



# Excellent MSc Dissertations 2017

## Media and Communication Studies, Lund University

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TOBIAS LINNÉ (ED.) WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM KEVIN WITZENBERGER,  
AGNE RASCIUTE, PHILIPP SEUFERLING, KRISZTINA JUDIT TÓTH, BURCUM KESEN,  
ISABELLA LOPEZ-SMITH & JULIE YUNG KIRK





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Ed. Tobias Linné

Authors: Kevin Witzenberger, Agnė Raščiūtė, Philipp Seufferling,  
Krisztina Judit Tóth, Burcum Kesen, Isabella Lopez-Smith &  
Julie Yung Kirk



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# Introduction

Few things have the capacity to be at once as global and yet as personal as our relationship with the media. Media studies uses the media as a starting point to understand the global social, political and cultural processes that shape the world we live in: migration, digitalization, individualization, commercialization, social justice movements, climate change discourses, terrorism and neo-liberalist politics to name a few. At the same time, media studies can also provide insights into the mundanity of people's everyday lives and the role of the media in it, shedding light onto the ways in which the media shapes our culture, biographies, life stories and memories in an all-encompassing way.

This publication, the second in a series, showcases a selection of seven excellent postgraduate dissertations, written by the community of students that graduated in June 2017 from the MSc in Media and Communication Studies at Lund University, Sweden. There are two main goals with the publication of *Excellent MSc Dissertations 2017*. First, it hopes to inspire present and future students in and beyond our programme in the process of writing their master's theses. Second, it is our hope that the work of the authors in this volume not only contribute to discussions on the topics studied but that they can also play an important part in generating critical engagement with these issues, within and beyond academia.

Each contribution in this volume shines a light on the many different roles that media plays in people's lives. They also demonstrate how, without a situated approach to the study of media, culture and communication, one that recognizes the specificity of particular social and cultural contexts, we cannot understand the complexities of the phenomena studied. Those phenomena include how patriarchal societal structures can be challenged, which is discussed in chapter five, how solidarity and mourning is expressed collectively, discussed in chapter four, and how neo-liberalism threatens

people's access to political information crucial for democratic society, discussed in chapter six.

Apart from this, three distinct threads connect each contribution in this volume. The first thread is that all of the studies build on original and creative ways of using theoretical and methodological approaches. In chapter one for example, Kevin Witzemberger delves into people's often unaware and invisible algorithmic biographies - the algorithmic outcomes that are generated by traces of the user's digital activity - with the help of Heideggerian theory and concepts. Rather than framing the chapter from the usual perspective of looking at how people's social lives are governed by online algorithms, Witzemberger instead focuses on how users' actions and intentions in relation to the algorithms changes the algorithms themselves. Further, in chapter three, Philipp Seuferling merges media, memory and migration studies in an approach used to highlight the importance of the media over time and how memories of past migrations shape the discourses over migration today, and thus also the experiences of migration both from the refugees' and the receiving societies' perspectives.

The second thread connecting each contribution to this volume is the way in which they all, to paraphrase feminist and post-humanist philosopher Donna Haraway, 'stay with the trouble', focusing on capturing complexity and ambivalence, the situated and multidimensional aspects of the cases studied. The chapters all strive to capture a social world that is ambiguous and dual. For example, as shown by Krisztina Judith Tóth in chapter four, social media actions of solidarity and empathy with victims of terrorist attacks in the form of using national flag filters on Facebook can be a way of coping with trauma and can furnish a sense of togetherness while at the same time be perceived as a minimalist way of doing activism, one that is too easy and trendy and that fails to create any real social change.

The chapters in this volume reject easy understandings and avoid dogmatic positions of interpretation and analysis. This willingness to engage in a deeper analysis in pursuit of more complex understandings shows in all of the contributions in this volume, in different ways, as for example in chapter five, where Burcum Kesen gives a detailed account of the affective and emotionally charged engagement in social media protests against sexism and rape culture.

The authors' focus on complexity and ambiguity in this volume ties in with the third thread that binds the writings together, which is their critical engagement with the media. This is especially powerful during this critical time with post-truth right wing populism offering simple solutions to political and social problems. In chapter six Isabella Lopez-Smith develops a thorough critique of neo-liberal British newspapers and the way they fulfil democratic duties. But she doesn't just critique: she also shows the potential of the local newspaper in creating conditions for empowerment and agency among audiences, which in turn enables those audiences to feel entitled to news as a political resource to draw on.

Similarly, in chapter seven, Julie Yung Kirk sets out to understand the political framing of climate change in the US context, focusing in particular on climate scepticism framings. However, in her study, she also demonstrates that scholarly work in media and communication studies is not limited to mapping or understanding, but also extends to the contribution of socially and culturally transformative research and idea generation. For example, Kirk argues that while the media, and in particular climate scepticist media framings, is part of the problem with climate change, we also need to think of the media as part of the solution, as a space where it is possible to further more tangible understandings of climate change than what is done in much natural science research on the topic.

All seven texts published in this edited volume were originally presented and evaluated as part of the final thesis exams in May 2017, in which they were awarded top grades. During the autumn of 2017 they were revised and edited for publication in the publication series *Förtjänstfulla examensarbeten i medie- och kommunikationsvetenskap (FEA)*, which was launched in 2008 to bring attention to and reward student work of a particularly high quality. The contributions combine empirical and theoretical work, showing the creative potential contained within different approaches to the study of media, culture and social life, capturing complexity and ambivalence while making original contributions to knowledge and being socially engaged all at the same time.

The volume starts off with Kevin Witzenberger's chapter *What Users Do to Algorithms. How everyday experiences and imagination shape algorithmic outcomes*. In this chapter, the author sets out to research the ways in which algorithms have found their way into the fabric of social life, trying to understand what happens when people are suddenly confronted with these

subtle digital structures. The algorithms Witzemberger studies concern different things, but what they have in common is that they raise complex questions in relation to power and agency, including, for example, regarding the background processes that are embedded deep within incomprehensible technologies.

While algorithmic power has become more and more in focus in recent years across many different fields, the standard way of researching it would have been to engage in a discussion of what algorithms do to the users who are more or less passive users. In this study, the question instead is, what do the *users* do to the algorithms? How do they shape and reshape them through their interaction with them? Through semi-structured interviews users of digital media applications are asked to reflect on their algorithmic encounters in their everyday lives. And as is shown in the analysis, the interviewees' awareness of their algorithmic biography came as a sudden point of realisation of their digital selves. The analysis shows how an affective encounter with the algorithmic biography starts a sequence of experience, which includes the initial affective encounter with a certain facet of an algorithm and leads towards later reflections upon the meaning of this encounter and algorithms within the users' lives. An algorithmic imaginary like this is also that which forms the conditions for the ways in which media users can exercise agency and how they re-appropriate the space of the networked environment.

The second chapter takes the reader to another aspect of an increasingly digital media environment. In *The Secret Land of Freelance Journalism in Lithuania. A life-world study of professional challenges in the digital era* Agnė Raščiūtė follows freelance journalists in Lithuania trying to understand how what has been described as a 'crisis' of the profession of journalism in the form of digitalization of the newsrooms, growing commercialization, and the implementation of business models shaping journalism has influenced the newsrooms' work and journalists' understanding of their professional roles and identities.

The chapter addresses the lack of a more holistic approach to freelance journalistic work outside of the newsrooms, providing a deeper look at the context of journalists' everyday lives by several qualitative methods in combination, such as interviews, images and diaries. In the chapter, Raščiūtė provides unique insights into the physical working environment of

the journalists, showing how these concrete physical localities can provide a frame of understanding of the journalists' self-identities as journalists.

One of the key findings of the study is the prevalence of a 'creative destruction of journalism'. Raščiūtė notes that it has become more and more difficult to both define what a professional journalist is in contemporary society and to determine what kind of relationships journalists should have with their audiences, causing problems for many with their journalistic identities. But tensions also shows in the analysis. There is a tension between how the autonomy from a news media institution can be experienced as a form of full journalistic independence on one hand, whilst it is also clear that contacts, community and belonging are important resources for the successful freelancing and the sustainment of a journalistic identity.

In chapter three, *"To arrive means being able to tell". Memory cultures and narratives of historical migration in German media in 1991–1994 and 2015–2017* Philipp Seuferling sets out to understand how mediated memories of historical migrations form continuous meta-narratives and discourses that are both part of and affect contemporary mediations of migration today. By looking at two similar periods of intense communication about migration in Germany, the so-called 'refugee crisis' (2015-2017) and 'asylum crisis' (1991-1994), Seuferling shows the historical repetitiveness of mediations of migration and how accounts of different migrants are put forward and become subject to the media's editorial power. Empirically the chapter builds on a case study of mnemonic practices of German media during the before mentioned time periods, including two case studies of single media texts, a docudrama and a TV-documentary.

In his conclusions, Seuferling shows how different population movements become re-narrativized and remediated in convergent ways, which historically frame contemporary migration. The concluding part of the chapter explores how the motivations for leaving are discursively constructed and how this influences the legitimacy of migration from the receiving society's perspective. It also examines the narratives and discourses of the arduous journey of refugees and the after-narratives including value-laden judgments about how migrants are confronting with the new demands and of who is a 'good immigrant'.

In chapter four, *Are Some Lives More Grievable Than Others? Social media practices of mourning and solidarity in the aftermath of the Beirut and Paris*

*attacks* focus turns onto terrorism and the media, and more precisely the role of social media in practices of mourning empathy and solidarity. In the chapter, Krisztina Judith Tóth ask what motivates people's participation in collective mourning in social media, and how social media facilitates certain digital collective mourning practices. She also explores how these practices can be understood as moral and even political acts even as they are also often described as an expression of easily accessible 'slacktivism' which does not entail much usefulness.

The study takes its starting point in the discussions triggered in 2016 when Facebook launched a French flag filter that users could update their profile pictures with as a way of showing solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015. However, just a one day earlier when a deadly terrorist attack struck Beirut, no flag filters were launched on Facebook, leading people to ask why flag filters were introduced after certain terrorist attack and not others? Theoretically, the chapter is grounded in discussions about the political aspects of mourning that surface when certain deaths are emphasized over others. The chapter's theoretical approaches also deal with questions about the power of major media corporations to shape visibility of victims as well as moral questions relating to mediations and feelings of responsibility to distant others.

By interviewing social media users about their practices of mourning and solidarity online after terrorist attacks, Tóth shows how social media can bring about a sense of togetherness as well as a broadening of the moral imagination beyond that of local and national communities. However, one of the main conclusions of the thesis is that when asked about the motivations for participating in online collective actions, the need for personal affiliation with a place seemed strong, thus reinforcing people's solidarity with certain victims over others.

Sticking with the theme of exploring the emotional aspects of people's uses of social media and how emotional content is produced online through collective interaction, Burcum Kesen's *Affective and Emotional: Turkish Women's Engagement with #sendeanlat* analyses the affective and emotional dimensions of women's engagement with online protests, in this case against sexism and rape culture in Turkey. Kesen argues that affect and emotions are what motivates many women to make themselves heard via hashtag protests like #metoo and #YesAllWomen in the US, #Everydaysexism in the UK,

#aufschrei in Germany and #sendeanlat, which translates into ‘you tell your story too’ in Turkish. Specifically, the chapter investigates the ways in which #sendeanlat was able to generate awareness about sexual harassment in Turkey. the ways in which women engaged with #sendeanlat as well as the motivations and limitations of their engagement. An interesting dimension of the chapter is that while a lot of contemporary work on social media and social issues focus on people who are already politically active, like in this case for example in feminist issues, Kesen instead focuses on how women who don’t define themselves as feminists choose to engage with social media protests.

Kesen interviewed women who were in varying respects participants of #sendeanlat, with a focus on the affective and emotional dimensions of their engagement. She illustrated how understanding tweets as ‘triggers’ can help to demonstrate the role of social media in activating emotions by enabling a space where affect can emerge. Through their emotional engagement with #sendeanlat, the women remembered their own experiences of sexual harassment and began to self-reflect, which generated a process of self-awareness. Furthermore, the women’s engagement was not limited to online spaces but went beyond reading and sharing their private stories online to occupying offline spaces as well, for example sparking conversations about these issues with friends “in real life”. The second to last chapter of this volume addresses local political culture in Northern Wales. In *Centralising Citizenship for Media Reform. Local news audiences of Brexit*

Isabella Lopez-Smith takes on the issue of how the increasingly concentrated ownership of British media ensures uneven resources and thus directly contradicts the possibility of democratic standards through pluralist competition. The chapter critically examines how news media can be a resource for political engagement, sparking engagement and participation among audiences. Choosing the case of Brexit as a heightened political moment to enter audiences’ reflections of the news and democracy, news audiences in the North Wales were interviewed on their engagement with news media pre- and post- Brexit.

Theoretically, the chapter builds on a critique of the neoliberal policies in Britain that have ensured a privatisation of the media industry where the value of news for democracy risks being undermined as accountability is lost. The analysis paints a fairly negative view of the current media landscape, with its strong association of political and media elites overly concerned with partisan

debates with ‘unclean and heated methods’ and an uneven representation to the hostile aspects of the debate. Some audiences in the study were deeply dissatisfied with the tone and level of the political debate and its coverage, and rejected a simplistic debate of scaremongering news, and the reproduction in the news of politics as a site of antagonism. However, there are other parts in the picture. People do have the ability to reject simplistic narratives, and as shown in the chapter, to place themselves in opposition to what they perceive as threatening news tactics. This chapter shows that there can be an engagement built on political knowledge constructed in relation to people’s consumption of news from neo-liberal media.

Finally, in chapter seven, *Framing Climate Change. The climate scepticist framing of climate change in a US political context*, Julie Yung Kirk sets out to understand and critically scrutinise the politicised environment for talking and dealing with climate change in the US, especially the efforts taken by climate change scepticists to undermine climate science consensus. Kirk focuses on the case of the Koch Brothers - David E. Koch and Charles Koch, owners of the family-owned business and America’s second largest private company Koch Industries – as actors in the US political debate on climate change in the so-called ‘climate wars’. The study explores how the Koch Brothers’ climate scepticism is realised through different discursive constructions. It uses a mixed-methodology approach to frame analysis where different media sources and promotional material are analysed, such as a newspaper, a newsletter, and school material related to an exhibition about the drama of climate change at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC that was funded by David Koch, also a member of the museum board.

The analysis shows how the frame of scientific uncertainty occurs on several occasions in the material studied, as well as how climate science is constructed as “a hoax”, or even as an economic or social progress opportunity. And as climate science is naturally vulnerable to scepticism - based on the complexities behind the science – this frame can be seen as strongly reinforcing the sceptic argument. Framings of climate science as unscientific, although not denying the existence of climate change, can also be seen as targeting policymakers holding their desires to act on climate science as more problematic than climate change itself. As Kirk concludes, climate scepticist views should also be recognised as evidence of more structurally anchored



positions not just by those in power, but in a society that allows for it or does not have the necessary means to do otherwise.

As each of the contributions in this volume illustrate, media studies has the power to inform our understanding of the world we live in and the institutions and forces that shape our lives. It is our hope that this volume will play a part in creating space for discussion and action on the topics discussed in this volume, both inside and outside the university.

*Tobias Linné*

Lund, December 2017



# What Users Do to Algorithms

How everyday experiences and imagination shape algorithmic outcomes

*Kevin Witzenberger*

## Introduction

Algorithms have found their way into the fabric of our social life and build on a simple premise: They ‘do things, and their syntax embodies a command structure to enable this to happen’ (Goffey, 2008, p. 17). People are confronted with these structures in their everyday life: from online-dating, to route navigation and from searching for knowledge to shopping. When a user runs a simple search on Google, its algorithm’s command structure resembles ‘a formal process or a set of step-by-step procedures’ (Striphas, 2015, p. 403). But somewhere between input and outcome this process needs data to evaluate possible results.

This data resides within a network the algorithm can assess via its data entry points – gates, bridging the algorithm with a network of data. These entry points are the heart of an algorithm’s decision-making process. Google’s search algorithm has over 200 of these<sup>1</sup> (Google, 2017a). If an identical query results in different outcomes, it is due to different decisions the algorithm made while it was assessing its entry points. These can be within Google’s own database or within the user’s request. Per its syntax, the algorithm evaluates

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<sup>1</sup> Google refers to these entry points as signals. Furthermore, this statement only refers to Google’s algorithm on their database on the ‘front end’. Processes on the ‘back end’ like crawlers are excluded here.

this data and creates a corpus of entries in a relevant order. The algorithm, then, functions as selector, by reducing entropy and limiting information to a body, which is presented as search result (c.f. Striphas, 2015).

This simple premise becomes complex in relation to power and agency: The background processes of algorithms are embedded within incomprehensible technologies and its decision-making process is hidden within the algorithm's black box, making it almost impossible to know if an algorithm is biasing results in its owner's interest.

In recent years, this debate about algorithmic power has gathered momentum across interdisciplinary fields. While most scholars focusing on the algorithms are concerned with the algorithm's effects and encoded syntax and argue that algorithms can rarely be noticed by users – only a few argue that algorithms are a product of human history and culture and can thereby be grasped by everyone (Andrejevic et al., 2015, p. 384). While algorithms might seem like alienated constructs – written in code and expressed in mathematical procedures – their outcomes are not. A friend's holiday photo on Facebook or a restaurant suggestion; people can make meaning out of these and adapt their behaviour based on encounters with algorithmic outcomes and their embedded values. While users might not understand what data entry points an algorithm uses, they know what its outcomes are meant to do for them. Thus, through living with and using algorithms, users gain the skills to restrict the power of the imposed algorithmic culture as they can find ways to dodge, bend or break the algorithm based on their experiences. This shows the necessity to complement the common question within critical algorithm studies concerning what algorithms do to people by asking: *what do people do to algorithms?*

Considering the algorithm's syntax is aimed at user's metadata to evaluate personalised results, this question is ever more important when looking at algorithmic power. This research will examine the question how users experience algorithms from a phenomenological perspective and aims to analyse users' perspectives on algorithms as a contribution to the understanding of algorithmic power and subjectivity.

This research perspective draws on 'public relevance algorithms' – algorithms that 'select what is most relevant from a corpus of data composed of traces of our activities, preferences, and expressions' (Gillespie, 2014, p. 168), how

their power is interrogated, and a discussion of contributions of audience and reception studies to researching power. Thereby, this perspective draws on a phenomenological approach based on Heidegger's notion of experience to illustrates how users come to realise the part algorithms play within their life and how they build towards agency within reflections of the practices of their everyday life.

This perspective sheds light on practices that thrive directly into the heart of algorithmic power and user's agency, as algorithms based on machine learning use data about users' activity to evolve. If, therefore, value-based experiences alter the way this data is produced, it also means that this alters the algorithm itself (c.f. Bucher, 2017; Rader & Gray, 2015).

The objective of this research is therefore to analyse how users experience algorithms within their everyday lives and how these experiences can reshape algorithmic outcomes. Conclusively, the research sets out to answer the following questions:

- How do users experience public relevance algorithms and how do they reflect upon their meaning within the practices of the everyday life?
- How do users shape and reshape public relevance algorithms?
- In what ways can user's experiences contribute to an understanding of algorithmic power?

To answer these questions ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. The phenomenology of experience rendered the algorithm's invisible nature tangible by making the everyday strange to the interviewees and leading them to reflect upon the meaning of algorithmic encounters within their everyday life, generating the empirical data used within this thesis. These encounters occurred when users came into touch with their 'algorithmic biography' – algorithmic outcomes that are generated by traces of the user's digital activity, which can subsequently be altered by users.

# Towards a user's perspective in critical algorithm studies

This review shows how algorithms make decisions through data entry points and how these can be linked to users' activity. Illustrating the frequency by which users interact with them, how these deliver outcomes that are personalised through users' activity and how machine learning alters the algorithm itself establishes an understanding of current problems within critical algorithm studies. The privatised character of algorithms and their personalised and market orientated outcomes invokes issues for users and cultural decision-making: Users are tied into a network that does not allow them to know how the algorithm works, while cultural decision-making is left to computational processes, hidden from public scrutiny.

Most recent studies aiming to unravel questions of algorithmic power are portraying the user as passive or study users exclusively from a macro perspective and fail to acknowledge their activity being part of the algorithm. Only a few attempts were made to extend this focus by considering that users are subjects to coercive and dispersed power through the 'hypernudge' (Yeung, 2016), that algorithms are a substantial part of the everyday (Willson, 2017), that the users' beliefs can alter their activity and algorithms (Rader & Gray, 2015), and that this belief can be researched via experiences (Bucher, 2017). This thesis contributes to this small but critical body of work on users' experiences of algorithms and the research of agency in relation to the place of algorithmic power in everyday practices.

## **Algorithms and public relevance – a system of knowledge**

While this thesis uses the singular form of algorithm when talking about public relevance algorithms, these are in fact conglomerates of algorithms. These types of algorithms do not only compose databases but rather stand for a knowledge system itself, as 'we have embraced computational tools as our primary media of expression, and have made not just mathematics but *all* information digital, we are subjecting human discourse and knowledge to these procedural logics that undergird all computation' (Gillespie, 2014). The concept of public relevance algorithms is fruitful to distinguish between the

types of algorithms doing simple calculations and those that are ‘producing and certifying knowledge’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 168).

Search engines often fall into the category of Gillespie’s definition: A user’s keyword request on a search engine requires its algorithm to choose a relevant body from a database and rank it. This database is in turn fed by other algorithms crawling the web for content and evaluating it (Halavais, 2009, p. 17). Taken together this procedure represents an algorithmic system generating knowledge and public relevance. However, the term public relevance algorithm is not limited to conventional keyword related search engines.

Coming from an audiences’ perspective Nightingale (2011) distinguishes two types of operational searches: ‘*search*’, covering all keyword search operations like Google, Bing, Baido or Yahoo, price comparisons pages, Amazon’s product index or even route navigation services on mobile devices and ‘*discovery*’, covering platforms that direct users to content that is possibly of interest by providing ‘a means to know what there is to know and how to know it’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 167). While Nightingale distinguishes those operational searches, recent developments have shown that both types of engines have become hybrids of one another. A platform like Google, that was deliberately created for a ‘search’ audience is creating more ways to incorporate discovery options, such as Google+, maps or YouTube, which can be used in both regards. Furthermore, search engines and discovery platforms both create relevance for the public through algorithms and databases – be this the web infrastructure itself or a database about people that deliberately put themselves into the database. The term public relevance algorithm can therefore be understood in a much broader sense, covering all algorithms somehow connected with one or the other operational search type.

Due to the vastness of possible information, these engines have become almost the only feasible way for users to access information online. The problem with their algorithms is that – even though creating public relevance – they are in fact privatised. Their interrogation has therefore become an important enquiry for social sciences. Gillespie addresses three issues of importance regarding the relevance of algorithms: *patterns of inclusion*, *cycles of anticipation* and the *evaluation of relevance*.

The first, patterns of inclusion, focuses on the politics behind the listed index of algorithms and what should be subject to public access: ‘The political

resistance to Google's Street View project in Germany and India reminds us that the answer to the question, "What does this street corner look like?" has different implications for those who want to go there, those who live there, and those who believe that the answer should not be available in such a public way. But it also reveals what Google thinks of as "public" (Gillespie, 2014, p. 170).

Gillespie also turns this problem around, as data needs to be made 'algorithm ready' to be indexed and, thus, bringing economic questions into play (Gillespie, 2014, pp. 172-175). Making things visible requires having the knowledge to design messages as webpages, posts etc. in a way that indexing and evaluating algorithms consider the message to be important. This has already 'yielded a new industry: search engine optimization (SEO)' (Halavais, 2009, p. 71). While some may want to be visible, public bodies exclude material from algorithms even though they are supposed to be accessible to the public. Gillespie points to Greg (2008) who reveals that the code `robot.txt` – which hides pages from search engines (Google, 2017b) has been used by government institutions to "redact" otherwise public documents from public scrutiny' (Gillespie, 2014, p. 172).

Gillespie's second point reflects on *cycles of anticipation*, drawn from the concept of the 'second index' (cf. Mayer & Stalder, 2009). Algorithms do not only represent an index but also create an index about its users (Gillespie, 2014, p. 173), feeding the algorithm with new data. Thereby, '[a]lgorithms are made and remade in every instance of their use because every click, every query, changes the tool incrementally' (Gillespie, 2014, p. 173). This is due to 'the predictive practice of data mining known as *machine learning*' (Mackenzie, 2015, p. 431). This practice turns users' digital behaviour in the form of metadata into a resource to improve the tool's ability to predict user's activity. 'The techniques of machine learning nearly all pivot around ways of transforming, constructing or imposing some kind of shape on the data and using that shape to discover, decide, classify, rank, cluster, recommend, label or predict' (2015, p. 432). These techniques are widely used for algorithms with a particular purpose, 'such as detecting ads or blatant search ranking manipulation and prioritizing search results based on the user's location' (Burrell, 2016). This dynamic nature of algorithms adds to the issues of researching it.



The last – and perhaps, most controversial – point is how these algorithms *evaluate relevance*: when users hit the search button an algorithm identifies what ‘best meets the criteria at hand, and will best satisfy a specific user and his presumed aims’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 175). The critical contention about how an algorithm approximates relevance is difficult: Accusing the algorithm implies that there is a metric for what ‘relevance’ means in the first place and otherwise ‘disputes over algorithmic evaluations have no solid ground to fall back on’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 175).

Consideration of this point does not exclude the importance of interrogating the criteria with which an algorithm assesses relevance. ‘Evaluations performed by algorithms always depend on inscribed assumptions about what matters, and how what matters can be identified’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 177). While it is hard to judge these criteria, it is easier to distinguish between commercial and public interests and for whose purposes this relevance is created: the user or the owner? Gillespie highlights Facebook’s newsfeed as ‘it interweaves the results of algorithmic calculations [...] and elements placed there based on sponsorship relationship’ (Gillespie, 2014).

When Gillespie distinguishes between commercial elements in the newsfeed and deliberately placed elements through sponsorship relationships, he might oversee a key point: The algorithm itself might be adjusted to a metric that detects what social content makes users stay engaged for a longer time with the newsfeed itself. This alone increases Facebook’s sponsorship revenue, because people are exposed to advertisements for a longer time. This also intermingles the user’s interest with the company’s commercial aspirations. Due to the hidden evaluative criteria of algorithms this is difficult to research. Corporations like Facebook and Twitter would also not simply publish their evaluative criteria as this ‘would give their competitors an easy means to duplicating and surpassing its service’ (Gillespie, 2014, p. 176). This idea reconnects with Gillespie’s first work on algorithms ‘welded shut’ (2007), in which he explores how hidden and opaque algorithms like Google’s search engine operate.<sup>2</sup>

Considering Gillespie’s arguments on public relevance algorithms, and that assumptions about consequences for the human knowledge endeavour can

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<sup>2</sup> For further reasons and embedded implications for users through the hidden character of algorithms turn to the section ‘Networked Environment’.

only be made by a critical analysis of the evaluative criteria (Gillespie, 2014, p. 176), he positions himself in a blind alley. As he says himself, evaluating these criteria is not possible due to the algorithms' hidden character and the missing metric.

## Algorithmic culture

What we learn from Gillespie is that algorithms matter and that they need to be interrogated. A perspective shifting focus on the outcome of public relevance algorithms and the way these are involved in cultural processes reveals more implications. Ted Striphas (2015) argues that algorithms alter the way we understand and generate culture. He uses an historic approach by connecting the concepts of *information*, *crowd* and *algorithm* to illustrate the alteration of culture through computational processes. Striphas reasons that over the past 30 years humans have left cultural decisions – 'the sorting, classifying and hierarchizing of people, places, objects and ideas' – increasingly to computational processes (2015, p. 395). Algorithms are cultural gatekeepers and Striphas understands this shift as 'algorithmic culture', 'which is increasingly becoming a private, exclusive and indeed profitable affair' (Striphas, 2015, p. 407).

Contrary to Gillespie, who argues that it is hard to judge an algorithm by its bias, Striphas argues that this hidden logic and its outcome already demonstrates an alteration of human culture:

What one sees [...] is the enfolding of human thought, conduct, organization and expression into the logic of big data and large-scale computation, a move that alters how the category *culture* has long been practiced, experienced and understood. (Striphas, 2015, p. 397)

He concludes that the publicness of cultural decisions is at stake and is being replaced by a new elite claiming to be transparent while covering up their working procedures, as '*algorithms* are becoming decisive, and [...] companies like Amazon, Google and Facebook are fast becoming [...] the new apostles of culture' (Striphas, 2015, p. 407). By looking at the outcomes of public relevance algorithms, Striphas could manifest the outcome of ranking algorithms itself already portrays a new way of cultural understanding.

This understanding of culture is important. It illustrates a critical idea that culture has become algorithmic. This is an essential understanding for this thesis' methodology as it shifts the focus away from the algorithmic syntax and towards its cultural outcomes. These algorithmic outcomes are the products users can relate to and those are the texts people will make meaning of when they are confronted with them.

## **Researching algorithmic power**

The interrogation of algorithms has seen a broad array of different approaches. While the material object of study – the algorithm – is an entity of interest within various disciplines, a dissonance in the formal way of approaching this entity seems to divide scholars into two groups. One tends to treat an algorithm as a line of code and scrutinizes the design of the algorithm and its technical abilities. The other group treats algorithms as a social process (c.f. Beer, 2017, p. 4). While both approaches aim to research the power implications of algorithms, they vary significantly in their advance, blind spots and outcomes. The technical perspective is helpful to understand the logic of algorithms and can illustrate how the harvesting of personal data can feed data entry points of the algorithmic decision-making process. Although, the technical side fails to investigate all facets of distinct privatised algorithms due to the black box approach of most corporations. Questions such as how Twitter generates its trending topics, or how Facebook its newsfeed, will never be fully understood by the public. Furthermore, the research from the technical side fails to look further into the algorithms interference within the social sphere. If the algorithm is treated as a line of code, the research ends with its last line and cannot be reconnected to the social sphere. Beer argues that, '[d]etaching the algorithm in order to ask what it does requires separating the algorithm from the social world' (Beer, 2017, p. 4) and treating a separated entity as part of something is simply not possible. Therefore, he argues that algorithms are part of the social world and must be treated as a social process if one is interested in its power within the social life. This argument is appealing as it calls for public relevance algorithms to be treated as part of the social sphere and thereby supports the view that algorithms are 'products of history and subject to cultural logics' (Andrejevic et al., 2015, p. 384). This understanding ultimately can alter the conception of algorithmic

understanding from a lay perspective and will be elaborated further in the section dedicated to the user's perspective and algorithms as phenomena.

Though all previously discussed contributions focus on questions regarding algorithmic power, none of them theorize implications through the accounts of users. Thus, algorithms are discussed as linear phenomena and its users are treated as bystanders. But the notion that communication is a linear process has led to fanciful fallacies in the past. Abercrombie and Longhurst name as example the stimulus and response model (cf. 1998, p. 5). The functionalist notion has produced a model of communication with the view of "media exercising direct, immediate, and powerful effects upon relatively powerless and passive audiences. This has been variously described as the *magic bullet*, *stimulus-response*, or *hypodermic needle*" (O'Neil, 2011, p. 323). This conception has produced false images of audiences in the past<sup>3</sup> and will continue to do so if the communication between users and algorithms is treated as a linear phenomenon too.

Livingston's more diverse approach explains how an active audience needs to be scrutinised. She argues for the 'diverse kinds of power relations between media and audiences, the contexts within which the media is influential, and the relation between [...] pleasure, identity, everyday practices, citizenship' (Livingstone, 1997, p. 15; as cited in O'Neil, 2011, p. 335). O'Neil argues, too, for the need to 'overcome the reactive and passive role induced by exceptionally powerful media influences' (O'Neil, 2011, p. 332). He observes 'that sense of return to powerful media effects is a familiar feature of some recent studies of new media [...], many of which replicate past research designs with different media in a newer technological setting' (O'Neil, 2011, p. 332). This development can be found today in approaches researching algorithmic power. These approaches fall into some of the fallacies of early audience studies with their linear communication model and embedded logic of causal effects. Only a handful of scholars have considered studying 'algorithmic power' with a concept that includes users' agency. Users can understand the essential working logic of algorithms; millions of users prove this every day by simply using search engines, to find the results they are looking for and create meaning out of them.

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<sup>3</sup>As example see Cantril's famous study 'The Invasion from Mars' (1947) about Orson Well's radio show 'War of the Worlds'.

## **Audience studies – towards a user's perspectives**

Looking at forms of media power in general, it seems necessary that algorithmic power can be understood in a broader sense when the user's perspective is included within the theorization of algorithms and how each approach enriches new methodologies. The four following studies show different approaches contributing to this user perspective.

Yueng scrutinized the decision-making of individuals and the interference of algorithms and looked at specific moments, such when algorithms take on decision-making in the form of 'hypernudge' (Yeung, 2016). This concept acknowledges that the algorithm has power within people's everyday decision-making process but portrays this power in the form of a nudge that rather points individuals into specific directions regarding the outcome of their decision. The scale on which this nudge influences an unlimited amount of decisions at the same time gave her reason to call this phenomenon 'hypernudge'. This view does not include the user's perspective on this issue but opens the interrogation of a notion of algorithmic power that includes user's agency.

Considering agency and tapping into the everyday life and practices, Michele Willson (2017) explores the settings in which users and algorithms share spaces in their everyday life. Within her essay, she argues that 'algorithms are a matter of concern, when considering questions of the everyday' (Willson, 2017, p. 138). She rationalises this by saying that the shape of online activity is an 'intersection of social, cultural, and political strategies enacted by powerful systems and actors' (Willson, 2017, pp. 138-139). These strategies are the architects of the internet's infrastructure as 'a series of systems within which many people navigate [and] must devise ways of operating or doing the everyday' (2017, p. 139). Willson concludes that algorithms are shaped by strategies, structures, tactics and interaction. Thus, she says that Michel de Certeau's work is relevant to research user's agency and algorithmic power, as algorithms are increasingly a substantial part of the everyday life (cf. 2017, p. 149).

Finally, conducting empirical research considering a user's perspective as part algorithmic power, Rader and Gray (2015) published the results of a larger survey about user's belief of the curation of the Facebook newsfeed. What is valuable about their study is that they acknowledge that users shape

algorithms through their use of it. Hence, their belief in how the algorithm works is important in looking at algorithms themselves. The study asked how users explain that not all posts of their Facebook friends are shown in their Newsfeed. Radar and Gray (2015) conclude that ‘users vary widely in the degree to which they perceive and understand the behaviour of content filtering algorithms in this online social network context, and these differences affect how they interact with, and experience, the systems they are using’ (Radar & Gray, 2015).

Bucher (2017) explores further how users experience algorithms. She refers to this as ‘algorithmic imaginary’. Bucher interviewed 25 people about their experiences with the algorithm that generates the Facebook’s newsfeed. She argues that algorithms are not experienced by people as a mathematical recipe but through ‘moods, affects and sensations that the algorithm helps to generate’ (Bucher, 2017, p. 32). Thus, she found an entry point in the everyday life with algorithms from a user’s perspective. Bucher illustrates how algorithms make people feel and this gives an account into the power of algorithms and how it creates subjectivities. This contribution is valuable to anyone who is looking for a broader notion of algorithmic power that includes the user. To research experiences, she uses the phenomenological notion of experiences from Merleau-Ponty. Thereby, she argues that people encounter the world through invisibilities. She suggests: ‘people do not necessarily need access to the precise instructions that tell the computer what to do in order to experience an algorithm. [...] but rather moods, affects and sensations that the algorithm helps to generate’ (Bucher, 2017, p. 32). Bucher’s work contributes to a user’s perspective, and offers a research foundation to build upon.

## **Algorithms as phenomena**

Researching agency via experiences requires a rethinking of Bucher’s methodological stance to ‘access’ algorithms. She refers to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception (1962) and argues that the algorithm would reveal itself to users through experienced ‘moods’ (cf. Bucher, 2017, p. 32). The idea of algorithms as phenomena is useful from a user’s perspective, but Merleau-Ponty’s notion cannot account for the machine learning aspects of algorithms.

The phenomenology of experience has its roots in the Kantian epistemology which separates entities into phenomena and noumena: While the object in itself (noumena) cannot be grasped, ‘phenomena cannot exist in themselves, but only in us’ (Kant, 1899 [1781], p. 79). Thus, the phenomenal side of an object can exist only by subjects experiencing it. While existential phenomenologists, such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, assumed that they can grasp with an intersubjective approach the original meaning of phenomena through interpretation, this research rejects the idea that there is such an access and follows more a contemporary social constructionist notion in which, ‘we cannot make claims about a real world that exists beyond our description of it’ (Burr, 2003, p. 24). Nevertheless, the phenomenological viewpoint provides the tools to study experiences from the first-person perspective.

Heidegger explores the Kantian notion of experience in several works to explain the relation between beings and phenomena. According to him, experience has different modes. Heidegger distinguishes between *Erleben* and *Erfahren*. Both words translate into the English word ‘experience’, but while the former applies to unreflective experiences, the latter should be understood as reflexive experience, accumulating over time (cf. Scannell, 2014, p. 241).

By focusing on ‘moods’ of algorithms, Bucher looks at experience as *Erleben* [*living-through*], which according to Heidegger is ‘isolated and temporary’ (Inwood, 1999). Experiencing an algorithm [as *erleben*] means to have lived through many of its moods. Experiencing an algorithm [as *erfahren*] stands in relation to an interpretative process throughout time. Heidegger describes ‘a sequence of steps of “experiencing”’ (Heidegger, 1999 [1936], p. 110).

Experience here starts as encounters that ‘affects one [...] without ones having to *do* anything’ (110). This can be a mood that is created through an algorithm and is similar to experience [as *erleben*]. However, this process continues when agents start to seek encounters. Heidegger refers to this step as ‘*going up to something*’, an active seeking of this mood (Heidegger, 1999 [1936], p. 111). This is seen by Heidegger as a transitional step that leads towards ‘testing’ and looking for ‘changing conditions of its encountering’ (Heidegger, 1999 [1936], p. 111) and towards ‘grasping ahead to what has the character of a rule’ (Heidegger, 1999 [1936], p. 111).

This notion of experience [as *erfahren*] is suitable to see how affectual experiences can reveal a subjective stance that is later reflected upon and how

it can lead towards agency. While an IT engineer might have the vocabulary to conceptualise algorithms and its background processes within the hermeneutic circle, everyday users can still build on their own experiences and see how the way they approach the algorithm – by offering certain data or metadata – reveals a different algorithmic outcome. While experience [as *erleben*] is suitable to illustrate algorithmic encounters, only experience [as *erfahren*] can show how users constitute algorithms as phenomena, thus, building towards an ‘algorithmic imaginary’, which Bucher defines as ways to think about what algorithms are (2017), which includes reflections building towards agency.

But Heidegger’s sequences do not necessary lead towards an understanding of the algorithm as a mathematical step-by-step procedure, rather it brings users towards an understanding of its purpose within their everyday lives. Paddy Scannell points out that Heidegger’s notion of understanding points first towards the object’s meaning. This is embedded within Heidegger’s description of different ontological worlds of objects and the care-structure. Instead of asking users what an algorithm is and considering its coded syntax, they are more likely to understand *what it is meant to do*. The meaning of a public relevance algorithm then is an accessible phenomenon for users, as it is embedded within the experiences of the algorithm’s cultural outcomes. Not necessarily through its character as an object of the everyday, but through the meaning it conjures. While it can be hard for users to think about what algorithms are, it is much easier for them to find meaning behind algorithms within their lives and through that find also access to the question what an algorithm is (c.f. Scannell, 2014, pp. 20-26).

Therefore, the ‘algorithmic imaginary’ contributes to the understanding of what the algorithm is. By reconsidering this, the imaginary is more than a summary of experiences but rather a resource for users when they interact with algorithms. However, this imaginary as resource does not necessarily relate the algorithm itself, as it is the result of a process that requires creative interpretation and reflectivity through answering what it is meant to do. In other words: experience as *Erfahren*.



## Practices based on the imaginary

Although everyday users often do not have the vocabulary to explain how metadata influences search results or how their activity is embedded into information ecosystems, they have experiences based on algorithmic outcomes affecting them. Users can find ways to embrace or avoid these encounters. This is particularly interesting when the altered digital behaviour becomes a part of the algorithmic outcome itself. This can be evident within the users' everyday lives when sequences of experience [*as erfahren*] transform into practices.

As shown by Willson (2017), de Certeau's work is relevant as its components as strategies, structure, tactics and interactions are applicable to online spaces. Willson is not alone in this connotation, Jenkins, Ford and Green's work was also inspired by de Certeau by mapping out the 'shifting relations between media producers and their audiences' (2013, p. 153) among online fan cultures. Michel de Certeau's work on *Practice of Everyday Life* (1988; 1998) offers a useful guide to study how users deal with algorithms and how they can resist, by limiting flows and dissipating energies (Highmore, 2007, p. 108).

What is important about de Certeau's work is his concept of strategies and tactics. According to de Certeau, a *strategy* is

the calculation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city) can be isolated. (Certeau, 1988, p. 36)

While this strategy accounts for the algorithm itself, a *tactic* on the other hand can be used by users as

a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. [...], it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. (Certeau, 1988, p. 37)

In other words, he refers to tactics as 'art of the weak' (Certeau, 1988, p. 37). The weak are the targets of the strategy, thus, users of the spaces created by platform owners and their 'everyday practices [...] are tactical in character' (Certeau, 1988, p. xiv).

It stands to reason how these practices are continuously altered with different experiences of users. In light of the foregoing, this research endeavour is then required to draw upon narratives to study these practices of users as a resource to scrutinize their experiences and ways of operating embedded into their everyday life (cf. Highmore, 2007, p. 119). These narratives can disclose how users experience public relevance algorithms throughout time, reflect on them and show how they change their practices with algorithms based on these reflections.

## Methods and methodology

While Heidegger shows the struggle for new subjectivities through the ontology of being, Michel de Certeau aims to study the 'ordinary activities that help to escape from articulated strategic power' (Nalivaika, 2014, p. 42). The similarities are in their interests to build their analysis on subjects situated in the everyday and therefore the approaches are complementary.

The everyday in both approaches is characterised through experiences of otherness in space and time. While Heidegger is more concerned with existentialist questions about subjectivities, de Certeau looks how subjectivities express themselves physically in the 'art of making do' (Certeau, 1988). Rather than setting these two approaches apart, this research utilises both to show how experiences and actions are interconnected and transform each other.

Not restricting the analysis of the empirical data to one singular methodological stance allows to draw on the advantages of both in each part. Therefore, this research follows the suggestion of Pat Bazeley, who proposes to use provided methodology to inform the research possibilities, rather using them as completed schemes (2013, p. 10). Doing this broadens the perspective of this research, rather than restricting it to a 'methodolotary' advance, 'a preoccupation with selecting and finding methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the story being told' (Janesick, 2000, p. 390). This section on methodology and methods will explain how this compromise was found between two approaches in which the 'narrative becomes the resource in the everyday life' (Highmore, 2007, p. 119). This methodology chapter will show how this compromise was found.

## **Co-producing empirical data – the semi structured interview**

The literature review has shown that public relevance algorithms are mainly researched from a systemic viewpoint with the conclusion that users are disadvantaged within tightly knit systems. In contrast to this, the advantages of a qualitative research approach lies within its structure: The '[q]ualitative research methods, such as interviews [...], have been developed in order to throw light upon human experience and social life' (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 21). The semi-structured interview can access values, attitudes and feelings, are flexible and can achieve thematical depth (Byrne, 2012, p. 211). Thus, the qualitative approach provides the possibility to adapt the research process and can uncover findings that have not been considered when the research was designed.

## **The research process: pilot, sampling, recruiting, and analysis**

It is hard to speak with people about their interactions with information and communication technology and their reflections on experiences with technologies like algorithms. Therefore, the pilot of this research builds onto a foregoing project that focused on practices and surveillance in social media (Witzenberger, 2016). Furthermore, the sample and its size proved to be a difficulty. Mainly because of the minute number of similar projects to draw upon covering both experiences and practices on algorithms. An aim of this research was to verify the notion that users had their own ways of dealing with algorithms even though this was implicit in some cases. The theoretical sampling for this case study was compiled similar to a critical 'most likely' case according to Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 79). This builds on the proposition that if the age group that is most immersed in digital media cannot shape algorithmic outcomes based on their experiences, less immersed age groups are less likely to do so either. A sample within the age-group between 14 and 30 years seemed to be promising to fulfil this. More than 95 percent of this age group use online media, and thereby more than other age groups (Frees, 2015)<sup>4</sup>. As an additional limitation to the sample composition, the research also required the participants to have various levels of data literacy to ensure that tactics do

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<sup>4</sup>This research is part of the annual online user survey from the German public broadcasting ARD/ZDF Media Commission.

not necessarily correspond to IT-skills and knowledge. Therefore, a range of different occupations and educational backgrounds was included as well as a gender mix to stratify the sampling.

The recruiting for this research was based on a snowball principle. A mix of a conscious and random selection of participants (Brosius et al., 2012, p. 71). After a database with thirty possible candidates including their age, occupation, gender and educational background was compiled, the candidates within the database were contacted for a small conversation about the research project and the aim of this research.

Ten interviews were conducted. This was to ensure the length of the interview, that often exceeded one hour, and simultaneously allow that an in-depth analysis would be achievable within the given timeframe. The interview itself was then structured through the interview guide. It included six sections: Covering background information, routines and everyday life, the algorithmic imagination, practices and a loosely coupled section that mainly gave some more context.

Within the analysis, a compromise between practices and experiences had to be found. The given structure of the interviews was helpful to distinguish these two interconnected fields within the analysis, yet allowing illustration of how one leads into another. Therefore, two complementary types of analysis were required to combine the more important aspects of each theoretical model, drawing on the same interviews.

After fully transcribing all interviews, the analysis split into two advances. The first part on experience was analysed with thematic statements. These have the benefit to 'identify those things that make a phenomenon what it is' (Bazeley, 2013, p. 193). The statements were marked within the transcript if their expression helped to identify the 'essence' of the algorithm as phenomenon, as suggested by Bazeley (2013, p. 193). The thematic statements were then put into shorter statements to make them identifiable within the transcript and rearranged into subordinate themes covering the phenomenon.

The part on practices was coded. The coding was completed through a zigzag approach (Rivas, 2012, p. 369). The coding was open, inductive, and mainly *in vivo*. Codes were later categorised to refer to tactics. All together these themes made up the essence of what is the last chapter of the analysis on

practices. When a user for example referred to using an ad-blocking software that would help to avoid advertisements, this was noted as code. When more of these codes were found within the transcripts, these were put into the category of avoidance tactic. The category avoidance tactic was later organised with other tactics under the theme 'practices: ways of operating'.

## **Critical reflections and limitations**

'Heidegger recognises the intersubjectivity or embeddedness of our experience [...] and attempted to interpret the original intentions and meanings held by a person in relation to a phenomenon' (Bazeley, 2013, p. 193). Not only is the interviewee subject to intersubjectivity, but so too is the researcher. Thus, creating a 'double hermeneutics' by making sense of a person who is trying to make sense of what is happening to them (Bazeley, 2013, p. 194). Furthermore, the qualitative interview has a low reliability itself: answers of the interviewees can vary through unlimited variables. To limit these, this research includes the context of the interviews and acknowledges that data is not collected but gathered in co-production with the researcher (Byrne, 2012, p. 208). But the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee can 'allow the everyday to become vivid again by making the ordinary strange by referring it to surprising contexts' (Highmore, 2001, p. 46). However, putting the individual at the centre of attention also has its benefits: It allows research of an entire phenomenon from the consciousness to social actions in context of the experiences of the interviewees and still recognize that the produced data in the interviews is subject to the researcher's interpretation. Additionally, other methodological advances that claim to have a way to find uninterpreted ways to gather, collect or produce data need to acknowledge that '*reality* is always already interpreted.

## **Analysis**

This analysis draws on the everyday and illustrate the circumstances in which users encounter algorithms. The first of section of this analysis illustrates the circumstances in which users encounter algorithms throughout the time and space of their everyday life. After situating the interviewees and their digital

media usage, the analysis moves towards Heidegger's sequence of experiences. Thus, starting with affectual encounters of the phenomenon and moving towards rationalisations. While the affectual encounter marks the awareness of the subjective stance among users, the rationalisation builds towards agency. This part focuses around the algorithmic biography, which from a user's perspective refers to the personalised aspects of public relevance algorithms. Throughout the rationalisation of the phenomena, users then build their own set of values and rules about algorithms via their imagination. Depending on the construction of this, users find agency to shape algorithmic outcomes. The tactics of users to anticipate the objectives of algorithms, build the last part of the analysis.

### **Being *with* and *through* algorithms**

In the beginning of all interviewees faced questions regarding their digital media usage to situate algorithmic encounters into the everyday life of the interviewees. The users show that they do not distinguish between their being in the everyday and the use of technology. Using technology instead is a part of the being in time and throughout space.

#### *Time*

Kasper, an Estonian software engineer believed he spent 'every second minute' of his day actively using his digital devices to access different platforms. He refers to his phone as a being; a useful tool to help him get out of bed, to navigate him through social media, the streets, and his work schedule, while helping him to stay in contact with people. Like all other interviewees, Kasper attaches an ordinariness to his excessive digital media usage. Here is his account:

**Kasper:** It [smartphone] wakes me up in the morning and sometimes it drives me to work as well to know where there is better traffic. [...] I work behind a computer and I am constantly connected to it. [...] I'd usually go to the gym after work, there I would use my phone to listen to music or when I ride my bike somewhere I'd use maps to find it. [...] I mean I really use all of my digital devices constantly, however it is the most convenient. (24, software engineer)

While not all of his activity is directly linked with public relevance algorithms, he aids a lot of his everyday activities through them. All other interviewees answered similarly, everybody showed the same intense attachment to the ordinariness of digital media usage in their daily lives. The other interviewees confirmed this.

