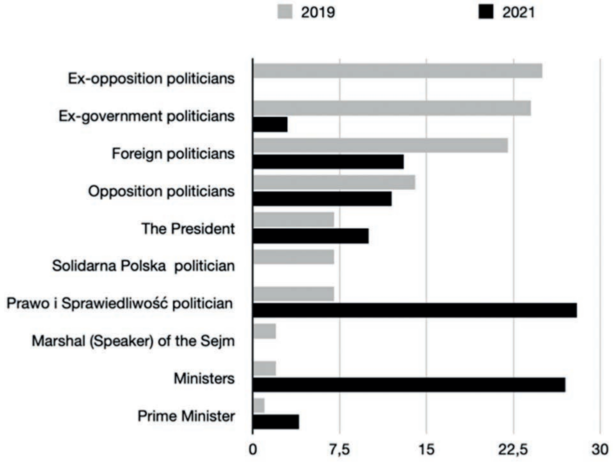
Finally, let us mention one more technique defined as testimonial, by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (Lee & Lee, 1939). It refers to statements, data, citations, other people, or institutions that can be considered reliable, and thus enhance the reliability of the news item (ibid.). Therefore, despite a highly critical attitude towards European institutions and entities of the Western world, TVP cited data of the Federal Statistical Office of Germany and Eurostat (in the news concerning German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Group), to prove the achievements of the Polish economy and the increase of the Polish GDP, in comparison to the problems of Germany's economy.

POLITICAL ANNIHILATION OF THE OPPOSITION

The third group of issues revealing the politicization of *Wiadomości* included those that were aimed at deepening the polarization of society annihilating the opposition. In this aspect, it is necessary to return to the mentioned presence of politicians and journalists in the news program.

Regarding the first group (see Figure 5), the appearance of former politicians and oppositionists from the Communist period (n=48) is noticeable in the first studied period. Their appearance was due to the death (on 7 February 2019, during the analyzed week) of Jan Olszewski. Memories of these old former communist politicians were presented in *Wiadomości*. Interestingly, on the anniversary of his death in 2021, the same commemorative material was also included but far fewer former communist politicians (n=3). Mediatization (or medialization in a narrower sense) of history (Korzeniewski, 2007), and its politicization, are increasingly obvious. Qualitative analysis of the material reveals that only those figures whose lives and attitudes match the modern narrative of the PiS party are commemorated.

Figure 5. Politicians (by political party) appearing on *Wiadomości*, during February 4–10 in 2019 and 2021



Source: Authors

However, referring to data for the weeks of 2019 and 2021, a unique situation is visible. Members of the coalition government and politicians of PiS, as the largest party of the *Zjednoczona Prawica*, (ZP, United Right) coalition, were often presented in TVP1's *Wiadomości* (Osęka, 2020).

The overwhelming appearance of the government ministers and PiS politicians in the second period analyzed, in 2021, is significant, although it coincides with the utter absence of politicians from *Solidarna Polska* (SP, United Poland). The SP leader is Zbigniew Ziobro who is the current Minister of Justice and the Attorney General. There were however open tensions between him and both Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the ZP coalition. Therefore, *Wiadomości* for a while stopped inviting both Ziobro and his SP colleagues to appear in news programs.

Tensions within the *Zjednoczona Prawica* coalition also restricted the participation of the SP politicians in *Wiadomości*'s news programs. This is the reason, Dziubka (2020) argues for SP politicians to be absent in either *Wiadomości* or the TVP Info news channel in August and December 2020. Their absence was not however total. Whenever voters who supported the ZP coalition felt the SP's non-appearance was an incomprehensible anomaly, Zbigniew Ziobro would reappear on either *Wiadomości* or the TVP Info news in some form of close correlation with the political interest of the ZP coalition. This happened during a series of conferences and commentaries after a legal ruling to release Sławomir Nowak, a former collaborator of Donald Tusk. Minister Ziobro rejected this decision, because he saw it as a premise for further reform of the legal system in Poland. Interestingly, EU institutions perceived this reform as a stage in the process of subordinating independent courts in Poland to politicians.

The starting point for most of the news stories is the Manichean vision of the world, with the 'us' vs. 'them' division (Mendeluk, 2018). There are the governing actors (mostly PiS politicians) and Poles who support the authorities on the one side and "total oppositions, elites, judicial caste" (all these terms come from news tickers in *Wiadomości*) on the other. There are also external opponents like Berlin, Brussels, and the EU Commission. Sometimes several such terms were joined in one ticker, as this example shows: "Brussels elites attack Poland again" (02.09.21). It should be noted that these tickers are often perceived as news headlines. In principle, they should indicate the essence of the news. However, in practice, they often offer an emotional hint, becoming an emanation of one of the classic propaganda techniques. These emotional hints can also be found in previews of the news or the news items themselves, as in the following example: "Journalists from the public TV on the one hand receive support, and on the other, they are permanently attacked by not only political activists but also politically engaged journalists" (08.02.2019).

In addition to the Manichean vision of the world, the news writers of *Wiadomości*'s programs use numerous epithets, such as "villains", "thieves" (for slaughterhouse owners) (07.02.2019), "devil Euromaniac flourishing a pitchfork" (about Donald Tusk – former Prime Minister and President of the European Council), "patronizing clot" (again, about Donald Tusk) (10.02.2019) "shady businessman" (about Grzegorz Hajdarowicz, owner of the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*) (08.02.2019).

Repetition of previously broadcast opinions regarding specific issues and of short interviews, is another important persuasion technique. For example, Jan Vincent Rostowski, who had been the Minister of Finance in the PO government for six years (2007-2013), made a statement during the election night on 25.10.2015 that was broadcast a record number of times. Referring to declarations of welfare programs by PiS (in opposition at that time), and the 500+ program in particular (500 PLN allowance for children under 18 years of age) he said: "There just is – and will be – no money for the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość's* promises". This statement has been repeated on *Wiadomości* at least 45 times since January 2016; it was also mentioned twice in the studied periods of February 2019 and February 2021. *Wiadomości* recalls Rostowski with pleasure, always in the context of manifesto declarations of the PO party and its credibility (a sarcasm suggesting the total opposite), also in news pieces about the successes of the ensuing governments of Beata Szydło and Mateusz Morawiecki (who was appointed Prime Minister on 11 December 2017 and is still active).

Public service media tries to further strengthen their credibility by undermining the results of external audience surveys and introducing their measurements in this context. Since 2016, TVP has often criticized Nielsen Global Media, a branch of which (Nielsen Audience Measurement – NAM) was the only institution measuring the audience of individual TV channels. Jacek Kurski, head of TVP accused Nielsen of lack of reliability and underreporting of TVP channels' audience data (Pallus, 2016). However, when Nielsen reported a substantial five-figure increase in the audience of *Wiadomości*, there were no complaints of unreliability.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study confirm the first hypothesis that the main TVP news program (*Wiadomości*) does not meet one of the main tasks of a public broadcaster, i.e., the obligation of objectivity and impartiality, due to the increasing politicization of its broadcast news [H1]. Its news program promotes a positive image of PiS and the government, with the visible effect of the increasing presence of PiS politicians in the news programs [H2]. Moreover, the PiS politicians are always related either to the positive tone of the news or to positive epithets describing their activities. The tone of the news is closely and positively related to news items about the PiS party, which praise the activities of the government and PiS' EU parliament members. The PSM presents positive results of every PiS program, always in the context of failures (according to *Wiadomości*) of the former government [H3]. Due to the tools, methods, and propaganda techniques mentioned above, the news program *Wiadomości* contributes to polarization and societal divisions [H4]. The study of the editions of the news program, concomitant with two years of government dominated by *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, revealed the growing, negative changes in content and form of the news presented in the PSM. The changes described here confirm the deepening process of media politicization.

We mentioned that the model of Polish media before 2015 had a lot of the liberal model qualities, as described by Hallin and Mancini (2004). It is clear that increasing politicization devolves the Polish media system, which we can conclude is similar to the authoritarian model described by Dobek-Ostrowska (2015). She notes that the authoritarian model was the starting point for many Central and East European countries in the early 1990s, while in Poland three decades later we can observe the return of Polish PSM to that starting line. We agree with Karen Donders that PSM in Poland do not participate in democratization processes (even if she focused on her respondents' opinion that the idea of PSM as a centralized institution can be anachronistic) (Donders, 2021). As a concluding remark, we support the idea of the need for healthy and independent public service media in Poland. We can argue that the institutions that safeguard PSM's autonomy need to be strengthened, also through legal protection, so that the public service media in the country fulfil their remit in serving the public and not the political elites and their efforts to maintain their positions in power.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Silencing/Unsilencing Nature: A 'Lupocentric' Remediation of Animal-Nature Relationships[1]

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Abstract: This article is theoretically grounded in a reflection on the discursive-material knot, which uses a macro-(con)textual approach to discourse, but also allocates a non-hierarchical position to the material, recognizing its agency. The article uses the ontological model to further theorize the discursive-material struggles of, and over, nature, and in particular of non-human animals. These theoretical frameworks are then deployed to reflect on the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project (and its diverse subprojects). This is an arts-based research project which aims to unpack the discursive-material relationship between humans and nature, and how nature often has been silenced, focusing on the position of the wolf in the zoo assemblage, and how these animals are discursively and materially entrapped. At the same time, the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project investigates how this situation can be changed, and how their voices can still be made audible, gain more strength and become further unsilenced.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism; speciesism; discursive-material knot; arts-based research; photography.

INTRODUCTION

The relations between human and non-human animals[2] are interlaced with highly complicated power dynamics. For instance, Derrida (2008, p. 24ff) argues that a political struggle has been waged over the past two centuries between the age-old practices of violence toward animals and the ethical-political efforts to reduce this violence. The argument raised in my article is that these struggles are, in part, discursive struggles, with different discourses allocating different meanings to humans, animals and, their relationships. Especially when we define discourses in macro-(con)textual ways, which implies that discourses are positioned at the same level of abstraction as ideologies, we can, as an initial example, mention the struggles between anthropocentric and ecocentric discourses.[3] At the same time, a reduction of the human-animal power dynamics to discursive struggles is all too problematic. There is also a need to incorporate more materialist perspectives, entangled with the realm of the discursive because these perspectives open up more spaces for acknowledging animal resistance.

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[1] This article uses text from Carpentier, 2021b.

[2] The reader will have to forgive me for using 'human' and 'animal' as shortcuts for 'human animal' and 'non-human animal'.

Nevertheless, humans do exercise substantial control over animals, partially because of the formers' capacity to generate discourses that provide meaning to the world, but also through their ability to manipulate the material world. This structural power imbalance has enabled the age-old practices of violence toward animals mentioned by Derrida (2008), which has caused significant suffering. There are many possible responses to this power imbalance, ranging from approval over reluctant acceptance to critique and activism aimed at change, which is integral to the above-mentioned discursive struggle. In addition, if the need to redress the structural power imbalance in human-animal relations is acknowledged then a variety of tactics is at our disposal to support this change.

This article focuses, from a discursive-material knot perspective (Carpentier, 2017), on the tactic of unsilencing, which consists of the development and deployment of a set of respectful and emphatic signifying practices. After theorizing this tactic, and the model of the discursive-material knot, in which this tactic is embedded, the article discusses an interventionist, change-oriented, and arts-based research project, entitled "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*", using an auto-ethnographic procedure.[4] This project, organized by the author of this article in collaboration with many others, illustrates the possibilities and desirabilities of producing signifying practices that give nature (and in particular wolves) more of a voice in the human world, thus attempting to contribute to a change in the power relations between humans and nature. Simultaneously, there is also the need for a critical analysis of the limitations of this experimental project, which is performed through a discussion of the project's problems related to the logics of representation – in both its political and cultural meanings. As it will be argued, these problems know no easy solution, but they might still be overcome in order to further unsilence nature.

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[3] In short, this is a struggle about discursive-material centrality, articulating either humans as the main reference point, or what is referred to as nature.

[4] In this type of qualitative research method, "personal experience (auto)" is "systematically analyze[d] (graphy)" in order to understand "cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 1).

A DISCURSIVE-MATERIAL APPROACH TO NATURE AND HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONS

Discourses are the indispensable and powerful tools that give meaning to our social realities; they are the frameworks of intelligibility that structure humans' relationships with the world, through the provision of meaning. While discourses are often defined as almost-synonyms of language, in this article, they are approached from a macro-(con)textual perspective (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007), as structures "in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau, 1988, p. 254). Discourses are, in other words, defined as knowledge structures that consist of systemically articulated signifiers that together form reasonably stable entities. As providers and generators of meaning, their role is indispensable, as there is no way to signify, comprehend and communicate social realities without them.

This stability is not total, permanent or taken-for-granted, even though discourses still aim to protect internal stability and achieve external domination, and thus fixate social reality. Discourses are not outside the realm of the political (in the broad sense of the meaning of the concept of 'the political'); their meaning can always be contested and altered through political struggle. Moreover, discourses engage in political struggles over hegemony with each other, and even the most hegemonic discourses are subjected to the continuous threat of dislocation originating from counter-hegemonic forces.

These discursive struggles over hegemony affect all realms of the world, also including what we refer to as nature. Nature, in its vast diversity and with its many overlaps with the world of human activity, has been discursified in an equally wide variety of ways, with many of these discourses engaging in intense struggles over hegemony. For instance, as Corbett (2006, p. 26) argues, there is an entire spectrum of what she calls "environmental ideologies", that range from unrestrained instrumentalism, over conservationism and preservationism, to transformative ideologies that aim to radically move away from anthropocentric frameworks and embrace ecocentric perspectives.

These discourses all give meaning to the relations of humans with the environment but always do so in distinct ways. Moreover, these discourses do not operate in isolation but engage in almost permanent discursive struggles. Importantly, some of these discourses[5] are, as Stibbe (2012, p. 3) considers, destructive, because they "promote inhumane treatment [of animals] and environmental damage". Instrumentalism, an ideology that articulates nature as a resource to fulfill human needs, is one example, but also speciesism, or the "systematic discrimination against an other based solely on a generic characteristic – in this case, species"

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[5] Stibbe's analysis, or any other academic reflection, is not outside these discursive struggles.

(Wolfe, 2003, p. 1) is an example. Both are discourses, which have a strong potential to damage (and destroy) through the combination of classification, hierarchization, and inferiorization, ignoring what Derrida (2008, p. 41) has called the *animot*, the "irreducible living multiplicity of mortals".

As mentioned earlier, in the discourse-theoretical approach used in this article, discourses become defined as fundamentally distinct from language. They are structures of meaning communicated *through* language, which functions as their material carrier, allowing for meaning to be condensed. In other words, discourse is not text, it is what is behind the text and is communicated through the text. As language still might be (at least potentially) too restrictive to capture the wide variety of communicative practices, the notion of 'signifying practice' is preferred here, in the ways that Hall (1997) uses the concept. Signifying practices are the tools that are used in order to refer, directly or indirectly, to social reality, and to exchange meanings about it. This distinction is important because it generates space for the argument that signifying practices are not limited to humans. Non-human animals also have the capacity to generate signifying practices, as Kohn (2013, p. 9) writes: "Life is constitutively semiotic." In other words, language is not a human prerogative, and "the idea that only humans have language as informed by *logos* and that other animals do not is untenable [emphasis in original]" (Meijer, 2019, p. 6). Also Derrida (1991) argues:

> the idea according to which man is the only speaking being, in its traditional form or in its Heideggerian form, seems to me at once undisplaceable and highly problematic. Of course, if one defines language in such a way that it is reserved for what we call man, what is there to say? But if one reinscribes language in a network of possibilities that do not merely encompass it but mark it irreducibly from the inside, everything changes. (p. 116)

At the same time animals cannot construct discourses, at least not in the way that the concept of discourse is defined in this article. It is important to add that individual humans cannot produce discourses either, as the construction of meaning at this level is a social and not an individual process, even if individuals can identify with particular discourses, and can construct their subjectivity through these discourses. The absence of animals, not to mention other living beings, and abiotic matter, from the realm of discursive production (and from institutions, the signifying machines that play vital roles in the transformation of signifying practices into discourses), generates a structural power imbalance that is hard to remedy. Arguably, this is one of the key causes of the domination of the non-human world by humans.

One more, crucial element still needs to be added to this equation, namely the material, whose role is often underestimated in more constructionist perspectives.

This negligence of the material is beautifully captured by Latour (2005), when he writes that:

> Objects are nowhere to be said and everywhere to be felt. They exist, naturally, but they are never given a thought, a social thought. Like humble servants, they live on the margins of the social doing most of the work but never allowed to be represented as such. (p. 73)

As I have extensively argued elsewhere (Carpentier, 2017) the material cannot be seen as a second-rate component of social reality. In contrast, the material must be approached as an integrated and substantive part of social reality, intimately knotted and entangled, and in permanent interaction with the discursive. Moreover, to avoid the implicit perpetuation of the domination of the discursive, it is vital, as new materialist approaches argue, to acknowledge that the material has its own agencies. Barad's (2007, p. 54) re-conceptualization of agency illustrates this argument: "Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements."

This acknowledgment of material agency affects the power positions of animals. An important starting point for this discussion is Meijer (2019, p. 129) who writes: "it is not up to 'us' to grant 'them' political agency – other animals already act politically, whether humans choose to recognize it or not." Humans are still keen to engage in this (signifying) practice of granting agency while maintaining the attribution of "differential agencies" to "charismatic species" (Lorimer, 2007, p. 912). By contrast, animals[6] through their bodily practices, can exercise their agency to at least recalibrate their power relations, in order to compensate for what they are denied in the discursive realm. Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011, p. 114) refer to this type of argumentation when they write animals can be "by their sheer presence […] advocates and agents of change." An example that Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011, p. 114ff) discuss, and which is still uncomfortably close to the instrumentalization of animals, is Wolch's (2002) analysis of urban dog park activism. This example involves the owners of large dogs deploying them to dissuade people (who they consider undesirable) from frequenting a particular park. In other cases, animal agency becomes more disconnected from human agency, for instance, when animal bodies (e.g., malaria-carrying mosquitoes – see Mitchell, 2002) migrate unexpectedly, or when animal bodies refuse to perform as expected or demanded. Hribal's (2010) work on animal resistance, for instance with zoo and circus animals, documents not only their refusals to have their bodies perform but also their attempts to escape.

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[6] Also, the abiotic parts of the world can exercise agency, e.g., soil trembling and moving.

This last example shows that animal materiality (and its agencies) should be regarded as articulated within the discursive-material knot, where animals are more than mere bodies, and where they, for instance, have the capacity of “negotiating the terms of coexistence with their human companions” (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011, p. 120). But this example also shows that the human domination of animals is deeply material, for instance, through the creation of assemblages that structurally restrict the freedom of animals. The resistance that Hribal (2010) mentions, is very much a response to the material enclosure of animals in zoos and circuses. Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011, p. 283) strongly argue: “Capturing animals and putting them in zoos is a violation of their basic individual rights, and a violation of their rights as members of sovereign communities”. But in this extensive footnote on the complexities of zoos, they argue some species “may be trapped in a tragic dilemma […] unable to re-wild, yet also unable to flourish in the sort of confined spaces that even the most ‘progressive’ sanctuaries provide” (ibid.).

THE UNSILENCING OF NATURE

The inability of non-human living beings to produce discourse, despite their ability to produce signifying practices, generates tactical questions very much in de Certeau’s (1984) meaning of the word ‘tactics’ (as resisting hegemony). These questions, and some of their answers, are (arguably) not dissimilar from the discussions on the subaltern in postcolonial theory, where Spivak (1988, p. 284) argued that the “irretrievably heterogeneous” subaltern cannot speak. Obviously, the subaltern can produce signifying practices, but the difficulty lies in the transformation of these signifying practices into discourse. Interestingly, one of the key answers to this conundrum is produced in postcolonial theory, through Said’s (1994, p. 260) emphasis on – *writing back* – , a tactical replacement of dominant imperial narratives “with either a more playful or a more powerful new narrative style.”

The silencing of non-human living beings is at least as intense. Their position is, though, not helped by their inability to produce discourses. In some cases, with painful similarities to the cruel treatments that colonial subjects were exposed to, the silencing was literal and physical. For instance, non-human predators, when competing with humans over territory and resources, have often been subjected to species extinction, which Beirne (2014) terms “theriocide”. But symbolic violence has also been extensively used towards non-human living beings. To return to the example of predators, and in particular wolves (see also Robisch, 2009; Carpentier, 2021a): Derrida (2011, p. 12) describes how these demonizing articulations, entextualized (condensed and made material in text) feature in fairy tales like *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Three Pigs* and *Peter and the Wolf*, using the following terms: "the devouring wolf is not far away, the big bad wolf, the wolf's mouth, the big teeth of Little Red Riding Hood's Grandmother-Wolf ('Grandmother, what big teeth you have'), as well as the devouring wolf in the Rig Veda, etc."

This sometimes structurally oppressive and violent relationship between human and non-human living beings is not easy to remedy. Said's tactics of writing back are, for instance, not something that can immediately be transferred to this context. Non-human living beings have, through their material bodily practices and through their signifying practices (even though humans do not always easily comprehend them), resisted human attempts to dominate them. But in addition, also different (human) voices have been writing back to these oppressive practices towards non-human living beings, defending the interest of non-human living beings and nature in general.

Literature, science, and popular culture have all engaged with this discursive struggle, in a variety of ways, with the animal-takeover-fantasy as one of many examples. For instance, the apes in the *Planet of the Apes* and the mice in the *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* are shown to exercise political agency through their resistance against, and eventual domination over, humans. Environmental movements and activisms have been, for decades and more, countering the silencing of nature, resulting in a variety of political translations of these discourses. For instance, animal rights have been engrained in legal frameworks, which institutionalizes these representational logics, a practice that has been extended to non-living components of nature, with, for instance, rivers having been granted legal rights (see Kang (2019) for a discussion). These tactics share the principle that nature needs to be further unsilenced, facilitating the transformation into discourse of signifying practices that empathically speak on behalf of, and that defend the interest of, nature.

TACTICS OF UNSILENCING NATURE: THE "SILENCING/UNSILENCING NATURE" PROJECT

The need to actively counter the still hegemonic anthropocentric and specieist discourse(s), and to contribute to the respectful unsilencing of nature can be translated in a variety of tactics. One rendering is the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project, which consists of a series of interventions (or subprojects). The author[7] of this article, who took the hybrid position of artist-academic or "artademic" (Sinner, 2014), conceived and created the project. This hybrid position was important as this project deployed arts-based research methods to produce signifying practices that critically analyzed the discursive-material construction of nature (and in particular wolves) and that strengthened the unsilencing of nature. Arts-based research methods have proven to be highly suitable for these kinds of objectives. As Leavy (2015, p. ix) wrote, arts-based research is "a set of methodological tools used by researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research, including data generation, analysis, interpretation, and representation [original emphasis removed]." Still rooted in academia, arts-based research consists of a search for various communicational modes to communicate academic knowledge, or as Leavy (2015, p. 11) explains, it "advances critical conversations about the nature of social scientific practice and expands the borders of our methods repository."

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[7] As always, this creative process was enabled by the help and support of many others.

This implies that there is a wealth of artistic communicational repertoires at our disposal. Leavy's (2015) overview gives an initial idea of the possibilities:

> Representational forms include but are not limited to short stories, novels, experimental writing forms, graphic novels, comics, poems, parables, collages, paintings, drawings, sculpture, 3-D art, quilts and needlework, performance scripts, theatrical performances, dances, films, and songs and musical scores. (p. ix)

It is particularly important to emphasize that these artistic practices are integrated into the processes of knowledge production and that they are not a series of post ante practices that are then used to "translate" academic knowledge. Moreover, the artistic practices bring in the idea that knowledge is, or expressed more modestly can be, embodied. To use Cooperman's (2018, p. 22) more poetic formulation, "Arts-based research is a research of the flesh where our source material originates from the closeness and collaboration of the bodies and voices of one another."

The "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project included various interventions (or subprojects). Chronologically, the first intervention, entitled the "*Wolves at the Prague Zoo Assemblage*" consisted of a series of wolf-and-cat-face collages (see Carpentier, 2020). These collages were produced for a special issue of the Czech photography magazine *Fotograf*, entitled "*Living with Humans*" and aimed at rethinking (and re-imagining) human-animal relations.[8] The first layer of the photographs consisted of a series of close-ups[9] (portraits) of the four wolves living in the Prague Zoo assemblage.[10] The wolves were then combined with cat-face filters, as a second layer, signifying the ways that humans had brought the four wolves into an enclosure that mostly served human needs, allowing these animals to become exposed to an endless chain of human gazes. At first sight, this disrespectful and ethically problematic second layer also touched upon the complexity of the cat-face filter, where humans use the perceived cuteness of domesticated animals to signify their own cuteness, without becoming animal.

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[8] https://fotografmagazine.cz/en/magazine/living-with-humans/

[9] In addition to these nine photographs, the series also included the photographs of a stuffed wolf in the museum shop, and a slightly troubled Yorkshire Terrier in the arms of a visitor to the wolf enclosure.

Here, we have to be reminded of Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) positive, even utopian, approach towards becoming animal, exemplified by their description of what it means "to become animal", which they argue:

> is to participate in movement, to stake out a path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold […] to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs. (p. 13)

The aspect that needs to be added, though, is that this rejection of anthropocentrism and speciesism, the transgression into the affective world of animals, and the abandonment of the certainties and comfort of human signification (and thus 'civilization') can produce deep anxieties. These only stimulate the performance of rituals where humans can become only a bit animal, and where they can stay on the 'safe' side of the human-animal divide. The cat-face filters exemplify this only very partial transgression, which removes any potential for radical rearticulation of human-animal relations. By implicating the (photographs of the) wolves in this protective strategy, the animals not only become anthropomorphized, but their position on the 'wrong' side of the human-animal divide becomes symbolized (and simultaneously critiqued).

The third layer of the wolf-and-cat-face collages consisted of hand-written questions, superimposed over each of the photographs. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that photographers, such as the North American Duane Michals (see Benedict-Jones, 2014) started using this technique, not necessarily using it as a caption but as a hand-written text to add layers of meaning to the image. Nowadays the technique is more accepted, think of the work of the visual artist Shirin Neshat, making it more of a disruption of the saying that infers a picture is worth more than a thousand words. In this particular instance, the hand-written text introduced, at least symbolically[11], the voice of the wolves. Through a 'lupocentric’ re-positioning of the (human) author, the wolves are seen to ask tough theoretical questions, which are related to the cultural phenomenon of animal silencing, thus giving voice to the wolves and unsilencing them even more. Some of the questions they posed were: “Am I only material?”, “Can I resist material enclosure?” and “Do I control this space or does it control me?”

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[10] Ironically, the enclosure of the four wolves in the zoo assemblage also facilitated the production of these photographs.

[11] Obviously, this remains a human intervention.

The “*Wolves at the Prague Zoo Assemblage*” was expanded within the framework of the broader Lyssna! project, which is a collaboration between three Swedish arts centers: Färgfabriken, Skellefteå Konsthall and Virserum Konsthall. Lyssna! comprised the creation of “a forum where young people, researchers, and artists can explore and relay their experiences and feelings in relation to climate and places.”[12] Selected by the arts centers, small groups of youngsters, aged between 15 and 21 years, teamed up with artists and scholars, for a variety of activities. The Lyssna! team’s original plan, to organize a face-to-face “*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*” workshop for the youngsters, could not materialize due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions. This practical obstacle led to the development of an educational package, called “*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*”,[13] that could be autonomously deployed by the arts centers’ collaborators and teams of youngsters. Structured by a detailed, 40-page script, this educational package included an introductory video, four theoretical video-essays (supported by a series of exercises in the script), two assignment videos, and an epilogue video.

The four video-essays offered a series of more theoretical reflections, at various levels. First, there were two more general-theoretical essays about the discursive-material knot and its connections to the construction of nature (“Part 1: Discourse” & “Part 2: The Material and Entanglement”). The third essay discussed how wolves are integrated into the disciplining zoo assemblage, also highlighting their capacities for resistance (“Part 3: The Wolf Assemblage”). The fourth essay used the “*Wolves at the Prague Zoo Assemblage*” subproject as an example (see Figure 1), to explain the tactics of unsilencing (“Part 4: Unsilencing Wolves”).

But the objective of the “*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*” educational subproject was not only to engage the participating youngsters in theoretical reflections but also to create a framework for youngsters to actively produce signifying practices that would unsilence nature. The educational package was inspired not just by the theoretical reflections on the construction of nature, and the unsilencing tactics, but also by participatory photography, and methods like photovoice, which Jarldorn (2019, p. 1) defines as “the combination of participant created photographs and narratives”. This package (particularly the two assignment videos) generated a framework for the participating youngsters to create a photographic exhibition that would contribute to the further unsilencing of nature.

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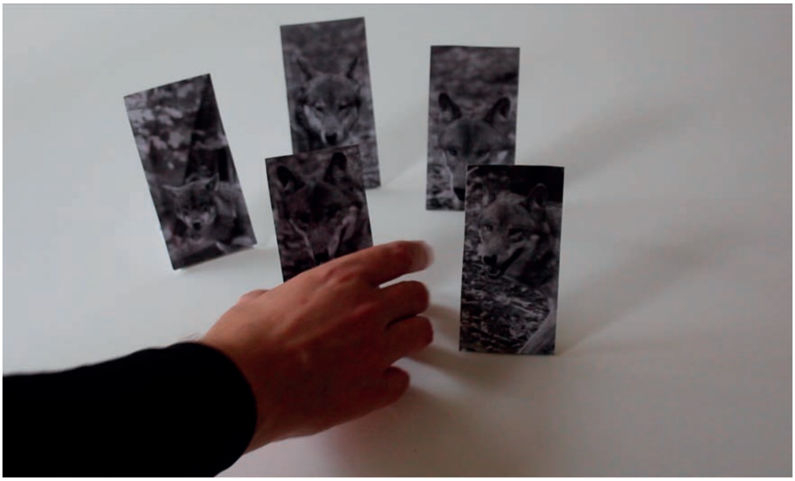
[12] https://fargfabriken.se/en/right-now/item/1471-listen

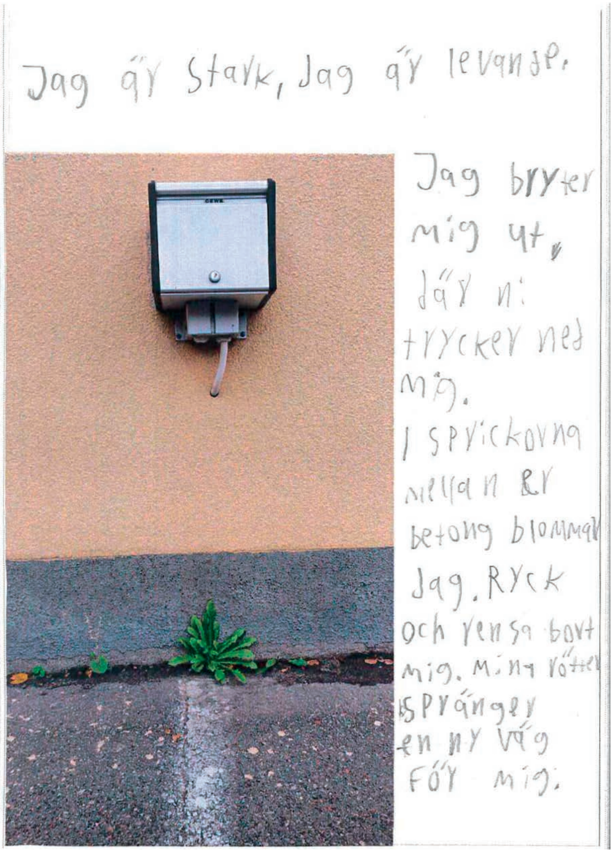
[13] Slightly confusingly, the “*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*” label was used for both the educational package and for the entire project.

Figure 1: Still from video-essay 4 ("Unsilencing Wolves") with a selection of wolf portraits from the "Wolves at the Prague Zoo Assemblage" project



On 10 October 2020, the Lyssna! team organized three parallel "*Silencing/ Unsilencing Nature*" workshops, at three locations: Färgfabriken organized a workshop in the Swedish capital Stockholm, Virserums Konsthall did a workshop in the south of Sweden and Skellefteå Konsthall did one in the north of the country. A key element of the workshops (and the set-up of the assignments) was that each group would initially decide, collectively, on which component of nature to unsilence. In the case of the Färgfabriken workshop, the 10 youngsters and the Lyssna! staff decided to focus on the tension between grass and weed (in Swedish: 'gräs' and 'ogräs'), and to act as the stewards of weeds (see Carpentier, 2021b). For example, a photograph produced by Joel (see Figure 2) who was one of the participating youngsters, expressed respect for the resilience and adaptability of weeds, with the following text accompanying his photo of a wallflower: "I'm strong, I'm alive. I break out where you push me down. In the cracks between your concrete, I bloomed. Jerk me out and clear me away. My roots are blowing a new path for me."

Figure 2: *Färgfabriken Lyssna!* workshop photograph and text by Joel

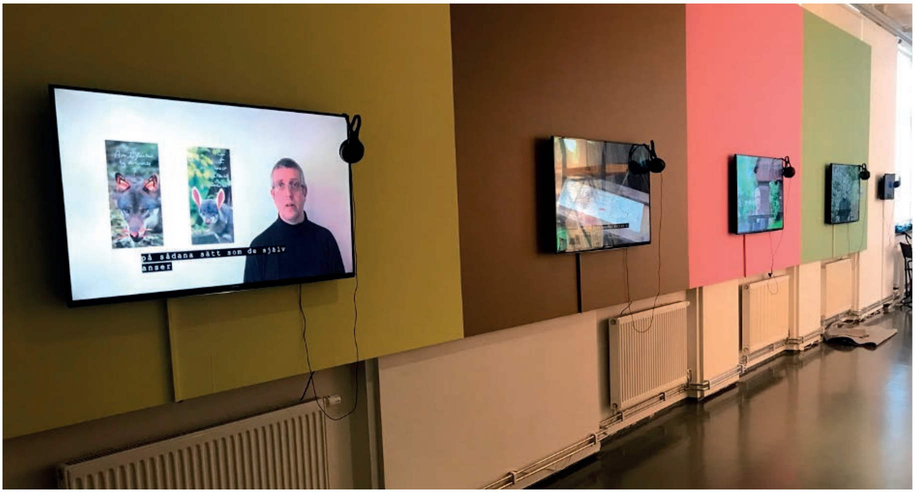


Jag är stark, Jag är levande.

Jag bryter
mig ut,
där ni
trycker ned
mig.
I sprickorna
mellan er
betong blommar
Jag. Ryck
och rensa bort
mig. Mina rötter
spränger
en ny väg
för mig.

As part of the (broader) Lyssna! project, the video-essays were also integrated into an exhibition and screened in the Project Room at Färgfabriken, from 12 September to 29 November 2020 (extended to 14 February 2021), and then at the Nordanå Centre in Skellefteå, from 13 March to 30 May 2021. Figure 3 gives an impression of the set-up of the videos at the Nordanå Centre.

Figure 3: Set-up of the "Silencing/Unsilencing Nature" video essays, at the Nordanå Centre in Skellefteå (photo: Daniel Uray)



The "*Wolf Talks*" subproject is the third and most recent intervention of the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project, (re-)assembling its different components. Theoretically and strategically, the subproject was, like the other two, driven by the tactics of unsilencing nature. "*Wolf Talks*" also contained critical reflections on the hegemonic representational mechanisms, by reusing the first series of wolf-and-cat-face collages.[14] In "*Wolf Talks*", two components were added, which increased the material dimension of the project. The first addition was a spatial component, as the 12 photographs were displayed in 12 locations in Prague, as part of the 2021 Fotograf Festival.[15] In a way, the wolves of the Prague Zoo assemblage were shown to have 'escaped' and to have found a new home in their city. Their images (and voices) now claimed part of the urban public space of Prague, through their presence in the window displays and on the walls of art centers, museums, shops, cafés, bank offices, and metro underpasses. Festival visitors could find them, by retracing the photographs through the online interface (which has a map) and visit some of them. Visitors were also invited to go on a "Wolf Walk", which encompassed a visit to all 12 photographs.

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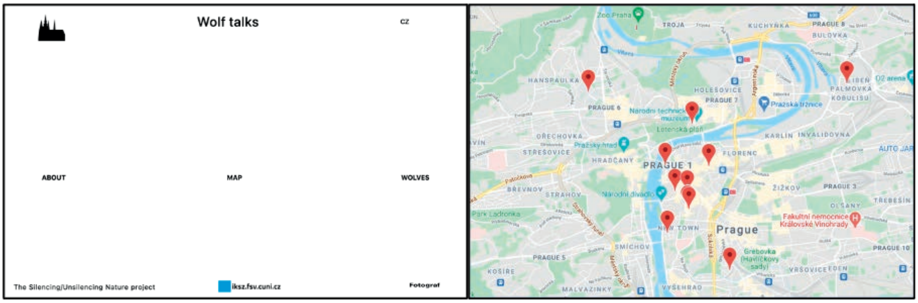
[14] At this stage, one more photograph of a mounted wolf was added to the nine wolf-and-cat-face collages and the two additional photographs.

[15] This multi-site exhibition ran from 3 September to 3 October 2021. Afterwards, the 12 photographs were exhibited together, at the Prague Hollar Gallery, from 12 to 17 October 2021, at the University of Okara, from 2 to 3 February 2022, and at the University of the Punjab, from 8 to 13 February 2022.