While many interviewees seemed to have no choice regarding their usage of digital media due to their work environment, other participants working in non-digitalised professions sought ways to incorporate digital media. Like Felix, a pastry chef:

**Felix:** I'd guess around 7 hours. It's quite hard to tell.

**Q:** Do you also use it at work, I guess you don't even have 7 free hours?

**Felix:** Here and there, my colleagues and I have a speaker and we listen to the Spotify radio and when its calm you can always check your messenger.  
(25, chef, translated)

Considering these personal accounts, the statement that '[w]e do not live *with*, but *in*, media' (Deuze, 2012, p. xiii) is apparent and time seems to be an important aspect when looking at a user's perspective on algorithmic power. Whether their usage is connected to the consumption of algorithmic outcomes or the creation of metadata by instant messaging or running background applications. Looking at time and media usage shows that the everyday life seems so interwoven with the media that they have become almost inseparable (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998, p. 77).

Kasper's account shows that his phone works as a structuring device (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). However, not only does his phone structure his day, its applications mark times throughout the day. Just as Kasper's routine shows: Spotify at the Gym, YouTube at home, Slack and Gmail at work. With this structuring aspect of the media in focus, the indifference between his applications on his phone and TV programs, that have been described as marker points by Gauntlett and Hill (1999) is striking.

If users then look at outcomes of some public relevance algorithms they offer 'kernels of identification' (Frosh, 1991, p. 195); little pieces of texts, images or anything that users can grab onto and build their identity. Unlike with non-digital media the content here is tailored towards the users' metadatafied identities and can be experienced via personalised 'explore' search engines. While all this is applicable to conventional media, it seems notable, that the

only difference to the algorithm driven media seems to be the personalisation, which is able to reduce the entropy of possible content. This makes digital and social media – driven through algorithmic selections – cope better with the demand and fast paced rhythm of the ‘speed up’ of late modernity (Dahlgren, 2016, p. 9).

### *Space*

While all interviewees were aware of their excessive online behaviour throughout time, they showed little awareness for the scale of their network throughout space. It was tough to establish the different services being used through registered accounts that in some way link to the personalisation of algorithmic outcomes and the networked environment. Practically all interview sequences covering space resulted in a long Q&As followed by a surprising realisation about its magnitude.

The accounts draw on both unconscious submitted data through metadata and voluntarily submitted information, containing personal information from addresses to credit card information and all other data once submitted to a service provider. Most interviewees shared discomfort regarding the scale of their networks, and often they were only confronted within the interview situation. The source of this discomfort was mostly connected with the inability to tell what information users submit voluntarily and what information the platform owners can extract through their digital behaviour. This inability is connected with strategies of obfuscation (Pasquale, 2015). When Carla was asked if she read the terms and conditions to know what information she submits within separate online spaces she responded:

**Carla:** No. I think they are just too long. When I need to read them, it is usually when I want to install or get something and as user I just don’t have the patience for that. I want to reach my goal quickly instead. I guess that is stupid’ (26, journalist, translated).

Notably, she berated herself and did not consider that the companies offering their services might have that in mind, while designing their terms of service. Furthermore, users don’t really have a chance to disagree: ‘we all know who call the shots in these “agreements” [...] The prospect of altering the terms of service for an intermediary like Facebook or Google is beyond the ambition of almost all users’ (Pasquale, 2015, p. 144). Alongside the obfuscating legal



strategy and the user's weak stance, comes the technological ability to create a multi-spatial network that allows not only the registration of every click and move on one platform, but also after leaving the website through tracking cookies and other technologies (Halavais, 2009). Through the ability of network owners to track users beyond their own networks, they have the ability to create metadata-fied identities or as Cheney-Lippold describe them as 'algorithmic identities' (2011). As the interviews have shown, these are not isolated but spread across all personal and work devices and platforms using several accounts through an interconnection – mostly the phone:

**Kasper:** I have two laptops but on my phone my work and private live meets because I have my Facebook messenger, my WhatsApp and my Snapchat but also all my work conversations on my phone. So, I can see what is going on.  
(24, software engineer)

Considering the time spent in the space of this networked environment these metadata-fied identities can draw on many resources.

### **Experience – from affectual encounters to reflective experiences**

Heidegger's sequences of experience are similar to Bucher's description of moods. This phenomenology of moods has similarities with Anna Gibbs' (2011) discussion of affect as a 'selective activation or expression on the basis of memory, experience, thought, and habit (Gibbs, 2011, p. 251). However, it is important to note this affectual encounter is just a moment in which people become aware of their subjective stance. Heidegger's notion goes beyond that. By evoking thoughts and emotions of users, algorithmic outcomes affect them as external events. The interviews in this project have shown encounters that affected the participants in this manner; the affective encounter was always experienced by the user through the algorithmically selected content. While the affectual work through experiencing algorithms is mainly done with a push individuals do not ask for, the cognitive work around the rationalisation of this experience depends on the affectual impression the algorithm has made on people. After looking at the different encounters in which algorithms as phenomena have pushed themselves into the awareness of the interviewees, this section also aims to unravel the rationalisation process of these individual encounters. Heidegger argues that the second encounter

with the algorithm as phenomena is being *sought*, yet still fresh, trying to re-enact the first encounter and its attached feelings. It stands to reason that nobody wants to re-enact negative feelings, therefore the attempt to avoid this encounter is as much part of the second sequence of experience as an attempt to recreate it. This is followed by a testing of the phenomena under varying conditions by the users; an attempt to see what the algorithm does when it is approached differently.

### *Algorithmic biography*

Experiencing the algorithmic biography refers to being in touch with one's own metadatatified identity as algorithmic outcomes. The concept of the algorithmic biography builds on Bucher's profiling identity as an algorithmic mood (Bucher, 2017), Elmer's description of algorithms as 'profiling machines' (2004) and how software can integrate user's information into malleable profiles (de Vries, 2010). The algorithmic biography has evolved as the main theme and is grounded in data and literature. This can be experienced either via encounters with the personalisation itself, through irrelevancies, or through personalisation that is able to draw on information from other platforms through tracking.

The interviewees had all different encounters, but direct experiences with the algorithmic biography often referred to the personalisation of search results. People with an approximate awareness for data entry points experience this as something positive, as it also gives them the ability to manipulate the calculations of the algorithms they use, while people with less data literacy find it troubling; finding fewer opportunities to protect themselves or shape their algorithmic outcomes.

If a search engine receives a query from a user it has several ways to identify them: their Internet Protocol number, whose newest version, IPv6, 'includes a so-called stateless mode that facilitates persistent identification of Internet users, and was designed to enable secure transaction' (Cohen, 2012, p. 169). However, there is a problem with the IP address: It is accountable per network and does not change from device to device. Furthermore, devices that are connected to several networks would therefore not be identifiable. A better way to keep track of unique devices is through cookies, pieces of code that are stored in a browser to identify devices (Halavais, 2009, p. 47). A search engine can then archive through its cookies queries per device. If a person has two devices, it is likely that the search engine makes the same assumptions about

a person's interests because it is likely that similar queries are run. Users, however, are more complex and behave differently in different spaces and contexts of their lives.

**Sheila:** What I find annoying is sometimes when I would research something for work with some specific words and I would check it at home again and I give the same keyword and the same websites don't come up. [...] It really is [frustrating] in those instances, when you are counting on it. (28, architect)

Sheila did not realise how her search results are part of her algorithmic biography and in some way tailored towards her until this structure could not identify her anymore because she was using devices that are not linked with each other. Sheila became aware that parts of her digital activity were part of her algorithmic outcomes and she started to rationalise what happens between different devices.

Kasper on the other hand had progressed far beyond the initial stage of the affectual encounter and had an accurate picture how his biography is being put together and why, stating that the personalisation would be 'pretty cool':

**Kasper:** Yeah either through my browser or my IP address they would know where I am. Also I use google chrome, so I am logged in there with my google account and it knows it is me. So, it is really easy for the algorithm to understand who is making the search. I mean it is basically the same with Facebook just that I don't even have to search for anything there. I am logged into my Facebook and they know all there is on Facebook about me. So that gives me tailored ads on the side of my newsfeed and it knows I am a man, from Estonia who likes certain things. (24, software engineer)

As a trained IT engineer, Kasper has a set of data literacy skills. Kasper is neither uncomfortable with this biography nor afraid of what it does. Conceivably, through his knowledge about data entry points and his skill based knowledge about how to manipulate them if necessary Kasper already has agency to act contrary to algorithmic power.

Search engines like Google are not the only service that can reveal the algorithmic biography. Anwar has made an encounter with Facebook's Newsfeed.

**Anwar:** What drives me nuts though is when I watch a video and it automatically generates like a timeline of videos that I want to see [...]. It just really drives me nuts, how the fuck do they know what I like? (22, accountant)

Anwar started to think about Facebook knowing something about her based on a video suggestion. This suggestion provokes her to reflect on the possible ways the algorithm has to identify her interests. While it is unsure whether the recommendation algorithm is based on a profiling algorithm or other factors, the experience for Anwar is aggravating. She clearly insinuated in her statement how even the articulation of this phenomenon intensified her negative feelings towards the profiling and how she ended her statement by directing her frustration not towards the algorithm itself, but the engineers who build it. This shows uncertainty about whether this video suggestion is built on algorithms using her personal data or data retrieved from the video. This shows the algorithmic biography does not necessarily need to be fed via data of the user but can also be experienced via a recommendation algorithm drawing on external data.

Coming into touch with what is called ‘algorithmic filter bubble’ (Pariser, 2011) on Facebook can also reveal the algorithmic biography. Felix and Nils realised that some of their friend’s posts do not show up on their Facebook Newsfeed. Both realised this by being drawn to their friend’s profile and not being able to tell if they have seen their posts. Both started to wonder why and if Facebook’s Newsfeed would not show their posts and explained it with a low engagement rate between them and their own friends. Nils even had an explanation with a commercial logic:

**Nils:** [T]hey would sometimes hide what my boring friends would do because they would think I might log off then because it wouldn’t matter to me as I don’t speak with them or usually click on their things. (25, student and programmer)

Regardless of how users experience different facets of their metadata-fied identity, it is a sudden point of realisation that there is a digital-self and this might be revealed through admiration, frustration, anger or just plain curiosity. Actively seeking one’s traces of the algorithmic biography is easy, once its existence has been revealed by affecting users.

When Felix noticed that his search results are in some way personalised he had mixed feelings, calling it a ‘double-edged sword’ that aids him on the one hand and reveals how ‘naked’ he is on the other. He realised that all his queries delivered results that coincided with his linguistic preferences, regardless in which country he resides in. This realisation made him curious. After this initial stage of seeking encounters within experience [*as erfahren*], he was ready to share his thoughts.

**Felix:** I just asked everyone to google the same thing with their phones and everyone had different results. Back then that was a surprise, today I think it is obvious (laughs). (translated, 25, chef)

Felix started to test the algorithm under varying conditions with his friends, reflecting with them on the meaning behind this personalisation and shows what Heidegger means by ‘testing’ a phenomenon under varying conditions. As soon as the affect through the algorithm wears out, the experience was hidden within the everyday again. As Felix said himself, today he thinks it is obvious, which illustrates the agency he has built since his first encounter.

All interviewees described similar encounters and the procedure how they became aware of various aspects of algorithms through testing. The step towards testing is a first step of agency. Felix started to read the terms and conditions and talked with his friends about what happened to their data. He and the other interviewees passed the initial moment of affect by testing the same algorithm under varying conditions and observed what it does. For others, these ‘tests’ contained some form of varying different entry points among users by changing their location physically or by other activity e.g. installing a new browser, having a new device or trying the incognito mode of a browser and seeing a difference in the search results.

### *Multi-Spatiality: the networks’ intersections*

Throughout all interviews, it seems to be a common theme that the participants built towards an awareness through a negative experience rather than a positive one. Building on the algorithmic biography, multi-spatiality refers to the ability of the algorithmic biography to be experienced throughout different networks via non-directly visible connections. While this can mean that different algorithms simply make the same recommendation, it also refers to some platforms’ abilities to track users’ activities beyond their own

platform. For the interviewees, this seemed to be a thorough negative experience, when they realised that the same personalisation used of one algorithm on a certain platform is also influencing their outcomes on another platform. The theme of multi-spatiality thereby builds on the networked environment.

This theme has emerged as evident through the tyranny of advertisement: algorithmically selected ads that are connected to the users' prior activity and subsequently reappear in different spaces and networks. The interviewees experienced this as a part of their algorithmic biography, with the ability to move between platforms and across devices to offer them relevant advertisements. Every interviewee connected thoroughly negative experiences with these encounters.

Mostly these were evoked through simple tracking cookies: pieces of code that are stored in a browser to 'track user's behaviour across application' (Halavais, 2009, p. 47). Anwar's first encounter with tracking cookies and algorithmically selected advertisements have shaken her up:

**Anwar:** I was looking for a t-shirt for a very obscure band when I was in Germany [...] and when I went back to using Facebook in Egypt I got a lot of pop-ups [...]. I thought someone is like fucking me up or hacked my account. My laptop can't read me that well and I then I just had to read about cookies. [...] The t-shirt thing was pretty trivial but it fucked me up so bad. I had no idea how far they would go with this. (22, accountant)

This encounter is interesting, as it does not only mark an encounter but also shows how Anwar forced herself to read about cookies to rationalise the experience she had to endure. Prior to this incident, Anwar had no idea about tracking cookies, she made this experience entirely based on its algorithmic outcome as personalised advertisements. In Anwar's case this was extremely negative because the fear it conjures that a non-defined audience might be able to see her 'backstage performances' (Goffman, 1990). Merely through the encounter with the algorithmic outcome that affected her, she started to actively seek avoidance tactics.

Most interviewees had similar encounters: Kasper faced a continuous Kickstarter advertisement on his Newsfeed after he clicked on a link his friend send him. Felix was 'bombarded' with Spanish holiday apartments after already booking a holiday to Spain. Carla felt 'stalked' by a dress that followed

her from online shopping on her phone's browser to her favourite news page on her laptop.

All interviewees named these facets of algorithmic advertisements 'annoying' and 'creepy'. While it is common for advertisements to interrupt television programmes and other media content, being creepy does not seem to be in their interest. Especially, since all interviews named these incidents in the beginning as a start of their endeavour into shielding themselves from these experiences. The affectual encounter here seemed also to be the starting point to rationalise experiences. The encounter reveals the 'space of the self' and the individuals agency within the world (Corner, 2011, p. 86). Moments like Anwar's t-shirt or Carla's dress incident can alter the subjective stance abruptly by making users feel powerless:

**Carla:** 'You suddenly feel just like you are made of glass and you know you are vulnerable' (26, journalist, translated).

This subjectivity is again connected with undefined others being able to see backstage performances. Carla indicates this by stating how she feels like being made of glass and vulnerable.

All interviewees have been affected by incidents like this and described how they tried to avoid this by learning digital skills, or by experiments on their own with a different browser, search engine or their browser's incognito mode. It is worth mentioning that data-literacy does not remove negative feelings about some platforms ability to breach the walls in which the users felt safe. Encountering this multi-spatiality is a facet of an algorithm that makes everyone feel vulnerable and motivates them to take agency to shield their 'networked-self' (Cohen, 2012):

**Kasper:** I mean I try everything to avoid this but whatever I do, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. (24, software engineer)

### *Algorithm of rubbish*

Being confronted with powerful recommendation and public relevance algorithms does not necessarily have to be the only incidence in which users encounter their algorithmic biography and come to think of its power. Many algorithms seem to build towards the opposite of what users consider as relevant to them. While the interviewees seemed disturbed by accurate

advertisement, they seemed particularly disengaged with the algorithms that continuously failed to identify their interests. This affects users too, as it can be a frustrating, annoying or humorous experience. Bucher made a similar finding and named it ‘faulty prediction’ (Bucher, 2017, p. 35). With this she refers to Facebook’s Newsfeed algorithm that is entirely wrong about its users’ interests.

Interviewees talked too about the irrelevance of Facebook. Robert was just one of many describing his discontent with the Newsfeed algorithm. For him its algorithm seems to completely miss the point of what he is interested in.

**Robert:** There is really nothing there apart from stupid cat and fail videos, advertisement that looks super dodgy and just stuff that I really don’t want to see. [...] it’s so boring I rarely use it anymore. (24, marketing, translated)

Robert reflects upon the algorithm driving his algorithmic biography and considers it to be broken. It can only offer him outcomes that he cannot identify with, which he implies by merely calling any outcomes ‘stuff’, not even valuable of a definition.

Sheila has experienced a similar problem with her feed. Prior to working as an architect in London, she studied in Denmark. Her newsfeed not only ignores that she has moved on with her life but also that she does not speak Danish.

**Sheila:** My Facebook feed is kind of like full of photos of people I really have nothing to do with anymore. Like the people I knew from Erasmus when I was studying in Denmark. So, I get a lot of Danish language news articles and advertisements, which obviously, I am anything but interested in. (28, architect)

While this newsfeed used to work as a bridging device too, its structure is fragile, once the necessary kernels are not provided anymore. When they do not deliver the right content, they get abandoned by users. Felix experienced the newsfeed algorithm as so ‘draining and boring’, that he had to deactivate his account to spare himself from the frustration and guilt of time wasting he feels every time he opens the application.

Experiences with this ‘algorithm of rubbish’ – as algorithmic outcomes that aim to resemble personalised outcomes but fail to do so – are not exclusively



linked to Facebook. Timo made similar experiences with SoundCloud. He uses the music streaming platform daily to listen to music and find new tracks. While the platform has a feed about artists' activity that recommends tracks he might be interested in, he described the recommendation algorithm as ridiculous and said that he never found a likeable track, other than a reuploaded track that he already marked as favourite. Instead he had to physically dig through the artists' profiles and look for their recommended songs. Experiencing this facet of an algorithms makes Timo think less of its power.

**Timo:** I think the machine is a little bit too complex to know how stupid it is sometimes. (26, student)

Instead of relying on this 'stupid machine', he puts in his effort to find the music he likes unaided by algorithms but rather through other humans.

### **Grasping the algorithm through meaning – the imagination**

By experiencing algorithms and reflecting on these experiences user's build towards a better understanding of algorithms as phenomena. Bucher defines this as 'algorithmic imaginary', 'ways to thinking about what algorithms are, what they should be, how they function and what these imaginations in turn make possible' (Bucher, 2017, p. 30). Thus far, the analysis has shown how users build towards an understanding of algorithms, its objectives and how they attach values to it. This part of the imaginary reflects the last stage in Heidegger's sequence of experience, in which users are 'grasping ahead to what has the character of a rule' (1999 [1936], p. 111). These imaginary rules should not be understood as technological procedures of the algorithm but also its objectives. Therefore, this part is not solely dedicated to the algorithm, but also its network, its engineers, its owners and other users from the singular perspective of a user. Focusing on this broader array contrasts with Bucher's work and allows the algorithm's strategies in Michel de Certeau's definition to be built within the imaginary, rather than the technical perspective of what an algorithm is and what it does. Therefore, the algorithmic imagination conjures the question what the phenomenon is meant to do for the user and what are its owners' objectives.

In the introduction of this thesis, the importance of data entry points for algorithms was explained and later its hidden evaluation criteria. Being able to put together this complex network requires skills and the necessary vocabulary. Only then can users know what data entry points could be possibly made up of their own (meta)data. It stands to reason that here IT professionals like Kasper or Nils have an advantage in mastering this game. Users without these skills, like Timo, struggle with it.

While many were not aware of the existence of tracking cookies or how IP addresses and locations can become a data entry point, they are still able to understand the working logic of the algorithm by imagining how he is being tracked. Through experiences, they are aware of their algorithmic biography and give explanations. Asking Timo why his identity would be tracked in the first place, he answers that he believes this is done to advertise better and sell his information. All other interviewees held the same beliefs. This comes close to the idea of the 'second index' which can be used to sell demographic data about users (cf. Mayer & Stalder, 2009). This means that there is an awareness by users of the exploitation within online spaces and thereby shows how users reflect on the objectives of the owners of algorithms.

Another issue is the algorithm's hidden evaluative criteria. While nobody can say with certainty how Google ranks its results 'apart from the people that actually work at Google' as Robert explains, the fact that the interviewed users think about the problem of conflicting interests shows that they do not take results for granted. This shows how users gauge between what the algorithm is meant to do for them and what its objectives are:

**Sheila:** We are using all these things for free, there obviously is a catch. It would be weird to think there isn't any catch. (28, architect)

Sheila shows that she reflects upon the algorithms objectives, but that it is not always easy to keep it in mind due to the embeddedness within her everyday life. Within the strange interview situation however, she reflected on her experiences of the socioeconomic structures behind the business models (van Dijck, 2013, p. 28) of algorithms. The 'catch' that Sheila describes is often connected by users with their opaque strategy and distrust:

**Anwar:** They are in control. [...] Who is on top and who is not [...], they don't really have a history of credibility [...] they could always put anything on top and you have to think of these things. (22, accountant)

**Timo:** Money talks for them [Google]. They are just operating for those who pay them, I would say Google has made my life much easier but on the other hand I think as a company, they just do what companies do: Get their services for those who pay them the most. So, I don't really think they always operate in my interest. (26, student)

These accounts show how sceptical the users are towards the strategies of service providers and how they are expecting the worst from the providers of public relevance algorithms. For Timo and Anwar, it is only a question of how far the objectives of the algorithm would interfere with their own.

Even though most interviewees felt uncomfortable about the control they have to influence relevancy, almost no user abandoned a platform as consequence. Only Felix felt so uncomfortable that he tries to avoid Google at the cost of his convenience.

**Felix:** I really dislike this monopoly. If there'd be only one restaurant in the world, that wouldn't mean the food is suddenly better. [...] The question is how much does Google actually know about us and what they leave out. Then, I'm asking myself if I am actually just using it because I am used to it or if I can do it differently. That is why I am using a different service. (25, chef, translated)

Felix does not merely relate his experiences with technologies, he actively reflects his experiences with the socio-economic aspects of the digital space towards his experiences with other spheres of his life. He sees the implications of monopolies and exercises political critique via his expressions and actions of abandoning the monopolist.

## **Imagination in practice and a frame of agency**

The imagination opens the last part of this analysis to see in which forms users can exercise agency and how they re-appropriate the space of the networked environment. Thus far the analysis has shown to what extent users are aware

of this environment and what kind of values and notions they attach to it, how they think about the meaning of algorithms within their lives and their owner's objectives. Looking at user's practices as 'ways of operating' (Certeau, 1988) reveals how they can 'anticipate the flows' (Highmore, 2007, p. 104) of power through their own 'network of antidiscipline' (Certeau, 1988, p. xiii). This part of the analysis looks at different forms of tactics, how they are exercised and why their imagination provides a frame of agency.

Anwar was troubled by the t-shirt incident and found a way to avoid such encounters in the future. While she was not willing to give up the production of (meta)data she continued to do so in her own terms. She installed software to delete her cookies once she closes her browser and ad-blocking software that attempts to filter out unwanted advertisements. Furthermore, she tried not to be logged into Facebook while she is doing other things online, as within her imaginary set of rules this would stop Facebook from spying on her online activity. All users showed their own ways to deal with negative encounters and an active attempt to avoid these encounters by protecting their algorithmic biography. This seemed to be the user's first option to isolate their digital-self to certain platforms.

Most interviewees said to have some form of ad-blocking extension in their browser. This is already an effective measure and is increasingly used: 'Ad-blocking tools [...] prevent ads from appearing on devices' screens and stop advertisers collecting data about users are becoming popular browser extensions' (Lupton, 2015, p. 152). Although, this is a commonly known tactic among the owners of websites that finance their services through advertisement revenue. Some make their websites inaccessible when their service can detect such software and thereby force users to turn off their software. Being forced to either look at advertisement or being barred from entering the website puts users into an uncomfortable position and almost forces users to reflect on the meaning of algorithms by blocking their activity:

**Timo:** Then I really have to think and everything gets stalled. I usually get from place to place really fast and when it stalls I mostly just say I am not going there. (26, student)

Using such software is not always sufficient and some resistant cookies must be deleted manually in the browser to eliminate the connection to the

biography. Cutting this cord seems to give the users some form of gratification:

**Rene:** I just feel good in a way to clean this stuff and to delete things – even if it takes a while to find it. (26, postgraduate researcher)

This cleaning is a process that purifies his algorithmic biography and stands in opposition of the algorithm of rubbish.

On social media platform's like Facebook that require a login, advertisements are hard to avoid, especially as some of them are built into the 'Newsfeed' of users and are usually located between other content. Kasper rationalised the frustration he felt when he had to face weeks of Kickstarter advertisements on Facebook. He concluded after the incident that it appeared after he followed a link that his friend sent to him through Facebook's messaging service. Thereby, he assumed that the answer to this breach must lie within the messenger. To avoid this in he started to copy links from his messenger and paste them into his browser as this would interrupt the platform's ability to follow his activity and archive his interests. Thereby, he has developed a digital but not traceable tactic to counteract the 'algorithmization of the hyperlink' (Helmond, 2013). While he still follows the same path, his tactic isolates one space from the other and thus, limits the strategy of the algorithm via his assumption.

Most interviewees were aware that most of their clicks and views on the platform are being analysed to create relevant results through their experiences with the algorithmic biography. Some practices of the interviewees aimed to avoid that their activity becomes part of the feed:

**Robert:** My feed is full of these cat videos I don't want to see but when I am like really bored I do like to see it sometimes but on the other hand I don't want to look at it because I am afraid I would get more of this stuff. Then, I scroll by slowly on the video and don't click on it for the sound to start, so then Facebook does not know that I was looking at it. I mean with Facebook the past plays such an important role, everything you look at becomes part of it and I just try to avoid these clicks that give them this chance. (24, marketing, translated)

A tactic like this requires a good understanding of possible ways of engineers to code ways to track and archive the user's activity into profiles. It is hard to judge if a tactic like this is useful for Robert because it requires knowledge of whether Facebook's algorithms consider interest via a click, or if the video is running. From Robert's perspective it is a tactic, as he imagines his activity to be a stealth tactic. Furthermore, this shows that his experiences with the feed and his imagination, in which the past plays a role subsequently changes his activity and therefore his production of meta(data). Considering the data entry points of the algorithm, this means that Robert's imagination has the power to shape the algorithmic outcome. It is just hard to say in which way.

While tactics like these aim to restrict the accuracy of the algorithmic biography, other tactics aim to cut data out of it. Timo has realised that the prices for flights often increase while he is looking for them. He explained this with a commercial logic:

**Timo:** If I look at it more often, they will make it more expensive because they think I am more interested and would pay more. (26, student)

Timo could explain the algorithms' objectives for increased prices via his imagination but could not explain why, only that it has something to do with his activity. Therefore, he was convinced that it is the best if he books his flights from his father's laptop, which, he assumes, has no connection to his biography. Thus, instead of doing things differently online, he physically moves to a different device.

Other tactics involved offering the algorithm data to process that has been deliberately manipulated. While the most common one was through the incognito mode of the browser or Virtual Private Networks (vpn). These tactics aim to deliberately convince the algorithm that the device is currently in a different location. While these tactics require at least some technical knowledge, others drew entirely on their imagination to confuse the algorithms working logic. Rene believes that Facebook's algorithm tracks every one of his moves and how he interacts with advertisements and hyperlinks. Within the advertisement section of Facebook, the platform offers to replace the advertisements if users do not like the products. Through his imaginary based on the technology and socioeconomic aim Rene developed a witty tactic:

**Rene:** It's just uncomfortable when the advertisements suit my interests too much, [...] I just tell Facebook that I am not interested in the content until something appears that actually doesn't interest me [...]. (26, postgraduate researcher)

Tactics like these show that users are 'refusing a logic-of-application [by] replacing it with a logic-of-alteration' (Highmore, 2007, p. 119). Users are not simply following the algorithms' objectives. While users can avoid outcomes and how they are produced, the technical side is not the only aspect users can avoid. They can also deprive themselves from the economic interests. Many interviewees stated avoidance tactics; Sheila said she would do something else while YouTube forces her to watch an advertisement or Carla's account about the stalking dress advertisements that antagonised her. Some went even further and stated that they would never click on the first link in search engines, because then 'they' would earn money. Incidents like these have the power to illustrate that people are aware of strategies and have their own way of dealing with their frustration. While this does not necessarily interrupt the algorithm, it makes it practically useless by interfering with its purpose.

These accounts do show how users can avert spaces owned by others. This is of course an idealised picture of user's agency, but it provokes new thoughts on algorithmic power. It shows how resistant users can be and how resistant they are, if one only looks close enough, and it also shows the importance of researching the power of the subjugated and that 'it is always good to remind ourselves that we mustn't take people for fools' (Certeau, 1988, p. 176). These different ways of operating show the tactical character of users and contrast their assumed apathy towards algorithms. Drawing on imagination and the meaning of algorithms within their lives, the tactics are neither reliable nor can make severe changes to the technological abilities of algorithms or its socio-economic objectives. Yet, these practices reveal that users have their own ways of getting around the implications of public relevance algorithms, by simply altering them, or by manipulating their (meta)data, based on their experiences with them.

Therefore, these experiences with public relevance algorithms and the users' imaginations stand in a circular process and resemble a conversation that users have in the moment of reflection in the present with their future self, drawing on affectual experiences in the past and their imagination. Throughout this,

the constant mutual shaping and reshaping of the algorithmic biography and imagination builds the frame of user's agency because every assumption and adjustment of behaviour they make has the power to shape algorithmic outcomes, due to the data entry points of algorithms aimed at user's activity.

If not just one but all users act this way and contrary to the encoded logics of algorithms it creates an entire network of 'anti-discipline' (Certeau, 1988, p. xv). For large-scale computation and machine learning in this regard this network of users has a chance to make a difference. Perhaps Yeung is right when she says that users are exposed to a 'hypernudge' (2016). And maybe under the same terms algorithms might be exposed to a *hyperdodge*. A system of constant manipulation of algorithms, created by millions of users simultaneously corrupting the cogs of machine learning algorithms and operating contrary to the interests of network owners.

## Conclusion

The research of algorithms via the phenomenology of experiences has shown that people can and do influence algorithms within their everyday life – even if they do not fully understand their technicalities. The key findings of this thesis are the algorithmic biography, which users can become aware of and influence, and how they draw on their algorithmic imagination to shape and reshape it. These findings shed a different light on algorithmic power in contrast to connotations that take a perspective from the network down towards the user (see e.g. Carr, 2015; Cheney-Lippold, 2011; Danaher, 2016; van Dijck, 2013).

### *Experiencing algorithms*

The analysis of the empirical data highlights the embeddedness of public relevance algorithms into the life of users. Users experience algorithms in all circumstances that are part of the everyday and are embedded into innumerable encounters. Often algorithms work below the consciousness of people, by predicting their preference or tracking their interests. For the interviewees in this project, algorithms disclosed themselves mainly through affectual encounters provoking negative emotions, in particular frustration, the feeling of vulnerability, anger, or infuriation.



The reflections start with its purpose: ‘what is an algorithm meant to do’ relates to two separate questions for users: *what is it meant to do for me* and *what are its owner’s objectives*? These questions build towards imagination, as the answers towards the stated questions merely relate to lived experiences and how they make users feel. While users cannot give up their use of algorithms as it is part of their being, they do question its objectives. The interviewees have shown different practices to bend outcomes or to dodge its objectives, for example through tricking algorithms into thinking they have different interests, by manipulating data entry points, limiting their (meta)data production, and avoidance.

Focusing on outcomes and the methodological shift towards a phenomenological approach enables the research to focus on a user’s perspective. This has been studied within the context of the everyday life of users and oriented itself around the work of Yeung (2016), Willson (2017), Cohen (2012) and Michel de Certeau’s notion of strategies and tactics (1988). The combination of both Heidegger’s phenomenology of experience and the work on everyday life renders visible hidden algorithms and what people do to them. This is contrary – as Bucher points out (2017, p. 42) – to the popular opinion that ‘the individual user is incapable of really experiencing the effect that algorithms have in determining one’s life as algorithms rarely, if ever, speak to the individual’ (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 176).

### *Shaping algorithmic outcomes*

A major finding from the interviews is the idea of an *algorithmic biography*. From a systemic viewpoint, this biography is made of all the data an algorithm has of a certain user in a moment and links to the research in critical algorithm studies (see de Vries, 2010; Elmer, 2004; Gillespie, 2014). When the personalisation behind public relevance algorithms becomes visible to users via outcomes, they are in touch with their algorithmic biography. From a user’s viewpoint, this algorithmic biography links to Bucher’s idea of a ‘profiling identity’ as an algorithmic mood (Bucher, 2017). Therefore, the algorithmic biography combines both views and has been developed from the analysis of the interviews and is grounded within the empirical data and literature. The algorithmic biography can be experienced by users and it is never static. It is remade in every instance; any action could change it. Thus, it can be reshaped by users through different practices. If users become aware

of algorithms via their own algorithmic biography, they can shape the algorithm itself.

The analysis shows how an affectual encounter with the algorithmic biography starts a Heideggerian sequence of experience, which includes the initial affectual encounter with a certain facet of an algorithm and leads towards later reflections upon the meaning of this encounter and algorithms within the users' lives. While the users' activity is constantly tracked, the interviewees became aware of this the realisation that their digital activity is influencing algorithmic outcomes. While users could get into touch with their algorithmic biography in this way, they were also able to get in touch with it by realising that their metadatafied identity is not isolated to spaces but is spread across several platforms. Another way of getting into touch with this biography for users has been through its inaccuracy.

Regardless of the way users get in touch with these facets, users go from momentary and affectual experiences towards more reflective ones. These reflections often culminated in attempts by users to influence algorithms deliberately by testing what outcomes it gives to other people, or what it does when different (meta)data is fed to the algorithm. These practices revealed to users more about their algorithmic biography and many realised that their biography is dynamic. This marks an alteration of the uses of algorithms merely building on an awareness of its existence to shape and reshape their algorithmic biography.

This reflective experience manifests an imaginary about the phenomenon that users have become aware of, which marks the second major finding of this thesis. It links to the user's *imagination* to think about the algorithm that drives the algorithmic biography. This idea builds on Bucher's 'algorithmic imaginary' (2017) and extends through Heidegger's notion of different ontological worlds (Heidegger, 1962). While users cannot factualise the algorithm per se, they instead find access by asking what it is meant to do for them, and what are its owner's objectives. When a user asks the questions what the algorithm should do for them, they can observe with varying practices how their algorithmic biography changes via outcomes. While this activity builds on imagination, as users cannot surely know what is inside the black box, it has in fact real consequences (c.f. Bucher, 2017, p. 40). Every assumption users will make about the algorithms objectives will ultimately make a difference and therefore shapes and reshapes public relevance

algorithms, due to their algorithmic biography being the sum of their algorithmically recognizable activity. Therefore, the biography and imagination are in circular interdependency – a circuit of public relevance algorithms, from machine to user and from user to machine. This circle between action and assumption is the frame in which everyday users can practice agency and reshape algorithms.

### *Understanding algorithmic power from below*

The findings of this thesis challenge assumptions about algorithmic power. Research in critical algorithm studies is primarily concerned with the algorithm's encoded syntax, its socio-political and economic environment, and its implications for a digitalised society. The trend to research algorithms seems to be driven by the same force that drives the algorithm – systemic thinking, big data, and quantification. Individuals are seen as they are by algorithms, 'as members of categories' (Cheney-Lippold, 2011, p. 176). Therefore, users are increasingly studied from a macro perspective with the common assumption that they are deprived in a system of ever expanding surveillance and improving algorithms.

The approaches by Andrejevic (2015) and Striphas (2015) have shown an alternative, not via technological or systemic aspects, but through ways in which algorithms take part in producing culture. Researching algorithmic power via these cultural practices creates ways to research algorithms from a user's perspective. Bucher's work on the algorithmic imaginary is one of the few academic studies that show the value of a phenomenological approach (2017). Her methodology builds on Merleau-Ponty notion of experience and focused on the affectual experiences with algorithms, leading to the result that users become aware of algorithms via its moods. A key aspect of this thesis was to rethink this methodology; it does so by showing how Heidegger's sequence of experiences enrich the analysis and shows momentary affectual encounters in which users become aware of public relevance algorithms and how reflections on these experiences build towards agency to change outcomes.

The algorithmic biography and the re-working of Bucher's algorithmic imaginary contribute to an understanding of users' experiences, algorithmic power, and provides a frame for user's agency. Thereby this notion opposes the view of users' agency and power via a systemic research approach (see Cheney-Lippold, 2011; Fisher & Fuchs, 2015; van Dijck, 2013). The problem with this advance has always been the algorithm as a black box itself.

The approach within this thesis can contribute to the solution of this methodological problem by turning around this scheme: It starts with the user's reactions to algorithms via the outcomes and looks how the reactions alter algorithms.

Considering the nature of qualitative data, which is highly dependent on the context of its production, this thesis has its limitations. The sample of users with varying data literacy skills shows that users do not need technical knowledge to shape algorithms but it is uncertain if this would be valid for other demographic groups that are less active within digital media.

To reduce these limitations, this research could be extended to a pluralist approach: combining the phenomenology of experience and reverse engineering. This would require an extended sample to identify more moments, in which users can directly influence algorithms via their imagination. Furthermore, it would need to draw on more diverse demographics. However, such an approach would still not be able to answer what impact the users reshaping has because of the algorithm's opaque nature. This could be solved through reverse engineering. Some scholars have shown that reverse engineering is a suitable approach to research the implications of algorithms if these engineers know which implication to look for (Gehl, 2014). The methodological approach from this thesis and an extended sample could provide these insights. Such an approach could make a great contribution towards an understanding of algorithmic power as it could scrutinize each step to research the algorithmic power that David Beer describes: materiality of algorithms, understanding the work of coders, modelling in action, understanding their role within everyday practices, seeing how people respond to algorithmic processes (Beer, 2017, p. 11) – but inverted and from below.

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# The Secret Land of Freelance Journalism in Lithuania

A life-world study of professional challenges in the  
digital era

*Agnė Raščiūtė*

## Introduction

If for a moment, one would imagine journalism as a space, it would be a green land with young and fresh grass; some small parts of it glitter from the dewdrops. However, if one stands on a hill it could be seen that explosions, someone's deep footsteps and trash left by the visitors, mark the field: digitalization of the newsrooms (Deuze, 2007; Hanitzsch, 2011; 2015); increased market orientation and implementation of business models (Schudson, 2016); as well as a shifting nature of news writing (Zelizer, 2017). These aforementioned cultural, structural and organisational changes have an impact on shaping the models according to which newsrooms work and journalists understand their professional roles and identities. Academics and journalists themselves sometimes call it the 'crisis' of the profession.

Paradoxically, technological developments, such as the internet and the possibility to work from almost anywhere to some extent enable journalists to choose the freelance type of work (Phillips, 2015: 70). In this case, freelance journalists are no longer only in the professional journalism area, they also enter into the freelance one, with its own laws and rules. Thus, freelance journalists have a distinct possibility to observe the professional crisis from

both outside as well as inside of the newsrooms and bring a different perspective to the ongoing discussion of journalism work and its challenges.

In the last decade, the number of freelance journalists has constantly been increasing (Solomon, 2016: 241; Eurofond, 2015). Nonetheless, academic attention usually is turned to the prestigious news outlets, newsrooms and their journalists in the Western world. This hinders the possibilities to get different vantage points of the problems within the profession around the world (Zelizer, 2017: 30). Societies of Eastern Europe still are transitional and “could be perceived as symbolic social laboratories where all the controversies and contemporary challenges of modern life can be tested” (Balčytienė, 2013: 29). Some cross-national projects try to illuminate and compare journalistic practices in various countries (for example the World of Journalism Project 2011-2016). Nonetheless, for a long time, neither the journalism workforce nor the freelance type of work in Lithuania has been studied. In Lithuania, using the metaphor from one of the interviewed freelance journalists, “freelance is a secret land”. Here, the prevalence of freelance labour is smaller than in other European countries (OECD, 2015; Eurofond, 2015), still, the land exists and it is time to remove the veil that keeps it secret. Studies indicate that journalistic values and ethical codes of conduct in Eastern countries are similar to those that constitute the hegemonic journalistic tradition around the world (Balcytiene, 2006, pp. 169-70). However, the latter is still altered by historical and cultural circumstances (Zelizer, 2008). For instance, long period of communist regime influenced the way journalists understand professionalism, ethical norms. In addition, it also informs what audiences should expect from the journalists. These elements should be reckoned in while analysing and trying to understand contemporary journalism and its ongoing crisis. Likewise, it should be the time to rethink the current paradigm and view digital and freelance labour as part of journalism, not as the destruction or a causality of the crisis.

Usually, newsroom or cultural journalism studies’ samples consist of journalists employed in the newsrooms. Sometimes the sample is coupled with freelance journalists’ accounts. Regardless, the studies still provide knowledge of difficulties freelancers are facing and tactics they are creating. What the studies lack is the deeper look at the context of journalists’ everyday life. Journalism is ultimately a “production of human beings” (McNair, 2005: 27) suggesting that journalists’ personalities, everyday lives should be reckoned in while studying the state of the profession. Rather small amounts

of journalism studies touch upon the broader contexts that the analysis of the everyday experiences could illuminate. Philosopher and social phenomenologist Schutz (1974) concept of the life-world lends itself to study the experiences, including dreams, fears and all the possible *happenings* that constitute the everyday life. This thesis seeks to broaden the discussion of contemporary and unavoidable new roles, practices, and competencies by investigating the life-world of freelance journalists, who live and work in the time of ongoing shifts within the profession and society. By interviewing Lithuanian freelance journalists and paying attention to their life-worlds, it is possible to bring a more holistic and different perspective to the global discussion about what constitutes and influences the individual and professional 'crisis' of journalism.

## Aims and research questions

The thesis addresses the lack of a more holistic approach to freelance journalistic work outside the newsrooms. Moving beyond the mere analysis of precariousness and temporality of freelance journalism, the overall aim of this thesis is to study the life-world of freelance journalists in Lithuania. Freelance journalism as a practice in this country is still developing, it is happening now, therefore it is a unique possibility to explore the phenomenon by seeing, hearing and understanding it through the freelance journalists' accounts.

The thesis study questions are:

1. How do freelance journalists in Lithuania feel about their work?
2. How do the everyday experiences of freelance journalists intertwine with the state of journalism in the country, and what does it reveal about journalists work conditions in Lithuania?

# Literature review

## **Liquid definitions**

In the public discourse about contemporary labour, freelancers are portrayed as “ideal neoliberal workers” (Cohen, 2015a: 518). In figurative words, clay that adapts to market demands, usually equipped with the newest skills, maybe even come with an already established circle of the audience and a brand-name. The typologies of freelance workers are emerging differently in different theoretical strands. In labour terms, freelancers can be named as contract workers (Paulussen, 2012), self-employed (Gandini, 2016), working for themselves (Cohen, 2015a), portfolio workers (Gill, 2002) or someone who does not work according to the traditional and institutional timing (Edstrom, Ladendorf, 2012). Despite the different terminology, independent and unconventional type of work seems to be the two prominent themes in all of the aforementioned typologies. In addition, there are freelance journalists who own their own news media or publishing businesses or, in other words, they are entrepreneurial (Horowitz, Rosati, 2014). Even though some scholars put entrepreneurship under the same umbrella of freelance work, others highlight some existing differences. For instance, freelancers do not possess as much of independence as entrepreneurs, because the latter have their own platforms to publish their works in. Whereas freelance journalists are dependent on a third party, be it the news media or an editor (Carbasse, 2015: 264). Likewise, the entrepreneurial work might be viewed as a type of freelance work, but should not be used interchangeably. It might pose a threat to excluding discussion of power relations and thresholds freelance journalists have to permeate through in order to produce and publish their texts.

The changes in the definitions of the freelance work might symbolise how the journalism institutions, as well as newsrooms, are dealing with the upcoming challenges. The conditions of labour correlate with the conditions of journalism as a profession and the newsroom as an institution, it becomes commoditised and employed for the profit making (Cohen, 2015a: 100). To some extent, the individual freelancer becomes an asset that is valued and priced (Gandini, 2016: 125, 136; Hearn, 2011). Media and journalism scholars Mark Deuze and Tamara Witschge (2017) summarizes the whole point of freelance journalists’ work in the current labour market in the digital

era: “the atypically employed individual finding his or her permanence in impermanence, forever flexibilized on the outside *as well as* on the inside of news institutions“ (p. 8). As the literature indicates, the typologies of the freelance work define journalists’ relationships with the news media organisation, editors and colleagues. In some studies, the definition ‘freelance’ is used as encompassing everything that this occupation is, however, different typologies shine a light on different everyday experiences. This brings into a discussion another way of understanding freelance work, as the definition of an occupation or work relation status and as a part of the private life. The latter understanding also will guide this study.

## **Additional labour**

The growth of freelance labour, especially during the two past decades, causes precariousness and depreciation of the workforce (Baines, 2002; Conor, Gill, Taylor, 2015: 9). Academics Morgan and Nelligan (2015: 68) adapts the term ‘labile labour’ for emphasising the blurry requirements and a number of different kinds of symbolic and knowledge work the freelancers are expected to do. Freelance journalists usually are collaborating with more than one media organisation. This means constant adaptation to the new value and work systems and, consequently, maintaining positive relationships with editors who do not necessarily respond in the same way (Patrick, Elks, 2015: 62).

Many freelance journalists in various countries do not count as an equal part of the profession (EFJ, 2015). Therefore, they do not have the same professional entitlements as employed journalists. For instance, many freelancers do not have press cards, IDs, or an equal right to protection during trials (EFJ, 2015). Consequently, it is more difficult to get into the workshops and conferences that might require proof of working in a specific news media organisation (Patrick, Elks, 2015: 62). Some studies (Paulussen, 2012: 200; Das, 2007; Solomon, 2016) indicate the apparent unequal division of labour between freelance and full-time journalists, especially during the evenings and holidays. This usually only comes into the light comparing freelance and full-time newsroom journalists’ work practices. Still, the discussions lack a deeper look into the unequal labour conditions and power dynamics between salaried

and freelance journalists in and outside the newsrooms and journalism community.

Freelance journalists are adapting to the market demands and following the existing non-written freelance rules. The latter might be, adapting editorial requirements every time entering a new newsroom, scarcity of assignments, managing ones' budget and creating social media persona as well as trying to be on display and available 24 hours per day. Notwithstanding, they have an agency in negotiating salaries, terms and deadlines (Cohen, 2012: 15). The levels of the agency are tied to the symbolic power of freelance journalists (Bourdieu, 1998: 41). Either, they are seen as successful and professional thus can demand and negotiate, or less successful and acknowledged, thus have to adapt (Storey, et al., 2005: 1038). The conscious decisions and motives are important details for studying the freelance work. For now, the majority of studies, while focusing on a specific aspect, overstep it. Delving into more personal and subjective motives alongside with reasons for those decisions could enrich the discussions of freelance journalism practices and work conditions. This means, looking broader and moving away from focusing on the economic determinism and precariousness as the most influential aspects of the freelance work.

### **Blurring distinctions of private and public**

Due to precarious and temporal conditions that usually are part of the freelance occupation, question freelancers might ask themselves is either how to reach the full-employment or how to freelance and continue doing it. One of the tactics is to create a sense of difference, newness, something that would substitute this inequality, hence brand the 'self' (Gandini, 2016; Hearn, 2011).

The studies of self-enterprising of freelance journalists indicate that establishing your own brand and positioning yourself as a valuable asset to the media organisation to some extent is an act of self-mediating (Cohen, 2015; Kuehn, Corrigan, 2013). In order to catch the attention and acknowledgement of the future clients, the freelancer is constantly on display on social media platforms. This activity can be both the additional form to the 24-hour labour and as a tactic of creating what the sociologist Goffman (1959), would term the 'front self'. "That part of the individual's performance



which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (p. 32), thus, the freelancers portray a specific image for ‘others’. Consequently, the successful freelancers are the ones who adapt to the market appeals and position themselves as employable by creating an online persona. The latter can be a celebrity journalist or a specialist in a particular area. This ‘front self’ helps freelancers to keep working and be printed, be valued and earn more money (Storey, et al., 2005: 1041). However, there are some drawbacks to it. Sociologist Gregg (2011: 99-100) in a thought-provoking way emphasises that creating and maintaining a specific image in online platforms poses a threat of losing the ‘back self’. As a result, the offline, private and personal identity is less and less on display during the everyday routines. This also blurs the distinction between the private and the public self. Hence, understanding the self as an enterprise makes freelancer feel fully responsible for both the failures and the success (Storey, et al., 2005: 1040; 1043). The freelancers, believing that they and their work are the same, experience the rejection from the editors more personally.

Many freelance workers are working from home. Sociologist Baines (2002) calls it home based micro-enterprises. Consequently, the dispersed work environment intersects with other areas of life and the distinction between work and domestic or home spaces blurs (Hochschild, 1997: 14; Taylor, 2015: 117). After studying people working on a freelance basis and those who choose or have to work from home Gregg (2011) assuredly states, that “work has broken out of the office, downstairs to the café into the street, on the train, and later still to the living room, dining room, and bedroom” (p. 1). Especially in the rise of internet technologies and social media platforms, work and home can be connected regardless specific time and/or place (Gregg, 2011: 53). It consequently affects the quality of work and domestic life. Studies indicate that it becomes more difficult for some freelancers to separate or, better put, clearly separate the work and non-work spaces, where one ends and the other starts. The confusion grows, even more, when some freelance workers create work environments at home (Gregg, 2011: 53; Baines, 2002: 98). In addition, sociologist Hochschild (1997: 45) states that the distinction between the time people spend at home and time they spend at work is obscure due to possibilities to work from home or to work longer in the office. She calls it the ‘time bind’. According to Hochschild (1997), the concept illuminates the blurring distinction between work and home social spaces on many levels. For

instance, possibility to work from home transforms the home environment into the office one. As well as, long work hours and additional assignments to some extent render the office space feel like home. This illuminates the blurring distinction between work and home spaces, and the growing peoples' intent to employ public and private spheres for work.