Figure 4: “Wolf Talks” website components


Wolf talks
CZ
ABOUT
MAP
WOLVES
The Silencing/Unsilencing Nature project
iksz.fsu.cuni.cz
Fotograf
Zoo Praha
TROJA
KUCHYŇKA
PRAGUE 8
BULOVKA
HANSPAULKA
HOLEŠOVICE
PRAGUE 7
LIBEŇ
PALMOVKA
KOBYLISY
PRAGUE 6
Národní technické muzeum
Letenská pláň
Pražská tržnice
OŘECHOVKA
Pražský hrad
STŘEŠOVICE
HRADČANY
KARLÍN
INVALIDOVNA
FLORENC
PRAGUE 1
BŘEVNOV
STRAHOV
Národní divadlo
ŽIŽKOV
PRAGUE 3
OLŠANY
Park Ladronka
NEW TOWN
Prague
Fakultní nemocnice Královské Vinohrady
SMÍCHOV
PRAGUE 5
Grébovka (Havlíčkovy sady)
VRŠOVICE
PRAGUE 10
KOŠÍŘE
MALVAZINKY
VYŠEHRAD

The second component that was added was auditory. The 12 wolf photographs (9 wolf-and-cat-face collages and 3 additional photos of a mounted wolf, a stuffed wolf toy, and a slightly frightened Yorkshire Terrier visiting the wolf enclosure at the Prague zoo assemblage were combined with a sound fragment each, which could be accessed through a QR code positioned close to the photographs. In each recording, a voice actor spoke from the ‘lupocentric’ position of the portrayed wolf, combined with a soundscape composed by Bart Cammaerts. These two to three-minute performances strengthened the representational dimension of the project, by having the wolves speak back to the spectator and lecturing them on the power dynamics in the relations between human and non-human animals. Below is an example of two fragments of the text related to the question “What am I in the zoo assemblage?”:

> “Tell me: What am I in the zoo assemblage? Am I at center stage, the animal around which everything revolves? Am I the reason why the zoo exists? I like to think so. But I know better. The zoo assemblage combines many different components and has many different reasons of existence. The zoo assemblage groups have many different discourses, that all give meaning to our presence. […] There are also so many material components. I wouldn’t know where to start. There are all the buildings of the zoo, in this lovely park. There are the bodies of administrators and caretakers, of shopkeepers and visitors. There are the fake and real rocks, the cages in which we are placed, the glass panels that allow visitors a good view. And there is me. So now you see, I’m only one little part of the zoo assemblage. But the thing is: This isn’t my assemblage. It is not mine.”

REPRESENTATIONAL COMPLEXITIES

In its attempts to reconfigure the power relations between humans and nature, the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project organizes a practice of representation. In doing so, the project relates to the representation concept in both of its main meanings: the political meaning, as 'speaking on behalf of', and its cultural meaning, as in 'making present'. Both components of representation are highly complicated and potentially problematic in socio-political practice, and this also applies to the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project. At the same time, these complexities are very useful to organize a more critical discussion of the limitations and dangers of this project.

When focusing on representation in its cultural meaning, as signification, we are immediately confronted with the interpretative issues related to all signifying practices, but even more so when using more artistic repertoires. Arts-based research projects have to face the tension between (the production of) more open and more closed texts, or "readerly" and "writerly" texts, to use Barthes' (1974, p. 4) language. These projects need to navigate between texts (or, signifying practices) that invite multiple interpretations or, by contrast, that attempt to fixate interpretation. Even if "writerly" texts are also open to interpretation, rendering the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" signifying practices too "readerly" might push them outside the realm of academic research communication. This is arguably one of the areas where the celebration of interpretative multiplicity and textual openness that sometimes characterizes arts-based research (Leavy, 2015, p. 26) needs to be qualified, but striking this balance in the "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*" project proved to be a rather difficult tightrope-walking-experience. This tension was further deepened by the combination of critical and interventionist dimensions, with almost contradictory outcomes, where the symbolization of a silencing lack of respect for animals was juxtaposed by an attempt to enhance respect for animal sovereignty. This combination is prone to a variety of interpretations, that might inverse or reject these critical and interventionist dimensions, partly or entirely.

In the context of cultural representation, we must also acknowledge the limits of discursive and signifying practices, which implies we need to acknowledge that the discursive can never completely capture or saturate the material, with the latter always escaping total discursification. It is a firm reminder that the "*Wolf Talks*" photographs can never replace the wolves' materiality, or their signifying practices. Nor can these photographs ever fulfill the desire for animal liberation, as the movement's more radical activists and critical animal studies scholars, are advocating for (see, e.g., Weisberg, 2009). However, this discursive shift might still provide a condition of possibility for animal liberation.

But we should also acknowledge the political limits of cultural representation. As mentioned earlier, human signifying practices are not automatically translated into discourse. Potentially, critiques on the hegemonic discourse and the formulation of counter-hegemonic alternatives can dislocate these hegemonic discourses, but this kind of impact is not guaranteed – nor is it easy to achieve. Singular signifying practices have their importance, but in order to become transformed into discourse, they often need (institutional) signifying machines to coordinate, strengthen and sustain them.

At the level of political representation, when humans try to unsilence nature, they unavoidably find themselves in the position of being a steward, acting on behalf of nature and representing nature without formal, or even informal, participatory mechanisms that would provide legitimacy to the actor representing nature. After all, no-one could have asked the wolves of Prague Zoo to endorse the photographs, the cat-face collages, the questions on the collages, and the words spoken by the voice actors on their behalf. Part of the answer to this dilemma lies in the acknowledgment that there are no better alternatives available, and the *laissez-faire* attitudes of the past (and the violence Derrida (2008) wrote about) have contributed more to the problem than to its solution. The risk that this type of stewardship escalates into an equally problematic anthropocentric position still needs to be acknowledged. Apart from the acknowledgment of the dangers and possible perverse effects, another answer lies in the qualification of the signifying practices. In our example of "*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*", the relevant questions become 'what is being said?', 'how it is said?' and 'what discourses structure the signifying practices?'. After all, there are many ways to speak on behalf of nature, and many of them are structured by anthropocentrism, instrumentalism, and speciesism. These signifying practices do not unsilence nature; they contribute to nature being silenced. Arguably, in order to unsilence nature, signifying practices require a 'lupocentric' (or ecocentric, to use a more general term) re-positioning that is articulated with (and by) a non-hierarchical and respectful sense of responsibility, an ethics of care and empathy, combined with consideration for all creatures' vulnerabilities (Pick, 2011). This, in turn, implies a fundamental acknowledgment of animal sovereignty, a concept that Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011, p. 170) define as "the capacity of animals to pursue their own good, and to shape their own communities."

A more political theory driven answer to these problematics lies in the unpacking of the concept of political representation, where democratic theory can provide some solace. Even if the counter-balancing force of participation is virtually absent, democratic theory allows us to think about post-election situations, where political decision-making powers have been delegated to a select few. These (delegated) powers are expected[16] to be wielded with responsibility and empathy (Morrell, 2010). In other words, representation in the human parts of society is a mechanism where power is relinquished to particular representatives, whose position is legitimated through the nature of their actions. However much it is sometimes abused and regretted, representation implies that individual citizens weaken their power position, and accept a degree of silencing, through the act of delegation. Moreover, the logic of empowerment, which aims to reconfigure power imbalances, has a slightly concealed collaborative component where those in strong power positions actively contribute to the equalization of power relations. This is an imperfect setting, caused by the impossibility to achieve "full participation" (Pateman, 1970) on a permanent and global scale. Still, empowerment remains desirable and necessary, despite the continued presence of power imbalances that render, as only partial, the unsilencing of non-privileged actors.

CONCLUSIONS

Anthropocentrism, instrumentalism, and speciesism are, at least potentially, discourses that work against nature, and of particular interest in this article, against the animal realm. Characterized by dualist and essentialist articulations, these discourses sustain hierarchies of privilege and domination, and trap the animal world in a series of destructive homogenizations. Starting from a discourse-theoretical perspective, this article argues that alternative (and more respectful) ways of giving meaning to nature are possible, but that these also require us to rethink the role of discursification. How we give meaning matters tremendously, but we also need to reconfigure how we define the discursive and its relationship with the material. More specifically, ample space must be allocated to the material when configuring the discursive-material entanglement. This would help to avoid the creation of a hierarchy between the discursive and the material, and acknowledge the significance of material agency.

This need for reconfiguration also plays out at the level of the ontic, and how we look at particular assemblages, without ignoring the workings of the discursive-material knot at the ontological level. This implies that Prague Zoo, and its wolf enclosure, is a significant location for studying how anthropocentric and speciesist discourses are both activated and resisted. It becomes apparent how wolves are exposed to the human gaze, with carefully constructed glass walls to facilitate the process, in combination with signifying processes that label and categorize the four animals in the enclosure as representatives of a species, without acknowledging any individuality. A more careful observation also renders the signifying practices of the wolves visible, which with the material shapes and behaviors of their bodies, emphasize the mammaldom that they share with humans. Under closer inspection, the individuality of these four living creatures, all of which have very distinct behavioral patterns and personalities, becomes visible. As do their frequent refusals to expose their bodies to the gaze of the visitors, leaving the latter staring frustrated into a void.

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[16] In practice, this might not always be the case.

Even though the four wolves are thus not at all mute, developing more unsilencing tactics remains desirable in order to compensate for the power imbalances that structure human-animal relations. Interventions such as “*Silencing/Unsilencing Nature*” remain important, even though modesty about the impact of individual projects is still very much a necessity. Acknowledgment is required that the representational mechanisms, in both the cultural and political meanings of the concept of representation, behind these unsilencing tactics are hardly straightforward. Still, the unsilencing tactics of the project supported by arts-based research methods that bring in more embodied and affective ways of knowing – can support change. In particular, the critical analysis of the workings of the discursive-material knot can open up reflective spaces that provide opportunities for change in two ways. First, change is supported by better understanding, communicating, and critiquing the functioning of hegemonic discursive-material assemblages. Second, change is also supported by contributing to the creation of signifying practices that support alternative (and even counter-hegemonic) discourses, that articulate the animal world in a more respectful and emphatic way.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Design and Development of Mediated Participation for Environmental Governance Transformation: Experiences with Community Art and Visual Problem Appraisal

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Abstract: For environmental governance to be more effective and transformative, it needs to enhance the presence of experimental and innovative approaches for participation. This enhancement requires a transformation of environmental governance, as too often the (public) participation process is set up as a formal obligation in the development of a proposed intervention. This article, in search of alternatives, and in support of this transformation elaborates on spaces where participatory and deliberative governance processes have been deployed. Experiences with two mediated participation methodologies – community art and visual problem appraisal – allow a demonstration of their potential, relevance and attractiveness. Additionally, the article analyzes the challenges that result from the nature of these arts-based methodologies, from the confrontational aspects of voices overlooked in conventional approaches, and from the need to rethink professionals' competences. Considering current environmental urgencies, mediated participation and social imaginaries still demonstrate capacities to open new avenues for action and reflection.

Keywords: Social imaginaries; mediated participation; environmental governance; community art; visual problem appraisal.

INTRODUCTION

The current multitude of environmental challenges has resulted in the development of environmental governance, which we see as synonymous with interventions aimed at changes in environment-related incentives, knowledge, institutions, decision making, and behaviors (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). More specifically, we use environmental governance to refer to the set of regulatory processes, mechanisms and organizations through which political actors influence environmental policies, actions and outcomes.

Arguably, when dealing with complex issues such as climate change, the involvement of diverse stakeholders and sectors, each with their own views, narratives and interests (Margerum & Robinson, 2016) becomes even more important. These forms of involvement allow environmental governance to become more transformative (Rijke et al., 2013), and to have a stronger impact on society. But political actors are not always open to these more intense forms of involvement, which implies that there is also a need for the transformation of environmental governance itself, in order to become more sensitive towards the multiplicity of societal voices.

To enable and facilitate the involvement of these diverse stakeholders and sectors, various participatory and collaborative approaches in environmental governance have been developed, such as community-based natural resource management (Kellert et al., 2000), network governance (Klijn et al., 1995; Rhodes, 2007), and collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2012). Of particular importance for the effectiveness of these experimental and innovative approaches, as participation models argue, is their implementation in the early stages of environmental governance (Rijke et al., 2013). Such a view aligns with André et al.'s (2006) reference to "early initiation" as an initial operating principle for public participation. The dominant views on public participation, as prevalent in impact assessment procedures, do not invite "the public" to participate as a pro-active strategy, but instead effectuate the public participation process as a formal obligation in the development of a proposed intervention.

Contrary to such views, our research group has in the contexts of climate change, loss of biodiversity and other environmental challenges, and driven by a collective sense of urgency and action leading to informed decision making, been exploring approaches for participatory and deliberative governance, aiming to transform environmental governance. This article thus elaborates on spaces where participatory and deliberative governance have been deployed, with inspiration and data resulting from experiences with mediated participation approaches, in contexts of environmental challenges where prevailing technological foci call for integrative and complementary perspectives, social dialogue and collective action.

MEDIATED PARTICIPATION

When addressing environmental governance, academic literature often emphasizes the importance of public participation, allowing for the incorporation of the diversity of knowledge and values in decision-making, even though this position is not always accepted in political practice. Several reasons exist to engage stakeholders in environmental decision-making; the decision-making becomes better informed and creative, public problem awareness and commitment are increased, the democratic right of stakeholders is strengthened and social learning is enhanced (see Mostert, 2003; Panten et al., 2018; Reed, 2008;). However, these qualities do not emerge spontaneously; as Reed describes (2008, p. 2417), "the quality of decisions made through stakeholder participation is strongly dependent on the nature of the process leading to them".

An aspect through which the concept of participation can be defined is the direction of the information flow (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). To move away from broad definitions of participation which follow the ladder[1] of Arnstein (1969) in a sometimes automized sense, we use a distinction, as made by Rowe and Frewer (2005), between informing, consulting and participation. In the case of informing, the information flow goes in one direction (indirect interaction). Consulting is gathering information from participants. Participation is the exchange of information between an organization and the public through direct interaction. This implies that in a participatory process, information is exchanged through some form of social dialogue, within a communicative platform which recognizes the diverse and probably unequal power positions, different interests, types of knowledge and eloquences—to name a few aspects—of participating social actors. To articulate these inequalities, we prefer to use the term stakeholders here. This term enhances the focus on the different stakes or interests and consequent power positions of persons involved. We also use this term to differentiate from the term actor which, interpreted theatrically, moves away from the autonomous behavior of a person to acting as induced or guided by the theatre director and the script (Stanislavski, 1980).

The more policy-oriented description of actor by Enserink et al. (2010, p. 79), stating that "an actor is a social entity, a person or an organization, able to act on or exert influence on a decision", focuses on a multi-actor perspective. Articulating the ability to influence decisions as collective action, presuming "that no individual will be able to unilaterally impose their desired solution onto others" (ibid.), makes the sharp distinction between actor and stakeholder less relevant. Yet, as the term actor may support the assumption that this concerns particularly actors who should have rightful access to a process of public participation, we like to reverse the focus. We aim to question the responsibility and accountability of policy makers, process designers and facilitators, as a major dimension for participatory and deliberative governance. This aligns with a recent study by Willmes and van Wessels (2021, p. 12) emphasizing the usefulness of making "issues and processes around responsibility" explicit for (network) governance. The inclusion of all and everything with a stake, aligns with contemporary perspectives accentuating the inclusion of voices from the past, the generation that is not yet born, and non-human entities such as, for example, described by Latour (2020) in his Parliament of Things.

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[1] As we do appreciate the strengths of metaphors and yet search to move beyond that of the ladder, we propose a "discursive-material knot" approach to participation, as introduced by Carpentier (2017). This metaphor entails exploring horizontal communicative processes through a combination of material and discursive practices.

Our focus here is on the realization of a social dialogue that includes the voices of all stakeholders; from all temporal dimensions, from human and non-humans, with a future oriented focus described by Krznaric (2020, p. 14) as "the good ancestor". Exploring new avenues for more inclusive dialogues, Amitav Ghosh contributes to our inspiration when he states:

> I would like to believe that out of this struggle [environmental action] will be born a new generation that will be able to look upon the world with clearer eyes than those that preceded it; that they will be able to transcend the isolation in which humanity was entrapped in the time of its derangement; that they will rediscover their kinship with other beings, and that this vision, at once new and ancient, will find expression in a transformed and renewed art and literature. (Ghosh, 2016, p. 162)

With the subtitle "Climate change and the unthinkable" of Ghosh' book "The Great Derangement", we are further pulled into processes of voicing in, and the envisioning of, participatory and deliberative governance.

In order to further conceptualize participation, in processes of representative governance, the concept of mediated participation is found to be useful (Witteveen et al., 2009), as it allows articulating the political perspective:

> Mediated participation aims to bring 'distanced' or 'overlooked' stakeholders in a mediated way to the doorstep of decision makers by using media. It promotes inclusion of their stories, concerns and proposals in decision-making processes because it allows policy and decision makers to 'learn' in mediated interaction with distant stakeholders. (Witteveen et al., 2009, p. 32)

We should, when thinking about designing innovative strategies of mediated participation, also be aware that this endeavor may require crossing the borders of conventional thinking and practice, as dominant positivist assumptions conflict with future and design-oriented ontologies. Buizer and Lata (2021, p. 174) refer in this respect to "practical implications for the way research and education activities are organized." One promising area of innovation comprises arts-science interfaces, that can be deployed to facilitate participatory processes, considering that creative, artistic and transdisciplinary regimes shape different ways of thinking and thereby contribute to breaking through conventional barriers and paradigms. The Dutch government's advisory architect ('rijksbouwmeester') Floris Alkemade (2020) refers in this context to qualities such as dealing with doubt and confusion, the power of imagination and even the pleasure derived from "the art of changing direction" which may result from an essential awareness of the urgent need for smart art-science amalgamations (p. 127).

Positioning such rethinking of reality in the current context of environmental urgencies can also be framed as decolonizing the future, paraphrasing Krznaric (2020, p. 17) who states that the future has been colonized, a statement which leads to the question: "How can we be good ancestors?" (Krznaric, 2020, p. 13).

But such art-science interfaces are not easy to organize, as professional identities, discursive practices and artistic craftmanship are distinct in both these domains. To make the worlds of arts and academia meet and act in a synergic way, their labelling as binary and oppositional worlds requires reframing. Svasek (2016, pp. 2–3) elaborates on the limited conceptualization of creative practice as linked to improvisation; combining the unexpected and the unrecognizable as qualities of craftmanship differs from a modernist perspective on creativity as pure innovation. Goris et al. (2015) describe how valuing participatory and artistic qualities in community art projects for social change requires a difficult balancing act, as certain practices defined as participatory may fall short of attaining immediate political impact, nor instigate more long-term oriented changes. For example, activities qualified as "participatory video" may focus more on presumed qualities of amateur filmmakers as an act of participation versus more abstract and complex aspects of a political participation process.

METHODOLOGY

This section provides descriptive overviews of two applied methodologies of mediated participation, namely community art (poetry routes and social imaginaries) and visual problem appraisal (VPA), both of which, as Witteveen and colleagues (Witteveen et al., 2018; Witteveen & den Boer, 2019) have explained, are forms of mediated participation. Both methodologies have the potential for facilitating stakeholder dialogue and stimulating social learning in complex multi-stakeholder settings, in order to enhance environmental governance and provide more robust grounding for decision-making processes.

Community art focuses on the creation of poetry routes, producing various social imaginaries, which refer to the ways people envision their social surroundings, as expressed in images and stories through popular and artistic expressions. A poetry route is both a genre and method, in which local communities in a facilitated arts-based process produce and combine images and poems in a series of printed banners regarding a particular theme or issue. The resulting poetry route feeds into a loop of social dialogue with other stakeholders similarly concerned or engaged with the issue at stake. In this fashion the poetry route travels and creates various spaces of dialogue.

In this article, two projects are described and reflected on, namely the poetry route River Flows situated in the Netherlands, and Suara Citarum, situated in Bandung, Indonesia. Furthermore, a new poetry route, in Terai Arc Landscape in Nepal is under way. The first author of this article developed the learning design of the poetry routes and facilitated their implementation together with the article's co-authors. Table 1 gives an overview of these poetry routes.

Table 1: Poetry Route Projects

Name of poetry route	Theme	Country	Years of production	Role of the authors	References
River Flows	Perspectives on river management	The Netherlands	2017	Witteveen (Design and process facilitation), den Boer (Process facilitation)	Witteveen & den Boer (2019) https://www.youtu.be/TKBOKTNZhcs
Suara Citarum	Perspectives on river management of Citarum river	Indonesia	2019	Roosmini, Dwi & Witteveen (Design and process facilitation)	https://youtu.be/KY8gQjyADW4
Terai Arc Landscape	Perspectives on landscape stewardship	Nepal	2022–2024	Witteveen & Fliervoet (Design and process facilitation)	Work in progress

Source: Authors.

The second applied methodology of mediated participation is visual problem appraisal (VPA), which consists of a series of filmed interviews allowing stakeholders to express their concerns and issues. The interviews are used in thematic workshops to enhance the analysis of, and social learning on, complex issues from different perspectives. This article focuses on two applied VPA projects, both located in The Netherlands: River Rhine Branches, and My Garden. These VPAs address diverse topics within the context of environment transformations (see Table 2).

Table 2. Visual Problem Appraisal projects

Name of the VPA	Theme	Country	Years of production	Role of the authors	References
River Rhine Branches	Perspectives on river management	The Netherlands	2017–2021	Witteveen (Design and process facilitation) Fliervoet (process facilitation)	Witteveen et al. (2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb-4ygRNB3o
My Garden	Perspectives on urban climate adaptation on local scale	The Netherlands	2020	Witteveen & Fliervoet (Design and process facilitation)	Research project "participation in climate adaptation": https://projectenportfolio.nl/wiki/index.php/PR_00315

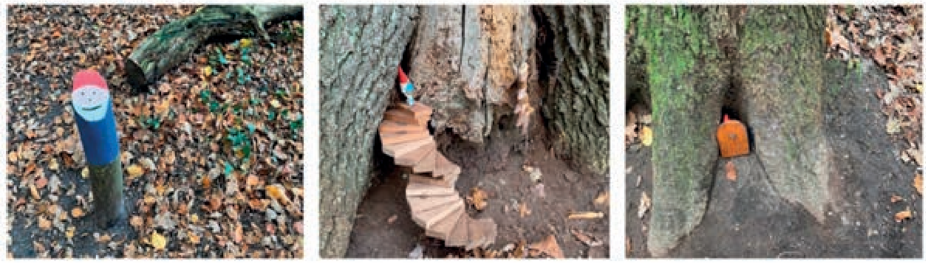
Source: Authors.

EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY ART: POETRY ROUTES AND SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

In this section, we elaborate on community art as a methodology and practice for public participation, and the afore-mentioned poetry routes (see Table 1) which aimed to contribute to sustainable futures by (re)articulating social imaginaries. Social imaginaries result from visioning, creating an active connection of lived and dreamed realities with past experiences and future ambitions. Social imaginaries refer to a collection of images, ideas and principles, fantasies, motivations, institutions, and rules which are shared by a group of people. They give meaning and presence to their surroundings and position all members in relation to one another. This argument aligns with Charles Taylor (2007, p. 23), who defines social imaginaries as "the way ordinary people 'imagine' their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but is carried in images, stories, and legends."

We refer here to social imaginaries where the social connects the individual imaginaries into a collective representation of future realities, which are not usually considered in cognitive or opinionated public participation methodologies. Interpretations of social imaginaries may trigger associations with fairy tales and children (or adult versions of this), but they do have a closer and more immediate relation to social reality. Still, the gnome track in Figure 1 encapsulates this potential association. Including the pictures of the gnome track here may appear to be contradictory, as they seem to confirm the fairy tale association. However, the aspect we wish to visualize is the strong impact stories, dreams, and other affective thoughts similar to fairy tales, may have when recognized and shared as collective social imaginaries.

Figure 1. Social Imaginaries: The Gnome Track in Renkum, the Netherlands



Source: Authors

POETRY ROUTE RIVER FLOWS

A gender-balanced group of 26 international students of the MSc course Management of Development at Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences, who were mid-career rural development professionals mostly from Africa and Asia, participated during their studies in the Netherlands in the 2-week course "Media Design for Social Change". The course aimed to deal with innovative processes supporting community resilience, participation and social learning by focusing on artistic, mediated and creative approaches. On several occasions, the students visited De Koppenwaard nature reserve and the nearby former brick factory on the IJssel River in the Netherlands, where they painted mono-types and wrote poems to express a sense of place, to highlight the cultural heritage of the site and to articulate the value of the natural resources of the area. A selection of monotypes and poems was used to create a dozen canvas banners (82 cm x 152 cm), which were displayed on the River Flows poetry route.

The activities attracted the attention of a local newspaper, the "Arnhemse Koerier".[2] During the visits, a short movie was made to show the students' activities and learning processes on the visits[3]. The nature organization Natuurmonumenten that commissioned the poetry route intended to use it to create awareness for, and involvement in, public participation in the redevelopment process of the old factory areas. In particular, it was planned to be used as a "conversation starter" for a participatory process, in which nature development, cultural heritage, flood safety and economic viability would be the key aspects. The poetry route was exhibited in the community room of the Van Hall Larenstein University of Applied Sciences in June and July 2017, in relation to the activities of the research group on Sustainable River Management and the Living Lab

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[2] For the press release (in Dutch) of June 14, 2017, see: https://www.arnhemsekoerier.nl/nieuws/algemeen/129242/kunst-en-gedichten-bevorderen-participatie-in-de-koppenwaard

[3] Link to the movie: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKBOKTNZhcs

Delta Oost, in which stakeholders related to the management of the IJssel River participated. With a public exhibition in the community hall of the municipality Rheden –through which the Ijssel River flows and in which De Koppenwaard nature reserve is located– the poetry route did indeed attract attention and serve as a conversation starter.

The poetry route was evaluated as contributive to a shared vision, combining perspectives on cultural heritage, nature conservation and economic feasibility in a way that was supported by the diverse nature conservation organizations, local and regional governmental bodies, landowners, tourist businesses, the general public and other stakeholders. Although an array of positive outcomes could be observed, Witteveen and den Boer (2019, p. 100) also describe a series of challenges resulting from strategic and material features of this poetry route. They state:

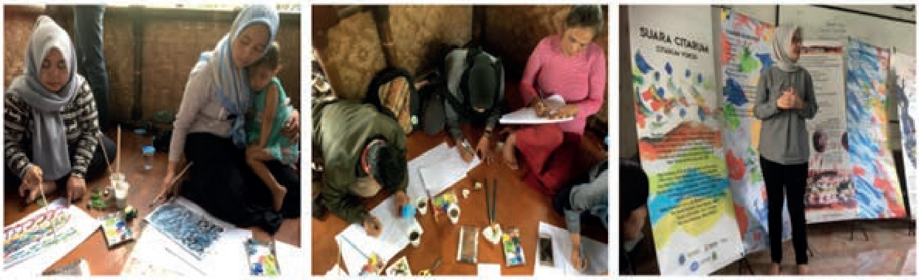
> Documenting and measuring this evidence for an artistic approach towards community resilience, participation and social learning in natural resources management no straightforward methods are available. People sharing their experiences will probably not tell their stories in a linear way or indicate a quantified (dis-) liking but instead will jump from one highlight to another, leaving gaps and returning to associate with other thoughts, feelings and ambitions.

This critical reflection resonates with Fenge et al. (2016, p. 11) who conclude "[a]rts-based approaches, and more specifically performance poetry act as an aid to encourage audiences to question the basis of knowledge and the power relations, which underpin everyday accepted practices."

POETRY ROUTE SUARA CITARUM – CITARUM VOICES

The Citarum River in Java, Indonesia is a highly polluted river that regularly floods parts of the city of Bandung. Urban downstream populations, like those in the city of Jakarta, rely on this river for drinking water supplies. Yet, the Citarum River is one of the most polluted rivers in the world and despite all efforts, developing integrated water resources management remains a challenge. Clean-up efforts involving the police, military, government departments, organizations and the public in the 25 districts the river passes through are hampered by a lack of coordination between diverse institutes and local communities. To move towards a shared vision for the Citarum River, community-based approaches are required, facilitating the communities to become stewards of the river rather than polluters. In November 2018, a collaboration between Indonesian and Dutch knowledge institutes in the context of their partnership in the Living Lab Upper Citarum, led to the creation of a space for exploring and implementing a community art project in rural upstream communities (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Community Art Project Suara Citarum – Citarum Voices



Source: Authors

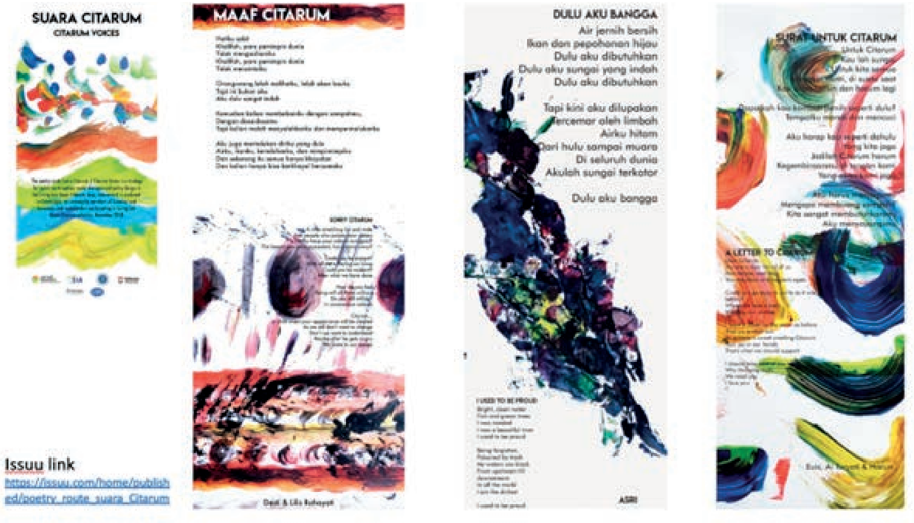
Approximately 30 community members of the settlements Ciwalengke and Sukahaji, both part of the riverbank village Padamulya, gathered to join the Citarum community art project. Over two days in November 2018 the participants produced paintings and poems in relation to the Citarum river, which flows through both settlements. All paintings were exhibited in a temporary village "museum" during the days of the workshop. Community members read their poems and then each poem was paired with a painting selected by other community members. The resulting poetry route, Suara Citarum – Citarum Voices, was produced as a series of banners combining the paintings and poems, in Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) and in English. This reassembling of the art works was achieved with permission from, and in cooperation with, the community and realized by professional artists and graphic designers to achieve maximum quality for the intended next loop of social dialogue.

The first exhibition of the poetry route was undertaken by representatives of both settlements, who took it for an exchange visit to the Banjaran community, which is at a 20 km upstream distance from the two settlements. When shown the poetry route, the audience experienced it as a dialogue between the river and the communities, which is also reflected in titles like "I used to be proud", "Sorry Citarum", "Cry of Citarum" and "For our grandchildren" (see Figure 3 for an impression). The community members, after statements of pleasure about their participation, expressed their interest during the closure session as forward looking. Deni Riswandani, on behalf of the participants expressed it as follows: "We are happy because what is presented is quite transparent. Hopefully this image brings a message for anyone who sees and this message hopefully becomes a solution to environmental changes."

The participating Living Lab Upper Citarum facilitators of water management related institutions evaluated the poetry route as very innovative, as it confronted the organizers of these local institutions with new roles to take up in the facilitation of the process and the production of the poetry route. It shuffled around existing views on voicing and representation, and it was met with surprise that the community was able to represent their views with paintings and poetry. Muhammad Rifa from the Human Resource Development agency of West Java province stated: “It is really interesting that they can draw something about their emotions and feelings about the Citarum river”.

The poetry route travelled to other kampungs and institutions for introducing a dialogical process on river pollution and management. Exposing the poetry route to other communities and witnessing the lively debates it induced, created attention for the design of such (community art) processes. The project ambitions were not limited to the community art project, though. The process, especially the process facilitation of the community art project—stimulating the social dialogue with the poetry route—was also analyzed for its meaning for university curricula, in this particular case, the Bandung Institute of Technology in Indonesia, one of the partners in the Living Lab Upper Citarum.

Figure 3. Part of the Poetry route Suara Citarum – Citarum voices



DULU AKU BANGGA
Air jernih bersih
Ikan dan pepohonan hijau
Dulu aku dibutuhkan
Dulu aku sungai yang indah
Dulu aku dibutuhkan

Tapi kini aku dilupakan
Tercemar oleh limbah
Airku hitam
Dari hulu sampai muara
Di seluruh dunia
Akulah sungai terkotor

Dulu aku bangga

Source: Authors

POETRY ROUTE TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE

Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), a rather flat zone along the southern foot of the Himalaya Mountain range, shared by Nepal, India and Bhutan, contains 23 national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, etc. that are partly interconnected, enabling tigers to migrate over large distances. To develop integrated grassland management strategies for the nature reserves in the TAL, that anticipate hydrological, ecological and socio-economic pressures, there is a plan to establish a community art project to record the mechanisms underlying the pressures, from a broad range of stakeholder perspectives. The combined insights will be used in co-creation processes with nature managers and local stakeholders to develop grassland management strategies that support the conservation of the tiger habitat.

The poetry route Terai Arc Landscape is part of the "Save the tiger! Save the grassland! Save the water!" project. This research project is financed by the National Science Agenda program of the Dutch Research Council, involving a collaboration of 25 partners from Dutch and Nepali universities, NGOs and companies working in the fields of hydrology, ecology, nature conservation and stakeholder participation and communication. During the operationalization of this project (which is facing delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic), concerns were raised about integrating the envisioned poetry route as a mediated participation activity. After deliberation among the project partners, different yet complementary epistemological perspectives on analyzing natural systems were combined. The poetry route Terai Arc Landscape that will be implemented as part of the project aims at articulating the community views and voices, through the compilation of paintings and poetry. This poetry route thereby aims to feed into the social-ecological system analysis and also envisions to activate the community in relation to a stewardship on the river management activities.

EXPERIENCES WITH VISUAL PROBLEM APPRAISAL (VPA)

Visual Problem Appraisal (VPA) is a film-based learning strategy, originally developed for higher education purposes, which aims to enhance the analysis of complex issues from various perspectives through a series of filmed interviews (Witteveen & Lie, 2018). Each interview communicates the insights of a stakeholder, their views, interests and preferences which are not necessarily familiar or easy to understand for the observing audience. The diversity of stories unfolds during VPA workshops, in which both voicing and participation take place in a mediated way.

A VPA set is to be used as a tool for social learning in diverse arenas such as policy making and education. It is a structured process that consists of three phases: (1) A scoping stage where participants become familiar with the subject matter and issues through facilitated individual and group study and deliberation; (2) A simulated stakeholder consultation, where participants select and view several interviews and provide feedback. "Meeting" a number of stakeholders allows the participants to learn about the various perspectives of these interviewees and the way they frame their problems. (3) In an "action" stage, participants interpret and organize the always confusing, contrasting, and contradictory information and formulate recommendations for action. This can take various shapes, such as scenario development, policy design or elaborated project proposals.

VPA sets have been used in higher education in several countries and they have shown to be very effective, offering an innovative and deliberative space for students, whereas evidenced impacts, as described by Witteveen et al. (2009, p. 42), include: "Enhanced problem and policy analysis capacity and intersubjective consensus; social learning, collective learning about social issues, problem framing and perceptions; reduced self-referentiality and increased commitment for primary stakeholders concerned".

The series of film portraits creates a mediated platform enabling direct stakeholders from the area to meet indirect ones in policy and management positions allowing them to explore and act on competing or conflicting interests. The VPA methodology offers an innovative tool for participatory and deliberative governance, and provides an important addition as it solves two well-known problems: (1) the shortage of time and material resources for stakeholders to participate (leading to stakeholder fatigue) and (2) the fact that often the same people participate in diverse arenas (the 'usual suspects'). In addition, we should mention the advantages of using VPA's visual textuality to record and portray narratives. Furthermore, the process of facilitation may bring in a new dynamic, as it focusses on the competences of participants to watch, to listen and to analyze in a reflective manner.

VISUAL PROBLEM APPRAISAL RHINE RIVER BRANCHES

This VPA project aimed to develop strategic guidance for the complex, multi-stakeholder setting of sustainable river management for the Rhine and its branches in the Netherlands. The VPA aimed to function as a tool to support innovative governance as it shaped processes of participation and social learning, creating social imaginaries of sustainable resource management and policy platforms to communicate about sustainable river futures.

A professional film crew of 3–4 members recorded the social and natural environment of the river and its branches, in a series of documentaries supported by filmed interviews of the stakeholders. Filming took place from 2018 to 2021, at different times of the year. In order to present the diversity in the narratives, the portraits included direct stakeholders such as farmers, local entrepreneurs, fishermen and residents as well as indirect ones such as tourists, nature conservationists, water managers, policy makers, and governmental administrators. The filming of the interviews was done by a small film crew, while the interviewees were chosen after a series of stakeholder selection workshops. After producing a first subset of interviews, the complete set of VPA interviewees was reviewed by a transdisciplinary team (whose composition changed during the process).

Jørgensen (2012) describes these dynamics as being aligned with the disruption of seemingly strong socio-technological configurations and the relevance of including non-engaged stakeholders in an arena approach towards transitions.

The VPA provided a space to listen to stakeholders whom conventional public participation processes did not consider and consequently anyone who was non-engaged, silenced or overlooked also featured in the repository of film portraits, but not all, as Molina y Vedia (2008) argues, were easy to enlist, such as the self-silenced stakeholders. Examples of everyday exclusion include inland navigation skippers as they continuously sail on the rivers, or seasonally affected actors in times of drought or floods who are inaccessible during those times.

Recent activities using the VPA River Rhine Branches with staff of the Dutch water authority led one participant to make the following statement: “maybe [it was] good we did not do the interview ourselves as it forced us to listen”. A view on listening as being a complex activity can be considered an expression of “reduced self – referentiality”; a major result of mediated participation, which Witteveen et al. (2009, p. 56) framed as “creating spaces for stakeholder dialogue and social learning by removing social, cultural, psychological and/or physical barriers between authorities, policymakers and primary stakeholders for meeting in the ‘public sphere’ for collective learning and decision-making.”