## **Professional and individual crisis**

Regardless the pathway of address the researcher chooses in studying journalism, the traditional journalistic responsibilities, roles and practices usually serve as the starting point for the analysis. After studying journalists' work in the newsrooms, and extensive analysis of the available literature on traditional journalistic practices, Deuze (2007: 163) summarises the homogeneous fundamentals of journalism: public accountability; objectivity<sup>5</sup>; editorial and personal autonomy; immediacy; professional ethics and editorial codes of conduct. According to journalism scholar David H. Weaver (2005: 44), these are the rudiments that are resistant to time, language, history and ethnicity. The aforementioned roles, according to journalists themselves, are the practices that define professional journalistic work and separate real journalists from other kinds of media workers, citizen journalists and pundits (Deuze, 2007: 141; 168; Singer, 2011: 81-2). This also could be viewed as the journalistic doxa, "practical schemes – implicit, tacit, very hard to make explicit, in other words, the universe of the tacit presuppositions that we accept as the natives of a certain society" (Bourdieu, 2005: 37). Journalists accept these traditional roles and practices, which constitute the journalistic doxa, without much of questioning (Bourdieu, 1993: 83; Schultz, 2007: 194); and construct their professional identities accordingly to traditional, and core elements of the profession. Still, current cultural, structural and organisational changes have an impact on shaping the models according to which newsrooms work and journalists understand their professional roles and identities, media scholars Splichal and Dahlgren (2016) shortly call these circumstances the "creative destruction of journalism" (p. 9). It becomes more difficult to define what a professional journalist is, what the journalistic roles in the

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<sup>5</sup> However in some newsroom studies, objectivity "has been dismissed not only as an unattainable standard but also as an undesirable norm" (Boudana, 2011: 385).

contemporary societies are and what kind of relationships there should be with the audiences.

Freelance journalists, as all other journalists, are part of the journalism profession. Sometimes freelancing for a journalist can be a way to secure traditional journalistic ideals in the time of professional crisis (Shudson, 2016; Landerdof, 2012: 96-7). Although, working on a freelance basis sometimes complicates journalists' professional identity. On the one hand, endeavour to be autonomous from any news media institution is a positive and professional act. On the other hand, studies indicate that journalism is a space where contacts, community and 'belonging' are important resources for the successful freelancing and the sustainment of a journalistic identity.

For instance, one of the core traditional responsibilities for journalists is to provide the news without regard to the agenda of any institution or a person (Koch, Obermaier, 2014). This becomes an issue for freelancers who work both part-time in journalism and public relations, some scholars refer to them as 'the moonlighters' (Fröhlich; Koch, Obermaier, 2013). For these freelancers', mostly western studies indicate, that, working in two different employments might result in experiencing inter-role conflicts (Obermaier, Koch, 2015: 618). In addition, the experiences of journalists', who only freelance as journalists, vary. Patrick and Elks (2015) research imply that freelancers who try to follow the traditional journalistic roles such as educating the reader, providing objective and in-depth analysis, consider freelancing as a less favourable form of work (p. 61). Opposing, if freelancers are concerned more about their work being published and getting the 'readership' then the conditions of work are more of a secondary facet (Patrick, Elks, 2015: 61).

According to Bauman (2000), in the late liquid modernity, there are many resources for the people to create desirable professional and individual selves. Especially, when the frames of what constitutes which identities, are fluid and blurring. However, freedom and unclearness also "has a bitter after-taste" (p. 62). The state of unfinished self is vulnerable and causes anxiety and fears. Traditional journalistic roles to some extent are the stable resources for creating and maintaining the journalistic identity. Nonetheless, in the current crisis within the profession, the boundaries between the journalistic and other kinds of media work are blurring. Journalistic practices move away from what once was seen as traditional professional routines (Deuze, Witschge, 2017; Donsbach, 2012). Thus, all the previous journalistic ideals and norms that

served as the guidelines for the journalists' professional identity creation seem now to be critiqued and questioned.

## Theoretical framework

Existentialist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre<sup>6</sup> states that by studying the everyday experiences, it is possible to see “something else *which is there* in everyday objects, not an abstract lining but something enfolded within which hitherto we have been unable to see” (Lefebvre, 1991: 134). A phenomenological approach to journalists' everyday life is an unconventional type of research in the newsroom studies. Some extensive ethnographic studies bring interesting points into the discussion about journalistic practices, values and editorial ecosystem. For instance, the famous, critical analyses of journalists work in the newsrooms by Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979) or Deuze (2007). However, the latter often lack a broader look at what happens when the newsroom doors are closed. Studying only one aspect of the everyday life of journalists – working in a newsroom – renders the experiences as too homogenous and excludes other critical elements that go beyond conventional considerations.

Theories that lend themselves to phenomenology are concerned with how people make sense of the environment they live in. The philosopher and social phenomenologist Schutz (1974) concept of the life-world helps to unpack how freelance journalists use and make sense of the ordinary routines, objects, details, hence everything that shape the hues of the everyday life, which might otherwise seem banal or trivial. By applying the life-world concept, it becomes

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<sup>6</sup> Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) was a French, Neo-Marxist existentialist philosopher and sociologist. He was immensely critical of Stalinism, structuralism and Marxist materialism (Hubbard, Kitchin, 2011). One of his most influential works is the “Critique of everyday life” (1991), there he illuminates the dialectic essence of the everyday life, where a person is both in control and not in control of the *happenings* in his life. An influential contribution to the phenomenology of space is his book “The Production of Space” (1991a). It introduces a notion of a space “as socially produced” (1991a: 26.), hence not static, constantly shifting. His studies help to unpack the parts of the everyday life that also shape the nature of the social space. Consequently, social space to some extent influences the human experiences of the everyday and vice versa.

possible to try to investigate the freelance journalists' everyday experiences in a more holistic manner.

## The life-world

Schutz<sup>7</sup> (1974: 3) defines the life-world as:

[...] the region of reality in which man can engage himself and which he can change while he operates in it by mean of his animate organism. At the same time, the objectivities and events, which are already found in this realm, limit his free possibilities of action.

The nature of the life-world is ambivalent. For instance, it can be open and close or separating and combining. It comes in the light through engaging with the 'provinces'. The latter are encompassing direct and indirect experiences or dreams, fears and the plans for the future. According to Schutz (1974: 18-19), there are two social realities within the life-world: one that is already experienced and another that is yet to be experienced. The already experienced social reality influences the way the upcoming social realities are or will be, understood and lived through. They might be viewed as the two main pillars that inform each other and shape individuals' understanding of the life-world. Schutz (1974: 68) also emphasises that the life-world is "the world of our common experience". Everyone makes sense of the life-world continuously through the actions and interactions. Additionally, the 'fellow-men', contemporaries, successors and predecessors reciprocally influence each other's everyday experiences. Thus, people interact with the life-world both personally and by seeing how others act in it, what they can learn from the predecessors and leave for the successors.

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<sup>7</sup> Alfred Schutz (1889-1959) was an Austrian philosopher and social phenomenologist. His key works are "Phenomenology of the Social World" (1967) and "The Structures of the Life-World" (1974). The latter was published posthumously. In this study, I use the book where Schutz texts are co-authored with Thomas Luckmann. The theory of the life world usually is referred to as "the phenomenology of a natural attitude" (Barber, 2004), it unpacks the complexities of the everyday life, taking into account things that might seem banal, trivial or taken for granted. It is a holistic theory to the complex and multilayer *happenings* that we call life.

Likewise, the 'stocks of knowledge' shape the direct and indirect experiences in the life-world. In short, knowledge is stacked through mistakes and lessons, but also through learning from already existing knowledge, such as culture, habituated social roles, myths and so on (Schutz, 1974: 66-68; Berger, Luckman, 1967: 183). Two interactions are very important in shaping the 'stocks of knowledge' and hence experiencing the life-world. These are with the 'fellow-men' and an 'other'. With the fellow men, experiences are unitary and the 'stock of knowledge' is ensured and sustained. However, in a relation with the 'other', the 'stock of knowledge' might be challenged and changed (Schutz, 1974: 66). Similarly, sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934) writes about the importance of the 'other' in the process of forming and understanding the 'self'. For both scholars, the 'other' is a necessary element that influences the individuals understanding of oneself, the social environment as well as the experiences. The 'other' is not necessarily a close member of the same community, it is everyone with whom the person shares his 'self' and whose approval he wants and seeks, Mead (1934: 158) calls it the 'generalised other'. The latter can be felt directly during the communication process with acquaintances, or it can be felt indirectly through a person's belief of what the 'other' is thinking and seeing of him (Mead, 1934: 156-9). Consequently, in the relation with the 'other', a person learns what kind of roles and traits society appreciates and accepts.

The life-world concept renders the everyday actions holistically, taking into account direct and indirect experiences of the everyday life; additionally, influences other people with whom the life-world is shared. It also acknowledges the dreams, plans for the future or nightmares, as indicators of important facets of the life-world.

## **Space metaphors**

For holistically thinking about the scope of everything of what and where the life-world can be, spatial metaphors help. Applying metaphors and emphasising specific elements within the space enables one to observe the processes contributing to the direct and indirect experiences of the life-world. It is rather difficult to study and portray on the paper everything that space is or can be (Lefebvre, 1991 a, p. 110). Applying metaphors and emphasising

specific elements within the space enables one to observe the processes contributing to the direct and indirect experiences of the life-world.

In this study, I rely on Lefebvre's (1991a) notion of socially produced space. It is "made up" through a three-way dialectic between perceived, conceived and lived space" (Hubbard, Kitchin, 2011: 6). The social space is not static; it is 'hypercomplex', encompassing geographical, social, physical as well as metaphysical, private and public entities (Lefebvre, 1991a: 33; 88-9). Thus, it is shifting product of society and individuals. Lefebvre's notion of space lends itself to this study because it helps to understand how freelance journalists create the journalism space and at the same time experience it through interacting with it. That is why journalism profession is referred to as journalism space and here it is in line with Lefebvre's (1991a) notion of socially produced space.

French philosopher Bachelard approaches phenomenology creatively. His works are open to methodological variations (Vydra, 2014, p. 46), for instance, in his influential book "Poetics of space" (1964) he reckons the house as a 'psychic state' (p. 72) from where all the other parts of 'being' come into the light. By studying poems, dreams and using the psychoanalysis of the imagination, Bachelard (1964) makes a study of experiencing the 'being' (p. 213). Applying metaphors of the house and everything that can be found within it, for instance, the nook, cellar, attic or drawers, he dissects feelings of 'being' for the reader without exposing, diminishing or doing a disservice to it. I am very much inspired by Bachelard's way to phenomenology. As the reader will later on see, his metaphors in many ways influenced not only the analysis but also the outline of the thesis, paying attention to certain spaces, imagining journalism as a space of a construction site.

## **Lithuanian context**

The Lithuanian national context is important for the analysis because it shapes the freelance journalists' experiences of work and the journalism space. Lithuania is independent for 26 years now hence media freedom is young. Even though it is difficult to dissect the country-dependent journalistic practices, studies indicate that journalistic values and ethical codes of conduct are similar to those that constitute a hegemonic journalistic tradition around the world (Balčytienė, 2006, pp. 169-70). However, the latter is still altered

by historical and cultural circumstances (Zelizer, 2008), especially the fifty years period of the communist regime.

One of the goals of the communist regime was to undermine national identity by rendering all the people as equal members of the Soviet nation. Media, which was the part of state apparatus, transmitted the depiction of a 'normal' everyday life in Soviet Lithuania (Putinaitė, 2008, pp. 265; 274). This directly influenced the appropriated professional roles and practices (Metykova, Cisarova, 2009, p. 733). After the Soviet Union collapsed, the journalism profession shifted from being part of the state apparatus to being free and liberal. Firstly, the responsibilities of cultivating and sustaining the national identity were prioritised (Balčytienė, 2012, pp. 57; 61). Correspondingly, journalists also had to re-adapt to being independent and acquire the roles and responsibilities journalists should possess in a democratic society (Balčytienė, 2006; 2012). Gaps in knowledge, weak journalistic tradition conditioned the acquisition of Western journalistic standard practices and values (Balaban, Meyan, 2012, p. 88; Balčytienė, 2012). The latter action also contributed to the homogenous and entertainment focused content in the majority of the news media. Overall, the environment that hindered free speech and the possibility to be an opposition to the government resulted in the weak professionalism of journalists and a weak publics' knowledge of journalists' work.

Currently, as in many European countries, digitalization of the newsrooms, growing commercialization, implementation of business model shape journalism in Lithuania today. Still, there is a lack of empirical studies of how the journalism practices and profession look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It needs to be observed and knowledge about it updated.

## Methodological framework

### **The methods**

#### *Qualitative interviews*

Freelance journalists' accounts in the academic discourse are scarce. The qualitative interview method is applicable as the best way to capture their



stories (Jensen, Jankowski, 2002: 6). In this study, taking into account what was presented during the interview as true claims of events experienced by the interviewees, it is held that both the respondents and I are delivering the knowledge, through the dialogue (Edwards, Holland, 2013: 17).

I collected the data during January and February of 2017. I used my personal contacts, participated in the specific freelance forums and used the snowballing technique to find the interviewees. I interviewed people who are part and full-time freelance journalists; this enriched the data with more various experiences and diverse details. With doing face-to-face interviews, I had the possibility to talk and pay attention to all the utterances, pauses and body language. They are the indicators of *something* that might be important and come to the light during the analysis process (Briggs, 1986: 46). I paid a lot of attention to the environment too, some interviewees invited me to their homes and rooms. I stopped with 12 interviews when I felt that information became repetitive and no new topics or themes emerged.

### *Field diary - being with*

Fieldwork in this thesis is understood more of as an activity of being together or, as professors in ethnology and cultural studies Frykman and Gilje (2003) name, 'being there' with the interviewees in a certain period of their day and life. Therefore, one should view the fieldwork as a complementary data, nothing less and nothing more. It cannot fall into the frames of a rich anthropological observation, as there was not enough of time to collect enough of material. Nevertheless, it helped me to see and understand things, which otherwise would have been invisible to me. The field diary notes will be interwoven in the analysis text. Excerpts from the field diary are used for inviting the reader into the different analysis parts.

During the fieldwork, "attempting to situate oneself in the place the interviewees occupy in the social space" (Bourdieu, 1999: 613) I strived to be surrounded and affected by the same sounds and smells because these facets are parts of their life-world too. In addition, I have spent three days with two participants separately. One of them, Elliot, has also kindly agreed to keep a diary documenting his everyday activities for two weeks (February 16-30). We also agreed that he is in control of the diary and what he wants to tell me about his day (Plummer, 2001: 51-2). All the interviewees were also asked to send pictures of the places they usually work, to have a glimpse of where the freelance work is taking place: on a train, at home or bed. I have received nine

photos of the 'workplaces' and I got permission from the interviewees to use some photos in the thesis.

## **Anonymity and ethical issues**

All the interviews were conducted with interviewees consent. With signing the informed consent forms, interviewees know about the research focus and the possible forms and usage of the material. Their full anonymity is ensured, I changed their names the moment the data collection started. The recordings are kept in a safe environment, some were translated in their entirety, others were kept in the original language and only the used quotes are translated.

## **Reflexivity**

The interviews were emotional and I was not hiding my emotional reactions to the interviewees' stories. Their open, honest answers and willingness to share astounded me. I am reflexive and aware of limits of my possibilities to read and interpret respondents lived experiences (Finlay, 2014: 324) and that the produced knowledge is from my perspective and framed within my academic capacities. I tried to be as authentic as possible while translating the quotes. I was concerned about reducing or exposing too much of a person, misinterpreting or doing injustice to their expressed feelings. Josselson (1996) who is analysing the ethical issues of exploring the narratives of human lives, writes, that it is an unavoidable "violation of an individual's life" (p. 62). This feeling was my companion during the whole writing process.

## **Thematic content analysis**

I chose to follow the framework of the thematic analysis. This framework enables moving beyond the descriptions and digging deeper in the meanings expressed about freelance journalism in Lithuania by the respondents (Seale, 2012: 367). The process consists of three phases.

During the first phase, I started with open coding. Firstly, all the interviews were transcribed in detail, not leaving out anything that might have seemed as transgressed from the research questions or the overall topic (Schreier,

2013: 178). In order not to force pre-existing categories onto the data, the actual words or metaphors that the interviewees used were adopted as codes that resulted in line-by-line notes (Seale, 2012: 372). In the second phase, moving from the descriptive to analytic look, I merged codes into the categories (Ritchie, 2014: 271). With more reading, each category submerged into three key themes covering certain topics. Consequently, information was digitalized and put into the table charts for comparing the interviewees' examples and seeing differences and/or similarities (Seale, 2012: 383). The third phase started with the analysis and the interpretation of the material. Themes are approached analytically aiming to look deeper into the meanings of the interviews.

In this work, inspired by Bachelard (1964), I treat the newsroom as a building that stands in the land that I have described in the introduction. 'Freelance' is the additional room that is not yet built. I will continue to use spatial concepts throughout the analysis, hopefully in a creative way.

## Analysis part I

### **Journalism as a construction site**

I write my field diary and it is 6 p.m. already; Matt sends a message saying he will be 30 minutes late. At least I have more time to observe the meeting place. The café is in the old part of Vilnius. Therefore, the interior plays the game of blending old and new. Half of the café looks like many other modern places might. Big, round, brass lamps illuminate minimalistic black tables with slim chairs, pictures capturing people drinking and enjoying coffee hang on the dark walls. I sit in the other part separated with naked walls, which are part of the history of this city, the capital of Lithuania. Now it is part of the interior, part of the everyday life. I cannot escape writing about the time because it seems to be an important part of my and Matt's conversation; time for being a freelance journalist and time for living in Lithuania. Is it the right time?

Later, at the last moment, before I stop recording our interview, Matt says:

Maybe I was too critical about freelancing, but I wanted to tell it the way it is because everything here is so... desperate. You cannot do anything about it. There is some cultural gap, it seems that you can create something, but there is.... Wild West here.

In the following chapter, the metaphor of a construction site symbolises what kind of problems interviewees see in current newsrooms and the journalism profession in Lithuania. There are piles of bricks, cement and scaffolding for changing and improving the journalism space. In the long run, these are the materials from which freelancers could build an additional room – the freelance room, a place only for them, where they could come, dream and create quality journalism (Bachelard, 1964: 226). Nothing is put together yet and everything can be easily changed and re-shaped.

### **The problems that need fixing**

The interviewees are in the dialectic of the inside and outside the newsrooms and the journalism space (Bachelard, 1964: 212). To some extent, it is a privileged position, because only by being outside “the being tests consistencies” (Bachelard, 1964: 215). Thus, the interviewees acquire the possibility to step away from the newsroom frames and walls that would limit their sight and see a broader view of the problems and cracks of the site. Alice thinks that newsroom journalists sometimes forget what the essence of journalism is. For her, the latter consists of respecting the sources, treating the material with high sensitivity, empathy and ethical standards. Likewise, going abroad, traveling and reporting from the spot. According to her, in Lithuania, “there is too much orientation towards money, clicks, lesser to quality”. For Kristen, the journalism profession seems to be forgetting that journalists are people too, with their own preferences, feelings and attitudes: “Newsroom work... you will most definitely have to step over your values, especially if you work in the news. No one cares what you are thinking”.

The media management in Denmark, where Scarlet was studying multimedia journalism, fascinates her. Compared with Denmark Scarlet thinks that journalism in Lithuania has merged too much with business:

I know that they [news media] try to separate it [advertisements] from the content as much as it is possible. However, for the ordinary audience, everything seems the same. Then the news media website looks like I don't know... a porn site.

On the one hand, the interviewees' accounts are more objective and critical because of the position they hold. On the other hand, their individual stocks of knowledge, dreams and experiences (Schutz, 1974: 66) influence their understanding of professional journalism. For instance, Kristofer expresses helplessness because he thinks that the journalism he dreamed of creating is no longer part of the current journalism profession:

It [journalism] transforms into speed and quick gossiping. Journalism becomes unnecessary. And you don't need an active freelancer, you just need a person who would collect all the information from the news agencies. Just provide clicks. Primitive.

Many professional challenges or problems that interviewees indicate are similar to those found in many newsroom studies: changing relationship with the audiences, click baiting, and increased market orientation (see the discussion on p. 14). As Deuze (2007; 2008) has already noticed in his studies, journalists articulate professional challenges likening it to their understanding of core journalistic roles and responsibilities. The respondents are concerned that traditional journalistic practices such as fairness, ethical conduct, autonomy are as Kristofer expresses "like a diminishing heartbeat" in the current Lithuanian newsrooms. These all are the cracks in journalism space that interviewees try to shore up with their independent contributions.

## **National journalism challenges**

Bachelard (1964: 29) has beautifully referred to a city as an ocean changing the course of the boat with storms or dead stillness. Similarly, Lithuania is a land on which the freelancers and other journalists build and fix the journalism space. Sometimes the land is trembling, sometimes the holes, that were lazily fixed, reopen. Overall, the land is the foundation on which the life-world is being created and reciprocally experienced; for instance, learning the possibilities and limitations of the actions, gaining knowledge and creating

the 'self' and the journalistic 'self' (Schutz, 1974; Berger, Luckman, 1967). Lithuanian journalism practices are similar to Western practices, because majority of ethical standards and professional values were adapted from the Western model (Balčytienė, 2012). Notwithstanding, many respondents felt that Lithuanian journalism practices are far from the latter. For the interviewees, the professional journalism is related to broad variety of themes that a journalist could cover. Likewise, stronger tradition of investigative journalism, better inclusion of multimedia storytelling into the news media as well as demand from the audiences for better quality of journalistic work. Matt was both worried and sad when after returning from the Berlinale film festival he knew that movies he could have written about for Lithuanian audiences had to be popular and commercial like for instance, 'T-2. Trainspotting'. He understands that the editors, not the audience, set this condition: "There is clearly cultural vacuum in Lithuania and journalism does not work with that. I think that many people sit and wait for something to happen".

During the talks, some national aspects of problems in the journalism profession emerged. When some of the interviewees were talking they distinguished between general problems in the journalism profession and "in our" (origin. *pas mus*) or 'we', referring specifically to problems in the Lithuanian journalism space. For example, Alice states that she misses storytelling techniques that, according to her, are already part of new journalistic practices in Western countries, for instance, multimedia storytelling: "in our (origin. *pas mus*) we still lack new journalism, multimedia journalism".

Luke and Elliot are dissatisfied that in many newsrooms, journalists maintain just certain roles: either a photographer or a writer, not both or more. According to Luke, this is the reason why in Lithuania there still is no culture of analytical and in-depth journalism (origin. *letoji žurnalistika*). Taunting and exalted unprofessional pundits according to the interviewees are prominent problems in the national journalism space. According to Alice, it is being celebrated and fostered rather than opposed in the society. Many interviewees are concerned about the lack of media literacy in the society and loss of empathy from journalists to the people. Likewise, that there is no institution that would effectively monitor journalists' actions and professional conduct. Such institution, according to Luke, would strengthen the professionalism and the possibilities for journalists to freelance: "As one of

the results, the newsrooms don't send journalists to other countries to do reports, because they can easily steal content from foreign news media".

According to some interviewees, the new media technologies are not being used in its full capacities, in the Lithuanian newsrooms. As a result, different styles and storytelling techniques are lacking in the journalism space, this is a critical problem, according to the respondents. They notice the absence of gonzo journalism, multimedia storytelling or content, written in a literature narrative style. The latter Kristen tries to promote with writing her own articles in this style. It seems that interviewees, who have collaborated with foreign media or just were familiar with newsroom practices and rules in other countries (for example Luke, Matt, Alice have collaborated with foreign news media), are aware that what had been possible in the journalism spaces in other countries is not possible in Lithuania (Schutz, 1974: 95). Correspondingly, the more cracks they see in the journalism space and newsrooms as well as in the country.

Scholars who study the everyday life in the post-Soviet countries document the anger and blame the young generation puts onto this specific historical period, and consequently, explain a lot of ills of the society as the remnants of communist regime (Tuzaitė, 2016; Putnaitė, 2008). It is the same for the interviewees: memories and preconceptions about the Soviet history echo in their intimate home places, in the newsroom and journalism spaces. For some interviewees this seems to cause problems in the journalism space. Luke thinks it is problematic that some editors are the ones who worked in the Soviet regime era and still are shaping the journalism space today: "It feels that journalism would have remained "Soviet" if not the investments from Scandinavia, thank God for that". Frank says that the relatively unstable situation of cultural journalism in the country is due to the resistance of editors to become more up-to-date: "This melancholic nostalgia to Soviet times that they are expressing is not in line with my views".

Notwithstanding, the Soviet occupation should not be articulated as the only causality of existing problems in journalism (Mierin, Cers, 2014: 1054). A deeper look into Lithuanian society and other social spheres would broaden the understanding of journalism and country. Regardless of all the existing problems, interviewees view the future positively. Some put high hopes for their own generation: young, educated, travelling, learning, and thus able to

implement changes in Lithuania. Subsequently, Scarlet puts a lot of belief and responsibility on herself:

Overall, it is quite incredible to be in Lithuania, because the country is so young and journalism is still immature. We can do something about it. Make some actual influence and change it, for real! Of course, if we will continue working and doing what we are doing now.

This expression also highlights an interesting paradox. During the interviews, many respondents expressed a lot of critique to Lithuanian journalism practices, majority of which seemed to be relicts of communist regime. However, for some interviewees, as for instance, Scarlet, the fact that Lithuania was young as an independent country was a stimulus to believe that she, a young freelance journalist and others like her, have the capacity to make a change. The paradox lies in the notion of Lithuania as both the causality of some problems within the profession and as a somewhat clean slate to start reconstructing the essence of Lithuanian journalism.

### **The newsroom as a symbol of the crisis in journalism and in the nation**

In many interviews, the way the respondents talked about the newsroom it transformed from only a physical place into a symbol of a place where all the problems that interviewees flag manifest and are further sustained. Despite positive changes such as the application of the investigative journalism or growing usage of multimedia projects, interviewees still see stagnation and inactivity in the newsrooms and hence journalism space. In addition, lack of resources that are necessary for them and their journalism.

Usually, the interviewees describe themselves as journalists in comparison to journalists working in the newsrooms. The distinction of “I as a freelance journalist” and “they, working in the newsrooms” becomes more apparent when the respondents articulate that the newsroom is not the suitable stage for the roles they strive to perform. For example, Luke thinks that real journalists should not acquire those roles:



A lot of photographers, who work in the newsrooms, they are like craftsmen: they do assignments, deliver them to the editor and that's it. However, photojournalism is not about that. It is about risks, acumen, curiosity, empathy, respect.

This distinction needs emphasising because interviewees themselves try to explicate, that they are doing journalistic work that is slightly different in the writing style, themes and treatment of the sources. All of it seems possible outside the newsroom, because as Kristen says, "those who sit comfortably in the newsrooms don't have to do that, they don't care about it". Thus, employed newsroom journalists, according to the interviewees, lose the edge and critical view from 'the outside' while comfortably being in the safe, four-walled newsroom place. Opposingly, lack of a comfortable place in or outside the newsroom makes some of the interviewees feel lonely and in need of a community of the 'fellow-men' who would share similar views about journalism.

I would like to suggest that even though interviewees have not explicitly said it directly, from their used metaphors and examples, the newsroom emerges as a symbol of the problems within, not only journalism space, but also within the nation. Interviewees are not referring to any specific newsroom or any specific editor. Zelizer (2017: 11) writes, "warning, labelling, evaluating and critiquing journalism and journalistic practice reflect populations and their individuals [...] and the relevant historical time periods and geographical settings". In addition, taking into account that the values that interviewees see as accepted in the newsrooms mirror the values accepted in the society (Deuze, 2008; Dahlgren, 1996: 63), it could be that by speaking about the newsroom or journalism interviewees are also speaking about the nation. Some respondents, as for instance Luke, directly assert that the state of journalism in Lithuania is very influential in impeding the development both of the profession and of society. Elliot also sometimes refers to the Lithuania as one of the causalities of problems within the profession: "For me, empathetic relationships with people are very important. That's why I create specific journalistic content, but this kind of journalism is not valued in Lithuania".

In other instances if the word "newsroom" or "journalism" would be changed to Lithuania or if the reader would think of the national context and societal values instead of a certain place, it would not make much difference in the meaning. For example, Scarlet says:

I knew that there is like an unwritten rule that all photographers have to take photos of those people who are dressed differently or not 'high-fashion' so that the next day, people could open their computers and mock those people.

Kristofer's comparison also says much more about the quality of work that Lithuanian public expects from the journalists. It could also be seen as an indicator of work conditions, not necessarily only in the journalism space:

In the current newsroom you feel like the conditions untie your hands and let you do everything that you want, but what is not related to journalism, they don't care how you will write and what kind of quality content you provide, pensioners will read it anyways.

Lithuania as a land for the interviewees might feel as paradoxical, it provides interviewees with many possibilities create the kind of journalism they want, but at the same time, current media platforms and the slow adaptation of new journalistic practices and skills limit those possibilities. For many interviewees the current practices in newsrooms are not acceptable therefore, they chose to be freelance journalists. In addition, what interviewees say about the newsroom journalists illuminates what kind of professional identities interviewees think are acquired in the newsroom, and what kind of values are fostered there (Frosh, 1991: 188). According to the respondents, there is a lack of both novelties and appreciation of core traditional journalistic roles and responsibilities. Despite a lot of critique to current trends in the profession, respondents are more optimistic about their own post-Soviet generation and their power. However, like building an actual additional room, it requires time, investment and a very strong belief that it is worth creating. The question remains, to what extent young people in Lithuania have the symbolic and actual power to implement changes within the profession.

## Analysis part II

### **The home**

The home is a primary and the most intimate place of a human soul: It “is our corner of the world. [...] it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the world” (Bachelard, 1964: 4). This chapter focuses on understanding the implications to the freelance journalists’ experiences of working from home or public spaces. In addition, it indicates the various ramifications that influence the life-world, such as not having traditional employment status that also provides with a certain title in the society.

The apartments I have visited are described in more detail in my field diary; I use shortened descriptions for a better understanding to the reader of how the home offices look, and from what kind of spaces and places ‘freelance’ experience is created. Other ‘offices’ are presented in the pictures.

#### *Stella in her yellow room*

During the interview, Stella ensures that she is satisfied with working from home: “I am one of those people who can easily work from home, I don’t have this anxiety or whatever. I can sit in my room for days and it doesn’t affect me”. She lives in a former student house in a small room. All the parts, that are usually separate with walls: kitchen, living room, bedroom in Stella’s apartment are pretty much in the same space. Only the bathroom has brown doors. Everything else had been seemingly thrown together, only Stella knows the clear lines that separate the bedroom from the living room or kitchen from the workspace. Her table stands in front of the window, from which you see another big, grey nine-storey building. There are a lot of candles, small cactuses and frog figurines on her windowsill.

On the left side of the room, there is a bed, covered with a fluffy green blanket, very soft and warm. Her room is yellow, with small flower prints randomly spread across the walls. A big, brown poster with words in white capital letters “WHO DOESN’T GIVE UP TAKES THE WORLD” is hanging next to her worktable. The personal nature of the poster and candles act as an antibody for the room, fighting off any attempts to completely transform the home environment to an office one. However, usually, she works from here.

She sits at the table on the big black leather chair. It is her father's gift and maybe the only thing, which resembles a traditional work place. She makes herself comfortable in the chair that feels oversized in comparison to the cramped and confined room. Just the tip of her head stands above the large chair once she is seated. She opens her laptop and starts where she left off before we met for the interview. I wonder, maybe this act makes the apartment into the office.

*Elliot's private room in a family apartment*

Elliot is living with his family in the same room he did his homework and wrote his bachelor thesis. The apartment is situated in an old, brick building. When he opens the door to his room there is a noticeable difference to that of parents: less furnished more aesthetic. The walls are bright yellow with green patterns, parts of it glitter when the sunshine penetrates through the window. In the middle of the room, there is a worktable with a big computer screen (27 cols). This is one of the reasons, why he does not go and work in cafés or other public places.



The shelf that stands on the worktable is stacked with books about film history and writers he appreciates. Here he keeps everything that is important and inspires him and his work. The bottom section, filled with piles of old magazines, of which half have been read and half saved for when there will be 'more free time'. The bed stands right behind the table. It is very close, not

even 2 meters between these two work and leisure spaces. He admits that it is very problematic, you feel the presence of the bed “breathing to your back”.

He says that sometimes he does not leave this place for five days straight. Naturally, my question is corresponding – How did you maintain your sanity? “I was on the verge to lose it, - he laughs. I felt like in a movie, like in ‘Inception’ if you have seen that one. It feels like everyone is looking at you, you are an alien in their world”, - he answers. The window, which is on the left of the table, is one of the ways to escape these four walls. You need to stand in order to see some life outside. The panorama of the whole city opens up. This is so relaxing and creates a feeling of a different universe within this room and within the world

People work from home for various reasons and it is not necessarily a choice, sometimes it is necessary (Baines, 2002: 98). For example, Mimi does not like to work in her room. She prefers working in a library or a café. However, she lives further away from the city and commuting is too expensive. She has to learn to work in her room. In addition, not all the interviewees work from home all the time. Some try to change the places of work by working in the libraries, cafes or other public places. Isabella tries to work in different places within her home: in the studio, in the kitchen or in the living room. Transitioning makes it easier for her to feel flexible and dynamic. Alice sends the pictures from her current workplace – an apartment in Argentina. The place and the scenery would change the minute she decides where to go next.

## **The destruction of a home feeling**

Work, leisure and private life make up a dialectical system, Lefebvre (1991: 40) wrote in 1958. Now, it is rather difficult to dissect the clear distinctions between leisure and work or private and public. According to Gregg (2011: 169), the new media technologies enable people to pretty much work anywhere: cafes, libraries or at home bedrooms and this possibility makes the professional ‘presence bleed’ into personal lives of the workers. When the spheres of the private and public merge, sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint where the home, the intimate space starts and ends. Home, for a long time, was seen as a private place “in which the worker is able to be whole or complete, retaining some authenticity of self” (Taylor, 2015: 182). However, due to current technologies people are enabled to work from wherever they

want. Even though, working from home is not the most favourable act for some people, but sometimes it becomes the only way pursuing and controlling your own career. For the respondents home environment stretched into the office one because actual newsrooms in some way could not satisfy the requirements the interviewees have for their kind of journalism (Gregg, 2011, p. 53). Hence, when the home, as Baines (2002) indicates, becomes some sort of an office, the dichotomy of private and the public subverts in a sense, that now to escape work-related thoughts and to withdraw some interviewees go to public places. Kristen, when it becomes too difficult to work at home goes to work in a café, and then after a while working back home becomes ‘normal’ again. Opposing, Matt, for instance, finds it difficult to take a pause from thinking about work, when home or any public place reminds him of it. On a more general level, all the interviewees can work during any time of the day; they need just a good internet connection for searching stories or displaying already published works on social media, hence maintaining the online image and accessibility for the editors and audiences.

In addition, for some interviewees spending time for leisure or other activities induces feelings of guilt. Isabella, when she was working only from home<sup>8</sup>, really tried to fight feeling like ‘home’ during the ‘work hours’:

I have to work even though I do not have assignments. I still have to wake up and do something, so that the time would be productive. [...] but I tried as much as it was possible, maybe in frames of time, to sustain this work discipline.

Elliot too finds it difficult to work from home. Every additional activity that he does for himself, for example watching TV or reading a book feels like guilty activities because he should work. If he lays on his bed he sees the computer screen which reminds him of work, when he works it takes just one turn to see the bed which is inviting to rest. For him, work space is “uncomfortably fit into the physical and emotional space of the home” (Baines, 2002: 98) and challenges his professional credibility. Working from home impedes Elliot’s flexibility and ability to compete with other journalists, who can manage their time better and who are working in studios or

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<sup>8</sup> Currently Isabella is working from both home and newsroom where she works as freelance journalists.

newsrooms. He still tries to come up with a better way than working from home.

One of the reasons of dissatisfaction with one's productivity is that by working at home and on the freelance basis the interviewees lose the possibility of rewards such as raise in the salary or other additional benefits, promotion, praise of the colleagues. The latter are very important for a working person (Ertel, et al., 2005). Some interviewees create their own reward systems, for instance, working twice as much for taking one week off for holidays. For others, a reward is also a possibility to have a 'home' day at home. Elliot's diary shows that only when the task was submitted the time spent at home was awarded as a "day for procrastination", meaning that during this day the 'home-office' becomes 'home'.

For those interviewees who had secondary employments, part-time freelancers, working from home was not as problematic. For instance, Frank has his workspace in the library, thus is able to better separate work and home places. He tries to write articles after his work hours as the librarian, but if an idea comes, he cannot resist it. The majority of journalistic work he does at home or other public spaces during weekends or after work hours. Thus, for part-time freelancers who have other jobs, journalistic work take up the place of the time that could be spent for the leisure. Many interviewees could not clearly distinguish what could now constitute the private and intimate space, where they could withdraw and 'recharge'. Overall, for all the interviewees all the spaces could serve as work spaces and all time could be time for work.

### **Never ending time for work**

One of the most prominent problems of working from home for the interviewees is to make distinctions between work and non-work time. Similarly, Gregg (2011: 54) writes, "time becomes a resource easily wasted, as home space is assessed in terms of efficiency regimes and scheduling potential". Hence, the home environment is turned into the office one through not only working from home, but also altering the time being home into the conventional office time. However, the office hours, as Gregg (2011: 54) notices, seems too short, not enough to secure ones position as a good freelancer amongst many other freelance workers.

The interviewees' homes serve as offices and many of them try to maintain the institutional work time. For Luke it is one of the ways to manage his efficiency and avoid feeling tired and unsatisfied: "I try to work according to office hours, those eight hours are for a reason". Keeping with 8-hour workdays is a tactic that many interviewees use. However, for some, keeping up with it is difficult. The excerpts from Elliot's diary show how his work hours are fluctuating and obscure:

Monday: I came back tired as hell, but my colleague sent me a documentary related to a topic I am working on. So, to "end myself" I watched it.

Going to sleep 2.30 am.

Tuesday: 6.50 a.m. wake up. This is more than painful. I go to meet my colleagues to talk about new projects.

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Friday: Sleep 6 in the morning.

Saturday: 10 a.m. I receive a call from a colleague, I am still "offline" because of exhaustion. In these moments I feel like a rock star lucid from drugs, it is interesting for how long I can go on like this. At 12 p.m. I am already in the office, working...

Sleep 2 a.m.

Sunday: waking up at 11 a.m. there is still so much work waiting.

Sleep 1 a.m.

Monday: I am so excited it is almost the end. Everything is almost finished; today will be easy, the day of procrastination and calmness, and my personal small victory ☺

It seems that the only time to stop working is the time for sleep, and even this activity is sometimes postponed in order to prepare for tomorrow's tasks or answer someone's e-mails and messages on the social media. Scholars, who analyse freelance work conditions, notice that maintaining the online images



and social networks are work routines that extend beyond conventional work hours (Gollmitzer, 2016; Cohen, 2015a). However, the stimuli to prolong work hours vary. For some interviewees it might be the money, for others, getting attention and securing future clients. It might also relate to the fact that “people generally have the urge to spend more time on what they value most and on what they are most valued for” (Hochschild, 1997: 198). Likewise, journalistic work for the respondents is their passion, source of income and part of their lifestyle. Additionally, Hochschild (1997) and Gregg (2011) notice, working from home changes the way a person not only feels, but also views one’s work quality. Thus, when working from home Isabella feels unproductive, not working enough, especially, because there is no end result, such as closing the office doors which would mean that the time has come - ‘it is enough for today’:

But the work was like... like imitating work, because you have no real assignments; the “working day” ends around 6 p.m. but you feel like you haven’t done anything productive so you stay in that room, sit until 9 p.m., because you feel that you have to compensate that empty time.

All the interviewees who are working from home try to compensate ‘that empty time’ with more work, prolonging it into the late evenings. For instance, Matt would sometimes work until 5 a.m., and wake up around noon, which makes him feel guilty: “you think oh fuck, half of the day went for nothing. For now, I haven’t yet found this work and life balance”. This prompts him to work longer again, to compensate and substitute for the time lost while sleeping. Lefebvre (1991) sees working as a “vicious circle” (p. 40), an activity that is done in order to ‘earn’ the leisure. However, the freelance occupation subverts that dichotomy. In some sense, the interviewees are working in order to get more work. They could not reach the state of thinking that it is already time for leisure. You cannot switch the light off in your office and think that you will do it tomorrow. Respondents try to compensate the time lost by working during the night and this becomes the vicious circle of the freelance work.

## Problems with ‘others’ while freelancing

The interviewees, freelancing and working from home or another unconventional work space, were susceptible to disbelief and questioning from ‘other’ people. It heightens the struggle to form and perform the identity of an employed person. When, during the interview, Kristen tries to mimic a smile she gets when she says that she is a freelance journalist, I shrug. Imagine the smile a child gets when her face is dark from melted chocolate and she says that she has not touched it. As if, you were caught lying. Admit you do not work. Kristen further elaborates: “I always have this attitude towards me that I always have time, I can always adjust to others, who really work”.

Scarlet’s family members still think that freelancing for her is more of an “after school activity”. These circumstances arise from the lack of information and a dialogue about the freelance work in the society. According to Luke, full-employment is still seen as favourable: “the only and the right way there are no other options”; and thus providing the title, especially in the eyes of the older generation.

Many of the perceived assessments from the ‘others’ come from the interviewees’ preconceptions and fears based on their own knowledge and previous experiences, hence ‘stock of knowledge’ (Schutz, 1974: 66; 256). Elliot says, “we sometimes joke that if earlier we could call people unemployed, now we call them freelancers because it sounds better”. He treats the preconceptions, fostered by the weak social cues of freelance work, as a joke. Simultaneously, this is how he thinks the majority of Lithuanians see him. The interviewees are very conscious about the existence of the ‘others’ and preconceptions about the freelance type of work’. Isabella puts her finger on the problem:

But there was one instance when I was at an event and I was introduced to a person as a journalist. And he asked me, for which newsroom I work for and at that moment I, myself, felt some sort of discomfort, because I understood that I am in some sense jobless, trying to catch some assignments.

For Stella, freelancing is “a secret land”, she is the only one in that land and only she knows what it feels like to be there. Her friends focuses on the job she has in the communication company, freelancing is for her, something secretive and personal. According to psychologist Stephen Frosh (1991: 107),

when society and others do not mirror the way a person would like to be mirrored it emasculates the possibilities for growing the self-esteem and the desirable 'self'. Similarly, Mead (1934: 47) states that people have to get the positive response from the 'others' to whom they show the desirable 'self' in order to fully establish it. Thus, those who do not get the approval, they cannot consciously feel being fully 'self'. Likewise, people desiring to belong, be accepted follow the rules, and value system that they assume are socially accepted (Mead, 1934: 204). Interviewees imagine that they have to possess certain symbols or reside in a certain place if they would really like to be seen as 'working' journalists, hence, employed. For instance, both Stella and Fiona express that it is much more difficult to show to 'others', and consequently feel themselves, that they are working as journalists while lacking simple, small details like official email accounts or a specific journalist ID that usually comes with the full-employment in a newsroom. Stella says that she feels like "a fraud". Fiona shares other implications:

I don't have any ID or e-mail, so when I call someone and say: "Hello, I am from 'this' TV station" and if the person *googles* you he won't find your name on the list next to other journalists.

Additionally, Alice is a professional freelance journalist, her articles or photo stories are published in various local and international outlets, but still, she sometimes has to remind the 'others' that she is a working journalist, not a travelling amateur photographer.

The analysis shows how the lack of knowledge and tradition of freelance work as well as working from home actually influence how interviewees create and experience their identities as working people. By working from home, the respondents are more prone to receive comments from friends, family members or acquaintances; these instances lead some interviewees to think that some members of the society do not see their work as equal to real work; feel excluded within the profession as equals and doubt their status as working people. However, none of the aforementioned consequences of working as a freelance journalist seem to dampen the passion for journalism.

## Analysis part III

### **The game room**

This chapter is called the game room because interviewees themselves describe freelancing as a game. Elliot says, “you understand that these are the game rules, everything won’t always be good or easy, but maybe there is no need for that.” In the following chapter freelancing will be analysed employing Bourdieu’s (1993; 2005) term of the game play. The ‘freelance game’ is a rational understanding, which is both learned by having beforehand knowledge about the game and through playing it; as well as an irrational feeling, sense, and intuition of what the game rules are and how to play it (Bourdieu, 1998; Schutz, 1974: 25). The games are different. Only by being a freelance journalist can one know the game and the right rules. The aim of this chapter is to dissect what constitutes the ‘freelance game’ in Lithuania and how it shapes experiences and dreams of the life-world of freelance journalists.

### **The doors**

From the interviewees’ accounts, the doors and the editor emerge as the two important figures of the freelance game room. For Bachelard (1964) “door is an entire cosmos, it accumulates desires and temptations” (p. 222). The editor decides if the doors should be opened and the freelancer could step through the threshold into the newsroom building or not. The editor figure stands in between, or, rather, in some cases is securing the door, the passageway for interviewees to transition: from a journalist without an assignment to the freelance journalist with the assignment. As a result, the need to have a good relationship with the editor and know the editor’s space – the newsroom – from the inside out is the most prominent rule of the game. Alice shares the techniques of communicating with the editors she learned during her career:

It is more about being on top of the things, able to navigate: what has been published, what style, what is usually the length of stories, what kind of photos do they use.

There are more entrance requirements for freelance journalists. Every freelance journalist has a specific, individual cabinet within the freelance game room where the personal experiences and mastered game rules are stored (Bachelard, 1964: 78). All of these individual experiences are put into the drawers where the knowledge about the freelance game rules is kept (Bachelard, 1964, p. 78). Scarlet opens one of the drawers and tells me what kind of work she usually does:

Why is this unique, interesting, why people need to read and hear about it. What makes this story different from others? [...] You always have to keep the relationship going on, be always online, ask, send e-mails, and post on Facebook. If you had a long distance relationship you will get what I am talking about [...] you can't ignore anything, you have to participate in all that life.

Elliot also notices, "what is not really nice is that we only have two big players and that's it. Moreover, they have the platforms we need. We, freelancers, can't overstep it". The small size of the journalism space really gives much of the power to the editors and renders interviewees to reckon in the unwritten freelance game rules, such as compromises about low salary and loyalty to one outlet. According to Luke, mostly inexperienced freelancers repudiate these rules or do not know about them, consequently find it more difficult to successfully freelance and earn money. Thus, the doors to the freelance game room are closed for those who are not willing to negotiate or sometimes compromise.

Many of the Lithuanian freelance game rules consists of searching for exceptionality, content uniqueness, maintaining relationships with editors and other possible clients as well as being accessible and, most importantly, available for everything. Labour studies indicate that similar activities are part of various kinds of creative freelance work (Gollmitzer, 2016; Cohen, 2015a; Conor, Gill, Taylor, 2015). In addition, these activities can help the freelancers to become more successful in the freelance game, hence step into the newsroom building or, metaphorically, get the temporary entrance card. Consequently, "by entering the game, they [players] tacitly accept the constraints and the possibilities inherent in the game" (Bourdieu, 1993: 184). Thus, many of the interviewees take all these activities for granted as natural

rules of the freelance game, similarly, as they take the traditional journalistic practices as part of their work.

### **Moving within the freelance game room**

Bourdieu (1993), who has extensively investigated the strategies people use while navigating in different social fields to which he usually refers as to playing the game, states that the habitus and the social capital are the most important traits in the game: “These trump cards determine not only the style of play but also success or failure in the game [...]” (Bourdieu, 1993: 150). The habitus is “the feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1993: 189), this means, understanding the game with its own specific rules. Habitus is related to having specific personality traits that easily lend themselves to freelance journalism: be communicative, friendly with editors, create a network of social relations. The symbolic capital is what the interviewees bring into the game and create through playing it (Bourdieu, 1989: 21). It consists of gained knowledge, journalistic status, ‘name’, and an established online and hence public image. This means, the more unique, interesting and reachable the interviewees are the more possibilities are there to open the doors to the game room. For instance, Alice has the capacity to create trust and relationships with various people, therefore she is able to bring back stories about remote villages, vanishing crafts, something extraordinary and unattainable to every journalist. Luke was brave enough to go and tell the story from the moment protests in Ukraine started. He stayed there longer than other Lithuanian journalists did; trying to capture what others did not have the time or did not want to. For Matt, playing the game is easier, because he is interested in non-mainstream music and there are not many journalists focusing on this specific area in Lithuania. He also has a big network of young people who help to reach young generation, as well as to make his work more visible and quickly spread in social media. Elliot is a multi-skilled journalist. When hiring him editors know that this journalist will be able to take photos, film, edit, write and report. These trump cards valorise the interviewees’ work (Siapera, Iliadi, 2015: 78; Gregg, 2011: 131) or in another sense, add more capital to their game playing and hence strengthen their place in the game room.

The longer interviewees are playing the game and the more rules they know, the more symbolic capital they collect. Respectively, the less tension and

sadness about freelancing they express. As Scarlet says, “with each new project or article it gets easier [...] with each new work you learn and understand more”. They are confident in knocking on more doors and wobbling the handles. The less experience – the more struggles, tensions and sadness the freelance game provokes for some of the respondents. It is a confining circle, but possible to destroy. Media scholars *Benson and Neveu* (2005: 6) write that those who know the game and have strong positions in it are able, to some extent, change the game rules. Alice’s and Luke’s initiative to create an online platform for young, enthusiastic journalists, who want to learn the freelance craft could be seen as an attempt to try to change the conditions of the freelance game. From this small amount of interviews, it is possible to grasp that the stronger positions they have, the more they think about other freelancers. As Bauman (2000) puts it, “to people confident of their power to change things, ‘progress’ is an axiom. To people who feel that things fall out of their hands, the idea of progress would not occur and would be laughable if heard” (p. 132). Hence, the more successful, the more willing Alice and Luke are to share their knowledge and add to the creation of a freelance room in the journalism space.

### **The will to play the freelance game**

Before she invites me to her home, I meet with Stella in a local café. In the middle of our conversation, she says: “There is something that still pushes me to go, but I can’t name it, maybe we will name it together during this talk”. Here, right in the kitsch café where the worlds of Renaissance, Ikea sale and Baroque are blended. In a big chair, covered in a black satin texture and chai latte in her hand, trying to put into words that which seem too big and overwhelming, Stella touches upon a different space within the game room. Bachelard (1964) in the “Poetics of space” spends a great deal in describing the importance of intimate, more secret places, where “you withdraw to yourself” (p. 136). Others cannot enter into this space. Hence, people themselves control these doors, should they open in or not. In this space the energy and *something* that still pushes Stella to be a freelancer rests. There are varieties of possible ways to name it, a dream, expectation, life goal, passion. It will be settled down with what Bourdieu (1993: 247) calls *illusio*: “sustaining itself through the informed player’s investment in the game”. It is a personal and socially ingrained belief that the freelance game is worth your

time and effort, that there is some result, an award. This belief is the driving force for the game, it also relates to pursuing “the state of affairs, the end, which the action has been undertaken to bring about” (Schutz, 1970: 126). Likewise, the decisions to freelance vary and relate to personal agendas. For example, Scarlet freelance because alongside studying, it is the perfect combination. Some motives are more precise, Stella and Fiona, explicitly states that they are freelancing in order to get into, or as Stella says, “be invited into“, the newsroom. Other interviewees appreciate the ability to work in different places, thus feel freedom in a sense that you are not obliged to follow any newsroom rules and obey others.

In addition, for some interviewees, the *illusio* relates to the belief of a personal success and career achievement, forecasting that there is something more to strive for (Bourdieu, 1993: 251-2; Born, Witteloostuijn, 2013: 31). Scarlet voices her personal belief:

Freelancing ‘bread’ is inhumanly difficult and plus everything depends on the moment when you will do something or some project that will lift up your career, will push you to the surface or into another level.

“The push” as articulated by Scarlet, in Schutz (1974: 24) life-world terms would be understood as the ‘leap’, “the exchange of one style of lived experience for another”. For Scarlet that *exchange* is a specific moment in life, when after a particular event it would become easier for her to freelance, to change her position from being a beginner, to recognised and well-established freelancer. It relates to the hope and belief, to strengthen the symbolic capital and get a better position in the freelance game. The latter belief influence Elliot’s decision taking up low paid projects. The more concrete motivations interviewees have, the more difficult it is to come across the challenges. However, the fewer expectations there are for the freelance game and the future, the easier it should be (Born, Witteloostuijn, 2013: 26), Frank tries to explain it in his words:

You have no expectations, that you will strengthen the relationship and the end result will be this or that, for me, it is more a game, experiment, without any big expectations.

Schutz (1970) suggests an interesting, but also challenging way for seeing the context of the actions, he calls it ‘because’ motives. The challenge lies on the



assumption that if a person says that he did something ‘because’, according to Schutz (1970: 127) it does not mean that one is able to really understand or believe that it is the cause. If simplifying and understanding a ‘because’ moment as a context of actions or motives, it is possible to grasp something about freelance journalism labour conditions in Lithuania. Some interviewees, even though they do not explicitly say it, decided to become, or in some instances ended up as, freelancers *because* there are no places for them in the newsrooms as full-timers. For instance, Mimi wanted to write or work full-time in the magazine that focuses on the film industry: “This is a magazine that you can’t make bigger, there are as many people as there can be, and they won’t give up their places”. Considering she did not possess strong professional position and did not have the ‘right’ contacts, she chose to freelance. She still faces difficulties trying to get her articles published in that specific magazine. Kristofer colloquially expresses about a similar ‘because’ moment: “Now you can just come to a newsroom only when someone leaves and it rarely happens. Practically, you just can come in when someone retires or dies”.

The interviewees’ decisions are not solely conditional. They are also conscious and purposive. Some choose to freelance because this is a challenge that prompts creativity and real ‘journalistic’ experience. Alice explains:

You forswear the security and full-time employment in one place so that you would have more possibilities to travel to various places, search for interesting stories that otherwise you wouldn’t know exist. You lose but also win something.

By taking something away, usually stable conditions and security for the future, freelancing also provides with something that fosters interviewees keep on working and believing in their actions. Even though it is very challenging to freelance as a journalist for Mimi, she still concludes: “but... you asked me if I want to keep on freelancing, yes I do, but I think it will be very difficult”. The ‘difficult’ is an insufficient challenge, for her, to impede the *illusio* for playing the ‘freelance game’. From what interviewees talk about, the freelance circumstances seem to some extent both impede their goals and stimulate them. It satisfies the respondents’ needs of development and winning the personal “small victories” as Elliot wrote in his diary after submitting the assignment. For now, only a few of the interviewees feel comfortable and

having enough of the agency to start contributing to making freelance conditions better for future freelance journalists. However, a move towards challenging the adverse 'freelance game' rules in Lithuania seems to be happening.

## Concluding reflections

As I was arguing, Lithuanian freelance journalists brought different and critical points to the discussion of challenges for journalism today. They are critical about the contemporary problems within the profession as well as the practices fostered in the newsrooms.

The concept of the life-world and the more holistic approach to journalists and journalistic practices helped me to see that the newsroom for the interviewees is not only the place of work; it is also a symbol of the nation. Thus, the analysis shows how influential the economic, political and cultural climate in Lithuania is to the interviewees' experiences of their life-world, hence being the citizens of Lithuania and journalists. As influential journalism scholars Deuze and Witschge (2017) and Zelizer (2017) highlight, journalists everyday experiences shape the content journalists produce. On a more general level, it also influences how journalists understand and experience the current shifts within the profession and newsrooms, or outside of them. The thesis supports the claim that Deuze and Witschge (2017) make: "understanding journalism means to appreciate journalists' personal drive beyond the institutional protections and privileges of the profession" (p. 12). Hence the discussions about contemporary journalism should not only revolve around institutional changes.

This study strengthens the statement that home and work spaces are intertwining, additionally, work time and leisure time are also blending. Relying on Gregg (2011) and Hochschild's (1997) works, it seems that office 'presence bleeding' into the home environment is the trend that is applicable for all kinds of workers, regardless the employment status or country. The interviewees' accounts lead one to think that everything now can serve as a workspace and every time of the day could be time for work, especially with technologies enabling people to be reachable and to work 24 hours per day. Striving to remain in the workspace pushes some of the respondents to

prolong work hours and shorten the leisure hours. Moreover, some are most of the time 'online': sharing their articles or just showing off their professional skills by commenting other's articles. Similarly, as journalism studies indicate this is part of many journalistic practices today (Siapera, Iliadi, 2015). For the interviewees being online and accessible is unpaid part of their work, on the other hand, it pays off in the longer run, because the better public image they create, the more often they are hired and appreciated by the editors.

As I indicated in the literature review, in many freelance labour studies precariousness and temporality are named as main challenges and problems for people working on a freelance basis. Interestingly, for these interviewees precariousness of work conditions, even unfair treatment by the editors or 'others' feels like part of the everyday life, part of the 'freelance game'. As writings on late modernity indicate, precariousness is already embedded to the respondents understanding of freelance occupation (Bauman, 2000). It seems to be part of the interviewees' life-world, which they already take for granted.

The current state of journalism in Lithuania intertwines with respondents' everyday experiences on many levels. For instance, not all newsrooms appreciate the content some interviewees provide. On a more general level, the respondents' everyday life is shaped by the state of journalism in Lithuania, because every day they try to shore up perceived problems with their own contributions. Drawing from the interview material it seems that stillness, refusal to accept new trends and lack of dialogue about professional journalism in the society shape the journalism 'crisis' in Lithuania. Contradictory to the many debates in the journalism studies (for example, see the discussion in Hanusch, Hanitzsch, 2017; Alexander, Breese, Luengo, 2016), these interviewees positively value the changes brought by digitalization of the newsrooms. According to the interviewees, it opens more possibilities to enhance journalistic practices. Thus, the analysis shows how the different workforce can articulate the professional crisis differently. Including freelance journalists experiences into the discussion not only reveals interesting points about shifting journalistic practices, but also current labour conditions and how it influence the quality and experience of the life-world. Listening to Lithuanian freelance journalists accounts let me to touch upon country dependent context of journalistic work and most importantly, how the post-Soviet generation feels working in the profession that was monitored and controlled for almost half of the century.

The cultural, political and economic climate is changing rapidly in this country. Lithuania is more open, the young generation has more possibilities to travel, learn and grow professionally and personally. Notwithstanding, drawing on the respondents' accounts, it seems, sometimes Lithuania cannot keep up with their growth and correspondingly growing needs for better work conditions and better quality in journalism. Nevertheless, the interviewees have actual possibilities to change and influence the journalism space and create the freelance room for the future generations. This study to some extent shows that the results of the many Anglo-Saxon journalism studies cannot be easily transferable to all countries. The conditions are different in many ways. To study journalism culture, researchers have to, with an open and unprejudiced mind, study journalism culture as a part of wider cultural aspects, such as a nation's history. This could be attainable with a holistic approach.

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# “To arrive means being able to tell”<sup>9</sup>

Memory cultures and narratives of historical migration in German media in 1991–1994 and 2015–2017

*Philipp Seufferling*

“For since the earth is a globe, they cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must, finally, tolerate living in close proximity, because originally no one had a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else.”

Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace, 1795

## **The eternal story of migration**

Migration history is human history. Without the movement of people, cultural exchange, development or progress would hardly have taken place. Yet, modern Western societies, among them Germany, continuously debate the implications of migrants and refugees, be it alleged cultural destruction or saving demographic problems. It seems that these debates are as old as the history of migration itself.

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<sup>9</sup> Title quote from: Morasch, Viktoria (21.4.2016): Angekommen. In: *ZEIT*, 16/2016. Online: <http://www.zeit.de/2016/16/russlanddeutsche-kasachstan-integration-sowjetunion-aussiedler/komplettansicht> (last access: 10.5.2017). Translated by author. Original: “Ankommen heißt, erzählen zu können“.

This thesis takes its starting point from this impression: Debates about migration, flight and expulsion have a history – what role does this history play for dealing with migration today? The presented research argues for approaching this question with a study of mediated memory cultures.

On 3 October 2016, German Unity Day, president of the Bundestag Norbert Lammert gave a speech at the official celebration in Dresden:

“From a letter about the eternal topic flight and expulsion:

‘Our boat is hopelessly overcrowded. The basket is already floating over the sea when I pull back the arm of the man. I lift my daughter out and take her to my breast. She’s two days old. [...] She hardly screams. I don’t feel anything. The relief just comes later when we’re sitting in the shacks of the emergency shelter. We escaped, with our lives. Yet we haven’t arrived.’

Escaped. Arrived. To our ears that sounds like the fate of a refugee from the Middle East. But it is the story of a young woman, who fled with her family from Kaliningrad in 1945...

‘15 minutes after we left the shore the engine of our boat broke down. Everyone started to scream. My sister jumped into the water and started pulling the boat. After a while I joined her. In the moment I couldn’t think, I just saw my life passing by.’

This young woman fled over the water, too. Yusra Mardini, born in Syria, has lived in Germany with her family for over a year.” (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016)

By comparing these two refugee stories, Lammert shows the striking similarity of historical and contemporary refugee plights and, thereby, calls for empathy through memory. At the same time, he recounts experiences of forced migration as an intrinsic part of German society: He points at the country’s historical multiculturalism by connecting national memories with migration memories (ibid.). Meanwhile in front of the building thousands of far-right protesters were insulting the politicians, yelling “traitor of the people” (DW News, 2016).

### *Aim and research questions*

In Germany's "refugee crisis" atmosphere, the eternal topic of migration is once again debated, first and foremost discernible in the media. The meaning of migration is subject to discursive struggle; it's not only the movement of people from one place to another, but also from one social and cultural environment into another. As the example demonstrates, memory plays an intrinsic role in this negotiation of people crossing borders.

Therefore, this study sets out to analyze mnemonic practices of German media during two periods of condensed communication about migration: the so-called "refugee crisis" (2015-2017) and "asylum crisis" (1991-1994). Combining approaches from media and cultural studies as well as media history, a narrative and discourse analysis of mediated memory cultures is presented, theoretically embedded in a conceptual triangle of media, memory and migration studies.

The material corpus consists of media texts (broadcasting, print and online) from both time periods. Included are only mediations re-narrativizing historical migration, not the coverage of contemporary events, because arguably a study of memory cultures can provide access to understanding how media and society ascribe meaning to the phenomenon of migration. Media are a central platform for constant and ubiquitous re-working of past realities in the present (Hoskins, 2011).

The approach this thesis takes is not a traditional study of migrant representations in the media, but seeks to historically understand how continuous meta-narratives of historical migration are part of framing refugees and migrants in times of condensed mediated communication about migration. Cultural representations of migration over time have affected our imagination of refugees and migrants. I suggest that scrutinizing mediated memories of different migrations together can show how memory cultures "premeditate" and "remediate" (Erll, 2008) cultural schemata and discursive and narrative patterns of mediating migration. Meta-narratives of migration will demonstrate on micro- (individual cases) and macro-levels (general patterns) how media invoke journalistic "templates", making the past "stand in" for the present (Zelizer, 2002:65). Ultimately, these memory cultures can provide historical insight into media cultures of migration in general – the ever so similar ways of mediating the same phenomenon.

The central argument is that diverse historical experiences of migration and flight become mediated within converging mediated mnemonic narratives and discourses, which affect social knowledge about people on the move now. Media are central platforms and actors in this process. In times of increased migratory movements, they pick up these repetitive narrative patterns and historically frame migration discourses.

Therefore, two of such periods (1991-1994 and 2015-2017) serve as cases here to show how memory cultures are part of and affect contemporary mediations of migration. They, firstly, provide a culturally specific, national context, which is crucial in the study of memory cultures, and secondly, show the continuity and repetitiveness of migration remembrance in the media.

In 2015, around 890.000 refugees from mostly Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan arrived in Germany, the highest annual number since World War Two (Tagesschau, 2016). When refugees were walking on Hungarian highways coming from the Balkans in early September, Germany and Austria decided to circumvent the Dublin regulation<sup>10</sup> and take in the refugees directly. The government refused to limit the number of incoming people. After the reported events on 31 December 2015 in Cologne<sup>11</sup>, public excitement cooled off. An integration law and the EU-Turkey-deal followed in 2016, while violent attacks against refugee shelters increased sharply. This series of events is referred to as a “refugee crisis” in Europe – although no European country lists among the top-ten refugee hosting countries (UNHCR, 2016).

In the early 1990s, the strikingly similar discussion was called “asylum crisis”. For Germany, this period is characterized not only by the recent reunification of the country, but also by increased migration: East Germans moving West, Russo-Germans resettling from the Soviet Union and refugees from war-torn Yugoslavia (430.000 asylum applications in 1992) (Seifert, 2012). Resurging

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<sup>10</sup> “Dublin III” determines the EU-country responsible for processing asylum applications seekers. This is usually the first EU-country of the refugees’ arrival, which in this case would have been Greece or Hungary (European Commission, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> According to the police’s (BKA) final report in July 2016, in different German cities around 1200 women were sexually assaulted by around 2000 men, mostly of North African descent. Media coverage and surrounding public discussions around these events affected the general mood in the refugee debate (Staudenmaier, 2016).

xenophobia<sup>12</sup> and an intense public discussion about asylum led to a tightening of the asylum legislation in 1993.

These two strikingly similar contextual time periods underline the necessity of studying the media and migration nexus from a historical point of view. Therefore, I want to go beyond a study of media coverage and suggest enhancing our understanding of how media affect the phenomenon of migration through a study of memory cultures. Juxtaposing two historical periods of condensed public communication about migration underscores how repetitive and continuous narrative and discursive “templates” of re-telling migration are.

By asking how mediations of migration are embedded in memory cultures of migration, I want to understand and problematize how migratory memories are re-narrativized in media. An inherent power struggle of selective memories will be demonstrated: In converging diverse experiences, the media negotiate inclusion and exclusion of migration into Germany’s national history. The title quote from a Russo-German immigrant during the 1990s illustrates this struggle for voice and recognition.

On this basis, the research questions are:

1. What narratives and discourses of migration historical memory cultures are present in German media during the “refugee crisis” and the “asylum crisis”?
2. How are continuous memories of previous migrations into Germany included or excluded from national memory cultures?
3. How do repetitive meta-narrative strands of migration history provide a basis for mediations of migration in general?

Research questions 1 and 2 are thoroughly answered on the empirical level, while research question 3 abstracts the empirical results and makes a larger theoretical argument about media cultures of migration. A study of memory cultures provides answers to these, by displaying where repetitive templates of mediating migration come from, as well as how memory can have the power

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. from 22-24 August 1992 a violent mob occupied and attacked an apartment block of migrants and asylum-seekers in Rostock-Lichtenhagen (Richter, 2012).

of facilitating imaginaries of incorporation and empathy toward refugees and migrants.

### *Structure of the thesis*

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 will provide an overview of Germany's history of migration and memory culture. In chapter 3, the theoretical framework, based on a literature review, is presented. Mediation of shared cultural memory of migration in Germany is studied, using concepts of *mediated memory* (Erll, 2008; Sturken, 1997; Zelizer, 2002) and *narrativization* (Ricoeur, 2004) in order to show the link between past, present and future through *mnemonic imagination* (Keightley & Pickering, 2012) in *historical discourses* (Landwehr, 2008). Memory cultures help to socially construct migration, its ramifications in society and how it is mediated.

The methodology and methods for answering these questions will be elaborated in chapter 4. The empirical material is presented in two analytical chapters (5 and 6). Compiling all cases of migration appearing in the media from both time periods, chapter 5 presents four main narrativization and discursive strands, emerging from the material: All relocations of people are told around the meta-narratives of BEFORE (reasons for migration), DURING (experiences of the journey), AFTER I (arrival and integration from the migrants' perspective) and AFTER II (arrival and integration from the receiving society's perspective). Then, chapter 6 displays two in-depth case studies of single media texts, the docudrama "Landgericht" (ZDF, 30.1.2017) and the TV-documentary "Die großen Fluchten" (ZDF, 19.11.2016). They illustrate the main findings of the analysis in context: Diverse experiences and memories of migration converge through mediation into repetitive narrative and discursive strands, which provide a basis for imaginatively combining historical and contemporary phenomena of migration. In doing so, national framing is a central feature of narrativization and demonstrates the power question of inclusion and exclusion of migration from national memory. A conclusion (7) discusses the results.



## Germany – an “immigration society”?

During the 1990s, chancellor Helmut Kohl repeatedly denied that Germany be an immigration country. A quick look at German migration history (Bade, 2003; Oltmer, 2016) however easily shows how numerous immigration and emigration movements made German society what it is today. Yet in political and legal self-definitions Germany does not understand itself as an immigration country (unlike e.g. the USA). This materializes in citizenship law: The option of gaining German citizenship as a foreigner was only added in 2000. Traditionally, a *ius sanguinis* (blood right) legislation (§116 GG) defines Germans as an ethnic community.

### Germany’s vast migration history

Most important for this study are different population movements caused and experienced by Germany over the last two centuries. The industrial revolution triggered large-scale migration all over Europe. Millions of Germans left for the New World, as refugees, labor migrants or opportunists, escaping poverty and hunger (ibid.:81-117). Also, religious conflicts produced refugees, e.g. during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the French Huguenots received asylum in German lands, fleeing persecution.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has appropriately been coined the “century of expulsions” (Münz, 2002) or the “century of refugees” (Wingenroth, 1959). Nationalist ideologies and two world wars produced massive population movements (Schwartz, 2013). During the Nazi regime, around 500.000 Jews and other persecuted left Germany into exile; German-induced forced labor and the Holocaust produced 11,3 million displaced persons (Herbert, 2001:129-190). At the end of World War Two and in its aftermath around 14 million ethnic<sup>13</sup> Germans living East of the new Oder-Neisse-border<sup>14</sup> fled or were expelled by the Red Army.

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<sup>13</sup> The term “ethnic Germans” is used here to demonstrate their legal status according to citizenship law.

<sup>14</sup> Germany’s current Eastern border with Poland, along the rivers Oder and Neiße; drawn by the Allied forces at the Potsdam Conference in 1945.

In post-war West Germany, the economic boom resulted in the hiring of “Gastarbeiter” [guestworkers] from Turkey, Southern Europe and North Africa from 1955 – the term implying that they would leave again. After the recruitment stop in 1973, the foreign population was almost 4 million (ibid.:233). And it kept growing, as the guestworkers became settling immigrants with children. Also, the GDR hired around 100.000 “Vertragsarbeiter” [contract workers] from socialist countries (especially Vietnam) (Bade, 2003:246).

Parallel to labor migration, people moved to West Germany as refugees. In the Cold War, people fleeing communism were warmly welcomed, e.g. from Hungary in 1956, from the GDR, or from Vietnam (“boat people”<sup>15</sup>). Due to Germany’s guilt in causing forced migration during World War Two, West Germany’s Basic Law (1949) includes a historically unique paragraph on asylum (§16 GG), declaring it a basic right for politically persecuted. When the Yugoslavian wars in the 1990s and the collapsing Eastern bloc caused more than 400.000 asylum applications in 1992, and the atmosphere around foreigners in reunited Germany got tense, §16 was tightened in 1993 by declaring safe countries of origin, not entitled to asylum and increased deportations. It is still in place today.

Adding to the immigration debate of the early 1990s, between 1987 and 1992 around 1,5 million Russo-Germans<sup>16</sup> or “late resettlers” (ethnic Germans who remained East of Germany’s new border after 1950) from mostly Siberia, Kazakhstan, Poland and Romania arrived in Germany after Gorbachev allowed their resettlement and Germany granted them citizenship (Panagiotidis, 2015).

Continuous immigration adds up to 21% of German population having foreign roots in 2016 (bpb, 2016) and 49% having post-World War Two refugees/expellees in their family or friend group (SFVV, 2015:3). The baseline of this fast march through Germany’s migration history is simple: Germany has constantly experienced migration and the loss of home – all of them have produced memories. In this way, Germany can be understood as

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<sup>15</sup> This term refers to the Vietnamese refugees who escaped from the Vietnam war by boat and ship, in total around 800.000 from 1975 to 1995 (UNHCR, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Historically, this group of Germans mainly settled to the Wolga area in Southern Russia under Catherine the Great in the 1700s.

an “immigration society”, meaning not legal definitions, but in cultural, historical, social and discursive ways.

### ***Flight and expulsion in national memory cultures***

Contemporary Germany’s anchor points of historical self-understanding as a democratic nation state in Europe are a “Never again” of the Second World War, Nazi regime and perpetration of the Holocaust (Schildt & Siegfried, 2009)<sup>17</sup>.

In relation to migration history these national discourses are relevant, when looking at the interplay of historical guilt commemoration and narratives of victimhood. Firstly, memories of German perpetration translate into moral obligations of openness, symbolized in the open asylum law. Secondly, memories of German suffering include the experience of forced migration, too: *Flight and Expulsion*<sup>18</sup> of 14 million Germans. In these narratives, Germans are victims of the Nazis, Stalinism, socialism/communism and the Allies (Niven, 2006). These narratives become problematic when disconnected from German crimes and especially from the absolute victimhood position of the Jews; therefore, they are considered narratives of “relative victimhood” (ibid.).

Legitimized by the Allies at the Potsdam conference in 1945, Germans fled or were forcefully expelled from the former Eastern and Central European areas of settlement. 8 million found a new home in West Germany, 4 million in the East (Naimark, 2001). Memory cultures of their experiences (movies, literature, museums, monuments) have shaped public discourses until today – subject to wide academic scholarship (e.g. Ahonen, 2003; Kittel, 2007; Kossert, 2008; Krauss, 2008; Hahn & Hahn, 2010; Niven, 2014).

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<sup>17</sup> These discourses of coming to terms with the past happened twofold in East and West. A discussion of this would however lead to far here.

<sup>18</sup> This term has been established as a fixed reference for the events between 1944 and 1950, designating the flight and forceful expulsion of Germans living east of the Oder-Neiße-border (see a detailed summary of the events in Beer (2011) and Naimark (2001)). “Flight and Expulsion” (Flucht und Vertreibung) is a “cipher” (Beer, 2011) for all these manifold events and experience and their ramifications in post-war Germany.

The expellees formed an influential societal group affecting history politics<sup>19</sup>. Even though their completed integration seems to be a given today, Kossert (2008) showed the difficulties and outright rejection many of them faced as “foreigners” in their own home country.

Historian Stephan Scholz (2016) pointed at the relevance of exactly these experiences in the refugee debate today: “Willkommenskultur”<sup>20</sup> can be motivated by the “comparison of fates”. A third of volunteers helping refugees today stated in a survey that they have a family background of Flight and Expulsion.

## Media – memory – migration

“About past events we can only say for sure, that it exactly didn’t happen as we present it today.

At least of this we can be sure.” (history philosopher Achim Landwehr, 2016:27)

Experiences of relocation produce memories, which become re-told, re-enacted, re-shaped through different forms of mediation. Texts, images or sounds offer interpretations of what migration means in modern, media-saturated societies. This is where this thesis takes its theoretical stance: Memories of historical migration experiences represented today in mediated forms ascribe new meaning to this history. Within what was coined *cultural memory* and *communicative memory* (Assmann, 1995; 2008), *collective memory* (Halbwachs, 1925/1992), or *social memory* (developed by Aby Warburg. Assmann, 1995:125), individual experiences are subject to social practices of remembering. They are translated into cultural forms of expression, which offer audiences affective, empathetic access to meanings of migratory history.

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<sup>19</sup> In West Germany, they formed an own political party in the 1950s and organized into unions for remembering the old home and for supporting a possible return to the lost areas. In the GDR, any political organization of “resettlers”, as they were called there, was forbidden (see Ahonen, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> “Willkommenskultur” [welcome culture] is a central term during the “refugee crisis”, meaning the efforts Germans are making to welcome refugees.

I argue that mediation entangles memories into repetitive meta-narratives of migration history, which make them recognizable and relatable. This chapter will map out, based on existing research, the conceptual triangle of media, memory and migration, which serves as a theoretical framework for this study.

## **Migration**

Migration as a history of human cultural exchange and as a subcategory of mobility is a deeply socially constructed concept. Thereby, its ramifications debated in society and its connection to media and memory can be grasped thoroughly. The construction of migration is anchored in the construction of borders as territorial distinctions between political entities, in modernity between nation states, based on the construction of cultural boundaries. These borders are crossed by people which then are labelled migrants. This resulted in the development of migration control and “migration regimes” (Pott, Rass & Wolff, 2014<sup>21</sup>). Instruments of this discursive, political and mostly legal construction are citizenship (documentation of people) and protectionist labor markets, controlling labor forces within certain territories (Anderson, 2013). Thus, discursive negotiations around belonging, “us” and “them”, “guests” and “aliens” (Sassen, 1999; Anderson, 2013) or “illegality” and “legality” (De Genova, 2002) happen in connection with migration.

During what migration scholars Castles and Miller (2009:2-3) coined “the age of migration” (starting in the 1600s with the post-Westphalian implementation of sovereign states) manifold migration movements created discourses of immigration policies, migrant incorporation or multiculturalism in Western societies. This vast history of people on the move, affected by migration regimes, is the basis for mnemonic narratives and discourses analyzed here.

Migration studies offer valuable concepts for understanding these memory cultures in their context. Migration regimes of modernity created migration categories, like the distinction between forced migration (refugees) and voluntary/labor migration (Castles & Miller, 2009:181-206). The boundary

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<sup>21</sup> The research group “Migration Regimes” is an interdisciplinary study group at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at University of Osnabrück. The concept understands legal frameworks and discourses as decisive for the migration experience.

between these is highly blurry and political, because legal frameworks define these categories according to different discursive environments over history. For instance, today's "refugee" concept was shaped in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gatrell, 2013), articulated in the Geneva Convention for the protection of refugees of 1949, in reaction to the 25 million displaced people in World War Two. In contrast, e.g. the mentioned guestworkers as labor migrants are subject to different migration regimes (Castles & Miller, 2009:96-124).

Given the politics behind these historically constructed migration categories, this study does not limit the view on memories to just a certain category of refugees or migrants. Hence, the goal of this thesis is to scrutinize how different historical notions of migration were mediated and thereby affected social knowledge around migration based in mediated memory cultures.

### *Mediating migration*

Migration is as an inherently mediated phenomenon. In his study of modernity and globalization, Appadurai (1996) identifies media and migration as central dimensions of rupture within the global cultural economy and its imagination: "[W]hen [mass migration] is juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts, and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities" (1996:4). Not only are experiences of migration connected to media practices and media representations, but also are the legal categories mentioned above part of mediated societal discourses. Understanding migration in relation to what Appadurai (1996) calls "mediascape" – a space of cultural representation – is crucial for applying it to shared cultural memory.

The first strand of scholarship on the media and migration nexus focuses on migratory audiences: media consumption of diasporas and the meaning of media practices for ethnic/minority communities. This research comprises how migrants can be empowered through media usage or perform identities in transnational media spaces (Chin, 2016; Hegde, 2016; Gillespie, 2000; Gillespie & Webb, 2012; Georgiou, 2010; 2013; Madianou & Miller, 2012). From an ethnographic perspective, such as Eastmond's (2007) study of refugee experience narratives, this highlights the importance of media practices in the production of migratory memories. Considering relations migrants have with media is relevant here, as it demonstrates power dynamics in the mediation of migratory memories in terms of access to and representation in media spaces.

Following this, the second strand researches representations of migrants in media (e.g. Chavez, 2001; King & Wood, 2001; Wellgraf, 2008; Berry et al., 2015). King's and Wood's (2001) edited volume offers mostly British case studies on migrant representations in the search of what they call "tropes of migration" (ibid.:12) or the "'Ur-Migrant' imprinted in one's visual memory" (ibid.:13). This thesis however wants to go past a study of representation and investigate how mnemonic narratives as specific forms of migrant representations are producing such meta-notions around migration.

### *Remembering migration*

The mentioned work on media and migration is mostly lacking a clear historical outlook, especially one that includes memory. In the intersection of migration and memory studies, the edited volume by Glynn and Kleist (2012) clearly hints at the politics of migration history, as they influence incorporation of minorities by negotiating belongings in diverse societies. Contemporary national political discourses about integration, assimilation or "the other" are affected by memory politics of "immigrant heritage". Unfortunately, this volume is missing a media perspective.

Discussions about migratory pasts in society must acknowledge the meaning of these memories within national remembrance cultures: representations of memories demonstrate a right to remember within a minority-majority-setting and ideas about homogeneity of societies. Worcman and Garde-Hansen (2016) point out this power struggle: migrant memories are mobile across communities, and by that able to create conversation between them. However, territorial claims often go along with claims on heritage and memory, which shows the political power dimension of communicating migrant memories.

The crux of migrant memories is the question of who can remember what in which context, as moving people stand in a paradoxical relationship to homogenous, national ideas of memory cultures built around settled communities. The contributions in Glynn's and Kleist's (2012) volume explore how certain migrant memories are enacted in specific contexts, mostly from an anthropological and ethnographic point of view, however lacking the media.

### *Mediating migratory memories*

Finally, there is research combining the three areas of media, memory and migration.

In Germany, the “Flight and Expulsion” of Germans is the most remembered migratory event in a national context until today. Amongst the wide scholarship in general, most recently Scholz, Röger and Niven (2015) presented a handbook about media and practices of memory around Flight and Expulsion, exploring memories in museums, schoolbooks, radio, movies or press. Part of this research is also Röger’s (2011) dissertation about media debates about German refugees and expellees after 1990 in Germany and Poland, as well as Tiew’s (2017) work on cinematic narratives of Flight and Expulsion as forms of integration. Central images and narratives of forced migration in general link back to the German expellees. This historicity of contemporary images of refugees is shown in an article by Scholz (2014) about visual icons of Flight and Expulsion, whose pictorial origins can be traced back to certain repetitive motifs and photographic careers of images. The central icons of Flight and Expulsion are the mother-child-motif and images of trails with people carrying luggage (Paul, 2009). These symbolic cues immediately can be read by audiences as referring to the general topic of forced migration, back then as well as today.

The aim here is, however, to understand migration memories in Germany broader, namely across other cases of migration, too. Therefore, this outline of concepts and research around migration, media and memory sets the first pillar in this chapter: Media and memory practices matter in the construction and production of meaning around migration.

### **The mediation of shared cultural memory**

The second pillar is memory. In simple terms, “memory is the past made present” (Terdiman, 1993:60). It happens in the present and is a creative, active labor process.

Based on the early ideas on *collective memory* by Maurice Halbwachs (1925/1992), many scholars have updated the concept until today. The notion of memory applied here intrinsically connects it to mediation. This is based on broader conceptualizations of *cultural memory* (Assmann, 2007; Erll



& Nünning, 2008) and national *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1997), but thinks these “memory sites” or externalized storage places of social knowledge as communicated and culturally mediated. If we understand shared memories, or the common, public referral and identity relation to certain events in the past, as “the interplay between past and present in socio-cultural contexts” (Erl & Nünning, 2008:2) and as constructive of communities, it is inevitable to think these processes as mediated. Media make history present everywhere around us, or as Hoskins (2011:19) describes it: “[T]he glut of media is also a glut of memory; the past is everywhere: media ghosts memory”.

This ubiquity of media re-telling memories requires deeper consideration of how mediated processes of remembering function. The link between media and memory has found wide academic awareness (van Dijck, 2007; Cronqvist, 2013; Garde-Hansen, 2011; Grainge, 2003; Erl & Rigney, 2009; Huyssen, 2000; 2003a/b; Neiger et al. 2011; Sturken, 1997; Zelizer, 2002; 2014). A much-debated challenge at the core of memory studies is the relationship between individual and collective, private and public memories, or “memory-in-the-head” vs. “memory-in-the-world” (Hoskins, 2011:21). The most useful solution to this problem is to not think of them as opposite poles but as and interdependent forms of the same process of remembering. Only individuals can actually remember in the end, but what and how they remember is, next to lived experiences, affected by social and cultural factors – made available by media. This links to the notion of *mnemonic imagination* described by Keightley and Pickering (2012). They understand memory as the “creative articulation of the relationship between individual experience and shared understanding of the past” (ibid.:103). Single experiences become worked into cohesive narratives through imagination. A sense of temporality and identity in fragmented, future-oriented modernity is constructed “acting upon” (ibid.:5) memories in imaginative ways: “The remembering subject engages imaginatively with what is retained from the past and, moving across time, continuously rearranges the hotchpotch of experience into relatively coherent structures” (ibid.:43). Past, present and future are connected through memory and imagination processes. This creative memory labor happens in a playoff of personal and societal/cultural frameworks. It offers the connection of own and others’ past and present in the transfer of experiences, potentially creating empathy. Hence, migration history and present can be connected through mediated memory.

This understanding of personal and public memory as two sides of the same coin seems highly applicable in a context of migration: how individuals remember in certain cultural codes is vital in the case of group- and border-crossing, mobile memories. Of interest in this study are social, publicly mediated memories. As shown, they are ultimately connected to personal memories, which are full of individual details and experiences, but the goal of enquiry here is how on a societal level compiled mnemonic narratives emerge within such memory cultures. In mediation processes, these migration historical narratives and discourses, through mnemonic imagination, provide a basis for wider understandings of migration. Flows of mediated memories constantly circulate new meanings about past realities, affected by the institutions, technologies and groups that are involved in the processes of mediation.

Through mediation, past experiences are communicated within social settings and thereby become shared cultural memories. This exchange is the basis for memory cultures, where memories transform to “knowledge with an identity-index” (Assmann, 2008:114). Mediation of shared memories then means “first-hand experiences” becoming imagined “second-hand experiences for others” (Keightley & Pickering, 2012), through public representation. Publicly constituted memories are formed according to certain discursive and cultural conventions, which communicate the remembering subject’s experiences in a recognizable and empathetic way to others. These recognizable templates of migration are to be analyzed here.

Thereby, memories affect others’ subjectivities and engagements with the past, which then again creatively re-negotiate imaginations of the past (Keightley & Pickering, 2012:85-100). This was also described as *prosthetic memory* by Landsberg (2004), where distant audiences find ways to empathize with others’ experiences through media memories, in her study through movies. Continuing this argument leads to Silverstone’s (2007) *mediapolis* as a site of morality through encounter with the “other”. Understanding memory cultures in an ethical way is very central to the discussion about refugees and migrants – a setting where “the other” enters the mnemonic space of a receiving society and adds new imaginations of the past to cultural memory.

### *Generating mediated memories: power and politics*

“We need to ask not whether a memory is true but rather what its telling reveals about how the past affects the present” (Sturken, 1997:2). This statement perfectly summarizes the politics at play within the mediation of memories in public spheres, especially of migrants. The question of who can remember and mediate which experiences of refugees and migrants to an audience is a political power question.

Sturken (1997:3) understands cultural memories as a field of “contested meanings”, of discursive struggle. For instance, the image of a photography itself stays fixed, but its meaning, just like memory, is reshaped and constituted in different contexts all over again (ibid.:21). What she calls re-narrativization, re-enactment and re-embodiment of past experiences through media are conflictive social practices, which make cultural memory political: “The desire for narrative closure thus forces upon historical events the limits of narrative form and enables forgetting” (Sturken, 1997:8). Sturken traces narrative structures in manifold media materials of Vietnam war memory culture practices. This approach is taken up here: puzzling together a mosaic of national memory discourses of migration.

Hoskins’ and Tulloch’s (2016) study on mediatization of memories of the 2008 financial crisis is constructed similarly. One of their main findings, which motivates my approach here, is the continued relevance of mainstream media in the negotiation of memories; remediated narratives use the “collective memorial gravitas” of mainstream media, following their editorial logics (Hoskins & Tulloch, 2016:305). This justifies to more freely look for the “reconfiguration of discourses” (ibid.:297) in central media outlets, because they demonstrate the limitedness and selection of memory cultural representations.

Looking for memories in different media reflects the notion of a *media ensemble* (Couldry & Hepp, 2017:67-70) in place, which mediates the past for audiences in complex interplays with each other. Memory media are interconnected, discourses manifest in different places. How different media outlets within the system of journalism produce memories, has been described by Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014), who understand journalistic actors as memory generators. Therein, this study sees “media”, as mass media (acknowledging the difficulties of this term) that are relevant in larger societal communication processes.

Returning to the politics in the mediation of memories, both Hoskins and Tulloch (2016) and Sturken (1997) ascribe mediated memories a function of “closure” through narrative: remembrance orients individuals to a version of the past, offering an interpretation, which makes it relevant again to contemporary concerns (Hoskins & Tulloch, 2016:26). Hence, seeing a concept as remembered means to understand it as a social construction, that was, put bluntly, made a thing through historical discourses (ibid.:31).

This idea has also been described by Erll (2008; 2009) as *premediation* and *remediation*. Erll (2008:390-396; 2009) identifies “intramedial”, “inter-medial” and “plurimedial” conditions that affect “memory making” in media. First, intramediality concerns rhetorics and narrative structures of shared memories. Next, intermediality is based on the notions of premediation and remediation; the repetition of certain memory products, images, motifs, narrative plot structures etc. affects how the same memory site will be re-narrativized later; premediation provides cultural schemata for the remediation through certain practices of looking, naming and telling. These conditions affect the re-telling of historical events in cultural forms. Applied on forced migration, one typical narrative plot structure would be “happy life in homeland” – “violence makes people leave” – “arduous journey into safety” – “difficult arrival and slow integration into new home” (Tiews, 2015; Niven, 2014). The analysis will argue that these patterns can be found across different media genres and migration cases.

Hoskins and Tulloch (2016:26-33) call it “commemorative cycles” or “iterations”, while Zelizer speaks of journalistic “templates” (2002). She argues in her comparison of photographic coverage of 9/11 and concentration camp liberations that journalism maintains historical templates, perpetuating their functions (ibid.). Therefore, the analysis will look for these meta-narrative continuities in the mediation of migration, arguing according to Zelizer (2002) that these perpetuations of a media culture of migration mean that ultimately “in seeing what seems like more we in fact see less” (ibid.:66).

This idea of continuous reconstructions of memories through pre- and remediations – central in the analysis here – ultimately connects to Rothberg’s (2009:3) concept of *multidirectional memory*, a site of ongoing negotiation through borrowing and cross-referencing. In mediated public spheres, different groups’ memories are not competitive, but multidirectional, according to Rothberg, meaning that creative dynamic transfers take place

affecting identity politics. Hence, also shared memories of different migrations enter a “back-and-forth movement [...] in and out of public consciousness” (ibid.:17), not fighting for scarce public recognition, but being multidirectional in dialogic interactions. This malleability of mediated memory discourses leads to Erll’s (2008) final idea of plurimedial networks at play; different media create contexts for memories through cross-referencing.

### *The national dimension of memory cultures*

Understanding memories as social practices of meaning-making among communities, means understanding them as cultures. Drawing on Assmann’s (2008) *cultural memory*, the meaning for the remembering groups arises through the cultural conventions, the ways of doing and making memory. They make the stored cultural memory understandable as social memory (Erll & Nünning, 2008:3).

One important way for doing this is the national frame. In globalized and transnational settings, the nation still prevails as a central factor in community practices in the late modern era (Billig, 1995; Mihelj, 2011). The inclusion of memory cultures in the explanation of nation building processes through mediation is essential, demonstrated by Anderson’s (1991) study of *imagined communities*. This imagination – aligning with mnemonic imagination – of communities happens through references to a common past. So, for this study, the question arises how national memory cultures are challenged by (transnational) migrant memories?

Thinking memory cultures from a nationalism perspective requires an understanding of nation as constructed through discourse and narrative. Bhabha’s (1990) concept of “nations as narrations” points at the construction of historical continuity through “national objects of knowledge” (ibid.:3), offering timeless and irrational frames of identification, just like Nora’s (1997) *lieux de mémoire*. This understanding nationalist practices through discursive practices is picked up in Billig’s (1995) idea of *banal nationalism*, describing the mundane, everyday reproduction of nationalist “beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices” (ibid.:5) central to Western societies. The construction’s continuity is provided by memory cultures, which function like reminders, Billig argues. Memory cultures “transmit past grammars and semantics” (ibid.:43), adding a nationalism perspective to the concepts of premediation and templates of mediating the past.

Acknowledging the relevance of the national in the study of memory cultures raises tensions when combining it with migration. How is the nation a space for memory cultures of migratory communities and how is migration incorporated or not into narratives of national memories? Migrants transgress national borders and imaginaries, as well as borderlines of “us” and “them”. In an article about diasporic memories within national memory cultures in Germany, Huyssen (2003a) points at the exclusion of migrant communities from cultural memory, posing the question if migrants must also “migrate into the history of the host nation” (Huyssen, 2003a:154) as a form of integration. So, the question remains: How are migrant memories incorporated in Germany’s memory culture – toward a migration historical memory culture?

### **Narrativity of memory**

The descriptions of mediated memory above demonstrated that cultural forms of story-telling are a crucial element in the creation of shared cultural memories. This can be underscored by theories of narratives and discourses; they bring us further in understanding *how* memories of migration are mediated. Building on the framework of re-narrativization presented by Sturken (1997), a glance at narratology reveals how memories are a field of discursive “struggle” (Foucault, 1977:22).

“Narrative [...] is what results from the effort to make real or imagined events and objects meaningful in relation to one another” (Puckett, 2016:2). This definition provides a basis for understanding narratives in relation to memories: experiences of “real or imagined events” (cf. mnemonic imagination) are put into a (premediated, conventional) structure which mediates meaning about migration.

This discussion of (mis)representation is taken up by Ricoeur. In his work on *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) he extensively discusses the relationships between mnemonic practices and their translation into historiography. In his study of the genesis of historical knowledge, Ricoeur distinguishes between three interplaying phases: documentary (testimony and archives of memories), explanation/understanding (modeling process of history, explaining causes and lawfulness) and representation/narrativization, which I will elaborate on now. Based on documented testimonies and memories of

witnesses we have trust toward, the historian ties together layers of meanings and explanations of events and actors into narrative configurations – very similar to what media do in mediation processes of shared cultural memories. Ricoeur (2004:243) conceptualizes the role of the narrative as the

“coordination between multiple events or between causes, intentions and also accidents within a single meaningful unity. The plot is the literary form of this coordination. It consists in guiding complex action from an initial situation to a terminal one by means of rule-governed transformations [...] within the framework of narratology.”

He thereby describes the process of arranging the results of the understanding/explaining phase of historiography according to rhetorical concerns of readability and visibility. Narratives produce coherence and closure through the “emplotment” of events and characters. Identified events and actors are encoded into narratives by certain schemata and rules for emplotment, but also historical imagination and inventions (ibid.:251-253). Again, this echoes the descriptions of mediated memories above: in the idea of story-telling, the politics of selecting and mnemonic imagination. Ricoeur connects this notion of historical narrative to representation (in a sense of “representation”), which he sees as “standing for” the events and characters that existed before.

Taking these ideas of narrative representation of history based on memories into a media context, we have to replace “historian” with “media”: Media make narrative configurations of past events and characters, too. Narrativization according to Ricoeur (2004:246) has an “integrative function” by being a “switching point between structure and event”, thereby creating a relevant meaning for the event in the present. That easily resonates with the view on mediated memories above. Ricoeur’s views on narratives of history in a fluid zone between factuality and fictionality are applicable for the kind of mediated narratives of migration history I am looking for here. The question is, hence, how media compile different narrative strands about migration history, based on mediated memories (testimonies), into narrative configurations, which re-present migration history.

## **Conclusion: media – memory – migration**

The triangle of media, memory and migration carved out the lacuna and research goal of this thesis: the mediation of migration history, which is seen as memory culture within a national frame of Germany. The research objects are mediated renarrativizations of different migrations, converging into templates through mediation. These mediations of shared cultural memories, both for the host society and newcomers, affect the representation and thereby inclusion of migrants and refugees over time; the mediated historicizing of contemporary migrations revitalizes national memory cultures of migration history. This theoretical outlook combined with the empirical data analysis from two different periods in time offers valuable new perspectives on how mediations of migration are historically continuous and repetitive, because memory cultures create symbolic references to migration history. By that the argument is threefold, echoing the research questions:

Firstly, memory cultures build culturally schematic, conventional narratives and discourses of migration history. Next, these shared cultural memories are re-narrativized in contemporary mediations of migration. They, thus, can create mnemonic imagination as well as power imbalances through inclusion and exclusion from mediated space. And thereby finally, media representations of migration in general become historically repetitive and continuous, because memories produce social knowledge about what migration means in society.

By looking at two strikingly similar periods of condensed societal communication about migration into Germany (1991-1994 and 2015-2017), an argument can be made about the repetitiveness of migration discourses and narratives. The concepts of memory culture and narratives, as outlined here, can explain how the media's referral to Germany's migration history is part of contemporary mediations of migration. Ultimately, this migration historical media culture, in the form of narrative patterns of telling migration memories, affects how the story of refugees and migrants is told today.



# Methods and methodology

## **Social constructionism and cultural theory**

Studying narratives of history is rooted in social constructivism. As Hacking stated, no construction has to be as it is (1999:6). Hence, the task is, following Luckmann (2008:282), to reconstruct data (narratives of migration history) and preserve them as constructs in their meaningfulness and contextual historicity. Also Burr (2015:2-5) underscores the necessity of situated knowledge in scientific enquiry in order to understand social processes behind the data and question taken-for-granted assumptions. Concepts of migration, its history and its political ramifications are socially constructed in the mediation of memories – an analysis of narratives and discourses can uncover how media produce and perpetuate these meanings.

Secondly, the title promises a study of “memory cultures”. The contextual understanding of migration history as negotiated in mediations, is very much based in cultural theory. Fornäs (1995) in his account of late modernity puts communication and symbols central to his understanding of culture; these “flows of culture” (ibid.:7) are highly dynamic, being based on complex intersubjective encounters through symbols. Here, a methodological framework can be extracted: The task is to uncover “roots” and “routes” (ibid.:3) of culture, which has symbolic communication at its core. Mediations of migration history, understood as a space of contested meanings, are communicative, intersubjective encounters involving commonalities and differences in the web of culture.

## **Data gathering and sampling**

The data corpus comprises 65 newspaper articles<sup>22</sup>, 63 TV-clips/shows (only 2015-2017), 6 radio-clips/shows one online multimedia-platform, and 42 archive sources from NDR<sup>23</sup> in Hamburg (see appendix). This is no

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<sup>22</sup> 38 from 2015-2017, 27 from 1991-1994

<sup>23</sup> NDR (North German Broadcasting station) is a public service broadcaster (part of the federal ARD) and produces regionally and nation-wide broadcasted TV programs.

representative sample, as the goal is to trace narratives and discourses across the media landscape in both studied periods. Rather the sampling strategy is orientated at the approach Sturken (1997) or Hoskins & Tulloch (2016) take: media material which features mnemonic practices about migration was chosen rather freely, no exact outlets were defined and only the general timeframes of the two periods (2015-2017 and 1991-1994) were applied. Memory cultures in media are cross-referencing, premediating and remediating across the media ensemble. The goal is to trace the mosaic structure of narratives and discourses, hence free sampling.

At first, the online archives of ARD, ZDF<sup>24</sup>, Der Spiegel and DIE ZEIT<sup>25</sup> were gone through with combinations of keywords: “(im)migration”, “flight/escape”, “expulsion”, “guestworkers”, “history”<sup>26</sup>. Next, an extended Google<sup>27</sup> search was conducted for both periods with the same words, from which pieces from other outlets<sup>28</sup> were added to the corpus. Based on the title and short descriptions it could be seen if historical migrations are significantly mentioned in the media text. Last, in a circular way of data collection more material based on the already found content was added during the analysis<sup>29</sup>.

For the 1990s, TV-sources were gathered from the NDR-archive in Hamburg. For their database the same keywords were applied to generate lists

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Therefore, the findings here can actually only give an insight into what was shown on TV about migration history. For a full overview and probably stronger sampling, all TV archives of ARD would have to be visited. However, the material here is already rich enough to be analyzed for the questions asked here.