VISUAL PROBLEM APPRAISAL “MY GARDEN”

The literature shows that climate adaptation is a difficult process, in which various factors can have an obstructive effect (Bulkeley & Casta Broto, 2013). This is not different in the Dutch local governance situation, where municipalities often have a sectoral approach and a lack of structural embedding of climate adaptation in spatial planning processes (Uittenbroek et al., 2019). Also, citizens and other stakeholders have a limited awareness of extreme weather occurrences and the increasing impact of climate change. Moreover, there are no uniform solutions and stakeholders have different priorities, interests and preferences for particular solutions. This makes climate change a complex societal problem. However, many of these impeding factors are social constructs, which can be addressed by increasing the adaptive capacity in society.

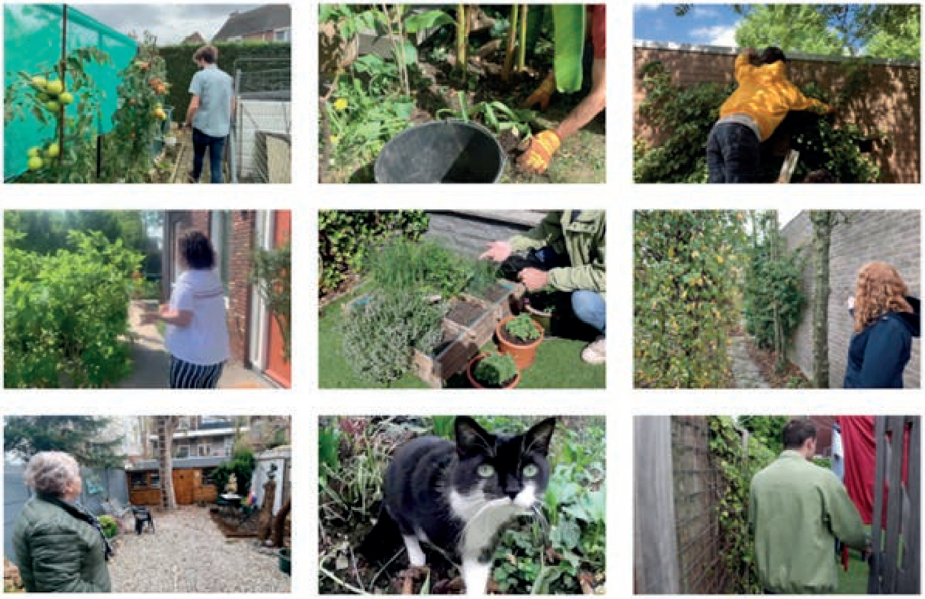
The project VPA My Garden recorded on film what people experience and do in their private gardens, whether it is a “hedgehog” garden or a manicured garden, or whatever variation that is possible. The project also featured their motivations. The resulting filmed portraits, capturing the garden experience of 20 residents and a domestic cat, were intended to be used in workshop settings related to citizen participation in urban climate adaptation. The VPA My Garden was used in co-creation workshops, in which the focus was on raising awareness on climate effects, and on creating a climate-proof design for the street or neighborhood. Through

VPA, participants in the workshops met other stakeholders in the neighborhood and competing or conflicting interests became clearly visible.

The resulting VPA showed how citizens were passionate about their gardens and how they imagined them. Interviewees narrated about a variety of functions and activities which indicated that more places or spots existed than those that would actually fit in the square meter outline of their garden. The social imaginaries used by the filmed citizens is expressed by real, imagined or dreamed functions and activities, such as harvesting your own food, socializing with everyone, contributing to biodiversity or simply having a nice place to dry laundry, drink a cup of tea or read a book. Pieter T., whose filmed interview is part of this VPA formulated it as follows: "When I sit here in the garden, I have different corners where I can sit and those corners give me peace because I sit between the greenery and hear the birds."

The films showed that the reality is not what takes place but what could take place: seasons and other time frames, shadow, sunlight, fruits, flowers and other natural gifts, the presence of family and friends were easily imagined (see Figure 4 for an impression). This is exemplified by Seniye T, who has a Mediterranean origin. She said: "And as you can see, I do have an olive tree here. No olives, but I just like that we are aware of where the olives come from." In addition, the inclusion of the "interview" with Lola the cat advanced the audience's interest for considering non-human voices.

Figure 4. My Garden Interviewees



Source: Authors

CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of experiences in this article aimed to gain insights about the opportunities and challenges of mediated participation for environmental governance, thus also supporting a transformation of environmental governance. Experiences with community art-based poetry route and film-based visual problem appraisal had the ambition to overcome frictions in the integration of diverse discursive cultures and textualities, that we can find in the more conventional (and minimalist) approaches towards participatory and deliberative governance.

Achieving participation through art-based methodologies—using film and poetry—can contribute to diverse arenas of social dialogue and governance transformation. More specific conclusions, based on more detailed accounts of the events as described in this article, require prudence when analyzing the impact of the spaces explored, in order to prevent jumping to enthusiastic positivism. To prevent this over-optimism, we will therefore start formulating the challenges before we shed light on the value of our experiences.

The nature of mediated participation implies that "voicing" is rendered differently: no longer favoring direct communicative qualities such as eloquence, time and mobility resources and other aspects of access and inclusion. This comes at a cost: if mediated participation is to result in social dialogue, it is required to design strategies that consider particular aspects resulting from art-based perspectives, such as visual ethics, and the power dynamics of portrayal. Frictions are caused by issues related to craftmanship and discursive power. As participation cannot be equally implemented in all elements in the process—for instance, in the final compilation of art works—it remains necessary to focus on the governance and dialogical aspiration. This aligns with Literat (2012, p. 2962) who wrote that mediated participation creates new opportunities for stakeholder engagement, but also raises important questions regarding "collective creativity, authorship, and the aesthetic significance of digital participation." Recognizing such frictions may probably lead to curricula reviews, focusing on transdisciplinarity and 21st century skills.

Another challenge is that processes of mediated participation require the recognition of complexity by process facilitators amongst others. This can be exemplified with the VPA My Garden. These film portraits led to the realization that contemporary debates may tend to position every issue in a political context. A citizen with a garden full of trees and bushes could then be positioned in a left-wing political corner, whereas a paved garden could represent a right-wing stance. The VPA My Garden shows landlords who prohibit their tenants from altering the pavement, a wheelchair requiring pavement and a resident's disappointment that their pear tree did not carry fruit. These stories convincingly confronted the VPA process facilitators and their audiences with the idea that it is imperative to recognize and respect the diversity of existing or imagined functions and activities that citizens attribute to their gardens before introducing tangible interventions to adapt those spaces towards climate change.

The societal relevance of these integrative approaches to learning and transformation should nevertheless stimulate institutes of higher education to integrate art-based narrative methodologies and facilitation competences in their curricula, as part of their teaching on soft system knowledge. Amitav Ghosh elaborates on "climate change and the unthinkable" (the subtitle to his book "The Great Derangement") as an imaginative failure in the face of global warming. He formulates it as follows: "we are confronted suddenly with a new task: that of finding other ways in which to imagine the unthinkable beings and events of this era" (2016, p. 33).

Still to be considered as a challenge, but of utmost importance, is the recommendation that process facilitation should be accountable beyond its direct handling. Facilitation towards transparent and achievable goals also links to procedures and activities guiding participation processes. This allows facilitators to be transparent about expected efforts, engagement and resulting relevance. As evidenced in the Terai Arc Landscape project, to prevent a misalignment in using the outcomes of participatory processes, it is important to engage in timely negotiations on how the outcomes will be used, so that the mandate of those who will use the outcomes can be defined beforehand.

To advance further insights and actions for environmental governance transformation, and to respect the urgency in developing and implementing environmental actions, governmental authorities, education institutes and other influential stakeholders should dare to support innovative, uncompromising and adventurous approaches. In particular, the concept of social imaginaries is considered of great value for processes, which are designed and motivated by art-based or creative methodologies and requires further exploration. Using this concept of social imaginaries may open new avenues for action and reflection in times of urgency, as this concept allows us to stay away from conventional modernist thinking.

Complementary to our call for good process facilitation, and the need to be sensitive to power imbalances that arise from these methods, there is another valuable outcome. We also witnessed—with both methodologies (community art and VPA)—the autonomous power of art-based mediated participation. Bringing the poetry route Suara Citarum to downstream villages prompted spontaneous and passionate debates about the Citarum river. Thus, the intrinsic power of the poetry route was revealed. In such cases, the facilitator or process designers are challenged to take a step back and respect the emerging dynamics, also allowing for paths other than those planned to be taken. This implies an element of trust that these unexpected paths will also generate relevant contributions. This aligns with the last lines of the poem “The Flood”, written by participating villagers Cucu, Sopian and Engkar: “But if you come together. With hopes and dreams. We can grow side by side”; it also resonates with Kokom and Mida’s words in the poem “A prayer for Citarum”: “That is what I want for tomorrow and forever”.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Homeless People as Agents of Self-representation: Exploring the Potential of Enhanced Participation in a Community Newspaper Project

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Abstract: Homeless people are subjected to disadvantageous representations in the media, also lacking opportunities for self-representation. This article reports on the findings of two preparatory stages of a project that involves homeless people in the publication of their own newspaper. The findings show that homeless people want to represent themselves through self-created news and to address homelessness as a social issue through people's life stories, which has the potential to challenge mainstream media practices related to portraying homelessness. At the same time, the analysis reveals several issues that need to be considered while implementing such projects. For example, self-empowerment may sometimes come at the price of disempowerment of others. This emphasizes the importance of carefully structuring the facilitating processes to promote homeless people's genuine media participation, and to support individual and community empowerment.

Keywords: homelessness; media participation; self-representation; empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Homeless people are among the most marginalized and voiceless societal groups (Edgar, 2009), being subjected to systematic discrimination and societal exclusion. This is often fed by mainstream media, whose representations tend to support the main stereotypical presumptions of the homeless as tramps, smelly, dirty, obnoxious, or drunk (Mao et al., 2011; Ravenhill, 2016). Some alternative media, such as community media or street papers, do speak for homeless people (Doudaki & Carpentier 2021a; Howley, 2003), yet the opportunities they are given to articulate their own voices are limited (Torck, 2001).

This article presents the findings of the preparatory stages of a community newspaper project that aims to engage homeless people in processes of empowerment, through which they can regain their voice and represent themselves and other homeless people through self-created news. Such an effort assumes that homeless people acting as agents of self-representation can challenge the stereotypical and simplified ways, in which mainstream media portray homelessness. But more importantly, the project symbolizes innovative participation opportunities that lead to the empowerment of individuals and the homeless community complementing media by allowing homeless people to become active media voices. Such a project can potentially contribute to altering how the public understands homelessness and how media report on it, and more importantly, to shifting the unequal power relations in favor of the homeless people.

The article elaborates on the findings of two sets of preparatory-stage interviews. These interviews focus on the attitudes of homeless people towards becoming agents of self-representation, and on the issues and dimensions of homelessness that are deemed of relevance to be communicated by the homeless community. As this study argues, the evaluation of the preparatory stages of such projects is important to create the conditions for genuine participation (see Doudaki & Carpentier, 2021b). This is achieved by identifying and taking into consideration the views, attitudes and preferences of the involved actors –in this case homeless people– as it concerns the types and modes of participation and content to be published, together with the potential risks and pitfalls of such processes.

APPROACHES TO HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness, as a concept, requires an understanding of the broader context of possible living situations and homes. Definitions involving statutory, legal, statistical, or housing shortage data are often unsuitable for categorizing homelessness (Busch-Geertsema, 2010) and distinctions between absolute and relative (see Hwang, 2001), and apparent, hidden, and potential homelessness (see Hradecký & Hradecká, 1996), should be avoided as they oversimplify the complexity of this phenomenon. The NGO FEANTSA developed a European typology on homelessness and housing exclusion (ETHOS) in 2005 (FEANTSA, 2006), which as Edgar (2009) explains, identifies three domains that constitute home – physical, social, and legal – and direct homelessness is the outcome of the absence of two or all three. ETHOS distinguishes between 4 main categories of homelessness: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing, which are further divided into 13 subcategories covering all living situations where at least one of the three domains of home is absent.

ETHOS provides a continuum definition of living situations (Amore et al., 2011; Edgar, 2009), covering not only people who live on the streets, stay in night shelters, or in accommodation for the homeless, but also people who are released from penal or medical institutions without having a home to go to and immigrants in temporary accommodation. Furthermore, ETHOS includes people who occupy land illegally or live in non-conventional structures, unfit or extremely overcrowded housing and people who live under the threat of eviction or violence.

All these categories are intertwined, and the journey from inadequate housing to rooflessness may be swift as multiple factors contribute to homelessness. It is not only economic factors or lack of housing but also relationship, family or health related factors, that may involve domestic or gender-related violence, family break-up, divorce, death, mental or physical health issues, or addictions (Edgar, 2009).

These complexities make clear that a thorough understanding of homelessness has practical implications for the quantity and quality of policy and social services (see Dvořák, 2020; Hradecký et al., 2012 Kliment & Dočekal, 2016; Mao et al., 2001), and for the public perception of homelessness, which are all mediated and co-constructed by the media and their representations of homelessness.

REPRESENTATIONS OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE MEDIA

Mainstream media tend to present homeless people and homelessness in stereotypical and simplistic ways. These representations may reinforce the stereotypical images of the obnoxious, dirty, and drunk tramp (Ravenhill, 2016) and strengthen the stigmatization of homeless people in contemporary Western societies (Doudaki & Carpentier, 2021a). Stigmatization poses a grave risk for homeless people, who already suffer from low self-esteem, low self-acceptance, and high social exclusion levels (Dvořák, 2020).

Although mainstream media depict homeless people both positively and negatively (Best, 2010), the unfavorable depictions are more prevalent as deficits and deviant characteristics of homeless people are discussed to a significantly greater extent (Buck et al., 2004). Mainstream media often represent homeless people as dangerous criminals, drug abusers, mentally ill, or as having contagious diseases (Buck et al., 2004; Lind & Danowski, 1999; Min, 1999). At best, they are seen as the victims of violence (Schneider, 2012) or as "helpless, dependent for their salvation on society's benevolence, while the rest of the society is assumed to be healthy and powerful" (Doudaki & Carpentier, 2019, p. 10). Furthermore, as media tend to use simplistic stereotypes and give very little or no room to representing the complexities of human nature, homeless people are homogenized as an undistinguishable social category (Dvořák, 2020; Min, 1999).

Representation of homelessness as a social issue is both scarce and highly insufficient, as mainstream media usually do not link their content to broader issues of homelessness nor present it as a matter for public action (Best, 2010). Thus, although portraying the homeless as victims may contribute to public awareness, it has limited impact given that the media focus on homelessness episodically, especially in winter, without mentioning its causes or possible solutions, which leaves homeless people unnoticed for most of the year (Best, 2010; Bunis et al., 1996; Hodgetts et al., 2006; Schneider, 2012). The periodicity and stereotypical media representations pose a risk in the form of the public's compassion fatigue (Bunis et al., 1996; Link et al., 1995).

One issue of misrepresentation relates to whom is given attention as homeless. Although roofless people only represent the tip of the iceberg of all homeless people, they receive the greatest media attention (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). This aspect is connected to journalists' inadequate training and understanding of homelessness, as well as to the criteria of newsworthiness and the competition to attract large audiences. Roofless people form a highly vulnerable part of the population often suffering from mental disorders or drug and alcohol addiction and may provide readymade controversial material, that is considered newsworthy.

Another issue is that of voice, because homeless people rarely have the benefit of an active voice in the media (Schneider, 2012). Related to this is the kind of voice they are permitted to articulate. For example, when homeless people are quoted, this is done in such a way that they share their first-hand experiences but rarely address homelessness in general (Hrast, 2008). As Schneider (2012) claims, such a practice contributes to the perception of homelessness as an individual rather than a social problem.

However, media that resist these discourses and offer alternative representations of homelessness do exist. A prime example is the street paper, which is a publication that aims to support homeless people by offering them the opportunity not only to become the vendors of the publication and gain an income but to reconnect with the fabric of society. The content of street papers focuses on homelessness and other issues of social inequality, using an inclusive discourse on these issues and raising awareness on social injustice, and thus seeking to bring in the voices and perspectives of the homeless and the poor (Doudaki & Carpentier, 2019).

Some street papers feature stories and commentary that go beyond reporting economic conditions or social policy changes – they document and analyze the impact these changes have on the lives of the homeless (Howley, 2003). Street papers represent the voice of the poor and seek to critically engage the reading public in ongoing deliberations over fundamental economic, social, and political justice issues, as well as to engage social service workers, community activists, and the poor in public journalism (Howley, 2003). Thus, they represent an alternative to mainstream media, as they help to disrupt the stereotypical depictions of homelessness and provide the homeless with opportunities to have their voices expressed (Doudaki & Carpentier, 2021a; Torck, 2001).

Despite the opportunities that street papers offer for alternative representations of homelessness, the voices of homeless people included in these publications typically receive only limited space and are restricted to specific writing genres (Torck, 2001). The cases homeless people are given enhanced, let alone, full media participation opportunities connected to control over the decision-making process of news-making, are rare.

The project that this article reports on aims to address this scarcity by creating opportunities for homeless people to become agents of self-representation through enhanced media participation. Such a publishing project might not only complement traditional and alternative media in the context of the coverage of issues of homelessness, but more importantly, can function as a space of empowerment for homeless people. The project would, by giving the homeless enhanced power over how their living situation shall be represented, give them also back their voice.

AGENCY OF SELF-REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

This article explores the possibilities of homeless people acting as agents of self-representation in the media. An agent of self-representation is a person who uses their voice to represent themselves and their community, in the public sphere and the media, through processes and practices of enhanced participation.

Before examining the attitudes of homeless people towards participation and self-representation in the media and what they think is relevant to be communicated about homelessness in the media, it is necessary to take a closer look at participation. According to Carpentier (2011; 2016), participation refers to equalizing power inequalities not only in decision-making processes but also power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors. This approach to participation emphasizes power-sharing, which is more than merely taking part in a process, and which is vital for enhancing societal equity and social justice.

Processes and practices of enhanced participation in the public sphere create opportunities for marginalized and socially excluded groups to strive for social justice and for challenging stereotypes, especially related to power distribution, reversing processes of marginalization and exclusion of the powerless (Adams, 2008). These practices facilitate the promotion of human and democratic rights, equity, public accountability, and the fostering of empowerment, which is a process through which the voiceless regain their voice. It is essential to consider participation, empowerment, and power as inseparable elements. Participation leads to empowerment and thence to shifts in power. Empowerment is a process of the transformation of power relations in the exercise of authority (Cavalieri

& Almeida, 2018; Wilkins, 2000), and as Borodkina et al. (2013) argue, it promotes and supports the representation of those commonly viewed as powerless. The empowering process enables people to gain more personal, interpersonal, and political power (Cavalieri & Almeida, 2018) and grants more control over their lives because it enhances decision-making capabilities (Rappaport, 1987; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Individual empowerment further promotes a higher rate of self-esteem, self-acceptance, and awareness of one's social environment and higher levels of self-esteem and self-acceptance contribute to laying solid foundations for empowerment processes (Cavalieri & Almeida, 2018).