<sup>24</sup> These are both the public service broadcasters. ARD is federally organized, consisting of nine regional broadcasting stations (TV and radio). The online archive gives results from all channels, ARD operates. ZDF is the second public service broadcaster and only offers one TV channel.

<sup>25</sup> Both of them are weekly news magazines, important on national level. Their online archive delivers results from both the magazine and the online page.

<sup>26</sup> In German: „Einwanderung“, „Migration“, „Flucht“, „Vertreibung“, „Gastarbeiter“, „Geschichte“

<sup>27</sup> For all online searches I am aware that personalized algorithms affect the results. Most of the material however stems from online archives of the public service stations and print outlets, where this is less of a problem, as key words clearly define what results come up.

<sup>28</sup> Welt, Focus, Tagesspiegel, managermagazin, Huffington Post, ntv, Stern

<sup>29</sup> For example, for chapter 6.1. about the drama movie “Landgericht” (ZDF, 30.1.2017) reviews were googled for.

of relevant broadcasts. The extended information was printed out and some shows were watched there.

## **Narrative and discourse analysis**

The aim of the textual analysis is to map out how across the media ensemble migration history is re-narrativized within different “patterns of discursive argument” (Hoskins & Tulloch, 2016:52). Based on Altheide’s and Schneider’s (2013) approach of document analysis for qualitative media studies, the following steps were undertaken.

Open coding was conducted during data immersion, looking for repetitive narrativizations within the accounts of migration history. The process is based on an analysis of media text around formats, frames, themes and discourses (ibid.:50-55). The focus herein lay on finding out what is said about previous migrations in which ways and by whom, inspired by Hoskins and Tulloch (2016:54) speaking of “templates [which] act as powerful memorial trajectories and are routinely employed by television news and other media to forge visual [or textual] schema”. The data was questioned for repetitive discursive statements and emplotment structures about the different mentioned migration cases.

This discourse-analytical level is oriented at Landwehr’s (2008) *historical discourse analysis*. Based in a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, this approach applies the analysis of the speakable and its implied power structures to historical studies, in order to provide “access to a history of truth, reality and knowledge<sup>30</sup>” (ibid.:96). Central to his approach is the extensive inclusion of context into the analysis of texts on a micro- and macro-level, from which the entanglements of statements, discourses and their subjective actors become discernible. Thus, processes of remembering and forgetting can be revealed (ibid.:128). This approach is applied by asking what social knowledge about migration was produced through memory in both periods. What is remembered by whom? What questions are even asked about migration history? What connotations does certain terminology have?<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Translated by the author.

<sup>31</sup> Thereby, this concept of discourse analysis is not a Critical Discourse Analysis or linguistic study of media discourses; rather a basic, yet in its foundation Foucauldian understanding

Concerning narrative analysis, this thesis roots in Ricoeur's (2004) conceptualizations, focuses on the content of narrations and the patterns of narrativization<sup>32</sup>: The data has been coded asking what is being said about migrations by whom and how these memories are emplotted into narratives in the media. Then, showing the repetitiveness and continuity of historically framed mediation of migration, the open codes were gathered into different narrative strands (meta-narratives) of migration history.

Following De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012), the analysis will extensively embed the narratives in contextual knowledge, when finding out what is said by whom about what migration. This leads to a discussion of power, authority, truth and credibility. To operationalize this, the analysis scrutinizes power constellations by coding who can voice their memories. Accounts of memories, e.g. by contemporary witnesses, enjoy increased credibility drawing on the primacy of their experiences (ibid.:137-141). They can be joined by experts (historians) or journalists and editorial control of the medium affecting the narrative. On that basis, dominating, potentially hegemonic, narrative frames can develop, unifying experiences for the collective and potentially suppressing others (cf. "cultural schemata" or "templates"); these will be called meta-narratives here.

Media are platforms where this consensus materializes in perpetuated emplotments of events. These eventually become dominant master-narratives: certain cultural plots about specific migration cases, which other narrativizations draw from (ibid.:143-150). They are constantly reproduced (pre- and remediated) and resisted against, just as the contested understanding of memory. Hence, it is asked what dominant structures emerge in the mnemonic accounts. Regarding the "how" of narrativization, or rhetorical strategies of narratives, Feldmann and Almquist (2016) propose a model for analyzing the implicit in narratives. Rhetorical features of storylines are looked at to find syllogism (implied logical conclusions) which are used to make an argument. This operationalizes the question how implications about

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of discourse as "what can be and is said and known when about what" is added to the narrative analysis.

<sup>32</sup> Unlike for example types that analyze patterns of story-telling as such or linguistic discursive approaches, focusing on how narrators construct identities through audiences (Holstein/Gubrium, 2012).

contemporary events, or mnemonic imagination, is part of the underlying argument structures, that media use in historical accounts.

Concludingly, the narrative and discourse analysis undertaken here is a combination of different approaches. Through a qualitative media text analysis, meta- and master-narrative strands as well as textual and visual narrativization techniques are identified and then embedded in contextual knowledge. Thus, the construction of a migration historical memory culture through mediated communication can be demonstrated, showing what and how media re-narrativize migration in repetitive and continuous ways.

## Narratives and discourses of migration history in german media in 1991-1994 and 2015-2017

“We shouldn’t get tired of publicly explaining that, historically, migration is no exception, but normality.

The idea that humans should live settled and home-loving, cozy and determined by a dominant culture – that is simply not in line with the realities of large phases of history.”

(Historian Dirk van Laak; ZEIT, 23.2.2017)

In the analysis of mnemonic narratives of migration, this thesis dares to think experiences of manifold historical migrations together. The fundamental argument, based on the theorization of mediated memory cultures above, is that the divergence of different population movements becomes re-narrativized and remediated in rather convergent ways, which historically frame contemporary migration. The following two chapters will trace these convergent narrative patterns, showing how in two time frames media have historicized migration in repetitive, cultural schemata. These conventional “templates” serve as historical frameworks in the mediation of migration. The structure of this chapter follows the articulation of migration historical narrative patterns identified across the empirical material – be it factual or fictional, press or TV, drama or witness reports.

These patterns follow the chronological order of any migration process: BEFORE – DURING – AFTER. Cinema critic Georg Sleenen wrote in an essay about the “grammar of the ‘refugee movie’” (2016):

“The drama of escape can be described in five acts. The first one shows the unbearable in life stories and the escalation of the situation, enforcing to flee. The second one is about farewell, the third about the dangers of the escape between adventures and tragedies. The fourth one tells about arrival, the fifth one finally about successful or failing attempts to find a new home.”

Supported by the data, this is not only true for fictional cinema. Other mnemonic narrativizations of migration happen along these storylines, too. Some of these “acts” are always part of remediated migration history, told by either migrants or observers. Therefore, the subchapters will deal with narratives and discourses (1) about reasons for migration - anything BEFORE packing the suitcase – (2) about experiences DURING the journey itself: leaving and moving, (3a) about the experience of arriving and coping with integrating AFTER the migration from the migrant’s point of view and (3b) about meanings of arrival and “integration” from the receiving society’s perspective. In the analyzed media, different cases of German migration history are told within these “acts”, functioning as meta-narrative strands.

In chapter 6, two case studies of single media texts (a docudrama and a TV-documentary) will in-depth illustrate the main arguments: Mediated re-narrativizations of different migration cases create recognizable, repetitive schemata of telling the story of migrants and refugees. By this, mnemonic imagination in connection to contemporary migration can be facilitated, while at the same time national framing and repetitive patterns reduce diverse migration history. The following subchapters will show the mosaic of different meta-narratives across migration cases and in both time periods. Applying the concepts of *premediation* and *remediation* as well as *mnemonic imagination* will show that.

## BEFORE: reasons for migration

Every relocation happens for a reason, shaping the entire experience of migration. These motivations for leaving are discursively the basis for legal migrant categories, such as “forced” or “labor” migration. Explanations of reasons for resettlement are central to almost every mnemonic account, forming the meta-narrative scheme BEFORE based on a narrativized causal relationship: Across the material, different “push-factors” are brought up, in accordance with the dominating discursive master-narrative about the specific migration case.

For example, most re-narrativizations of Flight and Expulsion include a causal relation to German war crimes in Eastern Europe, like this typical quote exemplifies:

“Up to 14 million Germans lost their homeland in 1945. Their expulsion was the consequence of the barbaric German occupational rule during World War Two.” (ZEIT, 12.2.2015)<sup>33</sup>

This master-narrative connects with the “relative victimhood” discourse, described in 2.3., explaining what events led to the expulsion, but not leaving out German war crimes<sup>34</sup>. Many accounts mention revenge for German atrocities by the Red Army, which the German population fled from. In retelling the expulsions, violence against Germans is given as a reason, e.g. called “violence excesses” (BR, 3.11.2016).

Another key example drawn on in this narrative are Jews who fled the Nazi regime<sup>35</sup>. There, Germany is framed as a refugee sending country, drawing on mnemonic imagination to give legitimacy and moral obligation to host refugees today. The same narrative framework of persecution can also be

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<sup>33</sup> All quotes have been translated by the author.

<sup>34</sup> Also for example put forward in a ZDF-documentary (8.5.2016) called “*Meeting history: Germany '45*” about Flight and Expulsion, where the connection to the Holocaust is discussed and the narrator asks a witness: “*Are you allowed to be a victim?*”, which demonstrates the discourse.

<sup>35</sup> For example: NDR, 23.5.1993 (documentary about Jewish childhood in Nazi Germany)

found in the tales of the Huguenots, fleeing pogroms and receiving refuge in Germany<sup>36</sup>.

This shows how political, religious or ethnic persecution are, in the narratives, causes for forced migration; they dominate the narrativizations about reasons for escape, giving evidence of an obvious reason for leaving. BEFORE-narratives negotiate the legitimacy of migration from the receiving society's perspective and thereby include a value-judgment into the discourse. Explaining what motivated certain groups to move is the basis for the degree of empathy they are met with (the "welcome culture").

This can also be found in accounts of GDR-refugees<sup>37</sup>. Their discourse is part of a Cold War context: In the master-narrative "Mauerflüchtlinge" [wall refugees] decided to break free from communism/socialism, preferring the more successful and truly free capitalist Western system (cf. Hamann (2008) showed that connection). Inner-German migration during the 1950s (before the wall) was coined a "vote by foot"<sup>38</sup>. Escaping communism perfectly fitted the new post-war definitions of political refugees – negotiating the legitimacy of migration here too.

Discursively, these discussions about reasons are negotiations of legitimacy and victimhood. They affect the degree of welcome-ness, which materializes in used terminology, ranging from "refugee" over "expellee" to "migrant", which imply imaginaries of their plights. These reasons are narrated in memories of the guestworkers or contract workers, too. Here, however, poverty, unemployment and the state-organized hiring from Germany caused the migration – maybe a less dramatic reason than persecution, and therefore not as present in the data. Typically, their immigration is linked to purely economic needs:

"Because work force was scarce in economic-miracle-land, suddenly thousands came, and with them integration problems." (NDR, 3.2.1992)

"They left their poor country for our economic miracle." (SWR, 2.10.2016)

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<sup>36</sup> For example: SWR2, 23.12.2015

<sup>37</sup> In total around 4,6 million people left the GDR between 1949 and 1990 (Martens, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> For example: Spiegel, 18.7.2015; HR, 3.10.2016 about inner-German border area



In a NDR-documentary (6.6.1993) images of deprived Anatolia recount the Turks' decision to escape poverty by approaching the German recruitment center in Istanbul. This is one of the few examples where the guestworkers' situation back home was given as a reason at all, and not only Germany's attractiveness. Generally, in 1991/1992 guestworkers were remembered more often within the 30-year anniversary of the recruitment contracts<sup>39</sup>. Here, the master-narrative is an economic, capitalist one of migrating work force pushed by poverty and pulled by Germany's "economic miracle". In contrast, the migration of the Vietnamese contract workers in the GDR<sup>40</sup> negotiates a different legitimacy by linking it to the Vietnam war, such as in an episode of "Fremde Heimat Deutschland"<sup>41</sup> about the individual example Thinh Nguyen-Do<sup>42</sup>, who shares his war memories and escaping military service.

In conclusion, this first episode shows how regardless of different migrations, similar meta-narrativizations about causes of relocation appear, however adapted to their contexts. The way migration reasons are re-narrativized depends on the master-narrative of the cases, and thereby on the importance that is attached to telling why relocation was necessary within the narrative. On a discourse level, victimhood and legitimacy are negotiated, which either implicitly or explicitly affect how the narrative about arriving and integration continues.

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<sup>39</sup> NDR, 3.12.1991; NDR, 26.9.1991; NDR, 3.2.1992

<sup>40</sup> Stories of the Vietnamese are in general much more present during the 90s, which is due to the xenophobic attacks against them, directing the media's attention to their situation.

<sup>41</sup> This 5-part series [Foreign Homeland Germany] aired in fall of 1994 and introduces 5 individual migrants in Germany, which are interviewed about their experiences of migration, arrival and life in Germany by actor and TV-host Rolf Becker.

<sup>42</sup> This person appears in different programs astonishingly often.

## **DURING: experience of the journey**

The next “act” of any migratory movement is the journey itself: leaving behind the old home and getting to a new one. This “act” incorporates experiences of humiliation, loss and victimhood, especially for Flight and Expulsion, which is the prevailing case for this part in the data<sup>43</sup>:

“Many refugees and expellees were traumatized. Not only had they lost their home, also were they victims of violence. Approaching Red Army soldiers raped thousands of women and later on at the expulsions abuse and murder happened. Being uprooted, many of the homeless didn’t manage to begin from zero. At times resulting in suicide.” (Spiegel, 1.4.2016)

The arduous journey of refugees is the central element of DURING. These memories are centrally based on accounts of oral witnesses, usually memories of violence and suffering on the trip. Witness reports (individuals representing the fate of an entire group through their account) are used as authentic deliverers of the past experience, giving testimony of their plight. They communicate with an alleged trust – an important part of mediation processes. Ashuri and Pinchevski (2009) provide a concept of mediated witnessing, understanding it as a contested field of struggle (aligning with the memory concepts above). Historical discourses and trust affect how mediators translate witness accounts into media structures. The material here proves how important witness accounts are for media narratives, like in these two examples (about Flight and Expulsion and a Cameroonian refugee), giving “authentic” evidence:

“Then the Czech police came and said you have to get out. Then we left with our handcart, put the essentials on it. Then we went to the station and were loaded into open wagons.” (MDR, 26.5.2016)

“And immediately abroad, to another African country. First to Nigeria, by foot, through the forest, for weeks, until you got somewhere safe...we were a group of around 50...I was 15.” (NDR, 1.12.1994)

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<sup>43</sup> For example: ZEIT, 22.5.1992; Deutschlandradio Kultur, 10.10.2015; ZDF, 8.5.2016 (documentary about suffering and violence on the escape from Eastern Prussia and Silesia)

The journey itself, regardless of the specific case, is told as a physically and emotionally straining experience, leaving strong memories for the affected. Often, narrativizations of DURING center around the iconified means of travel: boat, train or by foot (trail) with a handcart. For Flight and Expulsion certain specific events prevail within this episode. Röger (2011:308-309) already showed in her study that memory discourses are dominated by the most extreme happenings, such as the trail over the frozen lagoon in Eastern Prussia or the sinking of the passenger ship *Gustloff* in January 1945<sup>44</sup>. It is mentioned alongside many accounts of harsh westward trails on foot, train rides or boat trips<sup>45</sup> roughly between 1944 and 1950. Often the witnesses appearing in the media were children back then, such as the author of this report:

“For two days we sat on the train. Shortly after we had left, a man who sat directly next to Emma, threw up on her. It stank so abominably, I could hardly breath. Emma was sobbing the entire night on my shoulder.” (Huffington Post, 31.7.2015)

The article’s title “Before you judge refugees you should know this story” directly draws an argumentative link between this description and today through mnemonic imagination.

Moreover, exhausting and traumatizing journeys in the accounts often stand alongside the experience of total loss of property. E.g., in an online multimedia story produced by BR (2016) about migration history, in the beginning the sound effects in the background include an African accent saying: “Our house is burnt. We have nothing now”. Narratives of loss can again be found across many cases of migration, e.g. again about Flight and Expulsion:

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<sup>44</sup> The cruise liner *Gustloff* was sunk by a Soviet submarine on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1945. The ship left Gotenhafen in Eastern Prussia toward West, totally overcrowded, with around 10.000 people on board. It was one of the last possibilities to escape from the proceeding Red Army, as the Nazi regime had so far forbidden evacuation. Around 9.000 people are estimated to have drowned (Wagener, 2015). This story has been found entrance into a variety of factual and fictional accounts in media and popular culture (Tiews, 2017). E.g. NDR, 23.10.1993.

<sup>45</sup> For example: NDR, 5.9.1993 (documentary about the ship “Goya”, which was sunk by a Soviet submarine off the coast of Eastern Prussia in 1945, killing thousands of refugees).

"They don't have much, no toys, are often relocated. Sometimes more welcome, sometimes less." (NDR, 24.10.2016)

In the accounts of GDR-refugees, this narrative pattern has a different focus<sup>46</sup>. Instead of extreme suffering, here the spectacular aspect prevails, be it accounts of tunnel digging, taking a balloon or swimming across the border. This example basically tells a story of human trafficking in a positive tone, again based on the Cold War idea of the "good" refugees escaping socialism:

"Wild chases, strict controls: how a Berlin barkeeper smuggled GDR-refugees over the border [...] Often the traffickers had more luck than sense. Their trick [...] was simple: a messenger got in touch with potential refugees in the GDR, revealed himself with a password ("Jutta says hello") and told them the escape date and meeting point." (Spiegel, 5.1.2015)

These re-narrativizations tell a spectacular story of dangerous escapes. They also include accounts of getting shot at the inner-German border ("Mauertote" [wall dead])<sup>47</sup>. This is both part of the Cold War frame, adding to the illegitimate violence and suffering accounts, while at the same time it underscores the spectacle narrative.

In general, narrations of DURING use a more dramatic, but thereby empathy provoking language:

"Escape via the Baltic Sea is deemed the safest route out of the inferno." (NDR, 23.10.1993)

"It was the biggest mass exodus since antiquity." (Welt, 19.5.2015)

Whether the words are suitable or not – they ascribe meaning to the migrations talked about and relate their historical dimensions to the present. Again, master-narratives about individual migrations influence which episodes are remembered most predominantly here. Similarly over both time

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<sup>46</sup> For example: ZDF, 15.3.2016 (documentary about 10 turning points in German history, one of them being partition)

<sup>47</sup> For example: NDR, 7.8.2016 (documentary clip about 10 people shot at the wall in 1963); HR, 3.10.2016 (documentary about inner-German border area between Thuringia and Hesse).

periods, experiences DURING the journey are re-narrativized, using trustworthy witnesses giving mnemonic evidence of arduous fates, violence, loss of home and exhausting journeys. As Ricoeur (2004) elaborated, testimony of witnesses is basis for historical narratives. They provide empathetic access through narrativization of experiences, discursively negotiating legitimacy and compassion for historical migrants and refugees, which are a mirror for contemporary ones through mnemonic imagination. The same converging, but recognizable meta-narrative of dangerous relocation and loss of property and home is enacted within the respective master-narratives of migration cases, as the differences between Flight and Expulsion and GDR-refugees show.

### **AFTER I: arrival from the migrants' perspective**

Thirdly, any migration leads to a new home, confronting migrants with new demands. However, memories of arrival, settling in, or the term “integration” look different from the migrants’ or the receiving society’s point of view. The newcomer’s perspective is presented first.

The most common thread mentioned about all migrations in the corpus is the experience of a cold welcome, outright rejection and racism. Remediating this provides a historical framework for understanding the same experience in the present, as e.g. this Flight and Expulsion example:

“Rejection, defamation and pure hate were common until the late 1950s...Jakob Fischbacher, founding member of the Bavarian Party, considered it a ‘blood shame’, when a local farmer marries a ‘northern German blonde’ and wanted to send the Prussians ‘to Siberia right away’. A wine farmer [...] went even further: ‘You refugees all go to Auschwitz!’” (Deutschlandradio, 24.8.2016)

Especially remembering how Germans rejected other Germans<sup>48</sup>, is an often-used rhetorical device for drawing mnemonic parallels to today, as the title of the radio feature quoted above demonstrates: “Expellees back then, refugees

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<sup>48</sup> Historian Andreas Kossert (2008) coined the term “cold home” (Kalte Heimat) for this experience of the expellees in the post-war years.

today”. This meta-narrative template enables historical comparison by arguing the experiences today are the same.

Also other groups share this experience, put forward e.g. by an Italian guestworker:

“‘Spaghetti-glutton’, ‘knife man’, that hurts...My first girlfriend worked in another hotel. Her mum slapped her in the face and said: if you keep seeing an Italian, you mustn’t come home anymore. Summer ‘62.” (SWR, 2.10.2016)<sup>49</sup>

or a Russo-German, writing: “We Russo-Germans were regarded criminal drunkards in the 90s” (ZEIT, 21.4.2016). Harsh treatment is a continuous part of the narratives, whereas experiences of arrival are more diverse, yet still repetitive: Housing is an issue: difficulties of having accommodation in the beginning (many expellee-accounts remember being assigned to farms or shacks<sup>50</sup>), being put into shack settlements (especially guestworkers (SWR, 2.10.2016)), or the formation of ghetto-type, secluded areas (often in the memory of the Russo-Germans and of Vietnamese contract workers (NDR, 17.11.1994)). Multiple elements like these form the mosaic of arrival memories under the umbrella of the meta-narrative of difficulties of arriving.

In many narrativizations a continued feeling of loss, of “we have no home left”<sup>51</sup>, is connected to efforts to succeed in the new home. Many mention the will to “make it” and remember it as an incentive to work hard and learn the language – negotiations of what integration means. Aspirations of succeeding are often connected to economic welfare and being integrated through a job. What role language and culture obstacles played for integration is accounted for by this Spanish guestworker:

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<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, a German expellee remembers the exact same experience: “My husband’s relatives, they took long in accepting that he married a refugee girl. Was like that” (BR, 3.11.2016).

<sup>50</sup> For example: ZDF, 8.5.2016; BR2, 21.6.2015

<sup>51</sup> For example: a GDR-refugee in rbb, 13.11.2016

“The beginning was hard, we couldn’t communicate. To ask for bread or other things. We had to point.’ – But the family man still, over 50 years later, hardly speaks German. How can that be? – [daughter]: ‘The background is simply that his colleagues were also foreigners. They were Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Italians. That were the languages that he mostly heard. Dad learned to speak Italian and Portuguese fluently. And he knows basic Greek...and broken German’ – Luis Conde Santana considers himself a Laubenheimian of Spanish descent.” (SWR, 2.10.2016)

These re-narrativizations of integration and its hurdles show the relevance of the migrants’ voice in these discourses. In the examples, they are granted the mediated space to remember those difficulties. Their voiced memories form one contesting narrative strand of complex recollections of what arrival entails for them.

Moreover, the last quote exemplifies the construction of identity in mnemonic narratives of arrival. Discourses of integration from the migrants’ perspective focus on struggles of identity and recognition between two places. Often this problem seems put on them by either the media (e.g. question of the interviewer, first example) or by society (second example) – but still reported by themselves<sup>52</sup>:

“Did you grow up in Germany or in Turkey?’ – ‘I’m a Hamburger, a Hamburg boy<sup>53</sup>!’” (NDR, 15.12.1994)

“The Russo-Germans found out: We can declare all the time to be German, but we’ll still not be welcome. So they did, what they were best at: not stand out. They practiced that in the Soviet Union.” (ZEIT, 21.4.2016)

In the second example, integration is remembered as managing to not “stand out”, rather a definition of assimilation. Later in that piece the author realizes that accepting the own difference is actual “integration”.

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<sup>52</sup> For example: Spiegel, 7.6.1993; rbb, 16.10.2016 (documentary about “guestworker children: more than just Germans”)

<sup>53</sup> In original: “Hamburger Jung”, a local dialect expression for an inhabitant of Hamburg, fairly patriotic.

Concludingly, these discourses around meanings of arrival and integration from the migrants' perspective first and foremost show how complex and specific this experience can be. Although the same meta-narrative strands (racism, loss, old home, adapting and identity) come up across the corpus, it strikes how detailed they can vary in individual cases. There is no clear master-narrative for each migrant group (as was more the case in 5.1. and 5.2.), but rather differentiated meta-narratives of the same experiences in each case, which the media however still pick in a convergent way by repetitively addressing these topics across the data. Memory is more malleable here, contested and mosaic-like. Through mediation in German platforms memories of arrival by migrants are mostly told by individual witnesses. Therefore, they are very dependent on what is asked and how it is actually contextualized in a TV-show or print piece. No community media were analyzed here, so that the selection of these arrival memories is very much a power question: what is publicly remembered here still must be understood as affected from mediation processes from a German perspective. This inherent power imbalance is exemplified by the documentary "Luckily Germany – A different view on our country" (WDR, 29.12.2016), whose title reveals this double perspective: Selected immigrants from different countries and periods tell about their positive or jokingly awkward experiences in Germany, allegedly showing that "when Germans want to, they can be fantastic" (ibid.). Having voice to mediate memories of migration in the media hence is a power struggle of inclusion and exclusion – and thereby sets the limits for mnemonic imagination.

## **AFTER II: arrival from the receiving society's perspective**

The contested memory of "integration" becomes more visible in opposition to media texts from the receiving society perspective. Here, mnemonic imagination is drawn upon by remembering arrival and integration in purely economic and national terms – again, across all cases of migration.

The most common thread is framing integration with a neoliberal, capitalist discourse: Put bluntly, integration is understood as contributing to economy and helping to increase societal welfare. Most re-narrativizations of Flight and Expulsion, for instance, stress the essential contribution the 8 million



expellees in West Germany made for the “economic miracle”<sup>54,55</sup> – a key point of post-war West-German self-identification. On this basis, the narrative of Flight and Expulsion ends with a finished or “successful” (ZEIT, 12.2.2015) integration, made possible incredibly fast by unifying economic growth<sup>56</sup>. This alleged historical evidence is often taken even further, twisting it to be a guaranteed remedy for integration problems:

“Today, Germany stands economically relatively solid. Another ‘economic miracle’, which would comprise everyone and cover up faults, seems out of question. As long as integration and participation of migrants stays the societal goal, the slogan can only be ‘education, education, education’” (Deutschlandradio, 24.8.2016)

The economic influence is mentioned about every migrant group in the corpus<sup>57</sup>. Some examples measure the effects<sup>58</sup> and mostly tell a story of migrant communities being vital for German economy, like the TV-program “New consumers: Turks” (it is unfortunately not explained why they are “new” 30 years after their arrival):

“German economy gives to the Turks and takes back from them again...The economy has discovered the Turks in Germany as equal citizens, not for social but for commercial reasons.” (NDR, 12.9.1994)

Post-war migrations are often linked to the “economic miracle” discourse: GDR-refugees supported it and the guestworkers were only hired in the first place to make it possible, with the idea that they would go back home, making

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<sup>54</sup> This term refers to the period of post-war West Germany’s rapid economic boom and welfare increase. It’s a strong part of national memory.

<sup>51</sup> For example: MDR, 2016; ZDF, 15.9.2015

<sup>56</sup> For example: Welt, 19.5.2015; “Die großen Fluchten” (ZDF, 19.11.2016)

<sup>57</sup> For example: SWR, 2.10.2016 (documentary about guestworkers’ daughters who are making big careers now in Germany)

<sup>58</sup> For example: *managermagazin*, 8.1.2017; BR multimedia homepage, 2016; ZEIT, 7.2.1992; a ZEIT-article (1.9.2015) answering “What happened to the refugees of the 90s?” in solely economic terms

integration efforts irrelevant<sup>59</sup>. Lastly, even the Huguenots are re-narrativized as bringing new skills and industries<sup>60</sup>.

This discursive focus on work as a measurement for the “good immigrant” implicitly makes integration into something, which Germany has the right to demand; it is legitimate to ask migrants to make an effort. In the quote below the TV-narrator is in a position of judging the Vietnamese community’s success by comparing them to others from an assumed neutral position:

“The Vietnamese credo: Only education gets you off the rice field. No other immigrant group is more successful at school.” (ZDF, 10.7.2016)

This capitalist narrativization is often fluidly linked to a national understanding of integration. An underlying idea of assimilation, of foreigners becoming Germans, characterizes these mnemonic narratives, such as this example:

“Now German flags are next to Turkish ones in Berlin-Kreuzberg, German-Turks root for the German football team, Cologne fans wear Togo wigs, one could think: This integration exists, it works.” (Spiegel, 13.9.2016)

Connecting immigrants’ behavior to nationally charged symbols such as football is a measurement of integration here. This can even end in assimilation as an understanding of integration, such as the title of the talk show “Arrived to stay – how do immigrants become Germans?” (WDR, 18.4.2016) suggests. Part of this nationalized discussion of migration history is also the debate about citizenship laws, led equally passionately in the 90s and today. This links back to the overarching discussion about the “immigration country” – based in narratives about migration history. The re-narrativizations of integration and participation described here are the place where this negotiation happens.

By making migration history German history and connecting integration to German culture, state and economy, migration history is strongly nationally framed. Often celebrities are characters in narrativizations as rhetorical evidence of “good integration” or “positive refugees”, meaning that they

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<sup>59</sup> For example: SWR, 2.10.2016

<sup>60</sup> For example: SWR2, 23.12.2015

contributed to public interest or are part of national culture: Schlager-singer Helene Fischer<sup>61</sup>, who was born in Siberia, or people like Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein or Henry Kissinger, being Germans who had to flee the Nazi-regime and became German migrants contributing positively abroad. Renarrativizations of AFTER II focalize migration history to German history as the point of view migrants are looked at from.

Lastly, part of these “how it affects us”-narratives are accounts of criminality – due to “integration problems”. This quote shows how the argument of economic integration and criminality are tied together:

“Many Kurdish or Lebanese immigrants didn’t find access to work and education and thereby to German society. People instead searched for support in the family, therefore the famous clan structures with ancient mechanisms were reinstalled. On this basis, organized crime still exists today.” (Welt, 5.1.2016)

Hence, “integration” from this perspective means employment and no criminality. Compared to the complex experiences of arrival in the previous chapter, these narrativized definitions of the term are much more straightforward, less diverse and individual. By determining the meaning of this term, a top-down, almost judgmental constellation between receiving society and migrant groups emerges. The discursive struggle within the mnemonic narratives of arrival becomes evident in the opposition of the two perspectives, demonstrating the power question of mediated memory. National framing leads to selective exclusion and reduction of the migrants’ complex experiences.

## **Interim conclusion**

In a mosaic way, flows of migration historical memory culture happen through communication within the three strands BEFORE, DURING and AFTER, weaved together from individual accounts of witnesses, journalists or experts. Different memories become remediated in tangled schemata of narration and national, cultural contexts, across time and migration cases.

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<sup>61</sup> For example: ZDF, 15.9.2015

Merging sometimes more, sometimes less, they provide basis for a contested, yet shared cultural understanding of what migration means in society, being subject to discursive struggle, especially in case of arrival and integration. Juxtaposing the discourses of the 1990s and today shows that during both times of condensed communication about migration the historical topos is part of the discourse. Similar re-narrativizations appear across both time periods and across the different cases of migration. Remembering migration is historical itself.

In each part a meta-narrative (constructed in this analysis) became visible from different master-narratives of specific migrations. Media apply repetitive templates of narrativization (meta-narrative) and in the specific cases society and culture has certain dominant interpretations (master-narrative) that affect what is said about them. Deconstructing these narrativizations and discourses shows which aspects media focus on in the different episodes – and which migration cases are even mentioned. In the BEFORE and DURING phases, memories of forced migration (especially Flight and Expulsion, GDR-refugees) prevail, while AFTER emphasizes labor migration cases. Ultimately, the media texts make history rhetorical parts of their underlying argument structure in the present, drawing on potential mnemonic imagination of implicit comparison to today or empathy-creating elements. History and present can be connected in that way.

In the analysis of narrative techniques, the use of individual witnesses remembering their specific stories and giving authentic evidence of past truths is pivotal (cf. Ashuri & Pinchevski, 2009). One individual speaks for a collective experience, whether this generalization can be made or not. Experts or journalistic commentators organize the statements in the emplotment of the show or article. Thus, many mediations use the same argument structure: An implicit statement about today is made by using memory. A syllogism (Feldman & Almquist, 2016) of “A led to B before, therefore it will be identical today” is created through mnemonic imagination. This becomes visible e.g. in time-travelling terminology across accounts of different migrations (calling Huguenots “asylum seekers”), or in the memories of integration in AFTER II comparing economic policies across time and making arguments about refugee employment today. Making these time-crossing connections can both be problematic in twisting and limiting historical facts into fitting meta-narratives. At the same time recognizable schemata of narration are the basis for mnemonic imagination and potentially

empathy for refugees and migrants today, like in a Tagesspiegel-article (24.4.2015) called “Refugees back then and today. Ms Kiesewetter’s list”, where a German expellee compares her experiences with those of contemporary refugees in a systematic list.

It also turned out that migration history (as any historical narrative in the media) is told from two different standpoints: by affected remembering subjects themselves (witnesses, people with “first-hand-experiences” (Keightley & Pickering, 2012); especially examples in 5.2.) and by experts, mostly historians<sup>62</sup>, or journalists re-telling history from a bird perspective, claiming scientific credibility. Of course, both levels are entangled: different memory generators are cross-referencing in the mediated space and thereby create the narrative strands.

Finally, a central finding is the strong national framing of memory narratives, thus, constructing migration history as a part of national history. Memories of migrants and “facts” from (German) historians are at interplay in mediated spaces, where they are embedded in national discourses of Germany’s past. This results in a power question and discursive struggle of inclusion into the national memory. Ultimately, national framing, alongside the presented repetitive narrative strands with their recurring topics, emerged as templates or cross-referencing reiterations, which the media deploy – hence, mediated memory culture is arguably a basis for the mediation of migration in general.

## Case studies of mediated memories of migration

Finally, two TV-productions<sup>63</sup> will exemplify how the repetitive narrativization patterns work “in action”. Based in context, they show two main points: firstly, based on the narrative strands, how in plurimedial

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<sup>62</sup> For example: Jochen Oltmer (“Die großen Fluchten”, ZDF, 19.11.2016), Klaus J. Bade (ZDF, 15.9.2015), Michael Schwartz (BR, 3.11.2016), Andreas Kossert (ZEIT, 12.2.2015)

<sup>63</sup> Both case studies are from the “refugee crisis”-period, as access to entire shows or movies from the 1990s is connected with considerable access and cost complications. That does in no way mean that there is no material suitable for a deeper study. For instance, the mentioned 5-part series “Fremde Heimat Deutschland” [Foreign Homeland Germany] (NDR, 1994) would be a rich source for this research.

networks they create a mnemonically imagined, empathetic connection between historical migration and today; and secondly, how national framing raises questions about the power struggle of inclusion and voice of migrants in memory discourses.

### **Case study I: “Landgericht” (ZDF, 30.1.2017)**

This two-part drama movie<sup>64</sup> aired on ZDF on 30.1.2017 and 1.2.2017. The film about a half-Jewish family, who is scattered all over the world in World War Two and then has to cope in post-war West Germany, is a typical case of a “memory movie” according to Erll & Wodianka (2008): It resonates with a cultural memory through symbolic systems and is surrounded by plurimedial networks, making the link to migration memory. It tells the story of the Kornitzer family: Richard is a Jewish judge, Claire is an “Aryan” owner of an advertising firm, two children Georg and Selma. In 1938, after the November pogroms, they decide to send the children to the UK to protect them from the dawning Holocaust<sup>65</sup>. Exile due to immense anti-Semitism and the Shoah is the form of forced migration told in this movie: a traumatic experience of separation, loss of home and threatening genocide. Richard lost his employment as a judge, but manages to obtain a visa for Cuba, hoping he could let his family join. Claire, left alone in Germany, is raped by a Gestapo man, while they confiscate all valuables. She cannot leave the country and is assigned forced labor. When in 1947 she manages to find Richard, all family members, now “displaced persons”<sup>66</sup>, have built up new lives. He returns to his family, leaving behind a pregnant Cuban woman, but eager to reinstall justice in Germany. Claire visits the UK trying to get the children back. In the end, all attempts to rebuild the family fail. The 10-year separation, though

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<sup>64</sup> The meaning of the title is ambiguous. Firstly, it means “district court”. Literally, however, the compositum means “country court”, playing on the topic of the movie: guilt of a whole country, in which the Jewish protagonist is a judge.

<sup>65</sup> Around 10.000 Jewish children (Jewish according to the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935) were allowed to leave Germany in 1938 to Britain, mostly organized by Quakers. These “Kindertransporte” (Refugee Children Movement) offered the children exile in the care of host families (USHMM, 2017a).

<sup>66</sup> The category “displaced person” (DP) was introduced by the Allies in World War Two. It comprised people who were uprooted because of the war, mostly due to forced labor (alone around 11 million in Germany in order to keep up the war economy) (Bade, 2003:215).

assuring their survival, has estranged the family members from each other. The children stay in Britain feeling let down by their parents, the marriage is broken, and Richard despairs of continued Nazi structures in post-war Germany's justice system.

Part of the plot are all recognizable "acts" of forced migration: Several scenes present the extreme anti-Semitic persecution under the Nazi-regime as the reason for leaving. The children's train ride and sad farewell at the station as well as Richard's crossing to Cuba depict the journey and act of separation. Finally, the consequences of the exile are identity struggles (of the children), feeling uprooted and even foreign in the own home country after the return. But what more does this example tell about re-narrativized historical migration?

A glance at mediated communication around the movie, or the plurimedial networks (Erll & Wodianka, 2008), reveals the centrality of mnemonic imagination in the reading of this movie today. ZDF provides an entire homepage<sup>67</sup> with extra-material and historical facts, including interviews with producers and actors and a documentary (ZDF, 30.1.2017) about the real-life Kornitzer family – typical of a "memory movie", where fiction and historical documentary are entangled<sup>68</sup>. An individual case represents the fate of an entire group: "The Kornitzer family stands for many families with the same experience" (ZDF, 2017). The goal is clearly to convey historical knowledge via fictional entertainment, embedded in more factual material.

A video in the accompanying material, titled "Flight and Expulsion", discusses the timelessness of forced migration in the movie, connecting past and present. The editor ascribes the following meaning to the film:

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<sup>67</sup> <https://www.zdf.de/filme/landgericht> (last access: 10.5.2017), in corpus as ZDF, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> On the homepage this is pointed out directly: "Like the novel, the movie melts together documentary and fiction. In the two-partter, director Matthias Glasner creates a touching image of a time, during which countless people were deprived of their dignity. Heide Schwochow adapted Krechel's award-winning political novel into a thrilling script about a family, that cannot escape the trauma of their separation" (ZDF, 2017). This aligns with the public service TV task of entertainment and public education and information.

“Since we developed the scripts, the topic became shockingly current...The whole idea of flight and expulsion and the impossibility of life in exile and misfortune that seizes these people, even if they have bread, water and accommodation, all of that is mirrored here.” (ZDF, 2017)

This understanding of the experience of migration is seconded by the script-writer, who describes one of her intentions of the re-narrativization:

“Actually, it’s the same with the refugees today. To find something I wanna actually know, also from the refugees from Syria, what they actually lived through. And then I start developing empathy with these people. And that’s what I wanted to try in this adaption.” (ZDF, 2017)

These explanations by producers and actors give insight into the intended meanings behind the narratives (however they are then of course read by audiences). They show how the emplotment is resonating with cultural memories of forced migration and the Nazi regime and how these memories can be connected to re-telling these stories today. In the video, scenes from the movie are used to prove these points, such as the ship full of refugees, which cannot land at Cuba and has to return to Europe – an icon of migration with a parallel to boats on the Mediterranean today rejected by Europe. Thereby, this video demonstrates how handed-down, recognizable cultural schemata are part of narratives and offer a connection of past and present.

Narratives of “AFTER” are discussed in another extra-video, titled “Home”. Here, identity struggles of uprooted expatriates and the lost home are taken up, reminiscent of AFTER I-narratives:

“Also the question is: where is actually my home?...What does it mean to lose my home and to go to another country?...So is the Jewish people which always had to flee everywhere and cannot arrive.” (ZDF, 2017)

Furthermore, countless reviews in the press discuss the meanings conveyed in the movie, contributing to its memory making. Apart from discussing the movie’s statements about denazification and the unatoned post-war legal system (ZEIT, 30.1.2017; Stern, 30.1.2017), the experience of forced migration is read as a central feature of the movie – especially in its timelessness and the relevance of memory for today:



“It’s an important story, it must be told...And it’s our depressing everyday, that fleeing families are torn apart for years...especially as the idea to save children from the horror pops up again in the Syrian war.” (Spiegel, 31.1.2017)

The emotional meaning of escape for the characters, the separation and loss of home and security – cf. narratives in AFTER I – is read as most compelling and central message of the movie by many reviewers:

“Who has seen this movie, can understand what it means if escape from war and authoritarian regimes blow apart families into different directions.” (SZ, 30.1.2017)

“In the end, everyone stays homeless for themselves and much stays unatoned.” (FAZ, 30.1.2017)

In conclusion, this case study could demonstrate how narrativization of forced migration in the case of German Jews in the 1930s uses certain symbolic systems in the plot, which are remediating cultural memory about the experience of escape. It is told on a very emotional level, focusing on the family’s psychological suffering of homelessness. From there, the mnemonic connection of past and present is made in the plurimedial networks: this experience is timeless.

## **Case study II: “Die großen Fluchten” (ZDF, 19.11.2016)**

The final case study links most analytical threads together. In November 2016, the weekly serial “ZDF History”<sup>69</sup> aired an episode on German migration history: “The big escapes”<sup>70</sup>. Already the short description of this

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<sup>69</sup> The show is a public service TV institution for popular history since 2000 and was led until 2013 by famous TV presenter Guido Knopp. It features 45 minutes of popularized history every week.

<sup>70</sup> An interesting detail here is that Guido Knopp produced a five-part documentary for ZDF called “The big escape” in 2001 about the German refugees and expellees. Here, the title was simply put into the plural form.

episode correlates history with the current events – revealing the relevance and underlying argument of re-telling these stories now:

“The many refugees that flooded into Germany in 2015, bring back memories: Several times Germans had to flee, and Germany has often been a country of refuge.” (ZDF, 19.11.2016)

Mnemonic imagination through re-narrativization of previous migrations that offer interpretation and explanation of current events is defined as the aim of this show. Like many examples above did more subtly, also here the implicit rhetoric of this framing works like a syllogism, saying: These were the consequences of previous migrations in and out of Germany. Therefore, the same consequences will happen today, too. The evidence the show presents are six different cases of migration history. This choice demonstrates the selectiveness – hence, the power question – of mediated memory. Why these and not others?

The first case presented are GDR-citizens going West. Right at the beginning, history of forced migration is tied to a central national German memory site: division and reunification. The famous 1961 footage of an East German soldier jumping over the wall which is about to be built, a Cold War icon, is turned into a document of forced migration here – re-narrativized in the context of this documentary. Aligning with the mentioned Cold War narrative of fleeing communism, oral witnesses remember their spectacular ways of crossing the closed border. Narrating German division as a history of flight the issues of “Republikflucht” [escape of republic]<sup>71</sup> and the West buying free the incarcerated refugees, as well as economic motivations to go West are part of this often-repeated and well-known memory. Finally, the events of 1989 are brought up: “mass escape” via Austria and Hungary, causing difficulties in housing the refugees in West Germany. Footage of the collapsing Berlin wall is re-contextualized as “the end of inner-German escapes” – migration is weaved into the national memory site “reunification” in this narrative.

Next, German emigration to America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century is re-narrativized with time-travelling vocabulary of the mentioned capitalist

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<sup>71</sup> A severely punished crime in the GDR. Those who failed were put into prison, from where the West bought free many.

narrative. Calling the emigrants “economic refugees<sup>72</sup>...driven by sheer necessity” their story is told as entrepreneurial success: migrants bring innovations and welfare, exemplified by famous brands as Levi’s or Steinway, while poverty and unemployment are the reasons for migration. The main narrative strategy of this part is an economic framing, almost reminiscent of classical economic migration theories of push-and-pull factors (Castles & Miller, 2009:21-22). Also this migration is connected to national memory: the failed revolution of 1848, causing persecution and exile in the New World. A presented example is German political refugee Carl Schurz, who became a US-minister – which is deemed successful integration, meaning political participation. Especially in contrast to the definitions of integration presented otherwise in AFTER II, one wonders if the producers imply that the same ideal of integration should also apply the other way around, e.g. Turkish ministers in Germany.

The third case is Flight and Expulsion, named here “one of the biggest catastrophes of German history”. Embedded in footage of destroyed German cities and the approaching Red Army, Flight and Expulsion is, as usual, told as a consequence of Hitler’s failed war of conquest. Following the master-narrative, violence during the expulsions is put into perspective as a revenge to German war crimes in Eastern Europe. Witnesses report from the most remembered events of the journey: the march over the frozen lagoon in Eastern Prussia and the sinking of the *Gustloff*. Again, the most extreme events are emphasized, as Röger (2011:308-309) already constituted. Celebrities act as witnesses and symbols of integration, reporting from their cold welcome and the myth that talking about their fate was long a taboo (refuted by many historians<sup>73</sup>). Finally, the economic narrative of integration is applied again to emphasize the expellees’ role in the “economic miracle”, leading to the conclusion of the AFTER II strand: “Their fast integration amazes historians until today.”

Next, the “exodus” of the Huguenots is told as an early story of asylum – technically long before legal concepts of forced migration existed – but with

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<sup>72</sup> The term “Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge” [economic refugees] in the contemporary discourse has a derogative connotation in its implied opposition to “real refugees”. Also, it is somewhat paradoxical as refugees are commonly defined as escaping persecution or war, not seeking economic welfare. See more about social construction of migration categories in 3.1.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Scholz, Röger & Niven (2015)

the same vocabulary, drawing on mnemonic imagination. Fleeing religious persecution in France (narrative of legitimate reason), the Huguenots left for Germany. Here, the arduous escape is illustrated by a read-out original letter reporting about the sea travel, sounding almost identical to one of a Syrian crossing the Mediterranean. Their arrival is again fitted into the economic narrative: They were allowed “colonies”, bringing special skills and economic boom. Finally, the national-cultural dimension is not left out here either: “The German forest and its fairy tales. How German are they really?”, answered with Little Red Riding Hood (from Grimms’ fairytales) – a “figure with migration background”.

Fifth, the plight of Jews fleeing the Nazi regime is remembered. This central chapter of German history<sup>74</sup> is re-told through famous examples escaping violent antisemitism, Albert Einstein and writer Anna Seghers, who symbolize Jewish victims and refugees as contributing to society (cf. 5.4.). Imagery of boycotted Jewish shops and the “Kristallnacht” illustrates the memory site Shoah. As an interesting offer for mnemonic imagination, the Évian refugee conference of 1938<sup>75</sup>, explained as a total fail, is brought up as an implicit parallel to today’s EU refugee policies. Thereby, the narrativization’s focus shifts from the sending country to other countries refusing to take in Jewish refugees.

The last case are the Russo-Germans. Again, the story is re-told by a celebrity: the Schlager<sup>76</sup> celebrity Helene Fischer – presented as a symbol for integration. She “resettled” from Siberia in 1988 and tells that learning German was key to arriving, rather the arrival narrative of AFTER II. As a reason for the migration, Stalin’s terror against the Russo-Germans and their deportations to Siberia are mentioned, fitting into the Cold War narrative: the Russo-Germans wanted a “better life” – “back home”. The fact, that they had left this “home” 300 years earlier, shows the fluidity of meaning around

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<sup>74</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2, memory of the Shoah is part of post-war German self-understanding, thereby also to some degree a national memory.

<sup>75</sup> At the Évian conference (6-15 July 1938) representatives from 32 countries convened to discuss the Jewish refugee and persecution problem caused by Nazi Germany. The participants failed to come to any kind of agreement, only 2 countries increased their quotas of acceptance (USHMM, 2017c).

<sup>76</sup> This German-speaking music genre has a national connotation.

nationality and integration according to different master-narratives, dominated by the receiving society's perspective.

Concludingly, this case study pulls the threads of the analysis together in three points. Firstly, it simply shows how the meta-narrative strands of 5. appear "in action". Every case is converged along the BEFORE, DURING and AFTER.

Secondly, on a discursive level, mnemonic imagination of connecting past and present is deliberately played at in the narrator's contemporary terminology in the re-narrativization. It is challenging the mostly negative connotations certain terms have: "the human traffickers from back then are agents, that lure for potential travelers with fake reports from the New World" or "without welcome culture the American dream of these Germans would not have come true". The meaning of these terms is twisted by applying them to historical cases. History is re-imagined by means of the present, leading to new ways of historically understanding the contemporary discourse. The meaning of these terms is historically underscored with positive examples – potentially a way of creating compassion.

Thirdly, the national framing is striking. The selection of the six cases shows a nation-centered selection of memories: Migration history is told as a story of Germans. Accounts of guestworkers, Poles in Germany, Balkan refugees or any other significant non-German migrant groups are simply omitted. In the narrativizations, national memory sites (e.g. "reunification") are linked to migration history, excluding other cases, which would have been more difficult to explain as success stories connected to positive national memories. In all cases except for the Jews, Germans did good: they chose freedom over Communism, they brought innovation to the US, helped the "economic miracle" of the 50s, granted asylum to the Huguenots and preserved German culture in Siberia. Ultimately, framing German migration history this closely as a national memory and transforming already existing sites of national memory into migration memory demonstrates the same power question of contested memories: Apparently, the memories of others (e.g. guestworkers) are not part of this presented national memory and thus don't fit into the narrative patterns applied here. The basic power constellation of mediated memory cultures, outlined theoretically in 3. and found across the data set in 5., is condensed here: Whose memories are included and get to be voiced in public?

## Conclusion

In May 2016, memory scholar Aleida Assmann (2016) gave a keynote speech on memories of forced migration in Europe, where she called for a new overarching European narrative for the history of migration, flight and expulsion. According to her, nationally oriented memory cultures are prevailing so far and migration has not been defined as part of European memory culture yet.

Assmann accurately frames the debate this thesis initially set out to contribute to. A historical understanding of migration is vital for facing contemporary challenges of movements of people. The remembering and forgetting of migration are a fundamental motivation source for societies in dealing with refugees and migrants today. The central space and actors for these memory cultures are the media. They deploy migration memories in contemporary mediation processes, shape media cultures of migration and negotiate social meanings around the migration phenomenon.

The inquiry of migration historical memory cultures during the “refugee crisis” and the “asylum crisis” (research question 1) was approached with an analysis of narrativization and discursive strands. The first central result was that across the media ensemble (TV, radio, press and online media) and across the two selected time frames, memory-generating media texts were prominently and continuously part of the contemporary negotiation of migratory events. A significant amount of media texts historically framed contemporary debates in both time periods within recognizable, similar narrative strands of migration history.

By looking at all migrations and media texts together, repetitive templates of migration memories emerged from the data: Mnemonic narrativizations of migration are organized around the meta-narrative strands BEFORE, DURING, AFTER I (migrants’ perspective) and AFTER II (receiving society’s perspective). Even though this research design presented a rather generalizing analysis of diverse material, it could reveal how media as memory generators negotiate the topic of migration in ever so similar and recognizable ways. Memories of disparate experiences were put forward by witnesses and explained by journalists or experts, in order to form implicit arguments about the present based on migration history. Mediation converges divergent

memories and boils them down into cultural schemata and visual cues, retelling the story of migration. What Erll (2008; 2009) calls premediation and remediation (see 3.2.) is enacted in the analyzed material: repetitive explanation of reasons, journey experiences and arrival and integration resemble each other and materialize in different forms throughout the media. Similar discourses of the individual migration histories entangle into a contested, yet culturally schematic memory culture of the migration phenomenon.

Part of these continuous meta-narratives is the time-travelling rhetorical element of comparing historical and contemporary refugees and migrants. By embedding the accounts of historical cases in template-like cues, they become recognizable and transferable to the contemporary situation through mnemonic imagination (Keightley & Pickering, 2012). Implicit rhetorical syllogisms of “this cause-effect-relationship happened in history, therefore the same will happen today” as underlying argumentative elements of the narrativizations offer a re-imagination of past, present and future. Mnemonic imagination is offered, when witnesses publicly mediate their first-hand-experiences; they are the basis for imaginative transfer of historical knowledge.

Research question 2 about inclusion and exclusion of migrants from national memory cultures can be answered on this basis, too. Mixing together different migrant groups in the analysis shows how narratives and discourses are including and excluding memories of different migration experiences from narrativizations of history embedded in national memory cultures. The concept of mediated cultural memory as a contested field of discursive struggle (Sturken, 1997), which is selective and thereby deeply political comes alive here. Accounts of different migrants are put forward subjected to the media’s editorial power. Witnesses accompanied by experts and journalists voice and narrativize their experiences. A pivotal framing strategy here is the national dimension. These national memory discourses range from “banal” (Billig, 1995) national reminders, such as judging integration and contribution to society from a national economic perspective or using famous German refugees (Einstein) as examples, to more obvious, “hot” nationalistic references, like “reunification” or support of sports teams. Especially, memories of Flight and Expulsion as a national memory of victimhood is an essential case here. On the one hand, national narrativization strategies serve as recognizable “templates” aiding mnemonic imagination, on the other hand,

however, they limit the memories into a perspective dominated by the receiving society.

This leads to the often-mentioned power question ingrained in mediated memories. Dominant meta-narrative as well as the media's editorial influence affects who tells the story in which way, and thus, what experiences are included and excluded. The mediated memories of witnesses, experts and journalists are subject to historical discourses and master-narratives of different migrations. This excluding selectiveness became discernible, either through omission of entire migrant groups or through selection of certain statements and meta-narratives within the story of one migration – omitting other experiences.

The Russo-German journalist quoted in the title wrote: "To arrive means being able to tell." (ZEIT, 21.4.2016). The struggle of recognition is part of her arrival memories. The core of the media, memory and migration triangle is this relationship between newcomers and receiving society, which creates discursive power imbalances. But to what extent *are* migrants voicing their memories in the empirical material?

The analysis has showcased different types of including and excluding narrativizations. There are original voices of witnesses from all migration cases present. To what degree they speak for themselves or are embedded in comments by experts or journalists varies however, ranging from complete editorial control "from inside" (like the mentioned Russo-German journalist (ZEIT 12.4.2016)) to narrativization "from outside" (like "Die großen Fluchten"). The latter model dominated the corpus clearly, especially in TV-clips. Hence, in the analyzed media, migrants and refugees are voicing memories, yet strongly selected and tailored by the narrativization and mediation process – powers they can hardly influence.

This leads to the question of what these limitations of narrativization entail. On the one hand, structuring the analysis along the narrative strands and daring to mix together all migrations supports the argument that repetitive, culturally conventional and often heavily national(istic) ways of telling the story lead to exclusion and omission of diverse memories. On the other hand, however, recognizable schematic narrativization across different migrations is the basis for mnemonic imagination and the empathetic comparison of plights, which can lead to increased time-crossing understanding of migrants' and refugees' experiences. This thesis cannot present the only right way of



building an incorporating memory culture of migration. The analysis however hints at problematic, excluding and patronizing ways of narrativization, such as the generally repetitive focus on only certain experiences in different migration cases, due to an “us”-and-“them”-perspective, e.g. parts of “Die großen Fluchten” or the strong capitalist, neoliberal framing of “integration”. Yet, it also displays incorporating and acknowledging examples, such as those with obvious offers for mnemonic imagination, like “Landgericht” or “Fremde Heimat Deutschland” (NDR, 1994) or “Refugees back then and today. Ms Kiesewetter’s list” (Tagesspiegel, 24.4.2015), giving migrants space and power to voice complex experiences.

Ultimately, this thesis can make two main points. Firstly, this interplay of inclusion and exclusion is the crux of migration memory cultures. Reminiscent of Corner’s (2011) approach, this is a payoff of “good” and “bad” media power; “good”, as publicly shared memories can provide empathetic access, including migrants into memory cultures, and “bad”, as the selection of memories keeps silent other experiences under a national framework. Hence, when seeing the opposite of remembering as forgetting, we could argue that “forgetting” in this media context rather means a non-voicing of existent memories in a public sphere.

Elaborating on memories, Berger (1966:72) stated: “People on the move physically are frequently people who are also on the move in their self-understanding.” Taking that further, I argue that the examples show that memory cultures of migration can provide a connection between people on the move and receiving societies. Mnemonic imagination, the exchange of experience through mediation, or ultimately Rothberg’s (2009) concept of *multidirectional memory*, can facilitate exchange and imaginaries of “immigration societies”: “Memories are not owned by groups – nor are groups ‘owned’ by memories” (ibid.:6), rather they are “complex acts of solidarity in which historical memory serves as a medium for the creation of new communal and political identities” (ibid.:11).

The amount of memory-generating media texts material presented here shows that such a multidirectional memory culture is emerging. For a more comprehensive study of this, certainly media audiences would have to be included, showing how migration (history) is understood and how much memory culture is actually “lived”, especially in an interplay of migratory and

local audiences, who do or don't perceive themselves as citizens of an "immigration society".

Secondly, this thesis provides a basis for a further-reaching argument about mediations of migration in general (research question 3). Conducting a narrative and discourse analysis of mediated memory cultures gives access to the question how media converge different cases of migration into similar strands of narrativization. In times of condensed communication about migration, this historical framework of memory cultures is part of the media discourse and arguably affects how migration is told, sounds and looks – and *why* it is talked about so continuously and repetitively over history. This thesis cannot provide an empirical comparison of migration coverage over time (which should be undertaken on this basis). Yet, as shown throughout the analysis and discussion, repetitive meta-narratives premeditate and remediate conventional, cultural schemata or templates of telling the migration story (cf. theories by Erll (2008), Hoskins & Tulloch (2016) and Zelizer (2002)). By doing so in times of increased debate about migration, these narrative patterns connect history and present in a mediation framework. A certain media culture of historically telling the story of migration becomes discernible in the analyzed mediated memory cultures: Narrative strands are historically similar, becoming part of a mnemonic repertoire of the media draw from, just as Zelizer (2002) analyzed for the coverage traumatic events. The historical framing of the migration debate along the mentioned strands, combined with mnemonic imagination, offer repeatable templates of mediating migration. Many of the historical accounts are strikingly reminiscent of media coverage of today's migratory events, which should be systematically studied in a larger research.

The initial motivation of this thesis was to find out why migration is mediated so similarly over history. This study can argue that memory cultures of migration not only generate social knowledge about the phenomenon, but also are a basis for how it is generally depicted today: The same narrative strands, cultural schemata and visual icons appear in the media – converging very diverse experiences.

In 2017, 65,3 million people are "forcibly displaced" worldwide (UNHCR, 2017) and in 2015, 244 million people were counted as international migrants (UN, 2016). Many more diverse experiences will produce memories all over the world. The presented model of media, memory and migration

concepts can serve as a basis for understanding better and maybe even improve how we deal with these challenges in media-saturated societies. After all, migration has happened, is happening and will happen – all the time and everywhere. We just have to remember that.

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## Abbreviations

ARD	Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland; cooperation of the regional public-service broadcasters
BR	Bayerischer Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
GG	Grundgesetz; Germany's Basic Law
HR	Hessischer Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
MDR	Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
NDR	Norddeutscher Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
RB	Rundfunk Bremen; public-service broadcaster
rbb	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg; public-service broadcaster
SWR	Südwestdeutscher Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
WDR	Westdeutscher Rundfunk; public-service broadcaster
ZDF	Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen; public-service broadcaster



# Are Some Lives More Grievable Than Others?

Social media practices of mourning and solidarity in the aftermath of the Beirut and Paris attacks

*Krisztina Judit Tóth*

## Introduction

In the global media environment news of tragedies from far-away localities cross borders and trigger reactions from a world-wide audience. However, certain traumas seem to grab our attention and empathy more easily than others. This was recently showcased in the aftermath of two terrorist attacks very close in time to each other, in Beirut and Paris (on 12 and 13 November 2015).

The news of terrorist attacks on 13 November 2015 in Paris came as a shock worldwide, only a couple of months after journalists at Charlie Hebdo became the targets of an Islamists terrorist group (BBC.com, 2015). Three suicide bombers attacked the area around Stade de France, while mass shootings were carried out in the Bataclan theatre as well as cafés and restaurants downtown. 130 people lost their lives and more than 300 were injured, resulting in the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's history (BBC.com, 2015).

Only around 24 hours before, Beirut was struck by two suicide bombers of Islamic State on 12 November 2015. The bombs targeted a southern residential area of the city, mostly inhabited by Shiite Muslims. The number of victims is stated to be at least 43 while 200 people were wounded. Beirut

has faced several terrorist attacks before, however it was perceived as a relatively safe city in the months before the attacks (Barnard & Saad, 2015).

Although the attacks in Paris made headlines all over the world, the attacks just the day before in Beirut received media attention mainly in connection with the attacks in France.

Shortly after the attacks in Paris, social media became flooded with expressions of solidarity, with various discursive and visual symbols going viral. Beyond the Safety Check on Facebook and the #PorteOuverte or #Opendoors hashtags on Twitter that aimed to connect people who could offer shelter to victims, social media was also overflowed with expressions of grief and solidarity. The #PrayforParis hashtag was trending on Twitter, while Facebook introduced a filter with the French flag that users could transform their profile pictures with to show solidarity.

Given the closeness in time of the attacks and the highly different amount of social media reactions they triggered, the case invoked a myriad of articles that addressed the problematic of our so-called “empathy gap” as The Atlantic described it (Graham, 2015). Facebook in particular, received harsh criticism for the Safety Check for people in the Paris area as well as the flag filter for profile pictures (Feeney, 2015). This has not been done before, and there was neither a safety check option for Beirut nor a Lebanese flag filter to commemorate the victims. This led to a heated debate over Facebook’s and its’ users’ double standard on how some lives are treated with more attention than others (see: Graham, 2015; Nunn, 2015). On the other hand, it also raised questions on whether it should be judged who people grieve online and whether a simple gesture to commemorate one group of people could mean that they don’t have empathy for others (Stevens, 2015). The discussions in the aftermath of the Paris and Beirut attacks, many of them triggered by the French flag filter, inspired political debates regarding how we value life at different places and what sort of ethical and moral questions arise (see: Barnard, 2015; Graham, 2015; Malik, 2015).

Soon after the attacks, Judith Butler, an influential philosopher in political philosophy and ethics, wrote an opinion piece in *Libération* on the differences of “grievability” of lives in different localities. It is a topic that she had discussed in her book focusing on the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the decision to enter war afterwards (Butler, 2004). In the article, she focuses on



the different treatment of life in the aftermath of the Paris and Beirut attacks and raises the need for thinking of grief as transversal.

“Grief seems to be strictly limited to a national framework. The almost 50 deceased the day before in Beirut are hardly mentioned, and we keep silent about the 111 killed during the past week in Palestine or the victims of Ankara. The majority of people that I know say ‘being stuck’, incapable of making sense of the situation. One could think about it through the notion of ‘transversal grief’, to study how the measurement of grief functions, why a café as a target touches me much more than other places (Butler in *Libération*, 2015).”

What Butler defines as transversal grief seems a rightful concept in the age of social media where we feel more connected than ever. Studying the reactions and perceptions of mourning on social media after the attacks could shed light on the ambiguities highlighted in the two quotes below: why are we more touched by someone dying at a café and how is the “us and them mentality” constructed?

How grief is expressed on social media has become a popular field of research in recent years. Social media has increasingly become spaces for mourning and commemorating, including personal memory practices as well as public figures and traumatic events (Harju, 2015).

This research is set out to explore how social media users perceive these actions, how they participate or not participate and in what ways they relate to the moral and political questions. Furthermore, the power and ownership of the platforms where social values are being created and reproduced come into question (Fuchs, 2014, van Dijck, 2017) as well.

The aim of this research is to explore how practices of mourning, empathy and solidarity after terrorist attacks are constructed on social media. It sets out to explore how social media platforms influence these manifestations and what are the political implications of mourning online.

The research sets out to explore the phenomenon through aiming to answer the following research questions:

1. How is collective mourning online perceived by audiences and what motivates their participation in it?

2. How can we understand social media practices of solidarity and mourning as a form of moral and political act?
3. What role does social media, Facebook in particular, play in facilitating certain digital collective practices in public mourning?

Focusing on the construction of collective mourning practices on one of the most popular social media platforms, Facebook, the paper aims to examine how these actions are constructed online. It aims to shed light on the phenomenon from the perspective of social media users as participants and observers through conducting semi-structured interview. First, the literature review presents the main theories which are going to guide the analysis. Then, the methodological framework is explained. This is followed by the analysis of the empirical data gained from interviews. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the main conclusions of the research, pointing out that grieving for tragedies on the internet strengthens a sense of community but at the same time its usefulness and effectiveness to bring about greater societal change is questioned. People express emotions online mostly connected to events or causes that are personally or culturally closer to them. However, the results of the analysis of the interviews show that participants are highly critical of the Western dominance of news and feel the need for more inclusiveness of both mass media and social media.

## **Previous research in the field**

In the past decade, an “emotion boom” can be observed in social scientific research (Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013:76), and existential issues in particular seem to be in the center of our online media environment (Lagerkvist, 2014) with increased research interest in the fields of the mediation of death and memory practices online. Research has focused both on coping with individual loss (Carroll & Landry, 2010; Döveling, 2015; Lagerkvist, 2014) as well as collective memory practices concerning for instance celebrity deaths (Davies, 2012; Harju, 2015; Sanderson & Cheong, 2010) and online commemorations after major tragic events (see: Eriksson, 2016; Lindgren, 2015; Recuber, 2012).

As Harju (2015) points out, commemorative practices have been extensively studied in the offline sphere, however she argues that more research on online

memorial culture is needed. Memorial practices provide a deeper understanding of our shared cultural history, how this history is represented and who gets to decide what is represented (ibid).

Research on media and mourning in the case of collective losses has been highly concerned with how mourning rituals in the media serves to join people together (see: Eriksson, 2016; Pantti & Sumiala, 2009). Regarding mediations of loss connected to terrorist attacks, the mediation of the 11 September attacks stand out that has been given high research attention (see: Foot & Warnick, 2006; Lagerkvist, 2014; Lee, 2011). In a transnational context, examining the mediation of 11 September anniversaries on Swedish television, Lagerkvist (2014) remarks how television plays a great role in constructing the “global we” (ibid:350) of witnesses of the attacks. This “we”, according to her, is constructed transnationally and reinforces a certain Western shared social memory that goes beyond the borders of the nation.

Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) argue for the importance of research on the mediation of emotions in online media as our daily life has become intertwined with feeling and sharing emotions through the media. The authors treat emotion online as a “discursive manifestation” (ibid:4) and an essential component of participation online.

The research draws upon various fields, including collective mourning online, cosmopolitanism and the moral aspects of the global media sphere as well as “easy” online political activism or slacktivism. Thus, the project is situated in the intersection of these areas, aiming to understand collective mourning online in the context of the aftermath of terrorist attacks that became global media events. Drawing on the debate surrounding the different standards of “griveability” of human life (Butler, 2004), the research aims to explore how collective mourning is manifested on social media. Furthermore, the role of social media platforms’ responsibility is scrutinized as well, which has been a lacking dimension of previous research in the field.

## Theoretical framework

To furnish a theoretical framework for the analysis of the empirical data, this chapter presents an overview of the key theories and concepts through which expressing mourning on social media will be examined. First, the media environment's transition in times of globalisation and transnational flows will be presented. The heightened interconnectivity with one another and the appearance of the "other" through media inherently brings up questions of morality and ethics. Regarding social media, the agency and responsibility of actors need to be looked at: that of the platforms as well as the users. This will be followed by an overview of the scholarship concerning expressing emotions, particularly solidarity and grief online. Finally, social media activism as a form of slacktivism or easy activism will be discussed.

### **Media through a cosmopolitan lense**

The global reach of the media urges researchers in the field to extend their analytical framework beyond that of the nation-state. There has been extensive research interest concerning globalisation, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism in connection with media studies. I argue that an outlook that brings together the notions of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism is called for in this research as it is through these lenses that we can better understand how people on social media make the choice to show feelings of sorrow and solidarity with others and what is in fact, meant by others.

Giddens (1990:64) remarks an "intensification of worldwide social relations" that connects distant localities and that leads to distant events affecting what happens at one's own locality. "Consumption of media content (e.g., news stories and fictional narratives) and technological gateways of connectivity continuously reposition global audiences and users vis-à-vis institutions, social events, and each other. (Christensen, 2013:2402)". Thus, the interconnectivity between different locales opens the potential to experience cosmopolitanism in an ambiguous manner, as something that is near and distant at the same time.

The cosmopolitan lense has been used when exploring how society handles the phenomena of globalization and more globalized mediation of daily life

(Christensen, 2013). However, how cosmopolitanism can be defined is contested. It has not been conceptualised as a unified theory but instead has been described as standing for a number of different concepts by various theorists ranging from elitism to detachment of a particular cultural belonging.

According to Appiah (2007), it is mainly our cosmopolitanism that we have in common. This entails obligations that stretch further than whom we are related to or share citizenship with. He is above all interested in the moral questions that globalisation and cosmopolitan thinking evoke, such as the realness of values, what we mean by difference from one another and what our responsibility is towards strangers “by virtue of our shared humanity (ibid:xxi)”.

The interconnectivity created by the global media sphere has given rise to media scholars’ interest in transnationalism as well in connection with media studies (van Dijck, 2014). It is argued that “transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization (Vertovec, 2009:2)”, however the concepts are not interchangeable. According to Vertovec (2009) transnationalism manifests in the form of certain globally intensified relationships taking place at the same sphere despite distances and national borders. Today, one way transnationalism is manifested, he argues, is through the interconnectivity and social formations formed on networks of new technology.

The status of place is of great importance when examining transnational media (Athique, 2016). Media provides, on the one hand, representations where social relations are expressed and, on the other hand, communication technologies where social networks can be maintained. He mentions that the constant circulation of media artefacts along with our access to global communication systems enforce globalization in our everyday life.

The experience of massive connectivity is an ambiguous phenomenon that entails both a bridging and bonding effect (Christensen, 2013), at certain times making us feel closer, while also amplifying distances in other cases. For instance, media’s symbolic power in portraying distant suffering and its ethical and political aspects has been extensively researched (Chouliaraki, 2008). Thompson’s (1995) urge for a new form of habermasian public life that stretches through the states becomes even more accurate in the age of social media. Mediated publicness also plays a big role in contributing to feeling responsibility to distant others. A clear answer on how our

responsibility can manifest in a moral-practical reflection is not offered by Thompson but he argues that it is our attempt that counts (ibid).

## **The global media sphere and morality**

The media sphere's ability to make the world feel like a "global village" inherently poses questions surrounding ethics and morality in terms of how we connect to the world around us and what responsibilities that entails.

Silverstone (2007) addresses the public space of the media as the mediapolis where political life both on the national and global scale takes place and where media is understood as a moral space. He poses the question of terminology of those in the mediapolis: how to address the individual who proceeds media information and reacts to it, talks about it or chooses to ignore or resist it. Instead of trying to define whether she is to be considered an audience member, a spectator, a citizen or a consumer for example, Silverstone (2007) identifies the users and audiences of the mediapolis as participants. He emphasizes that even with minimal efforts of participation in the mediapolis, somehow, participants have agency. For him, the core question is how we relate to each other in the mediated world we share with close and distant others and what that implies for ethics. His point of departure is that "what we have in common is our difference (ibid:118)."

Appiah (2007) points out though that creating in-groups and out-groups is normal for humans, a way of strengthening our identities. However, as cosmopolitans he argues, it is important to learn from our differences even if we have local values that are not shared by others, who he refers to as strangers. This is similar to Silverstone's argument on the need for "media hospitality" which refers to inviting the so-called "stranger" to our media sphere which would lead to greater media justice.

One key problematic that Silverstone (2007) shows with the consequences of media's globalised aspect is the problem of distance. Media's global reach and symbolic power concerning how it depicts suffering for instance, leads to ethical and political challenges as well as the broadening of our "moral imagination" beyond our local or national communities (Chouliaraki, 2008). The harsh realities of others are offered to us in abundance, however besides

the temporary sensation and spectacle they provide, the viewer is not urged to take any form of responsibility.

Silverstone (2007) introduces the concept of proper distance, a measure to have a sense of the other that is sufficient for understanding them in their true reality and to have a sense of responsibility and duty towards them. The creation of proper distance is both required from media workers as well as audiences who with their imagination, construct their own narratives about the other. By keeping the proper distance in the media sphere, Silverstone (2007) urges to broaden the individual's perspective and to recognize the other as both the same, in having a shared identity with us, as well as different. He highlights the tensions of the mediapolis' role to manage the distance, to portray distant others in a proper way. These tensions and their moral implications are dealt with in the everyday life of the audience. Imagination is needed to create proper distance not only from those who construct the media narratives but also from the audiences who construct their own narratives influenced by the media. With the emergence of new media, creating a clear separation between an individual's "own" cultures and that of others has become difficult as global events are constantly entering one's local world (Sumiala, 2012).

Two phenomena can be observed in parallel. The first is the segregation of experience as several social phenomena, such as death, have been cut out of our everyday life and shifted to institutions. At the same time, mediation opens up the flow of experiences in our everyday life that we otherwise would not encounter, which Thompson (1995) calls "mediated quasi-interactions (p.208)". The abundance of mediated experience leads to individuals coping with the abundance by selecting, placing higher importance to those experiences that are more particularly interesting for them. Lagerkvist (2015) also argues that what we remember is a matter of choice which depends on what we subjectively feel affinity for. The problem that arises is how we can relate to experiences that take place in distant locations that are not connected to our everyday activities (ibid).

The selection of the media events is also connected to what strikes our attention most and thus what becomes news-worthy. Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified several factors that contribute to an event having news value, among which cultural factors play a great role. For instance, if an event concerns so-called elite nations, if it has cultural proximity and if it bears

highly negative consequences, it is more likely to become news-worthy (ibid). Moreover, the selection between the overpouring of media experiences and the news-worthiness of events connected to “elite nations” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) often results in mostly selecting experiences from the West. It has long been acknowledged that the Western world occupies a central role in the global news media environment (Zelizer, 2011 in Neiger, Meyers and Zandberg, 2011) which often results in depicting events that did not take place in the Western world with a highly Western focus.

## **The self on social media**

In this chapter, shifting the focus from the media sphere in general and zooming in on social media, the main scene of analysis, two aspects need to be examined: how can social media users’ expression be understood and how the platforms themselves can influence users’ actions.

Goffmann’s concept of “life as a stage” (1959) has been widely used to gain a deeper understanding on how humans present themselves in front of each other. Goffmann (1959) considers life as a stage where individuals perform themselves, or rather an idealized version of their self, often instead of an authentic one. Performance is understood in Goffmann’s terms as “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants (ibid:15)”. Taking this concept as his point of departure, Hogan (2010) applies the theory to the presentation of social media self. He argues that social media sites could be seen as spaces of exhibition where the self has the opportunity to perform, taking on the role of the curator on a site of an exhibition. Information and communication technologies increase the potential for performativity as they provide an abundant network of people and potential stages (Papacharissi, 2014).

In modern societies, individuals also take greater roles in constructing their own identity for themselves while they are also highly influenced by the “mediated symbolic materials” they are provided with (Thompson, 1995). Silverstone (2007) brings up the issue of “symbolic overload” (p.216) as a key problem encountered through the media. Individuals manage this problem by selecting the information that is most relevant to them. Naturally, people use materials from face-to-face interactions too for this but mediated symbolic materials play a great role in constructing the self.



Even more so than traditional forms of media, social media brings up questions surrounding the interplay between structure and agency when it comes to presentation of the self. “Social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise” and they both “enable and constrain actions (Giddens, in Fuchs, 2014:37)”. Participation and power are thus key notions when analysing social media as the social relations in social media are shaped by the power structures that are provided by the platforms in question (Fuchs, 2014).

Facebook such as other major platforms is driven by a set of mechanisms, namely datafication, selection and commodification (van Dijck, 2017). This means that they transform online activities into data to generate economic value through algorithmic filtering of user activities (ibid). The business model of Facebook relies on selling data about its users to its advertiser, identifying consumer interests and sharing them to generate profit (Fuchs, 2014). Facebook now has almost 1,9 billion users (Statista.com, 2017) which also translates into great market value and makes it an important actor in shaping daily social life and societal values (van Dijck, 2017). Van Dijck (2017) emphasizes the importance to ask critical questions towards the mechanisms of what she calls the “global platform society” which is driven by the “big 5”, namely Facebook, Google, Apple, Microsoft and Amazon.

Jenkins et al. (2013) however, stress the empowerment of users which the “spreadable” aspect of social media can bring to them. Spreadable media here is seen as a positive phenomenon as consumers can advocate for whatever they find socially and personally valuable. Fuchs (2014) draws attention to the fact that although Jenkins et al. (2013) highlight the positive aspect of participatory culture, such as helping to increase cultural diversity, they do not reflect on its negative sides. According to him, it is often forgotten that not all voices are equally heard due to the unequal distribution of power among the different actors, as well as the power of major media corporations to shape visibility. He takes a rather critical stance towards social media’s ability in encouraging participatory culture and offering a more democratic alternative in comparison to mass media. According to him, what remains to be critically examined is the “ownership of platforms, collective decision-making, profit, class and distribution of material benefits (Fuchs, 2014:55)”. Drawing upon Fuchs and van Dijck’s critical stance towards Facebook and to answer the research question regarding Facebook’s role in facilitating certain

practices in public mourning, questions of power and profit will be discussed further in the analysis.

## **The political side of collective mourning**

Facebook is being used more and more as a platform to express a wide range of emotions, among which mourning for personal and collective losses became a prominent one as well. In this chapter, the emotional aspect of social media is going to be explored regarding mourning online in particular.

New media creates new possibilities to construct our own meaning-making of the world and its events. The infrastructure of Facebook and Twitter enable us to feel closer to a certain place or event and imagine what others there might be feeling or experiencing (Papacharissi, 2014). It has been claimed that new media could potentially mediate solidarity, however a collective identity in itself is not sufficient, a common understanding of the endpoint is also called for (Fenton, 2007).

Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) see globalization and interconnectivity as the driving forces to create more empathy toward one another, urging us not to dismiss the concept of “global emotion” as something that is overly generalised.

“If globality, globalization, and global emotions do not provide the differentiated and complex conceptual frameworks for understanding our networked and distributed feelings, then what kinds of concepts do? (ibid:80).”

Online media provide a space for so-called “emotion agents” (ibid:4) to spread affect. Emotional content is produced online collectively through the passive and active behaviour of the masses as well as individualized interaction and participation. The manifestations of emotions in the context of the “ethics of (global) connectivity” (ibid:76) are of particular interest. Acknowledging the influence of media power in shaping what is seen and what is not, Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) ask “how is emotion being used as a universalizing factor that moves audiences and users across geopolitical boundaries (p.20)”. They contend that online culture is driven by emotion which is shared globally but might bear different meanings in local contexts.

It has been argued that the topic of death along with grieving have become taboos and kept out of the public eye in Western societies (see Walter, 1991, Cromby & Phillips, 2014). As death has been moved away from our everyday reality to institutions and away from the public eye, it has also become somewhat unspeakable in everyday life (Cromby & Phillips, 2014).

Grief can be conceptualized as a social emotion embedded and expressed in social interactions which provide a space for recovery and meaning making (Döveling, 2015). Today we can observe two seemingly controversial phenomena at the same time regarding how we relate to death. First, there is the material removal of death while at the same time we are exposed to a myriad of discourses and representations surrounding death, to the point that media representations have become one of our primary sources of knowledge (Cromby & Phillips, 2014). The importance of mass-mediated rituals concerning dying and mourning lie in their abilities to bolster a sense of social collectivism as well as to legitimize the existing social order and assert shared values (Pantti & Sumiala, 2009).

According to Keightly and Pickering (2012), no form of remembering is either solely individual or solely collective. They criticize the solely psychological approach where the social aspects of remembering are left out as well as sociologists' tendency to not consider the individual's agency in contributing to the shaping of collective cultural memory. They advocate for an approach that focuses on the interplay between the situated and the mediated experience. They emphasize the interactivity of memory and experience, as being both "personal and social, situated and mediated, proximate and distant (ibid:4)".

Van Dijck (2007) also stresses the importance of individual agency in contributing to collective memory. The role of cultural memory and the role of media in its formation is to help construct individual and collective identity. Van Dijck (2007) coined the term "digital shoeboxes", referring to the classic way of keeping memories in shoeboxes. It is to describe the products of the creative acts through which people make sense of their lives and the lives of others in the digital space.

Doka (1999) remarks that modern societies enforce "grieving rules" (ibid:37) which establish who, for whom and in which situations it is allowed to grieve, and thus certain mournings can be delegitimized. When it comes to social mourning in the Western world, socially grieving someone we knew

personally became constrained while publicly grieving people we did not personally know (such as victims of disasters or attacks) came to be perceived as inauthentic (Walter, 2008).

Furthermore, it is claimed that mourning over losses entails mourning the loss of part of the self. Glyson (2011) argues for the importance to consider the ethics of mourning to better understand how practices of loss and death have emerged. According to him, public recognition is an important aspect of turning a certain death into loss that encourages the mourner to work on the grieving process. He mentions the case of “blocked mourning (p.143)” in terms of the aftermaths of 9/11, when only ten days after the attacks President Bush called for finishing grieving and instead taking action. When there is no or little public recognition, the process of mourning becomes problematic and raises ethical questions. He highlights a shift from stressing the individual processing of death to collective action. The key ethical and political question is “whether the space and time given to us is appropriate to the task of determining how a death matters to us and how loss can be transformed into a creative and active shaper of individual and collective life (ibid:146)”. Glyson does not attempt to offer a certain answer for the appropriate context, instead he emphasises how discourse, fantasy and judgement are the key elements of grieving. According to Butler (2004), grieving could be made into a resource of politics as it could lead to establishing identification with suffering and by asking “What is it in the Other that I have lost? (p.30)” the I is put into the question, bringing the loss closer to the self.

Apart from the importance on how the self relates to the deceased, community and coming together in time of grief is greatly important, which is true for mourning in the context of media. Lagerkvist (2014) argues that “existential issues are at the core of our lived experience of the media environment (p.206)”. According to her, both memorialisations for personal losses and collective losses online seem to have a need in common, searching for connectivity and community. By comparing two mediated practices of memory, the commemoralisation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on Swedish television with online communities of grieving individuals, she points out that in both cases the aim of these memory cultures is to provide a sense of “communitas”. She also stresses the transnational aspect of memory and how it is produced transnationally across different cultural contexts which also form new communities of memory (Lagerkvist, 2015). The “memory site” (Nora, 1989 in Lagerkvist, 2015) thus seems to be disappearing “in a world

of global, digital, global, transmedial, transcultural and cosmopolitan memories (ibid:186)". In the global media culture, memory and commemorative practices of mourning are now produced beyond the physical place and the borders of the nation-state (Lagerkvist, 2015).

Butler's (2004) quest to understand the ethical aspects of collective mourning begins with the question of what constitutes a "grievable life" (p.20) and as such, who counts as human. She raises this question in the aftermath of the attacks of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US government's response to go into war in Iraq. She urges for the need to be able to narrate ourselves not only from the first person but also from the position of the other, for example taking into considerations the civilian lives that would be lost elsewhere with the potential of a war. This is where grief becomes political. According to Butler (2004) we should not mistakenly see grief as a privatizing and solitary phenomenon. She argues that it provides some sort of "political community of a complex order (ibid:22)" by highlighting the relational ties that imply how we think about our ethical responsibility and dependency towards one another.

Is there something to be gained in the political domain by maintaining grief as part of the framework within which we think our international ties? If we stay with the sense of loss, are we left feeling only passive and powerless, as some might fear? Or are we, rather, returned to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another? (ibid:30)

She argues that vulnerability is not equally distributed globally and some losses are more exposed than others. In the American context that she analyses, this resulted in a prohibition of discourse surrounding deaths that are on the enemy's land. Butler's observations will be useful when trying to understand the grievability of life on social media. It can be assumed that instead of a political prohibition in her argument, who is dehumanized and who is presented in more detail is more connected to media power and reporting.

The political aspects of mourning online in the aftermath of the examined terrorist attacks came into question particularly regarding Facebook's controversial French flag filter. Using the flag as a symbol received heavy criticism. It was interpreted as an example of nationalistic priming that reinforces that death is understood in the frame of a nation (Verrall, 2016),

and also as a manifestation of Euro-centrism disguised as an expression of compassion (Nunn, 2015).

Apart from the problematics of whether the filter was a manifestation of nationalism or not, it got harsher criticism for providing a tool for easy activism that serves no one except for the good conscious of the individual. The filter has extensively been referred to as a form of slacktivism in the aftermath of the attacks (Garber, 2015, Salo, 2015, Tayag, 2015).

The term slacktivism refers to a form of (usually) online activism that is easily accessible but which does not entail much usefulness. Morozov (2009) is highly critical of this form of easy activism or as he calls it, feel-good online activism that lacks any significant political or social impact. Slacktivism for him provides the illusion of meaningfulness. He argues that ideally, it could also facilitate “real” activism but he believes that most people who engage in it would already feel that they fulfill their moral obligation by just signing an online petition or joining a Facebook group.

How slacktivism or easy activism could relate to “real” activism if it affects at all is difficult to say. In one study though, that examined how slacktivism affects civic activism, researchers examined whether engaging in easily accessible online activism or slacktivism had an effect on more substantial civic action by examining how signing an online petition effected donating to a charity. They found that signing the petition online significantly increased the probability of donating to a charity related to the petition. However, they also discovered a “moral balancing effect” (p.1) as the people who did not sign the petition contributed more money to a charity not related to the petition (Lee & Hsieh, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented a framework for the analysis and illustrated how this thesis fits into the intersection of research on cosmopolitanism, media and morality, collective mourning online and slacktivism. Globalization and the emergence of social media are seen as driving forces of global emotions (Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013) that have the potential for more solidarity and empathy towards each other. However, how we relate to one another in this sphere is dependent on the media’s ability to manage proper distance

(Silverstone, 2007) as well as our own selection between events based on their relevance to ourselves and their news value.

To understand how social media practices of mourning are constructed online and to examine how we relate to tragic events in different localities, the political aspect of mourning comes into question. I argue that drawing on Butler's discussion on the grievability of human life and its implications for political community are vital to examine how the differences of mourning on Beirut and Paris are constructed and perceived. By examining how mourning on social media is expressed and in what ways can it form a certain political community is how the thesis could be a contribution in the existing literature in collective mourning. Before elaborating on the results of the analysis, what follows is situating the research methodologically and presenting the research design.

## Methodology

The research is based on the methodological standpoint of social constructionism as grieving and digital practices are highly social constructed phenomena. In this chapter, a short introduction of social constructionism is presented, followed by describing the method of the research project.

### **Social constructionism**

Couldry and Hepp (2016) argue that the communicative aspect of our practices plays a major role in how the social world is constructed. In the age of digital media with the rising agency of people to participate, we cannot clearly separate the world of face-to-face communication and the representation of the world through the media. Media (not to be reduced to mass media) both play a role in creating a shared understanding of the social world and provide representation for the social world (ibid).

The role of social constructionism is to challenge what we have been taken for granted about the world (Burr, 2003). Social constructionists contend that our observation of our surroundings can never be objective and unbiased, and

they focus on the cultural context of knowledge and how it affects power and social action (ibid).

Social constructionism helps us understand what sort of themes and arguments are constructed through discourse regarding the criticised double standard of media and the social media attention that certain global media events receive. This leads us to the role of language, one of the most essential elements of social constructionism, as it is through language that we construct our ideas and knowledge of the world (Burr, 2003). Language and the world are inseparable from each other as “the world comes to being in language and language has its being in the fact that the world is represented in it (Hekman, 1983:212).” Thus, one should take into consideration the language used when discussing the social media practices after different attacks and look at what words and themes come up.

### **Method: semi-structured interviews**

To scrutinize how social media users perceive and participate in the phenomenon of showing solidarity online after global media events of terrorism, interviewing social media users seemed the best way to understand the issue.

By conducting interviews, my aim was to find out what mourning and expressing solidarity means for social media users as participants and observers and what they think about its political and moral aspects of standing up for certain so-called “national tragedies” over others. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen as this method is flexible enough to give space for new themes that might emerge during a discussion, depending on the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

For recruiting interviewees and to set a frame for the research, I set a couple of criteria. I was interested in talking with young people as they are the most active on social media platforms therefore I set the limit for interviewees between 20 and 35 years old. It was also necessary that the interviewees are interested in world events, granting that they would be familiar with the attacks and reflect on the case. I was equally looking for people who shared something about either of the attacks and people who did not, to understand both how participating and perceiving mourning online is understood by



audiences. It was important that the respondents do not come from the countries where the examined tragedies happened as I was interested in a cosmopolitan perspective and how people “choose” which tragedies they stand with outside of the borders of their local or national communities. Recruiting participants was done through posting on Facebook student groups and on the campus of Lund University.

First, a pilot interview was conducted to test the interview guide. Since this interview presented a rich material and the questions worked well, I decided to use the data with the participant’s consent. In total, nine interviews were conducted between March 16 and April 4 2017. Seven interviews were conducted in person and two through Skype because of distance. The majority of the interviews lasted around 45 minutes, with the shortest being approximately 35 minutes and the longest around 75 minutes.

The discussions began by discussing the subjects’ social media use in general followed by discussing expressing mourning and solidarity on social media in general. Then, the public mourning on social media after the Beirut and Paris attacks was discussed to facilitate the discussion on the differences between mourning for similar tragedies. Finally, social media’s and particularly Facebook’s role was discussed as a platform to facilitate or limit expressions of mourning and solidarity. The interview guide was used in a flexible way and served mainly as a checklist to ensure that all major topics were covered.

The interviews were fully transcribed, resulting in 85 pages of material. After careful reading and re-reading of the text, the data was coded with the method of open coding (Seale, 2012). I was able to identify main themes that came up in the interviews and thus arranged the codes into three main categories, breaking down the main themes into subthemes as well. The first part concerns the self on social media and collective behaviour, followed by the theme that discusses the moral implications of social media as a highly connected, global public sphere. Finally, the third theme treats the political dimensions of mourning and solidarity on social media.

## Research ethics

The interviews were carried out with taking into consideration the guidelines of the Swedish Research Council's report on good research practice (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). Every participant was informed about the aims of the study and consent was given in each case. Participation in the research was voluntary and all participants were informed that they have the right to stop the interview at any point, the right to not answer a certain question or cancel the interview. They were granted anonymity and confidentiality as their data was promised to only be used for the purpose of this research. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to guarantee accuracy of the interpretation and quoting of participants.

Moreover, it is also important to reflect critically about my role as a researcher in this regard, whether I can interpret what the interviewees said in a valid and truthful way. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) encourage the interviewer to briefly sum up what the interviewees say at certain points and "send the meaning back (p.221)" to them. This way, the interviewees have a chance to correct the researcher if what she understood is not what they meant.

Even if validity is granted, questions regarding whether the results could be generalised arises still. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), a common concern with interviewing is that if the subjects are too few, the results could not be generalised. However, they point out that qualitative research is not meant to produce knowledge that is universally and eternally true for all places and times. Instead, they stress that social knowledge is socially and historically contextualised. Regarding the form of generalization that this research could provide, analytical generalization is the most fitting. It relies on the researcher's argument or "assertational logic (ibid:297)", in this case, the arguments are supported by theory.

## Analysis

The analysis presents the findings organised into three chapters according to the three main themes that the data was broken down to. These concern respectively the self on social media, social media as a global media sphere and the moral implications of connectivity, as well as the political dimensions of

expressing solidarity. After having examined the results of the interviews and interpreting them through the key theoretical concepts, the main conclusions of the analysis will be summarised in the following chapter.

## **Collective mourning and the self on social media**

This chapter discusses how the participants relate themselves and others as users, participants and audiences when perceiving and/or participating in collective mourning after certain world events. To gain a better understanding of the interviewees digital media habits, I asked questions surrounding general media and participation in any collective actions on social media. All interviewees were active on social media, however activeness in the sense of sharing and posting ranged from people who very rarely post something to people who post something several times a day.

### *Participation in collective movements on social media*

When asked about whether they have participated in any collective movements online before, those who have participated were motivated for instance by “showing people what I stand for” (Lisa), being part of something “that would affect us as a nation but also our environment” (Linh) or having several friends who had already participated in a certain action (Mary).

After the initial questions on social media use and thoughts and experiences about expressing solidarity and mourning on social media, I discussed the case of Beirut and Paris in November 2015. When asked about whether they have shared anything concerning either of the attacks on social media, four participants said they did not express anything but had seen many reactions on social media, while five of the participants have shared or expressed something.

James explained how he incorporated his grief of the Paris attacks with his personal social media challenge to post a photo of Budapest every day during his two-year stay in the city.

“It was a photo, I think it was just a picture. There’s a building on Andrásy út that has these lion heads [...] I wrote maybe a paragraph about my own experience in France and my experience with French people and, you know, I tried to keep it on that personal level, and say to my friends in France who were mourning... that I felt something and I wanted them to know that they weren’t alone in that fear and anxiety.” (James)

Lisa shared a video that went viral a few days after the Paris attacks. The video<sup>77</sup> portrays a father and a son, bringing flowers to commemorate victims at the scene of the Bataclan. The small boy talked about his fear of the “bad guys” and that they should move to escape them. In response, the father explained that there are bad guys everywhere but one can fight against them with coming together with flowers and candles. Lisa shared the video as she said that it “got to me emotionally” and it was “powerful”. As she explained, the video and the message of the video had more value to it for her than any kind of symbol or filter on Facebook and she found it to spread a good message about “fighting hate with love” (Lisa).

Emily however explained that she felt as if she needed to “explain herself” in a way for not using the French flag filter that Facebook offered after the attacks. When asked about the need for having to explain herself, she said that since she tends to be very political on Facebook, she felt that some people would interpret her not using the filter as a political opinion or choice.

“It kind of was a political choice on my part not to [use the filter]... but I didn’t want people to take it the wrong way”. (Emily)

As she explained, speaking up about one attack would have felt unfair as other tragedies had happened shortly before in Lebanon, Turkey and Syria. Similarly to Emily, Mary also felt the need to raise her voice concerning that attacks elsewhere in the world on civilians were not being addressed with the same attention. She has shared a short news article on the Beirut attacks with the aim to inform her personal network. Their views capture well the unease of showing solidarity for one tragic event while not doing the same for other

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<sup>77</sup> Le Petit Journal (2015): “They might have guns but we have flowers”: French father to kid after Paris terror. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkM-SDNoI\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkM-SDNoI_8)  
Accessed: 18-04-2017

less discussed ones, which will be further discussed in the later part of the analysis.

Rita added the French flag filter to her profile picture and she also shared several articles on the day of the Paris attacks as well as during the following days. The two articles and the video<sup>78</sup> that she posted, all produced by Le Figaro, a prominent French newspaper, focus on putting the pieces of the evolving of the attacks together. Her motivation for sharing was to inform and spread information as well as “to raise solidarity and awareness”.

“I think social media is a good platform to get participants’ personal experience closer to others. For example, I shared an article where two people talked about what happened in the Bataclan and I translated a paragraph. So, I tried to make it available for those who don’t speak French and may get less information or other types of information.” (Rita)

### *Social media as a “stage”: authenticity versus performance*

Most conversations naturally headed to questions surrounding the authenticity and performance of showing emotions on social media. Mary for instance, brought up the importance of validation when sharing something on social media and the pressure of friends’ approval. She admitted that she would “share things for the validation sometimes” (Mary) as other like-minded friends of hers shared the same or similar expressions. This latter motivation of participation could be interpreted as a form of the “bandwagon effect”. According to Chandler and Munday (2016), the “bandwagon effect” on social media means adopting a certain behaviour because everyone else is participating, and in the end, this chain effect generates trends that contributes to certain actions becoming popular or going viral. Thus, the more people “jumping on the bandwagon”, the less authentic an action might feel and therefore losing its meaning in the process.

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<sup>78</sup> 1. EN DIRECT - Attentats de Paris : des proches d'un terroriste arrêtés. Le Figaro, 13 November – 26 November, 2015 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualites/2015/11/13/01001-20151113LIVWWW00406-fusillade-paris-explosions-stade-de-france.php>

2. Attentats de Paris: la chronologies des attaques en image. Le Figaro (Video)

3. Attaques de Paris : «Ceux qui sortaient leurs portables étaient exécutés au Bataclan». Le Figaro, 14 November 2015 <http://www.lefigaro.fr/culture/2015/11/14/03004-20151114ARTFIG00095-attaques-de-paris-on-a-bien-vu-les-assaillants-du-bataclan.php>

When discussing seeing the immense number of people who changed their profile pictures with the flag overlay in her network, questioning of the authenticity of the action was mentioned by several interviewees. Rita remarked that “maybe it sounds selfish but I felt my grief to be more authentic”, referring to the people in her network who to her knowledge did not have any strong affiliations with France. The remark on her grief being more authentic than others’ refers to her personal connection to French culture, having learnt French for many years, having been in Paris for academic purposes, as well as preparing to moving to France. Although later she added that “everyone can do what they want, this was just a lurking thought” and that was her instinctive feeling. Linh had similar reflections, finding it strange that many of her Vietnamese friends who did not have much connection with France also used the filter. Thus, connection to the place of the attacks seems to be an important factor of being perceived as authentic.

“When a lot of my friends were having the French flag after the Paris attack, it’s like you feel kind of guilty not having it because then you’re not showing solidarity or whatever... So that’s why I think a lot of people just do it because people do it.” (Erik)

However, the easiness of participation on social media can also be seen as positive. When asked about whether she shared anything on social media about the attacks in Beirut, Lisa brought up the problem of unavailable symbolic materials.

“No, because I didn’t see anything to share. I’m not the kind of person who would start to fix something, a picture or so. I can share the things that are already there. But I didn’t see anything.” (Lisa)

When constructing the self through the media, Thompson emphasizes the influences and limits of availability of materials through which the self can be constructed. He denotes the self as a “symbolic project that the individual actively constructs (...) out of the symbolic materials that are available to him or her” (ibid:210). The flag filter for example could be understood as such a symbol and what Lisa’s answer indicates is that one can feel more encouraged to take action if something is already provided by the platform or other users.

Linh mentioned that it seemed to her that people expressed sorrow or solidarity to feel morally superior to others, thus criticizing the authenticity of actions in some cases.

“It’s sort of of moral masturbation if I want to put it in my term. You want to feel morally good that you have this kind of ability to feel just like the right people, the majority. So, by doing it, somehow you’re sitting and you think to yourself ‘Yeah I have done my part.’” (Linh).

In this interpretation, any moral question relates less to the other and more to ourselves. Are we just rewarding ourselves for our ability to show compassion if we participate, and are we just trying to perform the idealized version of our moral selves on the stage of social media? If something that can be achieved with a click is unauthentic, how many “clicks” or characters are needed to be seen as authentic enough? This easiness of the action to share a symbol or to change the profile picture was brought up in almost all interviews, and the interviewees seemed to be critical of the easiness.

## **The global social media sphere and its moral implications**

### *Personal connection and cultural proximity*

One of the themes that emerged the most in the course of the interviews was the need for a kind of personal connection to feel greater empathy for an event, physical closeness or a combination of these two. This also turned out to be the greatest motivation for sharing something on social media.