Empowerment is not only an outcome of participation (Adams, 2008; Arnstein, 1969), but its level is proportional. Arnstein (1969) claims that participation equals empowerment, and the higher the level of the former, so is that of the latter. Arnstein identifies three forms of enhanced participation: partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. Partnership brings opportunities for the participants to negotiate power with the traditional powerholders. At the same time, it fosters the exercise of power between participants and conventional powerholders. Delegated power allows participants to gain dominant roles in the decision-making process through ongoing negotiations. Finally, through citizen control participants are in complete control over decision-making and planning and oversee policy and managerial aspects (Arnstein, 1969). Citizen control is hereafter referred to as full participation, i.e., a process where each member has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions (Pateman, 1970).

The project that this article reports on focuses on creating opportunities for homeless people to become agents of self-representation through processes of enhanced and full participation in the media. These concern the participation of individuals and groups, in this case homeless people, "in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media organizational decision-making (structural participation)" (Carpentier, 2011, p. 68), on equal terms. Both content-related and structural participation are important for rebalancing unequal power relations, as they relate to creating spaces and opportunities for both free expression, and horizontal and democratic processes of organization and decision-making (Carpentier, 2011).

The participation process allows homeless people to regain their voice and has the capacity to promote their self-esteem, self-acceptance, and deeper awareness of their social environment (Cavalieri & Almeida, 2018), functioning as a form of training in democratic participation and decision-making. Furthermore, if the process is carefully and respectfully organized and facilitated, it introduces a powerful tool for disrupting the social exclusion of homeless people through the presence of their unmediated voices. Consequently, communication between homeless people and the public may become more direct, and the former, as agents of self-representation, may also challenge the stereotypes that mainstream media use when representing homeless people and homelessness (Jolls & Johnsen, 2017). This process does not guarantee that the public will change its perception of homelessness. One important factor is the limited reach that projects of this type usually have within the broader public. Yet, it may both complement and influence responsible and ethical journalism in offering alternative representations of homelessness (Jolls & Johnsen, 2017).

Although projects that promote enhanced forms of participation in communicative processes and in the media create substantial opportunities of empowerment, visibility and unmediated expression for the groups involved, these projects are not without risks. As Cooke and Kothari (2001) suggest, aiming to engage groups and individuals in participatory processes may, while promising empowerment, actually foster the reproduction of existing unequal power relations (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Participation may support, in practice, separatism and more complex and hidden forms of oppression (Arnstein, 1969), and does not necessarily help in dealing with conflicts or foster democratic processes and practices (Wiedemann & Femers, 1993).

Participatory projects aimed at involving vulnerable groups should be designed and implemented in ways that create the conditions for genuine participation at all levels. For this reason, when the groups involved lack basic resources, these resources must be made available. Such resources include not only the provision of safe spaces and basic infrastructure and equipment, and training in producing and publishing content and in operating media equipment, but also support and guidance in developing processes and routines of collaborative decision-making and management, and in dealing with tensions and conflicts (Adams, 2008; Croft & Beresford, 1993). Additionally, guidance in establishing reflective mechanisms that enable the participants to evaluate the participatory process and its outcomes (Croft & Beresford, 1993; Hardina, 2002), and adjust their practices, is crucial.

ATTITUDES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE TOWARD BECOMING AGENTS OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

This article reports on the findings of the preparatory stages of a project that involves the engagement of homeless people in the publication of their own community newspaper, hosted in a day center for homeless people in Brno, in the Czech Republic. This publication project is part of the "Empowering Media" doctoral project which aims at developing opportunities for homeless people to become agents of self-representation and studying their lived experiences through long-term (three to four years) ethnographic research. The "Empowering Media" project further seeks to develop guidelines for mediating full media participation for marginalized groups with a focus on homelessness striving for finding balance between individual and community empowerment.

The community newspaper project that this article focuses on is currently at the stage of preparation. It aims to counter the simplified and stereotypically negative representations of homelessness that abound in mainstream media, which do not address the broader social dimensions of homelessness (Buck et al., 2004; Min, 1999; Schneider, 2012). This newspaper project aims to offer genuine opportunities for enhanced and full participation to homeless people, as these opportunities are generally limited even in alternative and participatory media projects, such as those of street papers (Torck, 2001). Facilitating enhanced and, if possible, full media participation creates opportunities for the involved individuals' empowerment, and in the case of heavily marginalized groups, such as the homeless, their reconnection with society, the regaining of their voice and their rehumanization (Carpentier et al., 2021; Doudaki & Carpentier, 2021a).

This article reports on the findings of two of the preparatory stages of the community newspaper project. The first stage focuses on the attitudes of homeless people towards becoming agents of self-representation, and the second stage on the topics, issues and dimensions of homelessness that are relevant to be shared in such a participatory media outlet. The evaluation of these stages is important in designing and setting up the conditions for a participatory media outlet that would take into consideration homeless people's attitudes, feelings, understandings and prioritizations, so that enhanced or full participation does not end up an empty shell being externally imposed and thus, predicated to fail.

As it concerns the first stage, six in-depth interviews with homeless people were carried out, focusing on exploring their attitudes toward their own media participation. The sample consisted of three roofless and three houseless people, five male, and one female. All were between the ages of 38 and 61 and had finished either primary or secondary education. They had all been homeless for at least one year. The Czech language interviews were conducted in Brno, in 2018 and lasted from 90 to 120 minutes.[1] They were recorded and transcribed by the author, and were then analyzed implementing the main principles of textual analysis, using open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1999), in order to identify the main attitudes of the respondents toward their own media participation.[2]

According to Ajzen (1989, p. 241), "an attitude is an individuals' disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event, or to any other discriminable aspect of the individuals' world." There are three interrelated components of attitudes: the cognitive, the affective, and the conative (Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). The cognitive component represents knowledge, thoughts, beliefs, opinions, and expectations related to the issue or situation. The affective component includes feelings, moods and preferences about the issue or situation, and the conative is an intention to behave in a certain way toward it (Ajzen, 1989; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

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[1] To protect their anonymity, each interviewee is allocated a code. For example, Stage 1 Interviewee 1 is coded as S1I1, and Stage 2 Interviewee 1 is coded as S2I1.

[2] The author is responsible for translating into English the interview excerpts that are included in the article.

Overall, the response to the fundamental issue of whether homeless people want to become agents of self-representation was positive through the responses of the interviewees. Exploring the cognitive component of the homeless people's attitudes to becoming agents of self-representation showed that the interviewees perceive media as a way of changing or affecting society's perception of homelessness. The respondents found it difficult to imagine they could represent themselves in the media without anybody else directing them or editing the final content. They believe that the only way to express themselves in the media is by being asked by professional journalists to comment on an issue. At the same time, they would appreciate having the final word over the published content if they had the opportunity. As one interviewee (S1I4) mentioned: "Yeah, I could do that, I would really like that, to say I want this to be published but not that."

Exploring the affective component of their attitudes showed a mixture of emotions and preferences about becoming agents of self-representation. First, the interviewees shared negative emotions regarding low participation levels as they fear that their voices would be externally altered. This distrust was based on previous experiences with mainstream media, which only used their words without giving them the opportunity to express their opinions. On the other hand, they generally expressed very positive emotions toward the higher levels of participation, namely partnership and delegated power (see Arnstein, 1969). However, they were not very positive about full participation, as they did not feel confident or competent enough to create their own media. For example, an interviewee (S1I3) argued that "there are more eligible people, who have the experience and have been doing it for some time."

The conative, or behavioral, dimension pointed to inclinations toward partnership and delegated power. Hence, the interviewees showed a genuine interest in becoming agents of self-representation at the higher participation levels under the condition of having the final word concerning the content. As one interviewee (S1I4) said, "if I had the opportunity to write my own journalism, I would do it immediately. I have already done it once". This finding is related to the perception shared by several interviewees of an obligation to contribute to making their own news because it could potentially help other homeless people by enlightening the public and politicians on the complex life trajectories and circumstances leading to homelessness. Some interviewees also claimed that their motivation lies in providing truthful representations about homelessness.

At the same time, the interviewees who inclined toward higher forms of participation were cautious about full media participation. They argued that the ultimate control over the process should remain in professionals' hands, mainly because they recognized that it requires a high level of responsibility, specific journalism experience, and skills related to the formal aspects of news-making. As one interviewee (S1I2) argued, "the responsibility is huge. I would have to be responsible for lots of people, for lots of homeless, and I'm not responsible for them."

Gaining insight into homeless people's dispositions towards media participation is necessary in order to understand if homeless people want to engage in a participatory media project, to what extent and under which conditions, and what their thoughts and feelings are about such a prospect. This knowledge is important in setting the foundations of this type of project in a way that considers and addresses the prospective involved subjects' views, attitudes and preferences.

ISSUES, TOPICS AND DIMENSIONS OF RELEVANCE BY THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY

Homeless people generally lack the opportunity to have their own voices published even when media give them some visibility, so a second area of investigation concerns the topics homeless people would like to communicate as agents of self-representation. In 2019 and 2020, in-depth interviews with 12 homeless people were conducted in Brno. The sample consisted of various homeless categories ranging from the roofless to people living in unfit or extremely overcrowded housing, of whom 11 were male, and 1 was female, and 11 were Czech and 1 was Slovak. Their ages ranged from 32 to 66 years. The periods of being homeless ranged from five months to 12 years. The transcribed 60-90 minute interviews were analyzed following the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis focused on exploring which stories homeless people prefer to share if they have the opportunity to act as agents of self-representation, about themselves as well as about other homeless people and homelessness in general.

UNIQUENESS AND HUMANNESS

One thematic area concerned homeless people's uniqueness and humanness. All the interviewees were fully aware that homeless people are individuals with specific patterns of behavior, habits and needs, and emphasized the importance of representing homeless people as unique individuals. This awareness contributed to the formation of a common aversion to being "lumped together" (repeated by several interviewees) and the need for emphasizing that all homeless people are, most importantly, humans. As one interviewee (S2I12) stressed, homeless people are “very kind people […] it seems to me, that people with a very good heart end up like this”.

The emphasis on homeless people’s humanness is connected to the importance of communicating their non-material needs. As explained by the interviewees, they have different life trajectories and everyday needs that include more than just housing, food, work, or health. They emphasized the social dimension of humanness, often forgotten in mainstream representations of homelessness, that homeless people need opportunities for self-expression, social contact and relationships.

LIFE STRUGGLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Another issue, on which the interviewees focused, and which relates to the need for rehumanization of homeless people in media representations, is to make their life efforts and accomplishments visible. Hence, they attribute importance to making their everyday routines and living conditions visible, emphasizing that homeless people usually have to move around the city to acquire food, money, hygiene, or keep warm. They admitted that the main way to get money is by begging, explaining that this activity usually comes with a high level of shame and embarrassment which they sometimes try to overcome by getting drunk. Several interviewees stated that they occasionally manage to get a part-time job or receive social security benefits, which do not cover basic expenses or stable accommodation. Sharing these stories of discomfort and embarrassment, is for them, a way to communicate the everyday struggles of life, which are material, physical and emotional.

The interviewees emphasized the importance of making visible their efforts in being responsible, studying, working toward their future and not giving up, and sharing stories about their accomplishments, such as having worked for most of their lives, having children, dreams, and passions. Almost all the interviewees said they had been trying to change their situation and would continue doing so despite obstacles such as bad health, lack of work opportunities, incapability of working due to lack of sleep, or a safe place to return to after work. The presentation of these efforts will contribute, according to the interviewees, to their humanization and to challenging the stereotypical image of all homeless people as the drunk, dirty people who do not want to work.

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL RESPONSIBILITY

The interviewees also felt it to be relevant to communicate the issue of responsibility, both individual and collective, as it concerns homelessness. One dimension that is important, for them, is that homelessness is a social issue and that the reasons for losing their home are both individual and societal, and can be related to health issues, unemployment, bureaucracy, mental health issues, divorce, debts, or addictions. For some interviewees, honesty about their own responsibility is important to be shared. For example, one interviewee emphasized that becoming homeless was his fault, explaining that the main reason for losing his home was procrastination.

For the interviewees, addressing the broader social implications of homelessness, which society tends to ignore, might help their and other homeless people's efforts for social inclusion. Reflecting on the aversion of society towards issues of homelessness, one interviewee (S2I3) argued that it is because "society doesn't like to see its own fault". Furthermore, for some interviewees sharing their life stories is vital for society to realize that everybody can lose their home at some point in their lives, thus sharing their stories might help prevent people who have a home from losing it and becoming homeless. As one interviewee (S2I3) pointed out:

> It is pretty easy [to become homeless], it is not like I always said to myself that it cannot happen to me. That's not true at all, and it can happen to anybody who is looking down on us today. It doesn't mean that in two years you won't be on the street too. It doesn't matter, you can be the best entrepreneur, I also had my car service, […] and then he will think about, how only this could happen.

HOME AND HOMELESSNESS

The interviewees find it important to share stories about what home is. For one of them, "hectic life in between cars, and people in the middle of the street is not a home" (S2I12). They generally view home not only as a place where they can spend the night but more as a space that provides privacy, warmth, and peace – a place that allows them to build and maintain relationships. Such depiction of a home may lead to the public gaining more sympathy, for it is based on shared experience (see Bastian et al., 2014; Conti, 2015). All interviewees showed an intuitive understanding of home concerning the physical, social, and legal domains that constitute it (see Edgar, 2009). One interviewee argued that these three domains might not be sufficient under certain circumstances. Having lived in fear and feeling vulnerable in social housing, he decided to spend the days and nights outside in the parks to feel safer. According to his experience, feeling safe may sometimes be more critical than the physical or legal aspects of homeness: "Home, I'd like to have like, I want peace, yeah, there doesn't have to be anything, no effects, peace, so when you close the door, so I knew, that nobody will bang on me [the door], relax, peace" (S2I6).

Accordingly, it is important that their versions of what homelessness is, should become visible as well. For some of the interviewees, homeless people are only those who sleep rough on the street or in the parks, which relates to rooflessness. However, most of them agreed that homelessness includes people who live in cottages or lodging houses, which corresponds to the range of the ETHOS categories that include apart from rooflessness and houselessness, also insecure and inadequate housing. At the same time, one interviewee (S2I8) insisted on not being homeless even though he stayed in a one-room apartment with seven other people and spent most of his time drinking with other homeless people in the parks. This response points to the importance of self-perception about own condition, and advocates for cautiousness in imposing categories and definitions of homelessness to individuals.

SELF-IDENTIFICATION AND COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION

The interviewees' responses as to what they consider relevant to be communicated about homeless people, through own stories, is connected to how they see themselves and their own position in the homeless community. Two behavioral patterns emerged from the interviews. The first pattern was self-identification as an inseparable part of the community. The second pattern was quite the contrary, i.e., isolating or detaching from the community. Both have further implications for the stories homeless people want to share. Self-identification with the other members of the homeless community is related to compassion and a better understanding of the others. Distancing oneself is related to more judgemental opinions on other homeless people. For example, one interviewee (S2I6) claimed: "I don't even behave that way […] I would never want to end up this way. Or another interviewee (S2I11) said: "[…] Look, I'm a squatter[3], I don't lie on a bench or paper or so".

Some respondents described self-identification with others as a social vortex that hinders motivation to change their lives. One interviewee (S2I12) argued that "it will pull you in completely, the people you meet, you walk the street, you see the people, you know them, well, but you find out fourteen days later that you are back among them". In practice, distancing may work as a defense mechanism that fosters self-esteem boosting (see Diblasio & Belcher, 1993; Wojciszke & Struzynska–Kujalowicz, 2007). The interviewees who tend to distance themselves from the homeless community sometimes see members of the homeless community as major Others. For example, a few interviewees expressed substantial prejudice against Roma people, calling them thieves, who mistreat or physically attack other vulnerable homeless people.

These findings raise attention to two interconnected issues. One is that self-identification is in itself an important element to be communicated by the homeless individuals in the stories they create. At the same time, it has implications on how these individuals may communicate about other members of the homeless community and raises cautiousness on whether their representations reproduce negative stereotypes, othering parts of the homeless community.

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[3] A squatter is a person who unlawfully inhabits an otherwise uninhabited building or land.

CONCLUSIONS

This article reports on the findings of the preparatory stages of a project that involves the engagement of homeless people in the publication of their own community newspaper within a low-threshold day center for homeless people in Brno, Czech Republic. This type of media outlet could potentially serve as an example of how media can function, on the basis of participatory processes and democratic organization, offering inclusive and rehumanizing perspectives on homelessness. Thus, it can serve as a suggestion of alternative media organization, practices and content, contributing to changing the perspectives on homelessness.

The preparatory stages of the project, which this article focuses on, concern the exploration of homeless people's attitudes towards self-representation in the media, and their opinions and preferences regarding topics, issues and dimensions of homelessness, which they deem relevant to communicate in participatory publications. The evaluation and reflection on these first stages is a necessary component in the development of these types of projects. Considering and integrating the perspectives, preferences and needs of the actors and the communities involved in the projects' implementation is vital to create the conditions for their genuine participation. While academic publications usually focus on the successful outcomes of projects, there is the argument that it is important to have a structured and theoretically informed reflection on the early stages of the projects' development (see, e.g., Doudaki & Carpentier, 2021b), which can inform future projects and academic research.

The exploration of the attitudes of homeless people toward becoming agents of self-representation showed that homeless people are interested in sharing their stories and opinions through self-created news. Some of the interviewed homeless people feel socially responsible for doing so, as it could help other homeless people in their daily struggles and could prevent others from becoming homeless. These findings show that homeless people want to represent themselves; they want to create their own media, regain their voice and stand up for themselves and other homeless people, not only because they believe almost no professional journalists would do that, but because they have long been denied their voice.

The exploration of the topics, issues and stories the interviewed homeless people deem relevant to share, highlighted the importance of communicating the social dimensions of homelessness, not in abstract terms, but through people's life stories. A focus on homeless people's unique life stories and humanness within a social perspective angle has the potential of challenging mainstream media practices related to portraying homelessness. Furthermore, a more straightforward communication between the general public and homeless people may positively affect how the public views homelessness, by bringing the two sides closer or raising more understanding and compassion for homeless people.

At the same time, as the analysis of the interviews and the evaluation of these preparatory stages helped to reveal, there are several issues that need to be considered while designing and implementing projects that aim to facilitate enhanced media participation of homeless people. While the project aims for participation of homeless people at the highest levels it becomes clear that this cannot happen without careful planning, preparation and support. Full participation does not happen automatically; it takes time and might not be always attainable or desirable by all involved actors. It should not be neglected that any form of genuine participation is voluntary.