“I choose based on my own personal affiliations. If we’re talking about the sort of terrorist things that happened in the last years, I have lived in France, I was a French major as an undergraduate student so I felt like I had to say something on social media because I have French colleagues, I have French friends.” (James)

“It also depends, like mourning on Facebook and the things you share... if something happened here I would probably share everything or maybe if it happened in Denmark or Norway. So if it’s closer to us or closer to me as a person then I think I would be more likely to share stuff. because I would want people to know what happened in my country.” (Lisa)

Thompson (1995) put forward the problem of how we relate to experiences not connected to our everyday life. This detachment of our everyday life is a concern that has been raised by James as “*people allow themselves to get distracted from the things that are in their own communities*”. With a similar logic, Anna said that she sees the biggest potential of social media in times of a need for coming together and mobilising people to gather in the physical space.

It was mentioned by several participants that the reason for the double standard or “empathy gap” (The Economist, 2015) between Paris and Beirut could be because we are “used to” attacks happening in the Middle East in general, while not in Paris. It is interesting to point out though that although Lebanon has suffered several bombings in the past few years, it is still considered a relatively peaceful country compared to its neighbours. The bombings on 12 November 2015 are quite salient and claimed to be the deadliest terrorist attacks since the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990 (Lind & Matthews, 2015). This highlights the importance of media representations in the construction of the social world (Couldry & Hepp, 2016) as Lebanon might be portrayed as more of a war zone than it actually is.

“It’s sad to say but it happens a lot, like in those areas and when something happens in London or Paris it’s more like a shock that it would happen. [...] I feel like everytime something happens to countries that are pretty big or have a big influence in the world, like the US or England or France, people go crazy but when something happens in Beirut, Iraq, Syria, it’s more like ‘Oh it happens every day’”. (Sofia)

“I feel like we go back to the fact that we always feel sad for the places in Europe or the US than the rest of the world and I guess it’s because they assume that these other countries in the Middle East, like Syria, they have always been under attack, it’s normal for them... So yeah... people are not gonna want to recognise it because it’s nothing new.” (Mary)

The symbolic significance of Paris was a common theme in the reasoning of how everyone or “others” felt closer and touched by the attacks in the city. The vivid cultural image that is in the head of people of Paris as well as the city’s political and economic importance was pointed out in some way by all the participants. Apart from the myriad of mediated experiences, many of the



interviewees have personal lived experiences of Paris or friends who lived there at the time of the attacks thus possessed a very clear mental picture of the place. This however, does not hold true for Beirut.

“Paris also has a very special symbol around the world. It’s like this romantic and... you know, baguette guy with a nice tower and you know... you drink coffee on the sidewalk kind of thing. So it bears a very romantic, a very calm, happy... not happy... but yeah, like a very positive image. You do not associate it with terrorist attacks.” (Linh)

The interviewees mentioned the significance of the Paris attacks in the way how people died while participating in everyday activities that almost everyone can relate to, such as being at a concert or in a café with friends. However, the quotes above mentioning more abstract symbols and values of the city showcase how we relate to the values that have been shattered as well. As Butler (2004) argues, asking the question of “What is it in the Other that I have lost? (p.30)” is when grieving can be examined as a resource of politics and a source of identification.

How someone’s death matters to us, depends on how the deceased or traits that the deceased embodied “support our imaginary, symbolic, or real identifications (Glyson, 2014:145)”. The deceased might relate to ideals connected to freedom, democracy or innocence or others that become destabilized with her death (ibid). These answers show that people do not only grieve the people but the attack on values close to them, such as democracy and culture.

“A: If we think about how many things Paris symbolises for those who don’t even live there...

Q: What does it symbolise?

A: Well you know, culture, love, coffee, existentialism. Croissant... the Eiffel-tower, museums, salons, the whole cultural milieu. And democracy, the French revolution.” (Rita)

These strong images that most of us have about the city could also be connected to the personal connection aspect, even if this personal connection refers more to a “popular culture connection” or political connection which

could explain why we select to deal with this mediated experience instead of other ones while coping with information (Thompson, 1995). This cultural proximity to Paris, the mention of shared values and feeling of closeness through popular culture that is not mentioned in the case of Beirut could be interpreted as the major factor of how the us and them separation (Silverstone, 2007) is constructed.

*Social media: a terrain for coming together or exposing moral hypocrisy?*

Cultural proximity and news value, as well as France as an “elite” and influential nation were brought up as factors that explain quite well the dichotomy between two attacks happening just a day after one another. However, all interviewees were critical towards how this phenomenon is today and emphasized the need for a more balanced media coverage and more care on our part as participants and audiences.

Participants mentioned that even though they are genuinely interested in what is going on in the world, keeping up with global events often results in media fatigue (James) and it is impossible to empathize with everything as “you feel sad for a moment [about an event] and then keep scrolling” (Mary). This is in accordance with statements on coping with the media overload by selecting those having the most relevance to the participant (Thompson, 1995; Silverstone, 2007). The responsibility of the media in selecting for us was pointed out in several discussions.

“I feel like it’s hard to put pressure on people, like normal people. Sure, everyone could read the news more, everyone could watch more television and stuff like that but I also feel like, it’s responsibility for the ones that get the information out there [...] I guess that’s super hard, like you can’t know everything, noone can know everything... but you could, like, when you print a newspaper, you do pick out what you want to put in there and you could make it a bit more equal maybe.” (Sofia)

Many interviewees expressed their concern over how social media could be contributing to “exposing moral hypocrisy” (James) in terms of amplifying certain losses over others. While Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) point out the existence of “emotion agents” who transmit affect in the online sphere, Ashuri (2011) draws attention to the emergence of the “moral mnemonic agent” (p. 109). The moral mnemonic agent is someone who would share

their memories about events where others have suffered and hence making their suffering visible and more difficult to marginalize. Their hope is to call attention to sufferings that are not too widely exposed and thus effect more public recognition.

Rita's thoughts however reflect that it can feel like there is a point when the moral mnemonic agency can turn more into negativity and blaming, when it comes to the comparing of what is remembered and what is not.

“Many people think it's hypocritical that Paris, London Brussels... we commemorate all of these things, everyone is outraged while Aleppo and Istanbul and Iraq are not that much in the centre of attention. Many people say that it's really hypocritical so that means that those shaken by the Paris terrorist attacks but less so by what is happening in the Middles East, they don't value human lives there as much as those in Paris and that it's racism.. while to put it simply, I think people are instinctively more shaken by the things happening in their own cultural milieu than at other places. [...] Just let me live. It's not my fault that it is as it is. It's like calling me out for not being as deeply affected by someone's relative's death as for my own.” (Rita)

Rita's answer reflects the importance cultural proximity that came up in many other discussions as well. Regarding the role of cultural proximity, some argue that transnational flows and the globalised media environment lessen the role of locality and strengthens the potentials for solidarity. “Something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete. At the same time, it has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on an appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992:9).” It seems as if this argument holds somewhat true in the sense that the interviewees point out that they feel the need that other events in non-elite countries should become more covered and discussed. Although, as Rita expressed it through the analogy of the death of our own relative dying versus someone else's, something happening in the same cultural environment just “instinctively” go deeper.

This is the problematic that relates to navigating between the discourse of “common humanity” and the discourse of “strangeness” in the media sphere. Building on Silverstone's (2007) argument presented in the second chapter, Chouliaraki and Orgad (2011) situate proper distance in terms of the

discourse of common humanity and the discourse of strangeness. The former discourse assumes that moral imagination is a capacity shared by everyone as there is a universal “we”, based on all of us belonging to the human species (Eagleton, 2009 in Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011). The point of departure of the discourse of strangeness however is that moral imagination is impossible as the self and the other always come through representations and thus can never be understood as a universal us (ibid). The authors criticize the discourse of common humanity as it is grounded in the Western concept of humanity and thus fails to recognise cultural plurality. Furthermore, the discourse of strangeness is problematic in the sense that it emphasizes the otherness as the main condition for a moral encounter with the other of a different cultural background. Thus, they contend that “the moral imagination of otherness cannot but navigate a precarious territory” (ibid:343).

Pointing out that putting ourselves in the shoes of people who are closer to us and therefore empathizing with them more easily or more instinctively is reminiscent to the discourse of strangeness. The word “instinctively” is very telling and brings us to the question of whether we can expect ourselves to empathize the same way with people at places we do not possess mental pictures of? At the same time, as all interviewees were very critical of not paying the same attention to other lives lost at different parts of the world seems to reflect that we want to be able to have a universal moral imagination afterall. Thus, the precarious territory between the two discourses that Chouliaraki and Orgad bring up seem to hold true for the ambivalent feelings towards the social media aftermath of the attacks as well.

Overall, I argue that the interviewees seem to hold a rather cosmopolitan standpoint by both acknowledging that there is a double standard and expressing that that is something that they wish did not exist and criticizing the Western-centred media (Zelizer, 2011).

When discussing how certain attacks as well as the commemoration and public mourning of the victims are covered in the media, all participants pointed out the problems with the double standard. All interviewees expressed their sadness or anger over how we do not mourn for lives lost in certain places the same way as in other places in the world.

## **“Crowdsourcing emotions online”**

Despite all participants criticizing the unequal amount of attention given to certain world events and tragedies than others, each of the interviewees marked the collective or community aspect of showing empathy online as valuable. As Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) point out, all media are inherently emotional media where the subject of self and the object of the media cannot be simply separated, instead there is the self in the media and the media inside the self.

“A: For me it seems like a more logical or more satisfying step than if I would write it down in my diary.

Q: Why is that?

A: Because this is not a personal loss but an issue that affects all of us.” (Rita)

Although Anna emphasised that she believes more in the physical space and sees the power of social media mostly through its ability to get people organised to come together physically, she admitted being touched by the outpouring of support after the Paris attacks on Facebook.

“I think it is beautiful that people come together in a way to mourn together and I do it with them but silently.” (Anna)

Rita pointed out that for her, it is the collective aspect that makes her turn to social media in times of loss concerning an event, rather than sharing something when it is a personal loss.

“I would rather just like to raise others’ awareness when a collective loss hits us. And from my point of view, the attacks in Paris were a collective loss.” (Rita)

As Döveling (2015) explains, social bonding makes up an important part of mourning and the process of coping with loss includes “interpersonal and intrapersonal emotion regulation processes” (ibid:110), including conscious and unconscious strategies as well as selecting certain situations, such as sharing on social networks, to cope with the emotions of grief.

“It’s kind of a collective processing of information and for some people who might not be as in touch with their emotions or not as able to really process emotions on their own its better to have this, not just like national but global platform where you can kind of express your feelings and then also see how other people are expressing. So I think it’s a way of crowdsourcing emotions and processing and I know i definitely use it that way because there are some events that happen where I can’t come to terms with it immediately but by going through hashtags like jesuischarlie, stuff like that, you can begin the process of understanding and I guess moving on emotionally.” (Emily)

Ahmed (2004) remarks the emergence of what she defines as the “affective economy”. She challenges the view that we should view emotions as individual properties, referring to using language such as “I have a feeling”. Instead, she puts emphasis on the binding nature of emotions that occurs between subject and object. She considers emotions similar to capital in nature as the affects they produce do not reside in a sign, object or commodity but they come to life as they circulate across the social. What Emily describes as the “crowdsourcing of emotions” seems to be in line with what Ahmed defines as emotion capital.

What Emily’s experience reflects could also be connected to the ritual view of communication (Carey, 1989). According to Carey (1989), the ritual aspect focuses on aspects of sharing and participation of communication and reinforcing a certain worldview and values. In this view, news serves more as drama rather than information which call for our participation in them although it does not exclude the role of news as information providers. Commonness and community are also important notions in the ritual view of communication. The feelings and opinions regarding the positive aspects of coming together in the aftermath of a tragedy are in accordance with Lagerkvist’s (2014) argument about our need for community and connectivity as main motivations for expressions of loss on social media platforms.

While it has been stressed how social media platforms can be spaces providing bridges for people, James’ opinion however highlights how the Internet can also bring with itself a sense of alienation and distancing as well.

“On the Internet, things can become disembodied so expressions of mourning and solidarity can often become disembodied, so the picture I think maybe helps me center myself in an actual physical reality and maybe also can provide something like that for the people that are looking at the pictures.” (James)

As mentioned earlier, the high level of connectivity on social media brings with itself bridging and bonding at the same time (Christensen, 2013), sometimes bringing people closer together while other times, amplifying our differences. As Couldry and Hepp (2010) contends, shared experience is an important factor in the construction of a “we” as receptors of a media event. However, according to them when it comes to media events that expand to a global context, it is hardly unlikely that a “global we” can exist. They claim that it rather opens up the possibility to construct many different ideas of a common we (ibid). I would argue though in accordance with Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) that we should not dismiss the concept of global emotions and thus the concept of a global we that quickly though. How else can we understand such powerful instances of coming together such as in the aftermath of the death of Princess Diana, the 11 September attacks or the Paris attacks? It might be an ephemeral state of community but it certainly facilitated a sense of we-ness. However, once again, most of similar examples could probably been pointed out in Western countries which highlights inequalities.

## **Political dimensions of mourning and solidarity online**

### *Social media solidarity in terms of activism*

Just like the moral implications of social media practices of collective mourning, the political aspects are also seen as quite ambivalent. Whether the profile picture changing on Facebook was seen as some sort of activism as suggested by some news articles is contested by the interviewees. Some of the interviewees treated it only as a gesture while others as a form of activism, hinting at how it should have further use or effect than only expressing solidarity.

“People often think ‘I’m just gonna change the picture’. That means that ‘I’m with them, I think about them’. But I think that’s not enough, you need to be more critical, maybe pushing your government to do something about that... or maybe bring it up with the UN or I don’t know... to have a sanction, to have whatever form of policy possible to help the situation there. Instead of saying just... I mean it is really easy to sit in your room and think things are gonna be better because I change the picture or ‘I’m with the refugees’ but that’s not being critical of the situation.” (Linh)

The way Linh expressed herself in regards to using the French flag overlay on profile pictures showcases what researchers have referred to as slacktivism or easy activism. In her answer, the feel-good aspect of slacktivism (Morozov, 2009) is highlighted that criticises how people are using activism to bring more attention to themselves.

“I think it is a form of activism but it’s the bad kind. The fake... here in the US they call it ‘ally-theater’, like you want to do everything in your power to show the world that you are a true ally. People are doing everything in their power to show their activism and their position in the issue, that they end up bringing the attention to themselves.” (Mary)

Mary used the expression ally-theater and described the action as fake, that aligns with Morozov’s description of slacktivism (2009) as well. Moreover, the usefulness of this action was also highly criticized in many of the interviews. Sometimes, it was mixed with a sense of ambiguity, mentioning that there is something appealing in it, however it does not bring any change to the situation.

“I can see the point of sharing things and changing profile pictures... at the same time, that doesn’t help anybody. That’s like ‘Oh pray for Africa who are starving.’ Oh then we donate money, that’s what you do to help.” (Lisa)

Lisa saying that she sees the point of the filter but at the same time brings up how this is not a useful way of helping reflects a certain ambiguity. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) pointed out, ambiguity in an interviewee’s answer can reflect the contradictions in the world they live in.

Moreover, the expression echo chamber was mentioned by several participants as a problematic of social media. They feel that social media only lets them



see a certain standpoint and beliefs on an issue, depending on what political beliefs most of their friends share. The issue of an echo chamber was mentioned in the context of the political aspects of the French flag filter, and how that could be interpreted as standing for various different things according to what kind of network one has on Facebook.

Besides social media further increasing how selectively we hear about certain events, actions such as using the filter, something that could be seen as a nice gesture for the individual, might play into increasing fear and hatred towards other groups if interpreted by certain political groups in their own way.

“In terms of heightening fear and anxiety and I think that that can play into certain populist political agendas. [...] This heightened sense of emergency or fear, grieving can be channeled in negative ways and I think we probably still don’t really understand how social media is impacting our political sphere.” (James)

James summarized the ambiguity of relating to the French flag filter that was highlighted in many discussions:

“I think a lot of people, everybody, I would say did it out a sense of good intention. But the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” (James)

### *Responsibility of users and facebook*

As it has already been mentioned, Facebook introducing the French flag filter as a way to show solidarity with victims and survivors of the attacks or the people in France in general was viewed highly controversial. As an opinion piece on Newsfeed pointed out, it could heighten the feeling that certain events are worth more social media attention and mourning than others (Zhao, 2015). Alex Schultz, the Vice-President of Facebook responded to the critiques for not having a wider selection of filters simply by stating that there is a first time for everything, and for Facebook, it was Paris (Alter, 2015).

It seems to be unclear whether Facebook had any agenda regarding the French flag filter, similarly to the social experiment carried out in 2014. During the experiment, a certain amount of emotional words were hidden from users’ newsfeeds without their knowledge to test how that would affect their status updates or reactions to posts (Gibbs, 2014). The company was highly criticized for the unethical way of conducting the research, without having

notified the users. A year later when Facebook offered the rainbow-filter to celebrate the legalisation of same-sex marriage in the US, speculations on whether this was a big data experiment of some sort emerged as well (Matias, 2015).

When asked about Facebook's responsibility as a social media platform and company in introducing a filter of a state's flag, interviewees' stances ranged from being critical and sceptical to more accepting in this regard. Opinions concerning the possible agenda of Facebook behind the filter ranged between being curious about "how much more profit they generate with this kind of thing" (Linh) to understanding why Facebook would not create a filter for something the media has covered much as people would not understand what it was (Lisa) and saying that "the intentions were good" (Erik).

Taking the standpoint of van Dijck (2017), that platforms are never neutral and that they have a power in shaping society, it is crucial to scrutinize the responsibility of Facebook. Research concerning social media should deal with questions surrounding influences of power and power asymmetries. The power of Facebook to influence people in drawing attention to tragedies in France but not for others could be seen as an example of power asymmetry.

Facebook being a company first and foremost has been addressed by several interviewees.

"I think their role is pretty important because they were the ones who made this decision to have this option. That's why before I said I don't blame the people who chose to use this filter option, because the options were that filter flag or nothing and that decision lies with Facebook. Any conversations about political choices have to be directed to Facebook because they are the ones who made the actual decision." (Emily)

When asked about what sort of responsibility the interviewees attribute to themselves as users, opinions varied as well. Everyone addressed that it is a complex question that cannot have a black and white answer. Answers still varied between positions on whether it is more of the responsibility of the media or the media audiences themselves to get more balanced reporting on events around the world and thus, see more balanced social media reactions as well.

“If you don’t know... it’s hard to post anything. So I get the critique but also, we’re only humans, we can only respond to what we know.” (Sofia)

Sofia’s opinion implies a view that people are more dependent on the media coverage and thus their agency is affected by it.

The discussions highlighted that if there is something so available and ready-made such as the French flag filter on a platform, people feel more like they are making an active choice for standing with some event and not with others. Many interviewees expressed that using the filter would have made them feel uncomfortable as it would have shown more that they expressed mourning for a tragic event but not for another one. Emily for instance said that the Beirut attacks was one of the attacks shortly before Paris and that is why she decided not to change her profile picture.

The discomfort with the flag overlay came through in several of the interviews:

“The reason I’m not doing it myself is also because... I don’t know... It’s maybe kind of waking up an inner conflict on how much is actually going on and how little is actually being acknowledged by the mass. Like Paris, like that was really acknowledged but a lot of stuff is still going on which is not acknowledged.” (Erik)

Mary also did not use the filter to avoid participating in giving a higher attention to one attack over the other. She hinted at the systematic problem of media coverage which could be connected to Zelizer’s (2011) observation about a dominance of coverage of events in the Western world.

“A lot of things happened in other parts of the world and the news were not covering it and so that was the reason that I didn’t do it. Because I felt like I would be too outspoken about one and not about the others.” (Mary)

When it comes to more individualistic forms of expressions though, this feeling that it is more highlighted that they are making a choice and choosing a tragedy over another was not present though. James, for example expressed his feelings by a photo he had taken in Budapest and sending a message of compassion through it to his friends in France but he did not use the filter because of “a personal feeling of moral hypocrisy”.

“I didn’t change my profile when the attacks happened in Turkey, I didn’t change it when, you know, the nightclub in Orlando... I didn’t change for any of it. I feel like changing for one would mean that you’re valuing that over the others.” (James)

This form of expression could be an example of a piece in one’s “digital shoebox” (van Dijk, 2007), a creative act that aims to make sense of one’s own life and the lives of others around them.

Addressing the issue of the double standard on which lives are grievable as Judith Butler (2004) formulates it on social media was seen as important by all the participants. However, several of them also found the arguments that emerged in many news articles and opinion pieces comparing Beirut and Paris and how the filter can contribute to the global empathy gap (The Economist, 2015) or increase racism and division (Farhan, 2015) “toxic” as one participant formulated it.

According to Linh, the debate on this issue was not “healthy” and she thinks that we should use more understanding and solidarity towards each other.

“Instead of saying ‘yeah I get to do this because I have a personal connection with France and you can’t’... it’s your problem that you think I’m a hypocrite. Instead of really blaming the personal attitude towards these events it’s better to have more solidarity and talk.” (Linh)

Regarding the debate, Emily’s answer reflects more hopefulness on how this case could be used to point out the dominance of news media coverage on the Western world.

“I don’t think anyone has found the proper formula yet to turning moments like this into larger discussions but I think the potential is there.” (Emily)

Couldry (2003) has pointed out the opportunities for expressing conflicts and inequalities of the media’s symbolic power after certain grand-scale media events. He puts forward the example of audience engagement after the sudden death of Princess Diana, resulting in a myriad of different ways of public expressions of mourning contributing to producing the discourse of the media event. However, he contends that this was far from overthrowing the media’s representational authority and the already existing power structures. In his

reading, these discussions on grieveability could be understood in a more positive light. Perhaps, the debates addressing certain double standards, even in a times of sorrow, could serve as pointing out inequalities of reporting and showcasing the agency of social media users who raised their voices against it.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore the way how collective mourning is constructed and perceived on social media, through interviews with individuals active on social media, and having an interest in world events.

First, to answer the question of what motivates participation in collective mourning on social media, the research identified searching for community, personal affiliation as well as physical or cultural closeness as the main factors. Garde-Hansen and Gorton (2013) argue that emotion can be seen as a universalizing element that in the global media environment is a driving force of connecting people despite geo-political boundaries. This statement seem to hold true in regards to the views of the interview participants. They reflected on the positive impact of social media in presenting information from more parts of the world than mainstream media and users' agency in informing their networks about events or issues they care about. However, media fatigue was also mentioned as the downside of the heightened interconnectivity and the reason for not being emotionally involved with certain tragedies.

When asked about the motivations in general for participating in online collective actions online, the need for personal affiliation with a place or an event or standing for a cause that one personally cares about were identified. Furthermore, the need to show sadness as well as showing people affected by the tragedy that they are not alone highlight the need for "communitas" (Lagerkvist, 2014) for coping with trauma as well as the need for social bonding (Döveling, 2015) in grieving. It was emphasized that in case of something that is perceived as a collective loss, social media can help furnish a sense of togetherness. However, the authenticity of these actions is also questioned by some, mostly because the "trend-factor" filters and hashtags create a certain band-wagon effect.

Regarding the role and responsibility of shaping social media practices of collective mourning, it is perceived as quite ambivalent. One columnist at NPR.org wrote that it reflects the universal truth of the internet, as “we really can’t agree on anything, not even how to grieve (Sanders, 2015)”. This is similar to the impression that I got after discussing the filter with the interview participants. The flag filter was perceived either as a good tool to show solidarity, a tool that could play into populist agendas to spread fear or a tool that is positive and negative at the same time. Some pointed out that the company probably had good intentions but profit and corporate aspects were questioned as well, questioning the authenticity of the action.

Moreover, the easiness of colouring our online selves with a click was also a criticized aspect, implying that it serves more the user to feel good about themselves than change anything. One of the biggest criticism that was mentioned regarding the different symbols and hashtags, especially the French flag filter was their “easiness”. This discussion on effects and slacktivism is interesting and makes me want to question why we are so keen on generating some kind of effect even when it comes to emotions of loss and mourning? Do these feelings have to have an effect? What sort of result or practical benefits do we want from showing empathy and mourning? Of course, given the nature of the attacks, it is understandable that people feel the need to do something to react to or protest terrorism in a way. From this standpoint, criticism that a filter or a hashtag will not solve anything is evident, however it might create a sort of community or “global emotions” (Garde-Hansen & Gorton, 2013) ephemerally.

However, the concern that some localities are left out of this forming of community online was raised in all interviews. Cultural proximity is still a decisive factor of the capability to empathize with the other. When Zuckerberg and his colleagues decided to launch the French flag filter, it is fair to assume that it was based on a genuine human emotion at the core. In the end, Facebook is an American corporation and thereby imagining being attacked at a café or a concert feels much easier than trying to put themselves in the shoes of people at a war zone in Syria for instance. However, even if we do not think about how they would benefit from creating a “trend” on the network and optimistically think about it as a human action, we should still be critical towards the consequences. As many interviewees pointed out, it seems a bit disturbing that there is one flag and no other, inherently resulting in a sort of exclusion. The French flag might have been offered based on good

intentions, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions, to refer back to James' remark here.

Although cultural proximity for empathizing is key, the emergence of critiques and critical self-reflection on the double standards between Beirut and Paris seem to showcase the potential towards a more cosmopolitan mediapolis. This brings us back to navigating between the discourses of common humanness and strangeness regarding managing the proper distance in the mediapolis (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011). It seems as if we want to have this universal moral imagination based on our common humanity, however to what extent can we expect to be empathetic towards the unknown?

Our limitations of empathy could may be seen as a source of protection. If we were shaken by and mourned for every single life lost in the same way then we would constantly be numbed by sadness. This relates to the media fatigue mentioned by some which could also contribute to the suppressing of emotions. Collective mourning after similar tragedies can thus be understood through the ambivalence of wanting to care equally for all lives but at the same time acknowledging that cultural proximity and personal connection greatly influences us.

However, the fact that some tragedies trigger much more sympathy than others can put our sense of justice at unease and should not be overlooked. Raising the issue of the imbalance such as in the case of Beirut and Paris has the potential to generate fruitful ground for discussion to enhance more equality. The hard part lies in the balancing act of providing everyone the freedom for the right to mourn for whoever in whatever way they want while also being self-critical and pointing out inequalities of media representations and social media reactions.

Naturally, the research has limitations as well. Due to length limitations gender perspectives were not included. Furthermore, a fairly ironic limitation of the research is that it presented the views of mostly people from the West. With the exception of one Vietnamese participant, all were Americans and Europeans currently residing in Europe or the US. Most of them have also lived or currently live abroad which probably explains their generally cosmopolitan outlook. For further research, one could look at whether cultural proximity matters for people from non-Western cultures as much as it matters to us. The answer would probably be yes. Feeling closer emotionally to people who are closer to us or whose lives we can relate to is only human.

However, we should be critical towards the media's role in amplifying differences, the influence of platforms as well as the Western sphere dominating the media sphere (Zelizer, 2011).

It seems that the way people use social media to grieve is still evolving. Sadly, there are certainly going to be more occasions to see how showing emotions of solidarity and mourning are shaped in the digital sphere.

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# Affective and Emotional: Turkish Women's Engagement with #sendeanlat

*Burcum Kesen*

## Introduction

“In Turkey, we women are like in a big prison, and the charges against us never end.”

- Beyza

Social media's been a great tool to surface women issues. #MeToo from 2017 is a recent and a great example of this, however it is not the first one. All over the world, women have made themselves heard via hashtags before such as #YesAllWomen in the USA, #Everydaysexism in UK, and #aufschrei in Germany, commonly referred to as hashtag feminism as in Dixon (2014) and Knappe and Lang (2014). This thesis focuses on another one: #sendeanlat ('you tell your story too' in Turkish).

On 11th of February, 2015 Özgecan Aslan, a 20-year-old university student in Mersin, took a bus to go home at night. She was the only one left on the bus when the bus driver took her to the woods instead. Preceded by a rape attempt, Özgecan was murdered by the driver that night. Following this terrible event, women all around Turkey protested. Social media was used for women's mobilization and as well as a mourning platform where people shared their feelings via the hashtag #Özgecinsiyahgiy (wear black for Özge).

A couple of days after, this single incident became a catalyst for women to share their own stories of sexual harassment with the hashtag #sendeanlat. Within the first hour that the hashtag started, 440.000 tweets were posted (Uras, 2015). The stories women tweeted varied from everyday sexism incidents to sexual harassment stories on the street and in the family.

This thesis will use #sendeanlat as a case to look at how Turkish women experienced their engagement with this online protest, focusing specifically on affect and emotions. There is a number of studies about online feminist activism or hashtag feminism about above mentioned hashtags (Barker-Plummer, 2016; Armstrong & Mahone, 2016; Rodino-Colocino, 2014 etc.). However the Turkish online protest #sendeanlat did not receive any attention in the global literature. Besides the existing literature on online protests is often placed within the framework of social movement studies, focusing on theories of the public sphere. Feminist online movements follow this strand as well. The literature focuses on how online protests or hashtag feminism is executed in public spheres, regarding the producers as public/counter-publics. However not much attention within these online feminist studies is given to affective and emotional engagement of women, nor to the women who don't identify as feminists. While the existing literature focuses on feminist women's use of these spaces, this thesis focuses on the periphery, the non-feminist women. Through interviews the research investigates the affective and emotional dimensions of women's engagement with online protests against sexism and rape culture. The thesis will argue that affect and emotions are what motivate non-feminist women to engage with a protest against rape culture in Turkey. Looking at affect and emotions, the dimensions of women's engagement and the ways this engagement generated awareness is explored. The research also highlights the blurry lines between the online and offline spaces of the women's engagement.

This thesis aims to investigate the affective and emotional dimensions of Turkish women's engagement with #sendeanlat. It explores if and how awareness was initiated through this engagement and the different ways women chose to engage with it. The starting point is that in #sendeanlat, narratives of sexual harassment via tweets work as a catalyst of women's affective and emotional engagement through which social awareness about sexual harassment issues in Turkey was generated. To explore this, a qualitative approach has been employed where participants of #sendeanlat were interviewed. Therefore the following research questions were asked:

In relation to the online protest #sendeanlat, how can we understand the affective and emotional engagement of the Turkish women and the awareness this engagement generated?

- How did #sendeanlat create engagement through affect and emotions?
- In what ways were #sendeanlat able to generate awareness about sexual harassment issues in Turkey?
- What were the ways the women engaged further with #sendeanlat and what were the motivations and limitations of their engagement?

## Surveying spaces, emotions, and engagement

This chapter, first, will lay out how political can happen in the everyday life through online spaces, second, it will introduce the public space notion and explain affect and emotions, and how they are used within the media studies. Finally by looking at how online feminist studies are studying anti-sexist protests in online spaces, this research will situate itself within the existing literature.

The Internet has enabled people with a new communicative space for political engagement (Dahlgren, 2009). As seen in recent years with the Occupy movements, the Arab Spring, and the Slutwalk movement (Castells, 2015; Dahlgren, 2014; Papacharissi, 2014; Mendes, 2015), online platforms such as websites, blogs, and social media platforms are heavily used as a space for mobilization and political engagement. Due to these ways of using the Internet to engage, and mobilize, these spaces are referred as the “public spheres online” (Dahlgren, 2009) or “networked public spheres” (Tüfekci, 2012). However today, movements like Slutwalk and protests like #sendeanlat take other forms that might need to be investigated outside of this traditional framework of public spheres (Papacharissi, 2014). Modeling these online spaces on the notion of public sphere does not provide the necessary means to explore the online protests due to the duality of rationality and emotionality emphasized by the public sphere notions.

Online platforms do not only create a space for mobilization but also a space for people to engage emotionally with others. These platforms help people express their own political ideas by enabling them with a communicative space (Dahlgren, 2009; Papacharissi, 2014). Mendes (2015) also acknowledges that political and personal engagement today sometimes happen in these online spaces. While some scholars see these developments as clicktivism or slacktivism due to these activities being too easy to participate in without much effort and having no policy outcomes (Morozov, 2009), others recognize the potential of these networks of participation for civic culture (Dahlgren, 2009: 116) as well as for the discursive politics (Madison, 2013) and some even argue for real life impacts of online activism (Shaw, 2012). Therefore to understand what form online protests like #sendeanlat take, it will be useful to look further into how political is in the everyday lives of people and how engagement occurs emotionally through online spaces and transgresses to offline spaces.

### **The emotional politics of everyday in online public spaces**

Discussing the role of the Internet in today's world, Dahlgren (2013) builds up a three-tiered pyramid-like structure. The top tier refers to the elites of the media, the middle tier refers to the mainstream media and the bottom tier refers to the societal sphere. As he states "The lowest tier is the societal sphere, seen as a sprawling, amorphous arena which people can readily link up to, where communication can take a vast range of different forms" (ibid: 48). Most importantly for Dahlgren the societal sphere points to the space "where the political can take shape in the proximity of people's everyday lives" (ibid). With this approach, Dahlgren provides a leeway to recognize the political expression that happens on digital platforms such as blogs, website and social media spaces (ibid). Like Dahlgren, Papacharissi (2014) also recognizes the political by discussing how the personal in the everyday life becomes political on Twitter. Papacharissi defines "political" as "emergent expressions, orientations and environments" (137). She shows how Twitter enables people to state personal views thereby impregnating it with the capacity for the political (ibid), claiming that "The act of making a private thought public bears the potential of a political act" (ibid). This view is key to understand especially online protests where the political can take shape in the everyday life. Papacharissi further states that although not each attempt to speak up

may result in political impact, “the process of traversing private to public territory affords political potential” (ibid). She continues by drawing attention to the importance of the context where the political occurs: “Impact is derived from context, so a statement that is perceived as ordinary in one context may appear provocative in a different one” (ibid). This point becomes crucial to understand the impacts of #sendeanlat on Turkish women as well as what #sendeanlat mean for Turkish women. While in another context it might not be of importance to express these personal sexual harassment stories online, in the Turkish context where silence on these issues prevails, these personal statements of women become political. To be able to voice these tabooed issues publicly with the goal of refusing what they are experiencing daily carries a symbolic power. As Papacharissi states, “Similarly, the nature of the impact will vary depending on context, so statements that bear political potential may generate actual or symbolic power” (ibid). Furthermore, drawing on Corner (2011) these personal/political statements can be seen as a form of ‘soft power’ because of “the perceptions they encourage, the information they provide and the feelings they generate” (ibid: 23).

Traditionally though feelings generated by the political statements online in the everyday life have been considered to undermine the political characteristics of people’s engagement with online discussions and protests. This is the result of modeling online spaces after public sphere models (Papacharissi, 2014). As Dahlgren states these models focus on the rationality and criticize and ignore anything affective, emotional and passionate. Dahlgren however states that “To be engaged in something signals not just cognitive attention and some normative stance, but also an affective investment” (2009: 83). Therefore it becomes important to recognize the emotional character as well as affectivity within these online movements and protests. Because as Wetherell states the benefit of looking into affect and emotions is that it brings “the everyday back into social analysis” (2012: 11). Considering the political happens in the everyday life through the affective and emotional engagements, it becomes important to regard these aspects as well.

Engagement, affect and emotions are very much connected with each other and they all occur in everyday life, as Dahlgren states “political sentiments in the form of dominant and oppositional discourses are embodied by various modes of cultural expression, often comprising strong affective dimensions” (2014: 25). Therefore researching women’s engagement and participation

with online protests requires researching affectivity and emotions to further understand what attracts the women who participate or not, and what moves them. “Kuntsman notes that such intertwinedness is more an ‘affective fabric of digital cultures’. These are ‘the lived and deeply felt everyday sociality of connections, ruptures, emotions, worlds, politics and sensory energies, some of which can be pinned down to words and structures; others are intense yet ephemeral’ (2012, 3)” (Kuntsman cited in Garde-Hansen and Gorton, 2013: 14).

By arguing for the concept of a public space rather than public sphere, Poell and van Dijk (2016) dismiss the duality of rational and emotional in regards to these online spaces where political happens in the everyday lives of people. They distinguish two characteristics of online activist movements: First, they recognize that activism today does happen both in online and offline spaces. However their consideration of the online does not necessarily refer to how these spaces enable mobilization in physical spaces through communication online, but refers mostly to engagement and connectivity in online spaces. Second, they point to the emotional statements posted in various social media platforms and the feelings they generate which results in “emotional connectivity”. Therefore they argue that the connectivity that happens on online spaces is through the emotional statements shared. As they state, this is how public space online is constructed: “It is through the mass sharing of emotions that (temporary) public spaces are constructed” (2016: 228). This is because the activism happens in the techno-commercial infrastructure of social media (ibid). The publicness in Poell and van Dijk’s concept is not given to the public but more “constructed and conquered” by the public. According to Poell and van Dijk, due to these spaces being commercial spaces, publicness is constructed and conquered through their emotional engagement and connectivity by the public (2016: 229). The emotional connectivity then leads to people’s engagement with the protests transgressing to offline spaces.

Other scholars such as Clark (2016), Duguay (2016) Gerbaudo (2012) etc. have also been focusing on this intermixture of online and offline and the emotionality of these social media movements and protests to better understand these forms of protests that take place online. By researching how “networked platforms support affective processes” (2014: 27) and how they create “networked structures of feeling”, Papacharissi for example recognizes the emotional character of activism that blends the online spaces together with offline spaces. This is because the engagement and participation that occur

online carry an emotional characteristic that affects the offline. Furthermore she states that the notion of affect enables a way to comprehend “opportunities for voice that networked platforms invite” (ibid: 26). These qualities of her research shares commonalities with the Poell and van Dijk’s public space concept. By bringing in affect and emotions to online protests discussions, scholars provide us with a way to comprehend the nuances of the online activism. This focus on affect and emotions of the research shows how affect and emotions can enhance our understanding of online protests today. Therefore the following part will introduce affect and emotions before looking into its relation with the media and online protests.

## **Affect and emotions**

Affect has come to be defined in different ways by different scholars within the cultural studies and humanities. One predominant understanding of affect is that it is a pre-personal intensity that has to do with a body’s capacity to act (Massumi, 1995: xvi) while another definition considers affect as a motivational system in combination with reason and passion (Tomkins in Garde-Hansen and Gorton, 2013: 35). This understanding of affect as what precedes emotion, as bodily intensity as well as capacity to act encompasses bodily reactions: “Intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin” (Massumi, 1995: 85). This also refers to bodily sensations (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015) that are felt on the skin such as goosebumps, a lump in the throat, and feeling sick in the stomach. However affect has also come to refer to a broader understanding that encompasses various concepts such as moods, feelings, and emotions together (Konjin, 2008). Williams’ “structures of feelings” (1977) is another approach to affect and emotions. With the concept of structures of feelings, Williams dissolves the longstanding boundary that has characterized understandings of affect as a complex psychological notion and brings it into the cultural studies sphere. According to Williams, this concept is about “meaning and values as they are actively lived and felt” which is connected to “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships” (Williams, 1977: 132). By referring to impulse as one of the characteristics he also distinguishes that feeling of urge through the lived experience which can help to understand what moves us as well as what restraints us. However he emphasizes on the concept by stating that it is “not

feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practicing consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity” (ibid). Therefore William’s structures of feeling don’t come from an opposition of affect versus cognition. Rather feeling and the thought are seen as part of each other, as mutually dependent on each other. Williams’ structures of feeling, according to Papacharissi allows us to investigate different kinds of engagement that can be applicable to both “within and beyond the structured spheres of opinion expression” (2014: 115). Considering the engagement on the digital platforms regarding activism online today with its offline and online blend, affect and emotion become important factors to better understand what moves and attracts people in the way they engage with online movements.

It should be noted that unlike affect, emotions can be social. Although affect is sometimes referred to as the “atmosphere” in the room that can be felt by everyone, cognitive character of the emotions differs it from the affect (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015). Ahmed (2014) treats emotions as neither ‘inside’ us nor ‘outside’ us. Instead emotions are the surfaces that indicate individuals and the social (ibid). Emotions may have an object or can be about something as well including imaginary objects:

“Emotions are both about objects, which they hence shape, and are also shaped by contact with objects. Neither of these ways of approaching an object presumes that the object has a material existence; objects in which I am ‘involved’ can also be imagined (Heller, 1979: 12)” (ibid: 7).

Since affect is pre-personal and emotions are cognitive, making a distinction between the two helps the research in understanding the women’s engagement retrospectively. Sara Ahmed (2014) describes emotions in relation to affect as follows: “Emotions, in other words, involve bodily processes of affecting and being affected, or to use my own terms, emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others.” (ibid: 208) According to Ahmed then emotions are not simply what “we have” but more like how we relate and respond to objects and get into contact with others (ibid: 10). Ahmed’s understanding of the objects of emotions refers to imaginary objects too, therefore making a way to understand the connection between a lived experience in the past, its memory, and the feeling it generates. This becomes crucial to understand the women’s engagement with #sendeanlat. Such



connection between the emotions and memory illuminates that our memory of an experience can also trigger a certain feeling that we know of or vice versa. As she states:

“For example, I can have a memory of something, and that memory might trigger a feeling (Pugmire, 1998: 7). The memory can be the object of my feeling in both senses: the feeling is shaped by contact with the memory, and also involves an orientation towards what is remembered. So I might feel pain when I remember this or that, and in remembering this or that, I might attribute what is remembered as being painful” (2014: 7).

The relationship between the emotion and what is remembered can explain women’s emotional engagement with #sendeanlat even further. Not only because #sendeanlat was a 2 years old campaign when interviews were conducted and therefore the experience itself was a memory, but also because reading other people’s tweets, the women might have felt certain emotions which could be related to remembering their own personal experiences. Hence the connection between the personal memories and emotions can shed a light on the women’s engagement with #sendeanlat.

## **Affect and emotions in media studies**

In media studies, affect and emotions have come to be understood mainly in relation to the mass media and the emotions and affect it generates (Barlett and Gentile, 2010). This research includes the media reception studies in relation to entertainment and emotions, as well as news and emotions. Grusin’s study is one of the studies that examine the relationship between the news of natural disasters and the way they produce affective bonds on the audiences. As Grusin states “Mediashocks shapes or enables particular individual and collective affective formations, which keep people attached to social media, television or the Internet through intensifying the affective bond with their technical media devices” (2015: 34). Recent research extends the study of emotion and affect to new media landscapes such as social media platforms (Garde-Hansen and Gorton, 2013; Benski and Fisher, 2014; Karatzogianni and Kuntsman, 2012) Besides as stated by Garde Hansen and Gorton, “the most recent theoretical intervention casts the net wide in uncovering the everyday and ordinary emotions that are articulated and

consumed through technologically enabled networks” (2013: 12). This intervention to uncover the everyday and ordinary emotions that are articulated and consumed through digital platforms includes research that focuses on affective relations of celebrity Facebook pages and fan communication (Dilling-Hansen, 2015), the aesthetic-affective dimension of YouTube videos (Soelmark, 2015), the role of emotion in digital object memories (Mackley and Karpovich, 2012), as well as the affective fabric of everyday connections through mobile phones (Sirisena, 2012). It is the affect and emotions that are generated in the everyday media consumption that this research will focus on. Thus this turn to affect and emotions in relation to digital platforms helps us understand our relationship with the object of our engagement. The same applies to the research that connects social media activism with emotions and affect.

### *Affect and emotions in social media activism*

Looking at research that focuses on the affective, emotional relations with social media activism can help us better understand the political engagement in the everyday life through digital platforms. In *Affective Publics* (2014) Papacharissi takes the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements as case studies and examines Twitter hashtags around these movements and how they are examples of social media bringing affect, emotion and activism together. She shows how participants of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street are using social media to express what she calls “affective statements”: A blend of fact with opinion and emotions (2014: 27). Her argument is that by enabling affective statements, online spaces facilitate emotions and a sense of belonging among the citizens leading to the creation of networked affective publics. Instead of focusing on the political impacts of the Twitter hashtags, she focuses on how citizens express themselves and situate their political views right in the midst of emotions and opinions in their everyday lives (ibid: 27).

Following Papacharissi’s lead, Clark (2016) identifies the emotional involvement of high school students’ online and offline protests in Ferguson following the shooting of Michael Brown. She names these tweets, texts, snapchats, photos and videos the students share with each other as “artifacts of engagement” and places this within the emotional involvement of the students as they create their ‘affective public’ (2016: 243). Clark also emphasizes on the blurring lines of online and offline by stating that “the concepts of the digital material and, by extension, the specific example of

artifacts of engagement signal how difficult it is to separate objects, actions, platforms, and actors in the digital era because the digital material sits at the intersection of technological affordances, user interfaces, and social practices.” (2016: 244). These blurry lines between the offline and online engagement need to be acknowledged to understand the nature of the online protests.

Scholars such as Maddison (2013) focus on the discursive aspect of online movements, and direct their concern at “the role of discourse in creating meaning and shared understanding within the women’s movement and in women’s everyday life” (2013: 38). This becomes relevant considering the online protests that do not aim to have an offline presence. When we look at the rising number of online feminist protests such as #Everydaysexism, #holaback, #yesallwomen we can take Maddison’s stance and distinguish the importance of these movements as in meaning creation or raising consciousness through the engagement on online spaces. This will be crucial for the analysis in understanding how #sendeanlat as an online protest generated awareness.

## **Online feminist activism**

There is a number of research focusing on emotions and affect within the online activist movements however, the feminist strand of the digital activism studies don’t necessarily focus on the affective and emotional dimensions nor on the women who don’t identify with feminism but engage with feminist movements.

There is a lot of research about feminist activism online focusing on specific hashtags such as #EverydaySexism, #YesAllWomen etc. (Barker-Plummer, 2016; Armstrong & Mahone, 2016; Rodino-Colocino, 2014). These social media campaigns can be considered as online activism that happens in the public space. Reflecting the existing research on the online activism, the studies on feminist online activism also explore how these online spaces are used to mobilize, engage and participate as well.

One of the key studies focusing on public spaces online in a feminist context is by Drücke and Zobl (2015). Their research defines the layers of online publics around the hashtag #aufschrei to understand how feminists on social media discuss sexism and work towards mobilization. This study not only uses

Twitter but also looks at different platforms such as feminist blogs to determine the layers of digital public spheres and it contributes to social media's usage for mobilization. While the research shows how these online public spaces can be useful to protest against sexism through textual analysis, it does not explore women's perspectives by conducting interviews nor how these spaces are used by non-feminist women to engage in anti-sexism protests.

Additionally Sills et al. (2015) also looks at online space as an 'alternative discursive space' and argues that "social media provided safe spaces that served as a buffer against the negative effects of sexism, and allowed participation in a feminist counterpublic that directly contests rape culture" in a New Zealand context. Sills et al. illustrates how digital spaces are being used by feminist women as discursive spaces to engage and participate as well as to form a counterpublic. Similarly Rentschler (2014) posits that online spaces can serve as supportive spaces for feminists dealing with rape culture. However the engagement that is explored in these studies do not look into emotional or affective dimensions.

What's interesting about the examples mentioned above is that they show how the literature's focus is on online spaces being useful for feminist struggles and how these online spaces can work as public spaces or counter public spaces for feminist women. The usage of online public spaces as a tool for feminist women is very well displayed in the literature. However how women who do not necessarily identify with feminism can use these online spaces to engage in anti-sexism protests is not explored, nor is the affective and emotional dimensions of the women's engagement explored.

The previously mentioned literature on media studies about affect and emotions show us how emotions and affect are articulated and consumed through digital platforms. Therefore for this thesis to understand women's engagement with online protests and how online engagement might transgress to offline spaces through emotions, it becomes crucial to look into how emotions are generated in the everyday life through the engagement on these digital platforms and how they can serve for women's awareness about sexual harassment.

## Conclusions

Online spaces are communicative spaces where the political can take place. With social media activism studies however, a number of research focuses on how these spaces are being used for participation, engagement, and mobilization. The recent studies on activism shows that today these movements take place simultaneously both in online and offline spaces. Besides they also point out the emotional quality of the activism online. Due to the emphasis on rationality on the notion of public sphere, the public space term is coined to differentiate the earned publicness of techno-commercial spaces that has come to be appropriated for activism. With the term, the intermixture of online and offline is recognized as well as the emotional characteristics of the digital activism today. This enables an understanding of the political in everyday life where the engagement and participation has affective and emotional qualities. The literature on online feminist activism (Antonakis-Nashif, 2015; Barker-Plummer, 2016; Armstrong & Mahone, 2016; Rodino-Colocino, 2014; Rapp et al. 2010 and Sills et al. 2016 etc.) reflects the same qualities as digital activism research by looking into how these spaces are used to mobilize, engage and participate, and to create publics and counterpublics by using public sphere theories. However these studies do not focus on the affect and emotions of the women who engage with these issues through online spaces. This seems to be due to the focus on public sphere models. This tendency to frame the feminist women as counter-publics results in ignoring the women who engage in the feminist discussions online without identifying as feminists. Therefore the literature's focus stays on the feminist women and does not extend to the women who are not feminists but still use the spaces to engage and participate. Thus this research, by making use of the notion of public space, will look into emotional and affective dimensions of the women's engagement with #sendeanlat and demonstrate how engagement with an online protest against rape culture and sexism can generate awareness about these issues among non-feminist women.

# Methods and methodology

## Interviews

As Kvale states we learn about people by talking to them and via these talks we understand “their experiences, feelings and hopes and the world they live in” (2007: 2). For this reason I decided to focus on the women’s individual experiences of engaging with this campaign with the method of semi-structured qualitative interviews. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, a ‘friendly’ approach that feels like a conversation rather than an investigation (Oakley, 1981) was conducted. The major challenge for qualitative interviews is to plan how and to what degree to have a pre-structure for the interviews (Jensen, 2012: 272). Oakley’s “friendly approach” (1981) helped with this challenge since it was more of a conversation. Semi-structured interviews both helped me as a researcher to stay on topic and for the conversation to have room for new topics to emerge.