Also, some of the interviewees did have concerns regarding their eligibility to speak for the homeless community. They did not feel sufficiently competent or educated to handle the process. They argued for the need for further education and technical guidance, but were also reluctant to engage in full participation due to the increased responsibility that control over decision-making entails. These concerns need to be addressed. Pushing for full participation while the homeless people themselves are reluctant or not interested will lead to either a non-participatory project or a project that will collapse quickly. Hence, setting the foundations of participatory opportunities and practices and increasing independence gradually as it regards both content production and organization and management appears to be a suitable approach for individuals with low confidence and limited opportunities for social interaction.

Training and consultation related not only to media literacy skills or the technical aspects of creating media content and publishing, but also to the development of feedback mechanisms that will enhance a responsible and ethical approach towards publication, are deemed important. This role could be undertaken, at least in the early stages, by the project's initiators or facilitators. One crucial aspect of this process concerns the training regarding participation, in a democratic and inclusive fashion, taking into consideration the specificities of the involved actors. Therefore, it is important that homeless people are engaged in the decision-making processes from the beginning.

For example, as it became clear through the analysis, some homeless people show a higher degree of self-identification with other homeless people while others tend to detach and separate themselves from the homeless community. This aspect appears to relate with how they perceive other members of the homeless community, how they would potentially collaborate with these other members, and what stories they would like to share about them. This point needs to be addressed with the involvement of the homeless people. So, if there is a negative bias against some members of the homeless community it needs to be dealt with carefully and respectfully, pointing out the risks of harm, so as not to lead to the reproduction of vilification, marginalization and disempowerment of these members, which ends up disempowering the entire homeless community.

These types of projects that aim to facilitate forms of enhanced participation of highly marginalized societal groups in the media are faced with numerous challenges and a high degree of uncertainty. Still, it is important that they are set up and implemented, as creating the conditions for genuine media participation, in this case for homeless people, promotes their self-esteem, raises their dignity, and returns the voice to where it belongs, contributing to these people's empowerment and rehumanization.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Revolutionary Music in Lebanon and Egypt: Alternative Imaginaries for Self-representation and Participation

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Abstract: Globally, mainstream media excludes or misrepresents many societal groups, resulting in significant community absences. In these contexts, alternative media plays a vital role in offering meaningful self-representation and political participation. This type of media becomes crucial in revolutionary contexts, where people rise against the injustices of their governments in hopes of change. This article offers a case study approach to revolutionary music in the Middle East, where we review the socio-economic and political contexts behind the emergence of alternative media in Lebanon and Egypt. We analyze our cases by using Bailey et al.'s (2007) comprehensive approaches to alternative media. We propose that revolutionary music evolves and adapts to larger changes in the public sphere. Still, as the article concludes, while music can enable a persistent community when demanding change, it does not guarantee an actual change in the political system.

Keywords: Egypt; Lebanon; Revolutionary music; Alternative media.

INTRODUCTION

One of the long-standing issues in a variety of academic fields, and in society at large, relates to the ways of achieving political, economic, and cultural change. Revolution, in particular, is an often-deployed method, as it focuses on radical and swift changes, often reverting to violence. In some cases, revolution is driven by collective social movements that work – in the political sense – towards bringing about changes in the state and its institutions, changes to the nature of state-society relations, and changes to societies' political cultures (Kamrava, 2020, p. 1). However, people can also revolt to seek change in non-political aspects, such as social change, environmental change, and cultural change. Also, political elites can and do organize revolutions.

This also applies to the Arab world. In response to deep socio-economic grievances, revolutions have given a voice to the dissent of marginalized communities while pressuring states to reform, using various tools. Still, after witnessing for decades, waves of revolutions in the Arab world, we still hunt for the means to end the oppression of many regimes. But when the revolutions that did occur broke the 'barrier of silence', a change in people's attitudes was almost immediately reflected in the music scene of their respective countries. Revolutionary music became a significant tool used by artists to develop art that keeps protesters mobilized, offering them the representation, for which they yearn. Through revolutionary music, protesters manage to express their persistent rage, antagonism, and opposition against (unjust) governments as a way to demand change.

In this article, we focus on two cases of revolutionary music in the Middle East. One concerns Cairokee, a rock band based in Egypt, and the other DJ Madi Karimeh, a producer and video editor based in Lebanon. We explore this revolutionary music in two different periods, the first as part of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, and the latter as part of the more recent 2019 Lebanese revolution. By revolutionary music, we mean songs that consist of lyrics opposing the status-quo, either directly or indirectly, and that are disseminated either or both digitally and actively during the protests. Furthermore, we explore how our case studies show the relationship between alternative media practices (changing mainstream media practices) and changes in political systems. We argue that revolutionary music has been a mobilizing tool for decades, helping protesters to challenge the traditional, hegemonic political and media systems in the hopes of change, even when this change eventually fails to materialize.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC

One of the main factors needed for a revolution to erupt is a desire for change. However, for enough people to effectively take to the streets, other factors need to be considered as well. One key factor is the need for actual mobilizations, which can occur in a variety of ways. Relevant to our argument is Eyerman and Jamison's (1998) emphasis on the role of music as a mobilizing agent, one that transcends time and space and remains an ongoing force for mobilization. Importantly, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) also point out that social movements are a blend of culture and politics, where culture–in this case music—can be utilized for political purposes. Establishing this link between culture and politics is vital, as it emphasizes the cultural factors in social movements, where music contributes to the nature of these movements and the potential change they bring about. Similarly, Byerly (2013) emphasizes music's mobilizing capacity, as she describes revolutionary music as "a powerful weapon against the comparatively simple motivations of authoritarian rule" (p. 7). She argues that music is used against regimes, where oppressive leaders might fear its influence over the people. Furthermore, by tracing the role of music in protests through the past decades, Byerly identifies how such cultural elements contributed to the success of numerous social movements. She takes note of the musical transformation in the decolonization era, where music was used as a weapon to criticize colonialism fostering a sense of collective and inclusive identity in colonized societies.

The communicative dimension of music is essential for it to be a mobilizing force. Revolutionary music serves as a unified voice for those seeking change. Kunreuther (2018) links the notion of voice to democracy, where having a voice is necessary to guarantee successful political representation and hence a viable democracy. She argues that the notion of voice, in political rhetoric, is not constrained to "discursive speech, analytic or reasoned discourse" (p. 2), but is a broad concept that also includes more casual forms of discourse, such as "voices shouting, collective chanting [and] the production of noise for political effect" (p. 2). She then argues that individual voices are amplified through revolutionary music and chants, producing a united voice that is associated with mass movements. Barbera and Jackson (2019) stress another aspect of the communicative role that music can play, as it is one of the ways "people learn about the likelihood of a revolution's success by talking to those around themselves, the prior beliefs of the agents, the homogeneity of preferences in the population, and the number of contacts" (p. 2). As relevant music emerges, people will be able to assess how common is their desire for change, and whether enough people will participate in a potential or planned protest. This happens because music offers people a space to ultimately decide if being a revolutionary will actually lead to change.

(REVOLUTIONARY) MUSIC IN THE ARAB WORLD

In the 21st century, studies on music in the Arab world have increasingly recognized the complex social, economic, and cultural factors that impact and are influenced by music. The mediation of music through cultural traditions, structural changes, and technological advancements led to the emergence of new and ever-changing domains where music has become reflective of social traditions and norms, while at the same time subtly shaping them (Frishkopf, 2010). Furthermore, researchers have realized how studies of Arab music should not be approached in a dichotomous manner, such as that of 'traditional vs. modern' or 'western vs. eastern', as such an approach undermines the process by which music gradually becomes a reflection of societal forces where all these contradictions co-exist (Burkhalter et al., 2013).

In the Arab world, music has long been associated with revolutionary and resistance sentiments. A prime example is the development of rap music in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It was no surprise that such a genre would boom in times of revolution such as that of the Arab Spring, where dissent was heavily displayed through this genre (Moreno, 2017). However, as Moreno (2017) proposes in his work on Moroccan rap, the genre of revolutionary music can neither be alienated from the larger society nor be studied in a dichotomous framework that proposes culture as "fixed within perfectly built patterns of political contention" (p. 11). Moreno (2017) thus rejects identifying Moroccan rap as a *mere* form of resistance; he rather stresses its expressive nature, and how it offers a reflection of the struggles and fortunes of the local Moroccan society. Similarly, McDonald (2013) emphasizes protest songs being a form of "articulation within larger projects of social change" (p. 5).

If we focus on the countries of interest in our article, we can see that, with the advent of the Arab spring in the 2010s, revolutionary music spiked once again to prominence and became integral to these struggles. In Egypt, the 2011 revolution provided a fertile space for revolutionary and resistance cultures to emerge. In Tahrir Square, Cairo – the epicenter of the revolution – various forms of art developed, including graffiti, banners, documentaries, poets, and music (LeVine, 2015, p. 1283). Dessì (2020), writing about protest music in revolutionary Cairo (2011-2013), argues that revolutionary art and experiences bring out and activate "the potentialities embedded in shared histories, memories, and forms of life" (p. 235). Valassopoulos and Mostafa (2014) contend that revolutionary music served to provide confidence and hope to the demonstrators during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, hence intensifying the effectiveness of the protests. Furthermore, they argue that music helped to "articulate emerging desires and aspirations" (ibid., p. 638) of the people. Their article also emphasizes the role of revolutionary music as one that counters the influence of mainstream music and discourse, which is often used by authoritarian regimes to create support garnering propaganda.

In Lebanon, even when we go back to the period before our case study, i.e., during the civil war of 1975-1990, the use of music as a propaganda tool by different sects and clans to represent themselves and advocate their views, has been well-documented (Burkhalter, 2014). For example, the right-wing parties used music that praised the Lebanese Forces and alienated those who opposed them, in efforts to garner support. Burkhalter (2014) makes a point, which is important for our analysis, that for more than 15 years after the end of the war "a few people would still play Lebanese Forces' anthems loudly on their balconies" (p. 174). Similarly, the 2019 protests in Lebanon selectively reutilized revolutionary music whilst opposing the injustices imposed by the current presidency of Michel Aoun.

More broadly, literature about revolutionary music – whether in the Arab world or outside it – focuses on grounding revolutionary music within the social and cultural context from which it emerges. This then presents a thorough explanation of how such music affects various groups, offers them a unified voice, and gives them a tool of mobilization.

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AS ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Through the analysis of our case studies, focused on specific artists in Egypt in 2011 and Lebanon in 2019, we want to show how revolutionary music activated these 'potentialities' by bringing people together and mobilizing them to move towards their shared goal of being heard. We will also show how revolutionary music is a form of alternative media, which is adjusted to create change. This enables us to explore how music found innovative ways to reach the audience and fulfill its role as an alternator, and how it functions as a link between different parts of society. Analytical support in realizing these objectives is found in Bailey et al.'s (2007) work on alternative media, as their framework identifies overlooked and often ignored aspects when defining alternative media.

Bailey et al. (2007, pp. 12-13) emphasize that multi-angled alternative media are not only opposite or counter-hegemonic in relation to the dominant mainstream, but may also take the form and role of community media, civil society media, and rhizomatic media. In the first conceptual approach, Bailey et al. (2007) consider alternative media to offer content that either supplements or challenges hegemonic discourses and representation. In the second approach, of community media, they emphasize how alternative media serve the community through access and participation in media production and reception (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 14). Performing this role, alternative media offer accessible content that facilitates communication between community members, and promote the participation of members as they become both the audience and the producers of the media content. In the third approach, alternative media are linked to civil society while focusing on two aspects: alternative media being the 'third voice' between the state and commercial media, and alternative media 'making democracy work' through facilitating debate and discussion. In the fourth and last approach, of rhizomatic media, Bailey et al. (2007, p. 27) focus on three characteristics: alternative media's role at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and their interconnections and linkages with the market and state.

INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDIES

Our first case study about the Egyptian rock-band Cairokee, takes us back to January 2011, when after the events known as the Arab Spring, revolutionaries in Egypt were able to overthrow the dictator Hosni Mubarak. Although the military regained power through a coup less than three years afterwards, the 2011 revolution is still considered a critical juncture in Egyptian history. It was the first time in modern Egypt where the demands of the people were heard and fulfilled, evident in the creation of the first democratic presidential elections the country has experienced (Jumet, 2018). This revolution erupted due to the regime's prevalent corruption and incompetence, where unpleasant socio-economic conditions were affecting almost every Egyptian citizen (Jumet, 2018).

At this time, Cairokee first gained their popularity. Although they were initially formed in 2003, the band gained most of their fanbase through their sentimental revolutionary songs that emerged during the revolution. Three specific songs became very notable due to their passionate and moving lyrics: "*Sout El Horeya*" [Voice of Freedom], "*Yal Midan*" [Oh Square], and "*Ethbat Makanak*" [Hold your Ground]. Each of these songs voiced the Egyptian people's demands and sentiments at different moments. Released on YouTube a day before Mubarak's resignation, "*Sout El Horeya*" captured the spirit of the Tahrir square in the midst of the revolution, with the first line of the song being "I took to the streets and will refuse to go back." Released in November of the same year, "*Yal Midan*" captured the sentiment of the Tahrir square in the hindsight of the revolution, emphasizing how 'the square' brought people together. This was released at a time where the revolution was thought to be failing and was used to maintain the sentiments of the people and bring them back together. Two months later, with low public morale still prevalent, Cairokee released "*Ethbat Makanak*." As its title implies, this song was another attempt to bolster the revolutionary sentiment of the people, a call for the people to hold their ground and keep fighting.

Our second case study concerns the Lebanese DJ Madi K(arimeh). On October 17, 2019, after the Lebanese government decided to raise fees for calls via the app WhatsApp, people expressed their rage through protesting because as 41-year-old Karimeh told Al Jazeera, "it was the last straw" (Chehayeb, 2019). Yet, this was not the main reason protesters blocked the streets and revolted against the government. The Lebanese population had been deprived of basic services, such as water, electricity, sanitation, public health, and public education (Khoury, 2020). On top of all these struggles, Lebanon had been suffering from a political and financial crisis. Shattered by the civil war between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon was drowning in debt, leading to a high rate of unemployment and instability (Chehayeb, 2019). Despite its small surface area, Lebanon has more than 25 political parties trying to gain power, thus, causing conflicts across the country. According to Khoury, the Lebanese were not protesting because of a simple case of financial mismanagement, but “a fundamentally flawed system that superimposes sectarianism, feudalism, and corruption” (Khoury, 2020). Many Lebanese believed that the “only way out is to change the system” (Gadzo, 2019). Then, the October 17 revolution happened.

During the first days of the protests, many forms of communication and media filled the streets, such as graffiti, singing, dancing, and DJ performances. This brings us to DJ Madi K, who quickly became known as the ‘Revolution DJ’. Madi ignited the revolutionary and patriotic spirit after he performed his DJ playlist in Al Nour Square, in Tripoli. The 29-year-old turned the protests across various parts of Lebanon into a “dance party with his captivating music” (Bajec, 2019). His playlist featured a revised version of the national anthem along with patriotic songs mixed with techno and other hits that he readapted, making references to the popular uprising. His choice of songs was not merely anti-governmental and revolutionary-oriented; it was also about dancing and chanting, referring to some of the top hits of that specific moment. People who physically participated in the DJ performance, and Lebanese expatriates living abroad who watched him and shared his content through social media, created a non-geographic community of protesters who virtually participated in the anti-governmental movement. Also, his later DJ performances across Lebanon, demonstrated the role of music as a revolutionary element that motivated and encouraged protesters to remain on the streets.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES WITH CAIROKEE AND DJ MADI KARIMEH

Using Bailey et al.’s (2007) framework enables us to study the use of this communicational practice—music—in two revolutions in the MENA region. To understand how music stimulated change, we further provide a detailed analysis of the cases of Cairokee and DJ Madi Karimeh, without overlooking the imperative approaches of alternative media. We illustrate how each of our cases relates to (or does not) Bailey et al.’s definition of alternative media, its role, and how they serve people and communities.

As for the data for this article, two main sources were used, in addition to the oeuvre of both artists. First, a one-on-one interview with DJ Madi Karimeh was conducted by us in November 2020. We asked him specific questions about his music and his role in the revolution. The interview had a duration of 2,5 hours; it was conducted in Arabic and was transcribed and translated by us. For Cairokee, the primary source was “My Days with Cairokee: And a story of a generation that tried to change the world”, in which book the Egyptian author Walaa Kamal documents the eighteen months he spent with the rock-band (Kamal, 2019). The book is written in Arabic and the quotes that are included in this article were translated by us. All data were analyzed using qualitative methods, in particular thematic analysis, driven by the sensitizing concepts generated by the four approaches discussed by Bailey et al. (2007).

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AND THE COMMUNITY

Discussions about alternative media as serving a community must initially define the type it is aiming to serve. From there, we shall analyze how it serves that community, how accessible it is and to what extent it is participatory. This is done through evaluating two separate categories: access and participation. Access is the way "the content and form of these media validates and strengthens the community", whereas participation is "how the community is also the audience, how audiences are also producers of these media and how the topics and tools facilitate community involvement" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 14). Each of these categories are evaluated in terms of production and reception.

The community served by revolutionary music producers is usually the community of what can be defined as 'revolutionaries.' These are groups who took it upon themselves to give voice to their dissatisfaction with the state and call for change. Revolutionaries are a localized traditional community, which binds them through shared geography and experiences. They are also a translocal community, in which their shared experiences frequently extend beyond their local borders. Revolutionary music can also serve to persuade other groups in society to participate, recruiting them into the community of revolutionaries. Thereby, the community served encompasses everyone seeking change.

Revolutionary music serves this community by maintaining their motivation for calling for change as well as serving as an agent of mobilization. Revolutionary music aims to emphasize and publicly voice the revolutionaries' views and concerns, and since they are usually a large community, this helps unify them and strengthens their cohesiveness as a community. To fulfill this role, revolutionary music needs to be easily available, understood, and interpreted.

Both of our case studies fulfill this requirement, as their music is easily accessed through digital media platforms. Furthermore, revolutionary music is easily understood not only because it is presented in a common language, but also because it emphasizes shared experiences and sentiments. To add to that, both cases portray how revolutionary music serves the community as it gives everyone the chance to mobilize against oppression and seek change. With Karimeh, the audience actively participated in the live DJ performances as a means of protesting on the streets of Tripoli, Beirut, Al Beqaa, and Zgharta. The presence of a host, Bilal Jamal, alongside Karimeh, voicing out motivational, revolutionary chants, including "We are the power" and "All of them [politicians] means all of them", facilitated the communication and participation of the protesters in the movement. Similarly, Cairokee still plays revolutionary songs in concerts years after the revolution, allowing the audience to join in, and "give them [the songs] back to the community as they are the ones that created them" (Kamal, 2019).

To further highlight the strong link between these artists and their respective communities, it is important to note the continuity of the change they hope to bring about. Karimeh, for example, still identifies himself as the 'Revolution DJ' and claims that it will always be a part of his self-identification. Indeed, his social media platforms, especially his Instagram account, are fully devoted to anti-governmental posts. Almost two years after the protests ended, the revolutionary side of Karimeh remains accentuated. "I only stopped because of the Coronavirus" Karimeh stresses. "If a cure is found, I will be the first to protest on the streets of Tripoli all over again". The change he brought to himself and to Lebanon is persistent and continuous even though protests are currently not taking place. For example, during July 2021, Karimeh summoned students to protest in Al Nour Square as well as in front of the Ministry of Education and High Education. At that time, students were forced to study for their official exams while dealing with a shortage of electricity, water, food, medicine, and petrol. Karimeh has been continuously participating in revolutionary acts against the state long after those protests have ended, indicating the continuity and persistence of (the desire for) change.

As for Cairokee, whether it was amid the 2011 revolution, or in the years of instability that ensued, they made sure to always be the voice for those who sought change in Egypt and reflect their demands and sentiments. At times of the mass upheaval, Cairokee focused on mobilizing the masses and calling for action; and in times of relative quiet, they focused on producing songs that critiqued what they saw as unfair and unacceptable in relation to the Egyptian regime – voicing what people were unable to say. As Amir Eid, Cairokee's lead singer and main songwriter, said, "My biggest concern was representing the struggles of the Egyptian middle class, the class that set off the revolution, where thousands of youths took to the streets to find their voice" (Kamal, 2019). Over the years, Cairokee managed to stay relevant within civil society by capturing popular emotions and voicing them out loud for everyone to hear. From "*Sout El Horeya*" [Voice of Freedom] in 2011 – urging people to mobilize, to "*Yama fel Habs Mazaleem*" [Prison is full of innocent people] in 2014 – criticizing state corruption, to "*Akher Oghneya*" [The Last Song] in 2016 – emphasizing the need for freedom. While the 2016 single was not in fact the band's last song, it factored in capturing the prevalent sentiment in the band and Egyptian society. As the lyrics stress, "if this is my last song, it will be about freedom".

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AS ALTERNATIVE TO THE MAINSTREAM

One of the most important aspects of alternative media is how they counter mainstream media, which are usually characterized by their focus on representing powerful and dominant groups and promoting the ideology of the latter. This creates a need for under-represented groups to represent themselves through alternative forms of media. When evaluating certain types of media as alternative to the mainstream, two areas need to be analyzed: content and organization (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 16). Alternative media are usually characterized by content that is inclusive and includes numerous discourses, voices, genres, formats, and delivery methods.

When looking at the mainstream media in Egypt and Lebanon, it can be observed that they are merely a government or partisan mouthpiece. This gives no room for representation for large segments of the population, who must develop their own forms of alternative media to represent themselves. Regarding music, mainstream music is essentially songs created by artists 'loyal' to the regime, focusing on praising the state, or simply ignoring politics. In contrast, content-wise, revolutionary music is directly oppositional to the state, and thus also oppositional to many forms of mainstream media. The interview with Karimeh and the research done on Cairokee both highlight how 'revolutionary' themes are integrated into their music. In Cairokee's case, their songs, such as "*Yal Midan*" and "*Sout El Horeya*," explicitly call for revolutionary action and are clearly anti-hegemonic. They criticize the regime, praise the revolution and the revolutionaries, and call for perseverance in the face of oppression.

On the other hand, in Karimeh's case, there is an alternation of direct and indirect forms of 'revolutionary' songs. For example, along with the non-partisan mix of Electronic Dance Music (EDM), Karimeh fused a song, "*Ya Souwar El Ard*" [Oh Revolutionaries of the Earth] by the renowned revolutionary singer Julia Butros. He specifically replayed the lyrics "Oh revolutionaries of the earth, rebel against tyranny and deprivation" but then changed to a completely different genre of song, which is not explicitly revolutionary but incidentally expresses rebellious ideologies. For example, although "*Ensay*" [Forget it] is originally a break-up song that targets ex-lovers, during the revolution, it expressed people's demands for the downfall of Lebanon's political class. The lyrics were politically contextualized, such as "Forget the day you met me" and "I'm not yours anymore, yalla bye", as a way to convey their desire of removing despotic politicians from power.

In this way, Karimeh adjusted the initial purpose of the songs – entertaining the audience – to a whole different goal, the ignition of the revolution with the intention of change. Therefore, it is the counter-hegemonic content of the songs that make Cairokee and Karimeh alternative to the mainstream media. It is this type of media content that helped the Lebanese and Egyptian people create change within the system. Another way his music is alternative to the mainstream is because of the audience it attracts. Mainstream media in Lebanon are usually very sect-specific, while Karimeh's audience brought numerous sects and factions of Lebanese society, together for a shared goal. This helped promote an alternative view of Lebanese society, one that was not segregated and violent as mainstream media often presents.

Looking at the 2011 Egyptian Revolution, numerous mainstream songs praising the regime were released before Mubarak's fall (Valassopoulos & Mostafa, 2014, p. 641). Due to their hegemonic nature, however, this music did not gain much popularity, and became even more unpopular after Mubarak's fall. Nonetheless, "*Sout El Horeya*" was a song and a music video that soon became a trademark for the revolution. Cairokee and singer Hany Adel had a collaborative project with the song's music video being recorded during protests. The recording showed people of assorted age groups, genders, and social classes holding banners that dictate the song's lyrics while they mouth it along with the artists. This illustrates the representational aspect of revolutionary music as an alternative to the mainstream, where it is not only the lyrics that represent the people, but an effort is made to represent their communal experience as well.

In terms of organization, our two examples differ. Karimeh produces DJ mashups of previously recorded songs, producing content that requires little or no cost, allowing him to be completely independent of hierarchically structured organizations and recording studios. Karimeh stresses his indifference about promoting or advertising his DJ performance during the revolution: "I asked my friends to not post anything on social media," he says, "money is the least of my concerns," indicating his stance against the commercialization of media with social purposes. Karimeh claimed he did not care about gaining money at the end of his protest show: "What I am currently doing is for my country, not for me and not for anyone else". As Karimeh stresses in his interview, "anyone making money out of the revolution is the first person to be destroying our country". Karimeh's intention of using social media is clear: to construct change in Lebanon, while remaining independent from commercialism, consumerism, and popularity.

In the case of Cairokee, production is organized as with most musical artists, where they are signed with a record label that manages their production and distribution. DJ Madi Karimeh on the other hand, is more self-funded, self-organized, self-taught, and his revolutionary music is almost completely independent of the market. However, Cairokee's provocative lyrics forced them to find alternative and innovative ways of distribution. In one of their albums – "*Noaata Beida*" [A Drop of White] – they decided to completely forgo commercial profit and released the whole album on YouTube for free. This was because of the state's censorship authority restrictions on their provocative and criticizing lyrics, where they ended up valuing their stance as a band that "stands for the truth" and refused to bend to the state's will and publish a cut version of the album (Kamal, 2019). This meant that Cairokee's goals were not merely commercial; they aspired to mobilize the movements with their meaningful lyrics and to maintain the support of their base who expected them to not bow down to the status quo. This emphasizes the aspect that both cases do not wish to be a part of the mainstream, but instead consistently defy and stand against it.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil societies are constituted by groups or organizations that work outside the realms of state and market. They open the space for people to develop an alternative conceptualization of the political and economic systems (Parker-Stephen, 2013), all of which creates a public sphere, where people of different genders, occupations, and demographics come together to discuss their similar topics of interest. In this context, public opinion emerges as an alternative to the ideologies presented by the government or private sectors. It is crucial to note that civil societies are not entirely independent from the market and the state (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 22). By defining alternative media as a part of civil society, we are considering it to be the third voice between the state media and private commercial media (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 22).

Moreover, when linking alternative media to civil society, we shed light on its importance for the viability of democracy. This is because alternative media allows citizens to take active roles in micro-participation, such as participating in demonstrations and uprisings. Micro-participation teaches citizens ways to adopt many democratic and civic attitudes, and hence, allows for the macro-participation of society. All of this allows citizens to participate in public debates to represent themselves in the public sphere (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 25).

When describing civil society in our case studies, it was vital to mention the demands that bind people together through music. In both cases, citizens were exasperated by the corruption and the despotism of the regimes, so they were protesting to demand reform and change. It was the demands of the protesters that served as the point of connection that builds consensus and solidarity between them, hence forming civil society. Another noteworthy aspect of civil society is how music binds people of disparate social identities in one place, where music becomes the public sphere that facilitates communication between citizens.

Firstly, to emphasize their role as a third voice, it is important to note how each of our case studies reached out for help and funding. In the case of Karimeh, all his equipment, including the DJ set and the speakers, was self-funded. The DJ set had been stored in his room "for years", Karimeh notes. Every step was spontaneous and unplanned, so he asked some of his friends to help him set up the DJ set, and then rented speakers from a local business beside his house.

"I did not take 1000 L.L [Lebanese pounds] from beginning to end", Karimeh says. He went on to explain his independent position away from the private sector or the state by clarifying "I'm here to give energy to the people and to keep the revolution alive". Unlike his previous DJ shows, Karimeh modified the reason for using music. In response to the corruption of the Lebanese government, Karimeh said that all he wanted was to offer motivation, inspiration, and liveliness to protests with no reciprocity. Karimeh adds, "sometimes one should forget about money … Money comes and goes … But if my country goes, it needs years to come back".

Secondly, the inclusion or exclusion of opinions and identities is also an essential aspect of being a third voice. The Revolution DJ's performances were fully committed to community participation. "My phone blew up with messages asking me to DJ," he says. This is unlike other DJ performances, where the audience's participation is limited to just singing along, as is the case with Cairokee. Since their media artifacts are professionally produced and organized, the community's inclusion is limited.

Moreover, it is important that we mention how revolutionary music mediates change. As mentioned above, Karimeh's DJ mashups and Cairokee's songs supported revolutionary changes within the community. The former embellished the streets of Al Nour Square in Tripoli, stereotyped by dominant media as a terrorist land, with protesters from all around Lebanon, regardless of their religion, political affiliation, or social class. "All social classes were protesting on the street", Karimeh says, "the rich, the poor, and the middle class". Karimeh explains that inclusivity is what made the October 17 revolution successful: "a protest with only one class protesting is automatically unsuccessful, everyone needs to be protesting". This has never happened before. Unity was never conventional or 'normal' in Lebanon. It was an act that could lead to extreme chaos between different religious sects and political parties. Nevertheless, with revolutionary music, Tripoli became the symbol of inclusiveness, unity, and peace after long being considered a space for war, division, conservatism, and terrorism. Change in the views and perceptions of people was constructed after Karimeh unified people with his revolutionary mashups.

REVOLUTIONARY MUSIC AS A RHIZOME

The fourth approach is the rhizomatic approach of alternative media. Here, we focus on three characteristics: their role at the crossroads of civil society, their elusiveness, and their interconnections and linkages with the market and the state (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). The first characteristic, at the crossroads of civil society, shows how alternative activities in a revolutionary movement, are locally grounded, yet can also be engaged in trans-local networks. The second characteristic, their elusiveness, makes alternative media embedded in a fluid civil society and media organization where activists appear when an event requires their presence, and then disappear or transform into another media activity (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). The third characteristic, their interconnections with the market and the state, emphasizes how alternative media cut across borders and build linkages between the state and market without losing their proper identity (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 28).

Revolutionary music is rhizomatic, a metaphor for "nonlinear, anarchic, and nomadic" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 26). To consider revolutionary music a rhizomatic medium, we explain the three crucial characteristics. For example, when looking at Cairokee, the issues they talk about are usually specific to the Egyptian community. Nevertheless, they also connect with people all over the world – at least the Arab world – due to the trans-local nature of these grievances, such as state corruption, poverty, and economic difficulties, all of which are prevalent across the region. For the DJ street performances, it all started in Tripoli, where after receiving great engagement and response from the audience, Madi Karimeh translocated to Beirut, Al Beqaa, and Zgharta. Karimeh also mentions that he "performed the same songs to each area in Lebanon, and each gave the same response and engagement." All this links back to how revolutionary music in Lebanon and Egypt reflects anti-governmental and revolutionary conflicts that are prevalent globally.

To identify the trans-locality of revolutionary music is to think about the "fluid articulation of a diversity of alternative media organizations" (Bailey et al., 2007, p. 27). Both Cairokee and Karimeh use Rock and EDM – considered to be Western elements – while revolutionizing against Arab regimes. In this case, both of their music is fluid because they employ elements from different non-Arab parts of the world into Arabic songs. Hence, both stay locally grounded as they sing or remix Arabic music while incorporating Western musical styles and genres.

Second, revolutionary music is elusive, meaning it is embedded in a fluid society but is simultaneously antagonistic towards the state and market (Bailey et al., 2011, p. 27). In other words, revolutionary music is not merely counter-hegemonic; it engages with the state and the market, making music trans-hegemonic (Bailey et al., 2011, p. 28). This is another example of how (mainstream) media practices can be changed. Although Karimeh is in opposition to the mainstream public and commercial media, he still performs in events sanctioned by the government or the private sector, such as the color fun festival that was organized a few days before the October 17 Lebanese Revolution. Indeed, Karimeh pops up when an event requires his presence, but he then transforms into a different character when change is needed. Karimeh adjusts how he practices music depending on the conditions surrounding him and his country. Similarly, Cairokee is part of the worldwide music market where they produce songs unrelated to the rhetoric of revolution, possibly fitting mainstream market demands.

Amir Eid always claims that he writes what he feels, expressing himself and his views through his music. So, depending on the context, Cairokee produces and performs revolutionary songs when they see fit, otherwise, they operate as a regular rock band that produces music for a wider audience. As a result, music as a medium is adjusted and modified based on the political situation of the country and vice versa.

Thirdly, the creation of interconnections with the market and the state is another characteristic of revolutionary music as a rhizome. To elaborate, identifying mutations and collaborations with the market and the state is vital. For example, national TV stations advertised, in an indirect way, Revolution DJ through broadcasting the whole performance. Hence, this advertisement facilitated building linkages between different parts of Lebanon. In the case of Cairokee, the band collaborates with various sponsors to reach a larger audience to fight against hegemony.

This brings us to how revolutionary music can be perceived as trans-hegemonic. Both cases use their collaborations with the state and market to critique hegemony. For example, in the midst of the Lebanese revolution, Karimeh traveled to Qatar during the weekend to perform in one of the clubs. His playlist heavily integrated revolutionary and anti-government songs, so Madi took advantage of his paid job to build linkages between Lebanon and Qatar. By building these connections, revolutionary music established solidarity between the Lebanese community in Qatar and Lebanon to solidify their position against hegemony.

In the case of Cairokee, the band collaborates with various sponsors to maintain funding and reach a larger audience to fight against hegemony. Over the years, Cairokee has been involved in the production of commercials for numerous multinational companies, including Coca-Cola, Samsung, Vodafone, and Uber. According to Amir Eid, their involvement in these commercial activities is the "dark side of success". He admitted that he hated doing these commercials, but due to the band's decision not to be bound by a production company, so as not to limit their creative freedom, Cairokee realized the limits that come with stable funding and have opted to depend on sponsorship in order to maintain their unique oppositional voice (Kamal, 2019). Therefore, we can see how our case studies make trans-hegemonic engagements with the market and the state to reinforce their revolutionary stance against hegemonic discourses. Finally, the trans-locality, fluidity, and elusiveness of revolutionary music characterize it as a change-seeker in the face of corruption.

Both case studies are great examples of the idea of how media can change. Karimeh changed the purpose behind his social media platform, which was initially utilized to promote his work, to a medium that aims to promote the need for change. In a way, Karimeh alternated the use of his Instagram account in times when a lot of people in his country were protesting for reform. His purpose was not commercial anymore; it became revolutionary. This is like Cairokee, which is a popular rock band whose main goal ought to be to increase revenue and popularity in the music market, while complying with the law. The band chose to attract state criticism by releasing anti-governmental songs. However, the risks involved in creating revolutionary songs were not considered obstacles for Cairokee; if anything, they opened the door for more activism and antagonism. Cairokee's music adjusted when Egyptians pleaded for change.

CONCLUSIONS

This article demonstrates how media changes can be in harmony with the need for change in the state. Changes advocated by revolutionary music, itself using more alternative forms and content, can possibly lead to incremental changes in the political system. By 'incremental', we mean small changes that may eventually lead to the big changes that people long for. For instance, Karimeh's adjustments in his style of DJ mediated change in Lebanon, starting from Tripoli's symbol of unity to the resignation of the country's Prime Minister Saad Hariri. Yet, the government did not withdraw from their authoritarian position. Additionally, although changes in music may lead to big changes in the system, they are not permanent. After the 2011 Egyptian revolution, huge changes occurred within the regime such as the implementation of the first democratic elections. Nevertheless, Egypt got another authoritarian military regime less than three years after the revolution. Hence, it is important that we understand that revolutionary music may stimulate changes, incremental or radical, temporary or permanent, in the system.

However, it is vital that we emphasize that the link is not direct. Revolutionary music alone cannot guarantee change. "Nothing can bring them down, not music, not violence, nor chaos", Karimeh angrily says. Music encouraged many protesters to remain on the streets to fight for reform. In Lebanon, revolutionary music became an inspirational tool that motivated many to persevere until change was achieved. Cairokee's music in Egypt served a similar purpose, where they helped keep most protesters mobilized in the streets and kept the revolutionary sentiment going. Furthermore, Cairokee's insistence on maintaining their authenticity and stance against the authorities allowed them to remain relevant almost a decade after the revolution.

In this article, we have stressed the significance and limitations of revolutionary music. The importance of revolutionary music lies in the role of uniting civil society groups into a larger community and providing them with a representative and interactive public sphere. This then creates a unique form of solidarity, the local aspect of revolutionary music that counters globalization influences worldwide, and hence creates a sense of identity between local groups. This special form of unity has helped people through the decades to stand against their oppressors with resilience. Overall, we can conclude that revolutionary music was altered and mediated to seek change in the system. Nonetheless, while it served as an agent for voicing people's demands by giving them a united voice, changes were either incremental or temporary. Revolutionary music is not the sole factor that stimulates changes in the system, although it does offer a contribution.

Furthermore, these case studies illustrated the complex relationship between societal changes and the media. The former was manifested in people's willingness to finally speak up against their oppressors and was mirrored in the emerging culture of revolutionary music. Although this type of music is certainly not a recent phenomenon, it is tied to and integrated with the ideologies that emerged during a certain period. We can see how it serves to reflect the prevailing mood of the people during the revolution – sometimes being upbeat and motivating, sometimes expressing hope for change, and at other times expressing the people's disappointment in the lack of change. Yet, revolutionary music seems to achieve more of an emotional change within people rather than tangible systemic changes. Indeed, being hopeful and feeling motivated does not necessarily mean that positive change will be an outcome; it only means that there is a higher chance of change happening.

In order to further understand the roles of Cairokee and Karimeh in encouraging acts of hope, resilience, and change, we encourage researchers to study the revolutionary contributions of both case studies in a continuous manner, and to look at other artists as well. Also, we encourage them to interview the audience that participated in the performances to further identify the impact of revolutionary music during oppositional times.

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