In total 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted ranging in duration from 30 to 90 minutes. I made a use of an interview guide which included the main topics to discuss like engagement online and offline, affect and emotions, and awareness. Generally the questions were about understanding how the interviewees felt engaging with the tweets and participating in #sendeanlat and if their discussions transgressed to offline spaces. However since “the final aim remains to reconstruct people’s experiences and interpretations on their own terms” (van Zoonen, 2003: 137), the sequence of the questions varied, leaving the respondents room to explain themselves in their own ways. In some interviews, the guide wasn’t needed since the interviewee would bring the topics upon her own. As a result, additional themes occurred during the probes. These were: memory and navigating intimacy in different social media platforms. This highlights one of the benefits of semi-structured interviews; having room for new themes to emerge as “there is commitment to openness in following the respondents’ lead” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 128).

All the participants were informed about the research in general and agreed to the terms of their participation. 10 out of 14 interviewees signed a written consent form while the 4 interviewees that were on Skype agreed to the terms

verbally. Skype interviewees were informed prior to the Skype session via email by sending an informative document about the terms and objectives of the research. Both the informative document and the consent form stated the interviewees' right to stop the record and they were also reminded during the interviews due to the sensitivity of the topic. They were all given anonymity and a right to access to the transcriptions of their own interviews. While none of the interviewees were interested in the transcriptions, most of them showed an interest in the end result of the research. I hence promised to share my thesis with them after it was defended.

## **Recruiting and sampling**

10 out of the 14 interviews were conducted in person in Istanbul. Half of these 10 women were found on Facebook; the call for interviewees were shared by a friend to a group called "çare" ("remedy" in Turkish) which was a group for people who were consulting each other on different topics such as finding a rental room, a veterinarian, or a home for kittens. Since the research wants to display how women who do not necessarily identify with feminism engaged with #sendeanlat, using such a group helped reaching out to a more general crowd who may or may not necessarily be interested in women's issues. The rest of the women in Istanbul were found using the snowball technique "where the initial contact generates further informants" (Jensen, 2012: 270). Asking the interviewees if they know anyone else around them who followed #sendeanlat lead me to the rest of the respondents. The remaining 4 interviews were conducted via Skype with interviewees from Ankara. These women were also found via snowball technique after an initial contact in Ankara was made via Facebook. As a result, the sample was made up of 10 women who did not identify as feminists and 4 women who identified as feminists.

All the interviewees were residents of the metropolitan cities Istanbul and Ankara however most of them were born and raised in different parts of Turkey and moved to the metropolitan areas later in life. For this reason the interviewees demonstrated a variety of backgrounds by being from different geographical locations of Turkey - from the east to the west and from the north to the south. The reason that the sampling focuses on the residents of metropolitans is because 87% of the Twitter users in Turkey are from the

three big cities: Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir (Dogramaci and Radcliff, 2015). Their ages were between 25 to 45 and they were all university graduates. Their professions varied from law to teaching, from acting to advertisement and from unemployed to academicians and students.

## **Conducting interviews**

### *Power, research subjects, relations*

Talking about women's engagement with #sendeanlat most of the time meant talking about women's sexual harassment stories. As a woman who herself experienced sexual harassment, I decided it would be better to approach the women as another woman who has experienced these. Mies (1978) refers to this as "double consciousness" since it also permits the researcher to identify with the research subject, "in the sense that they both can recognize ... their position as victims, their outrage, analysis and criticism and motivation for acting" (Mies cited in van Zoonen, 2003: 129). Therefore many times when the respondent shared a sexual harassment story of their own, I recognized by acknowledging their feelings and sharing my own experience in return.

Early feminist researchers such as Ann Oakley (1981) follow a 'friendly' interview process in which they share their own identity and thoughts with the respondents. Hesse-Biber reflects on this by stating: "The idea of sharing identities and stories with one another is thought to increase reciprocity and rapport in the interview process, thus breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of the researcher" (2007: 128). Therefore approaching them as a woman who has experienced sexual harassment and sharing my stories with them in return was helpful in a sense to create what Reinharz (1992: 265) defines as "bonds of solidarity and mutuality" (Reinharz cited in van Zoonen, 2003: 129). However, being aware of the inevitability of the power imbalances (Doucet and Mauthner, 2005), I was still mindful of my position as a researcher. While I was still the one asking them questions and asking for a signed consent form, to what degree can we talk about breaking down notions of power and authority? As Cotterill (1992) states that "The final shift of power between the researcher and the respondent is balanced in favor of the researcher, for it is she who eventually walks away" (Cotterill cited in Doucet and Mauthner, 2006: 40). In other words I had the final say. However even though I am the one who walks away with the data,



some interviewees stated that they also benefited from this by pouring their heart out to someone who listened. I feel it is my ethical responsibility to make sure not to misrepresent these women who were willing to share their feelings and in some cases their painful experiences with me.

### *Presenting tweets*

The interviewees were presented with a screenshot of the live Twitter feed of #sendeanlat from 2015 found using Google images. The content of tweets varied from everyday sexism encounters to the practices that women engage in to deal with these. Additionally two tweets with sensory language were used. The rationale behind this technique was first to remind the interviewees the content of #sendeanlat and secondly to observe their reactions. During the interview, I carefully observe the interviewees' facial expressions and body movements along with their verbal expressions. While this approach worked for the interviews that were conducted face to face, it was hard to observe the interviewee's reactions over Skype. As Hesse-Biber states, "researcher ... loses the impact of visual and verbal clues, such as gestures and eye contact" (2007: 119). The Skype interviews, although valuable and insightful, lacked a certain affective environment due to the lack of bodily presence.

### *On being both an "insider" and an "outsider"*

It is argued that sharing the same status characteristics might help the interviewer to cooperate better with the interviewees, to create rapport and also to understand the subject better (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007: 140). I was an insider by being a woman from Turkey and being brought up to the same patriarchal culture and having similar experiences of sexual harassment. However I was also an outsider, coming from abroad to research. There were couple instances where I did not know the references the interviewees made to the recent events about women or talked about how 'it got worse' over the last year since I haven't experienced that process with them as a member of the group. How did this affect the understandings or expectations that the interviewees might have? While I cannot know how this situation affected the interviewees, I know how it affected my approach. The reason behind the choice of a friendly approach was also to be accepted as an insider. By creating an environment where both parties would give something, the aim was to increase the rapport that might have lacked due to my position as a researcher from abroad.

## **How to treat data: transcribing, translating, analyzing**

All the interviews were transcribed partially, skipping the parts that were off topic. The transcriptions include notes on women's reactions such as laughing, crying etc. due to this research's focus on affect and emotions. Only the parts used in the analysis were translated word by word. The interview data was treated as mutually constructed knowledge based on how women themselves state their experiences and feelings as an answer to my questions. This is what Kvale and Brinkmann refer to as "knowledge as produced" since the "interview knowledge is socially constructed in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee" (2009: 54). This is also related to how the analysis treats the statements about emotions. Since the interview data was treated as mutually constructed knowledge, what the interviewees stated as their feelings were treated as what they felt.

After transcribing half the interviews, some themes started emerging. Therefore an initial thematic analysis was done simultaneously, marking the key quotes while still transcribing. Qualitative data analysis is considered to be an iterative process (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011: 123) and mine was no different. The data was read multiple times and highlighted as I went on using the notes from the interviews. They gave further insight to the written conversations. These highlighted parts were copy-pasted into a digital table that helped me see the bigger picture. Sometimes I re-listened to the recordings to make sure not to take the quotes out of context. In total 11 themes were identified and only two were excluded: women's own trivialization of sexual harassment, and feminism. The rest were organized into two main themes: engagement and awareness.

## **Exploring the women's engagement with #sendeanlat**

The affective and emotional dimensions of women's engagement and participation with #sendeanlat are the central focus of this analysis. In this part the following themes will be explored: women's affective and emotional engagement and disengagement, generating awareness through emotional engagement on social media, and ways to engage: sharing and talking. The

way the analysis regards #sendeanlat is that talking is the starting point of empowerment and change. The women's engagement with these intimate stories in mediated online spaces shows a connection between reading, feeling, remembering and realizing in the way that reading makes us feel, feeling makes us remember, remembering and realizing are the ways to become aware. Awareness is followed by talking online or offline, which highlights the blurry lines between these two spaces.

### **Affective and emotional: the women's engagement and disengagement with #sendeanlat**

This part focuses on how the women's engagement with #sendeanlat was emotional, and how the same emotional engagement was also the reason for disengagement in some cases. The interviewees' engagement with #sendeanlat showed that reading the tweets was very much related to *feeling* the tweets. This was seen both in the way they expressed their feelings in general towards #sendeanlat and also in their reactions to the tweets.

The observations during the interviews showed affective relations with the tweets they were reading. When reading tweets, what is referred to as bodily sensations in the literature review were observable in the women's reactions. For example the women's facial expressions while reading can be referred to as a 'grimace', a mix of pain and disgust. This was observed many times during the interviews. While this same facial expression was the initial reaction to reading the tweets, it later left its place to mostly watery eyes, sometimes to crying and sometimes even to laughter. These different reactions can be considered as affective responses that precede the emotional reactions. It should be noted that the women were presented with a dozen tweets displaying different kinds of harassment stories and they were asked how they felt asked after reading them all. Below is an interviewee commenting on how she was affected during reading by stating her own bodily reactions:

"This [referring to the sensual tweets] is where that feeling of goosebumps happen. My eyes are filled with tears." (Beyza)

Beyza's reaction above seems to suggest an affective engagement with #sendeanlat. Bodily sensations such as goosebumps and tears are considered

as affect since “affect constitutes a dimension of bodily experiences” (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015: 7). Crying can be included in these bodily experiences too as a part of one’s “affectivity” (Sharma and Tygstrup, 2015). Here Melis comments on her experience of reading the stories online:

“There were stories that were shared in screenshots, like long stories. I remember crying while reading those. They affected me immensely.” (Melis)

After reading the tweets and being asked how they felt reading them, the interviewees’ responses differed. The emotions they expressed varied from sadness to disgust, from hate to pity, and from anger to pain. Tweets seem to play a triggering role in women’s engagement in the way they become the object of the emotions (Ahmed, 2014). Here Beyza is commenting on her experience of reading the tweets. She calls them triggers:

“It’s like a trigger. I mean a tweet I read triggers a place in me that hurts me and I can’t deal with what comes after that trigger. I feel like I am damaged.” (Beyza)

Understanding tweets as “triggers” can help to demonstrate the role of social media in activating emotions by enabling a space ‘where affect can emerge’. (Dilling-Hansen, 2015: 222). “Affect refers not to emotion but to a bodily capacity, a bodily readiness, a trigger to action, including the action of feeling an emotion” (Clough, 2012: 22). Beyza’s statement can be considered as her being affected and displays how affect triggers an emotion that she cannot deal with. This highlights how her engagement with the tweets were affective and emotional.

Women’s disengagement with #sendeanlat was also an emotional kind. Below is an interviewee, Nisan, expressing why she chose not to engage with #sendeanlat:

“One of the reasons I did not look at #sendeanlat is the because what’s been expressed there would be heavy for me. On the one side, this is a way to escape. On the other side this is a way of protecting yourself, not bringing this heavy topic near me.” (Nisan)

This heaviness that she refers to here can be explained as *intensity*, as her feeling a great deal about the topic to the point that she prefers not to engage

and to 'escape' from the strong feelings. This can be seen as affective disengagement due to the feeling of *intensity*. Affect and emotions become crucial to understand the women's disengagement with the tweets as well as their engagement. As seen in the quotations, their experiences of reading the tweets under #sendeanlat become much more than a cognitive and rational experience due to its affective and emotional dimensions. *Feeling* the tweets plays an important role in the way women engage or disengage with #sendeanlat. Social media as an online space where affect can emerge (Dilling-Hansen, 2015) enables the women's engagement and disengagement with the affective and emotional dimensions that are generated through social media.

### *The role of memory in emotional engagement*

To further understand the women's engagement with #sendeanlat, it is important to look into the relationship between the women's own memories of sexual harassment and their feelings when reading the tweets. As stated in the literature review, the way Ahmed treats the connection between feelings and memory becomes important to understand the relation between the women's engagement or disengagement with #sendeanlat and remembering their own memories. By exploring how the women made connections with their own memories while reading these stories online, it can be understood how the women were personalizing these stories. This plays a crucial role both in their emotional engagement and also in their awareness, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

As seen in the previous section the women's reading experiences were both affective and emotional. The connection between reading and feeling also creates space for remembrance. This remembrance is a crucial part of the interviewees' engagement with #sendeanlat. This theme sometimes came up directly, as one of the interviewee Fulya states here: "When I was reading the tweets, I remembered so many things". Other times the theme remembering emerged in the further explanations of their feelings. Below is Nisan quoted in the previous part, further explaining what feeling heavy means:

Q: "What do you mean by heavy?"

A: "I mean reading what women have experienced would remind me of my own experiences. Maybe it won't make a direct association to my own but it will directly make me experience the same feelings again."

Here the interviewee states that reading someone else's sexual harassment story made her feel heavy because it triggered her memory and resulted in remembering her own experience of sexual harassment. As stated in the literature review, Ahmed (2014) posits that our relationship between feeling and remembering goes both ways, we can feel a certain way and remember a past instance about this feeling or we can remember a past event and therefore feel a certain way. In the quote above, the interviewee attributes her memory to her feelings after reading the tweets. This connection between the harassment story she engages with online and memories of her own experiences helps us understand her emotional disengagement further.

The quotation below demonstrates another example of how memory emerges when Sinem started explaining her feelings, but furthermore it shows how she personalized the stories:

"It is very saddening. I internalized at least half of the tweets. The others caused pain. What should I say... I guess we'll end up talking about the harassment I experienced. They came to my mind." (Sinem)

The interviewee while stating how she felt reading the tweets comments that she internalized the stories that were told on the tweets. This brings her own experiences to the surface. She gets reminded of her own stories through these 'familiar' emotions. This familiarity of pain can be understood in the light of Ahmed's statement here: "For example, the sensation of pain is deeply affected by memories: one can feel pain when reminded of past trauma by an encounter with another" (2014: 25). Tweets here then work as an encounter with another and might lead one to "search one's memories for whether one has had it before, differentiating the strange from the familiar" (ibid). This shows how tweets trigger memory in relation to emotions. While this helps us comprehend the dimensions of the women's emotional engagement, most importantly it becomes crucial to understanding how awareness is generated through online spaces. The women through their emotional engagement with #sendeanlat remember their own experiences of sexual harassment and start to self-reflect which generates self-awareness among them.

## **Raising awareness through online spaces**

Hermida (2010) states that online spaces such as Twitter can afford individuals “an awareness system [which enables] diverse means to collect, communicate, share and display news and information, serving diverse purposes . . . on different levels of engagement” (2010: 301). Although Hermida talks about Twitter’s affordances as an awareness system in the context of news, this can also be applied to #sendanlat’s context. As Rapp et al states online spaces are “allowing [women] to have an explicit public presence with the opportunity to influence ... while also raising awareness at the local and national level” (2010: 256). Thus the below analysis identifies four different kinds of awareness: the women’s self-awareness, the women’s awareness of each other as collective awareness, the feminist women’s awareness of “other” women, and lastly men’s awareness of women’s experiences.

### *Women’s self awareness*

The way Twitter affords an awareness system (Hermida, 2010) here in relation to the women’s self-awareness is related to memory being triggered through the women’s emotional engagement. While engaging with tweets memory is triggered emotionally as shown in the previous part and this trigger in some cases turns into self-awareness by naming their experienced as sexual harassment. Below is an interviewee explaining her realization:

[while reading tweets] "Wow! You know how many stories there were like this! When I read these, I got so sad. People are telling about everything. For example this tweet is very similar to me. [reads tweet] ‘The worst thing is to realize that what happened to you as a kid that you did not understand was harassment’. What I shared was about this topic too but probably you can give billions of examples of this. Because when you look from here, that is what it was. You realize.” (Ezgi)

Recognizing what’s familiar in the tweets becomes the first step towards awareness. This helps the women consider some vague memory as a sexual harassment act with the help of other women calling similar acts harassment. This shows how the interactions with social media enable these women to realize their own story and become aware. Below are two examples further

explaining how during #sendeanlat they became aware that what happened to them was sexual harassment:

“It was my first time understanding that what happened to me was harassment and that is was also the first time I shared. And this was the essence of the #sendeanlat campaign, this awareness happened to many people I guess.” (Ezgi)

“Because we were not taught like that. While reading I was like, ‘This is harassment too?’ Well that happened to me as well...” (Akasya)

#Sendeanlat accomplishes something for women like Ezgi and Akasya, making them think about their experiences in a new light and further understand what they mean for them. This happens with the help of the thematic context of the hashtag inviting them to do so in their everyday lives (Papacharissi, 2014). By encountering the hashtag #sendeanlat while scrolling on their social media platforms, Ezgi and Akasya were invited to engage and participate. Through their engagement, they were not only affected but also reminded of their experiences. This lead to Ezgi realizing for the first time that her vague memory from her childhood was sexual harassment and lead Akasya to name her experience as harassment. The way social media activates memory through women’s emotional engagement later leads to self-awareness showing how social media enables self-awareness through the affordances of its “awareness system” (Hermida, 2010).

It is important to note that this awareness was identified among the women who were not engaging with these discussions about sexual harassment in their personal life. The women who identified as feminists among the interviewees stated that they were already engaging with this topic, therefore this self-awareness did not apply to them. However below is one of the interviewees commenting on the hashtag’s affordances by stating how it creates a shortcut for non-organized, non-feminist women:

“I think there is an advantage of this case. For example I put in so many hours, spent so much time to think about these issues but *these hashtags make you spend that time during the process itself*, like it’s an exploration. ‘Oh look this is harassment. Oh this is harassment, too!’ I saw that revelation. Maybe this thing that we call becoming aware...like kids for example...why they need to



be aware...so that they would know what harassment is. Exactly! Because I saw that this awareness was happening to other women. I got hopeful” (Beyza)

Beyza’s statement seems to be accurate for some of the interviewees. #Sendeanlat saves that time for women who did not previously spend time engaging with these issues. What sexual harassment is, how to define it, and their own experiences all become visible with the hashtag. It almost creates a shortcut to these discussions. As Mendes states “It is the transformation that is necessary to take one’s previously private experiences of something ‘designed to isolate and shame us into silence, into a strategy of consciousness raising’ [Penny 2013]” (2015: 94), social media functions as a space where consciousness raising can happen through this transformation of private experiences becoming public. The women’s private experiences that are to shame us into silence become a collective voice. Social media then becomes the space that enables this voice to be heard by others. With women’s private experiences becoming public, women start reading other women’s experiences online and start reflecting on their own lives and naming them. Here is how Deniz is reflecting on her engagement with #sendeanlat and her own process of accepting harassment:

“When I was really small although I don’t really remember how small I was...maybe I was big enough to remember...but there you start blaming yourself, ‘Why did I let this happen?’ I think I was seven years old and this (harassment) lasted a while. After #sendeanlat...I mean people talking about it and defining it as sexual harassment, I accepted that this happened in my life. Yes, I was harassed.” (Deniz)

Deniz’s engagement resulted in her defining her own experience as harassment. She attributes this acceptance to #sendeanlat and to the fact that other women named similar experiences harassment under #sendeanlat. Therefore it can be argued that women’s engagement with the hashtag generates ways to define what harassment is. The more women read other women calling certain behaviour harassment, the more women who don’t personally engage with these issues become aware of what it is. This is connected to Mendes’ (2015) discussion quoted above. The way women’s private experiences become public in online spaces enables these silenced and shamed stories to become a tool for other women to get aware. Publicness

enabled by the online spaces leads these private stories to get out in the public space and this in turn helps to create awareness among the women.

### *Women's collective awareness*

The second identified awareness was the women's collective awareness. What is meant by collective awareness is that the women who engaged with #sendeanlat became aware that they were not alone in experiencing sexual harassment. As the interviews showed, when asked about how they felt regarding #sendeanlat and the number of tweets, *every* woman commented that they felt like they were not alone. The most common statement that was shared by *every* interviewee about their feelings was this *feeling of not being alone*. This shows "the media's role in constructing experience [and] identity" (Kitzinger, 2001: 1). What Kitzinger states in the context of a television program helping women to construct their experiences and identities about sexual abuse, can be applied to the context of #sendeanlat as well. Through the online spaces, the women re-construct their experiences as a not alone experience. As the interviewee Sinem puts it, "Like I said, it feels terrible but on the other hand it also feels so so good... like that feeling of 'I am not alone'... that feeling of 'we are not alone'". The transition of private and painful experiences into public stories becomes a way for women to gain awareness about other women's experiences and feel *not alone* (Mendes, 2015).

Berlant on what makes intimate publics states "the consumers of its particular stuff already share a worldview and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience" (2008: viii). Even though what Berlant states here refers to the consumers of women's literature, films and TV shows in the States, it can be applied to the context of the Turkish women as well. This can help to understand why every interviewee found something familiar among the tweets and stated that #sendeanlat made them feel that they were not alone. When reading tweets, every interviewee found at least a couple of stories -if not all- that had commonalities with their own personal experiences. Every one of them would point out and say *this is exactly what happened to me*. Considering the previous argument of how women's engagement with #sendeanlat is emotional, this commonality referred to as 'worldview' by Berlant can be interpreted as what Williams (1977) describes as shared *structures of feeling*. Besides it can also be seen as her notion of 'emotional knowledge' that is evolved from common personal

histories. Below are two examples of interviewees talking about these common histories:

“I felt anger and this mutual feeling like all the stories we read there were too familiar. Because we do not even tell these to our girlfriends most of the time. Then you start feeling like okay these things are actually experienced by everyone. And I realized this then. There was one thing that affected me a lot. This walking alone at night and being scared. I used to think that was unique to me but I learned that this was something that every women feels. These things made me feel like...how to put it...like all women have a common problem” (Melis)

“In fact we all have these sexual harassment stories. There were some stories that were close to what I experienced. Those make me feel like ‘Yes! This too happened to me!’ Apparently I am not alone, everybody experiences these. These are the things we rarely talk about.” (Nil)

As Rapp et al argue, the above quotes show how the online space becomes a tool allowing public presence (2010). The public presence helps women voice stories that they do not even tell in their private spaces. This transformation into the public of their private stories (Mendes, 2015) makes women aware that their existing individual problems are also common problems. Drawing from Berlant: “A certain circularity structures an intimate public, therefore: its ... participants are perceived to be marked by a commonly lived history; its narratives and things are deemed expressive of that history while also shaping its conventions of belonging; and, expressing the sensational, embodied experience of living as a certain kind of being in the world” (2008: viii). What she refers to as the ‘commonly lived history’ can be interpreted in relation to the #sendeanlat context as the sexist culture in Turkey that is lived by Turkish women. Thus ‘its narratives’ can be seen as the sexual harassment stories that were shared by the women which were expressed during #sendeanlat. As Berlant states, these stories can be considered demonstrative of this common history or as Melis puts it as ‘our common problem’ while also shaping feelings of belonging and generating a collective awareness of this common problem:

“Actually in a way it made me happy. On the other hand I said I was not surprised [about the number of tweets] but also one feels like she is not alone. This is actually a disgusting feeling but it is not like I am happy everybody experienced this. What I mean is more like there are other people who experienced this so apparently I am not alone. That feeling of not being alone was a good feeling” (Akasya)

What Akasya and every other interviewee states about not being alone also shows that how these women alienated their own experiences from the rape culture itself and saw their harassment incidents as singular events. Their reactions reflect on the rape culture in the society. The fact that these incidents are not talked about leads women to feel like they are alone in experiencing the issues. Besides, the fear of being blamed, as some interviewees had, is deemed by the individualization of these experiences. This individualization leads women not to see the cause as buried in the structures of society (Anderson, 2015) but leads them to alienate these experiences as singular events instead of seeing them as a social phenomenon. That every interviewee states that they felt like they were not alone reveals how #sendeanlat helps portray these stories of women as a social phenomenon by depicting the stories as common histories of women. As scholars like Mendes (2015), Penny (2013) and Rapp et al (2010) argue, this displays how online spaces can be used in women’s everyday lives as a feminist tool to resist against the silence induced by sexist culture. Besides the women’s engagement with #sendeanlat through online spaces creates a collective awareness for women by making them aware that they are not alone.

*Feminist women’s awareness of other women and men’s awareness of women issues*

In addition to the above explained awareness, two additional kinds of awareness occurred among the people engaging with #sendeanlat. The third awareness identified is the feminist women’s awareness of how other women feel. As discussed in the introduction, #sendeanlat does not fit with the feminist online protests in the sense that it was an outcry of everyone, and this everyone-ness appealed to many women therefore making it accessible for women who do not identify with feminism as well:

“What I saw in #sendeanlat is that it was the people who usually don’t really engage with these issues, the people that stay in their own corner. Because these issues are seen as a feminist issue. I mean they are considered as the problem of people who say ‘I am a feminist’ but the hashtags were shared by women who were not feminists. In that sense #sendeanlat touched to a general thing.” (Beyza)

As Beyza states, #sendeanlat appeals to a general crowd rather than a specific feminist circle. This is why feminist women among the interviewees commented on an awareness of women who are outside of their circles. As Nisan says below this helped them understand what other women feel:

“My situation is different. I mean sexual violence is something that I have been dealing with for the last three years so for me awareness did not start from here (#sendeanlat) but it showed a different dimension to us. *With this we understood a little more about what other women outside of our world think and feel.*” (Nisan)

Nisan shows what #sendeanlat might have done for women who personally engage with this topic. The awareness system (Hermida, 2010) of the online spaces enables organized women to get a peek into how the women outside of their circles think and feel about the issues. In a way this awareness system helps them gain an awareness of other women’s perspective.

The interviews showed that this change in perspective was not limited to only women. The fourth kind of awareness generated through the engagement with #sendeanlat was men becoming aware of this problem in women’s lives as well as becoming aware of what constitutes sexual harassment. Even though the data collection only included women interviewees, this theme of men’s awareness was something that came up several times during the interviews. Here is Akasya stating how her male friend experienced awareness:

“This is actually very strange. I have a friend, male friend from the university, and this guy is the most insensitive guy on earth. We can define him as a douche. He is like one of those people to whom you cannot explain what sexual harassment is. He would ask, ‘really that too?’ And this guy had the biggest change with #sendeanlat. It is very interesting I know but I was more surprised about his change than my own. One day when we met, he himself opened the discussion and started saying like ‘I am reading these and I cannot

believe what stories are out there. And we didn't know about any of these'. Because they [men] don't know! Nobody heard about these. Their sisters do not tell them what they experience, just like I didn't. And he had the biggest enlightenment and really changed. I mean reading those stories were a turning point for him. Right now he is more of a person that you can talk to" (Akasya)

Akasya's statement above shows how she personally witnessed a friend change in his perspective. Although the interviewees mentioned a change in men's perspective via reading #sendeanlat, Akasya was the only one who actually knew someone going through this change. Drawing from Young (1997), this can be interpreted as the discursive power of the stories. It demonstrates how women's usage of online spaces can open up opportunities for not only women expressing themselves but also men getting perspective through their engagement online. There might have been some individual perspective changes in men through their encounters with the stories online in their everyday life. This is enabled by both the awareness system (Hermida, 2010) and the thematic context of hashtags (Papacharissi, 2014) inviting people to engage with a taboo topic in this case. As Sinem states, if we are lucky, they might have thought about it:

"The most important thing that #sendeanlat did is this feeling of not being alone, second is in the men's -in quotations- 'awareness' however much it is. And third is realizing what is the extent or definition of sexual harassment through these encounters (tweets). A man does not think of that. He goes to a bar and starts eating the woman with his eyes all through the night. He is not sure if this is harassment or not. But if we are lucky, if he read those tweets, he would think about it." (Sinem)

What Sinem describes above is similar to what Penny (2013) discusses about the power of digital feminism. She states that women sharing their stories online might also help men understand women's experiences differently than what they assume (2013: 48). In that sense, this awareness generated through the online space by engaging with #sendeanlat is not limited to women but also might be inclusive of men, as Penny states "who really aren't as ignorant as they'd like to be" (ibid). Therefore women sharing their stories online, transforming their private experiences into public is how these different kinds of awareness happen through online spaces. This transformation of private experience that is 'designed to isolate and shame us into silence' into the

public space becomes a 'strategy of consciousness raising' (Penny, 2013). And the above explained awareness is realized with the help of this transformation on online spaces therefore showing us how social media enabled awareness can happen.

### **Ways to engage: different forms of further engagement**

The women's engagement was not limited to online spaces but also transgressed to offline spaces. The below analysis will display two different ways that the women further engaged with #sendeanlat: 1) going beyond reading and sharing their private stories online and 2) talking with friends offline.

The following part will discuss the motivations and the limitations of women's engagement by sharing their stories online. The interviews showed that the most common way to further engage with the topic was to participate in the conversation online by sharing their own sexual harassment experiences or as defined in the literature review, by sharing 'affective statements'<sup>79</sup> (Papacharissi, 2014). The data showed that the online platforms women used varied based on the women's motivations as well as the limitations of these spaces. While most of them chose to participate on Twitter, a couple interviewees preferred Facebook and only one of the interviewees used the email address that was created during #sendeanlat. This variety of platforms displays the multitude of spaces where women's political engagement can take place in their everyday life through their online participation (Dahlgren, 2009) via the hashtag. The women choosing one platform over another showed different motivations to share on the online platforms they chose. Besides it also showed how they negotiated intimacy and publicness online in regards to the spaces.

Ezgi commented on using Facebook by saying that "There is a different kind of group on Twitter, I wanted it to stay on Facebook". Later she further explained on the 'different kind of group'. She stated that she was friends on Facebook with hundreds of young people she got to know through a youth program as a teacher. She considered sharing it on a platform where young

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<sup>79</sup> Affective statements here refer to women sharing facts about rape culture in Turkey based on their own experiences and combining it with emotional statements.

people can see as “meaningful”. Her comments below draw from these online spaces’ potential to work as “communicative spaces” where the political can take place in the everyday lives of people (Dahlgren, 2009):

“I want them to hear [about #sendeanlat] but also there is more to this, I wanted it to be seen and known. When it’s seen, it occupies a space and it starts coming from different places too. And it reaches to a point where you realize that this case exists. You are like ‘Oh I have an experience like this too!’ This had the same impact on all of us. It spreads in waves and you feel the need to share. Plus, I had friends [on Facebook] who would feel comfortable with sharing after seeing me share it. I shared it to be seen, also below that [the post] it continues with the comments and you start talking there. My aunt for example commented saying something like ‘Ah Ezgi, i’m so sorry’. She got upset etc, but she is not the target of that post but she sees it there too.” (Ezgi)

Ezgi’s example above exemplifies what scholars like Penny (2013) and Mendes (2015) argue: online spaces can be used as a political tool due to their discursive power. Besides her comment about how people start talking via comments illuminates how these ‘communicative spaces’ function in sparking discussions (Dahlgren, 2009). This also highlights her motivation to encourage other women to share by making this taboo issue visible on social media. Antonakis-Nashif (2015) argues that hashtags can make the invisible visible, enabling political to “take place in the proximity of people’s everyday lives” (Dahlgren, 2013: 48).

Furthermore Ezgi’s quote above displays how she had a certain group of people in mind or an “imagined audience” (boyd, 2007) when she shared her own intimate story on a networked public to be seen by this certain group. Her comment on her aunt and how she is not the ‘target’ of that post also gives away who is involved in this audience. The fact that she comments as “I have friends who would feel comfortable with sharing after seeing me share” hints who is a part of her imagined audience. What she states before about having a different kind of group on Facebook who are young and how she finds sharing her experience with them meaningful displays who she considers as her audience. The interviews showed that the “imagined audience” did play an important role in the women’s participation online. This was evident in both selecting what story to share online and also deciding to participate:



“On Twitter I talked about the doctor’s harassment only because how to put it... it is more of a ‘public knowledge’ getting harassed by a doctor, getting harassed by a teacher, etc. These are the happenings where the society can react more as ‘there there’” (Akasya)

Akasya’s comment shows that she chose to share an intimate story that was acceptable by her imagined audience. As boyd states: “participants in social network sites imagine their audience and speak according to the norms that they perceive to be generally accepted” (2007: 3). Thus this shows a possible limitation of the social media engagement based on what audience the women imagine.

Another limitation of the social media engagement was the very same aspect what makes this space powerful: the publicness. Below are examples of the women who were careful about the publicness:

“I read a lot and so many things came to my mind that I wanted to share too or similar stories that I thought that I should share this but I am an actress and I work with TV and my name would be seen there. And it would be like what I did was bad, I did not want it to come out with my name” (Nil)

“Maybe I did not want to be exposed like that ... I mean I did not want to be remembered like the woman who got harassed ... it gets attached to your identity” (Sinem)

These quotes show how the women respond differently to the publicness of the platforms. While some women made a use of the publicness by sharing to support each other or to raise consciousness on the matter, other women were more cautious in regards to their intimate story becoming public. What Nil states as “like what I did was bad” can be interpreted that she expected to be blamed by others if she shared. This highlights the limitation of the online spaces as public spaces in the way that they reflect the existing structures in the society. Sinem’s comment on the other hand shows how these stories when shared become a part of your identity which may lead to shaming and blaming. They imagine an audience who would blame them or who would remember them as victims. These imagined audiences become about the limitations of this new social and mediated space in which they are sharing their stories. This might be interpreted as though the digital public spaces too

are grounded in the traditional social boundaries of existing patriarchal system.

However each woman's experience and their motivations differed from each other. Below is Derya, commenting on her participation on Facebook:

"Everybody was sharing, they all had their own stories. I shared to both let it out and also for people to see like they are not the only ones who had these experiences. Like in a way I shared also to relax them" (Derya)

What Derya states above shows two different motivations: to open out as in to pour out or as to get a release and to support other women by making her own intimate, public. The shared intimacy here in Derya's case connects to Berlant's intimacy as it "involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way" (1998: 281). Shared stories of #sendeanlat are both about one's own self as well as about others which makes them intimate. They are about one's own self because they are experienced by that self and also because they are shared by oneself to get a release. However they are also about others in the way that it is shared with them by making one's intimate story others'. As Derya states she made her own intimate story public to support others and show them that 'they are not the only ones'. The publicness or the visibility is enabled by the mediated space and in Derya's case used to not only support others but also for herself to get it out.

Akasya also uses this online space to pour her heart out by emailing. As she puts it while laughing: "I wrote a lot to this email address. Like almost my life story". Her choice of the space is related to her motivation for participating in #sendeanlat:

"It [the email] got me more excited because there was a difference. When you shared on Twitter, there were way too many stories that people shared and everybody read one after another. And it is like...when you write in the email...it is like you get it out of your chest...like a journal. And you don't know if somebody reads it or not. But you got to pour your heart out and it is like journaling to the fullest." (Akasya)

Akasya's comment demonstrates that participating in #sendeanlat via email was a way to 'get things out of her chest'. This is related to her sharing these

stories for the *first time*. She commented that writing her experience was ‘therapeutic’ which again can be interpreted as her participation in #sendeanlat being a kind of confiding with strangers towards a way to heal from these experiences. Here we see how sharing the intimate stories are both about oneself and others (Berlant, 1998) and the media plays a part in this by enabling communicative spaces (Dahlgren, 2009) that women can use as tools to make the invisible visible.

The above part focused on the women’s further engagement with #sendeanlat in the online spaces -the motivations and limitations of their engagement on social media. The following section will continue to look at women’s engagement in offline spaces.

### *The blurring lines of spaces through engagement*

Baym refers to online spaces as a “myth” stating that online spaces are not juxtaposed with the offline (2010). Although this can be seen as a drastic argument, online and offline spaces can be seen as feeding off each other. As the interviews showed how the online discussion of #sendeanlat transgressed to offline, the lines between online and offline spaces becomes blurry in the way that women’s engagement transgresses into offline spaces. Some of the interviewees (Deniz, Nisan, Sinem, Akasya, Nil, Fulya) commented that #sendeanlat became a subject to discuss during their gatherings with friends and coworkers in offline spaces. What Bird (2003) notes about news stories in general can be applied to personal stories in these online spaces. As she states “people do indeed use news stories to discuss cultural and personal questions” (ibid: 17). In the #sendeanlat case the data showed that people do use hashtags to discuss cultural and personal questions as they commented that their engagement with #sendeanlat transgressed to their offline lives in the form of discussions about sexual harassment.

The topic of their discussions differed from each other. For some their offline discussions were about the number of tweets and how common sexual harassment was for women. For others, the discussions revolved around sharing their own harassment stories with each other. Some women confessed that it was their first time talking about this with other people, others stated that a friend shared a story with them for the first time. Below is Fulya commenting how a close friend opened up to her during #sendeanlat:

“We were talking about this [#sendeanlat] and what happened to Özgecan. And a close friend of mine started telling about her own sexual harassment story; how an older family member would love her differently on his lap. She said she realized what it was very late. She still hates that man and said how she never told this story to anyone before. It is good that we started talking about these with each other. These were the things we didn’t talk before but yes now at least we talk with each other and we started taking it one step further by writing it on social media. Now we make some noise and it is good.” (Fulya)

As argued before, engaging with these tweets emotionally, the women remembered their own experiences and self reflected on the memories. What Fulya states above can be seen as though some women took their awareness one step further and started talking during this spree of opening up. Here is Deniz commenting on opening up and telling her story for the first time:

“I didn’t share it on Twitter but maybe it helped me talk about my own story. For example I didn’t share this with anyone before. And even though I didn’t tweet it, I shared it face to face with a friend who I believe will be a lifelong friend. That is gonna stay there always. And when I look back now, yes it did help me talk. Because I did not tell this to anyone until then. Nobody knew about it.” (Deniz)

The women’s engagement with #sendeanlat shows that their engagement transgressed to the offline spaces as well. That the women talked in offline spaces about #sendeanlat shows how online protests can spark conversations offline. This reflects Poell and Van Dijk’s (2015) understanding of public spaces and their emphasis on the blurry lines of online protests between offline and online spaces. The blurry lines occur due to the women’s “emotional connectivity” (ibid) that enables the publicness of these online spaces as well as the transgression of their engagement from online to offline. It is through the affective and emotional dimensions of the women’s engagement that these online spaces can spark conversation and generate awareness.

## Concluding thoughts

The Turkish women's engagement with #sendeanlat was affective and emotional. Their motivation to participate was to let their hearts out and to support each other. Their limitation however was due to an imagined audience who would shame and blame them. Through their emotional engagement with #sendeanlat, these women understood their past experiences in a new light since the recollection, memory was central to their engagement. The research showed how online spaces can help the non-feminist women engage with these issues by bringing these matters into the public space. This visibility helped these women gain awareness through their engagement. This also displayed the blurry lines of online and offline spaces by showing how the women's engagement with #sendeanlat was not limited to the communicative spaces. Their discussions about sexual harassment transgressed to offline and in some cases changed something in them, either by accepting that what happened to them was harassment, or by remembering their own stories in a new light, or by talking about it out loud. While this brings up the emotional character of online protests emphasized by Poell and van Dijk (2016) in the way online and offline spaces get intermingled due to this emotionality, it also connects to feminist activism's emphasis on discursive politics. Since "much feminist activism concentrates on changing how people think about gender, power, self determination and so on" (Young, 1997: 12), the way #sendeanlat changes women's perspectives about sexual harassment as discussed above shows the importance of such protests online. Considering most of the interviewees stated that they actively use Twitter in their everyday lives, political takes place in the everyday lives of women on these digital public spaces through emotional engagements. This demonstrated how emotions can be a starting point, a catalyst for the non-feminist, non-organized women's engagement with women's issues and also can path the way towards awareness.

### **Empowered or disempowered?**

The reactions of the women were different from each other regarding the question if #sendeanlat achieved something. Most of the interviewees recognized the impact of #sendeanlat as the "initial step" towards a change or

“a step on the way” to change things while also emphasizing “we need many more steps like this”. Others referred to personal changes that happened to them or the men around them after having experienced #sendeanlat. One of the personal changes they mentioned was that today they feel more inclined to voice and scream when they experience sexual harassment on the street. They connect this change to the fact that after seeing #sendeanlat and the number of tweets, they knew that “even that old lady on the bus got harassed so I know she will back me up” (Fulya). However not everyone was as hopeful and optimistic as the rest of the women about the results. Below is an interviewee, Beyza, commenting on how #sendeanlat didn’t achieve anything:

“When we do something about the violence against a woman who is not a virgin, then we would be making progress. This is not progress! This is just everyone getting a release and going back to their homes. Men got a release saying that we want death penalty, spilled out their hatred. Women put their knowledge of these experiences with the naivety of “this happened to me too” and ran away. It has been two years, what do we have as a result of this campaign? Nothing at all!” (Beyza)

While Beyza is right in stating these since the women in Turkey still face the same violence, this thesis shares the optimism of the rest of the interviewees and believes that individual changes do matter. Questioning what is change and what is collective action, Young (1997) argues that individual acts such as leaving abusive partners can be collective in the way they affect the changes in discourses about male violence against women. She concludes that if these individual actions are considered together, they can grow to a collective resistance. Young posits this collectiveness in two ways both in the number of women leaving their abusive partners and in the discursive and institutional resources that make it possible for women to realize these actions. Although it is hard to argue for a social change in this case, the above arguments show individual changes in women’s perspectives of what harassment is as well as women speaking up. Tracing Young’s argument, these individual acts of awareness and speaking up might be seen as collective resistance to the prevailing sexism in the patriarchal Turkish society. Considering this, it might be why Fulya calls this protest a victory:

“It is like a victory! Yes we are together, we are talking. And not being alone is one of these feelings too. I felt like I wasn’t alone. This is both good and bad. It is scary that there are so many cases but the fact that women are expressing these made me feel good. I remember feeling like: Yes, finally! This is it! Maybe for the first time in this country we made this much noise.” (Fulya)

Making noise is very crucial in the case of #sendeanlat to understand if/how women are empowered. Papacharissi argues that “The practice of making an affective statement in front of an actual and imagined audience is potentially empowering and it becomes even more so in the context of tags that invite provocative statements” (2014: 110). Drawing from Papacharissi’s argument it can be argued that the women of #sendeanlat were empowered in the way they were able to express the affective statements in front of their actual and imagined audience. She posits “these affective statements employed emotion to locate private thoughts in a public setting. The act of publicly or visibly intimating thoughts one has only imagined articulating can be a self empowering act... it is not necessarily the act itself but rather the feeling it is infused with that grants the statements its own unique texture” (2014: 111). Emotion’s role in locating private thoughts is demonstrated in reading and remembering, considering Papacharissi’s point about expressing these private thoughts publicly is exactly what these women did by participating in #sendeanlat. Their emotional engagement then can be interpreted as a self-empowering act in the way they made their intimate, public. Some of the interviewees, when asked about what #sendeanlat did, talked about empowerment:

“In any way I think women were empowered. I mean... I don’t think anything will go back to how it was before. Because now that the women engage with these issues and openly discuss, men’s violence will be condemned. And women won’t be silent as much as they did before. I believe in this. I mean every time we move one step further, maybe sometimes we move three steps when something happens, maybe half a step, but every step feeds each other and turns into something empowering.” (Nisan)

Using Papacharissi’s stance, it can be argued that women were somewhat empowered. However these statements can also lead to disempowerment as seen in Nisan’s earlier statement below:

“Besides the feeling of not being able to do something is a heavier feeling. I mean you learn at that time that so many women have experienced this but you can't do anything. Your hands are tied. And you go back to your own pain, relive your own feelings and I don't know what good comes out of this and for whom..” (Nisan)

Nisan's feelings in the above quote can be interpreted as her feeling disempowered. And she wasn't the only one who felt this way. Below is Nil, stating how she felt:

“There were some people who wrote some very heavy things. Those diminish one's will to read these stories because you are like ‘what if that happens to me too?’. It leads you into this paranoia. I want to be able to walk comfortable with my stockings on, but those stories stay in my head and that leads to auto-censor.” (Nil)

When we look at Nil's reactions as having paranoia about what might happen to her or censoring the way she dresses because of this, is it possible to say she was empowered? To what degree can we talk about empowerment? It seems empowerment and disempowerment are not permanent states. While it is hard to argue for empowerment considering the above quotes, empowerment can be argued in the way that the women became aware. The women becoming aware of their own stories and naming them as sexual harassment can be considered empowerment, as well as the way engaging with #sendeanlat made them feel supported and understood. Furthermore understanding that their singular event actually was an issue for every women, helped them see how their individual cases are actually a collective problem. This can be considered empowering. This mixture of feeling empowered because of the collective noise of the women but also feeling powerless in the way not being able to do something shows how empowerment and disempowerment are floating notions. Nisan's quotations above exemplify both these states: feeling powerless because of the heaviness and feeling empowered at the same time. Empowerment and disempowerment then are not permanent states to be in constantly. They float in between and become temporary states.



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# Centralising Citizenship for Media Reform

## Local news audiences of Brexit

*Isabella Lopez-Smith*

### Introduction

The increasingly concentrated ownership of British media ensures uneven resources, directly contradicting the possibility of ensuring democratic standards through pluralist competition. Market logic falls short when fair competition cannot take place where resources are uneven to begin with (Schlosberg 2013). Legislative possibilities are available and are present in other developed nations (Media Reform Coalition 2012), yet as an institution, the British media has avoided even the minimal level of regulation needed for accountability (O'Neill 2002). The issue to which this thesis broaches, is not the technical means of *if* the media can be regulated, rather, *how* can significant power be contested, not in the least since media has the resources to frame its own fate (Tambini 2017).

News is presented as a resource in political life, where citizens choose, avoid or contest, yet vitally need communicative resources in order to engage and participate politically. In understanding engagement, in exploring insights of how citizens engage with news, how they use it, and what resources they expect and feel entitled to; qualitative audience research is bridged with studies of news, civic communication and democracy. In contributing to media reform, the aim was to access subjectivity, engagement and ideas around a certain political issue. In a diffused news audience, with the

ascription of news as inter-relational and influential to other practices and processes, accessing subjectivity and engagement focuses the analysis of a certain political issues around the citizen's experience.

Within an argument that engagement and identity needs to be understood, the value of qualitative audience research is demonstrated in both academic understandings of news and democracy, and in social research for policy and reform campaigning. Audience research will also demonstrate how news can be a resource for citizenship, a process which is increasingly shaped by mediated communication, where unmet communicative principles distort democratic societies along power axes of knowledge, debate and discursive resources. This research will argue that these distortions are present in British news media, resulting from an elite dominated and concentrated media, producing an unprecedented level of partisanship at the expense of news' capability as a resource.

The experience of Brexit represents a unique moment, the news' role heightened in public discourse. The specific context of this period in political lives should not be understated, as elite dissensus and fragility of the status quo present moments of 'crisis' which are likely to pose 'skepticism towards mainstream agendas' and willingness to consider alternatives (Freedman 2015, 139). This research attempts to situate a moment of crisis regarding the case of Brexit within the communicative processes of news audience engagement. In a heightened political moment, the case of Brexit offered an opportunity to enter audiences' reflections of the news. How do audiences feel about their experience of Brexit? Where they situate themselves in this experience? The approach was to ask them. To minimise contextual factors, the audience was localised to that of North Wales, where citizens were interviewed on their engagement with the event.

This research aims to critically examine how news media can be a resource for political engagement. A secondary aim is to demonstrate the contribution audience research can make in news, democracy and a project of media reform. In order to qualify these processes and contributions, this thesis sets out to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do local audiences engage with news pre and post Brexit in North Wales?
2. How do audiences engage with news as a resource for political life?



3. How can audience research contribute to news and democracy, specifically for a project of media reform?

## News, democracy, and power

An established function of media in a democratic society ‘assumes that individual citizens have the capacity to hold elected officials accountable’ (Curran et al. 2009:6). Accountability is undermined in elite dominance, under ever-increasing political, financial and personal elite entanglement (Freedman 2014). As ‘the means by which power is restrained and publicly monitored’ (Schlosberg 2013:1), accountability plays a central role of journalistic values, a premise of not only media holding power to democratic account but also providing ‘an arena in which dominant narratives can be contested’ (Schlosberg 2013:213). Through an analysis of media coverage, Schlosberg (2013) finds containment of reporting to mean this function is unmet, while simultaneously producing a spectacle of accountability; a performance by news institutions which dissuades the need for further scrutiny.

Relating to Schlossberg's spectacle of accountability, a performance of plurality can be seen in the results of the BBC Trust's breadth of opinion review (Wahl-Jorgensen et al 2013), where opinions are broad but different perspectives are not given equal representation. Relating to Allan's (2004) newsworthiness in choosing what to frame, the BBC leave ‘the authority to define the framing of news events is largely in the hands of official sources – particularly politicians representing government.’ (Wahl-Jorgensen et al 2013 ). The lens of the news was rarely shaped through members of the public, banking elites dominated coverage of the financial crisis in 2008, supporting the consistently pro-business, conservative leaning coverage despite the government in power (Wahl-Jorgensen et al 2013). Classical expressions of the journalistic role as objective, separating facts from values, the cultural environment of journalism routinisation and naturalising ‘the cultural construction of news as an ‘impartial’ form of social knowledge’, naturalises inequality as ‘appropriate, legitimate or inevitable’ (Allan 2004, 71).

Neoliberal policies in Britain have ensured the financialisation and privatisation of industry; the media is no exception. The value of news for

democracy is undermined 'wherein accountability is lost and the logic of capital becomes the sole driver of commercial newspaper practice' (Fenton 2015:84). The effects of governance by market logic with added economic pressure from new media has resulted in media ownership concentration (Fenton 2016, Freedman, 2015, Freedman 2013). An encroaching value of market-oriented industries is of the consumer over the citizen, individualism over collectivism, a structural democratic problem, where the 'political becomes engulfed and altered precisely by the practices and scourges of privatised consumption.' (Dahlgren 2016:5).

Symbolic resources are never neutral, but have power in the formation of ideas; 'through their various logics and contingencies, impact on the relationship between media user and that which is mediated.' (Dahlgren, 2013, 22). Accepting that symbolic power has some influence in civic consciousness is necessary for media's resource for knowledge (benign power [Corner 2011, 40]) it is argued here that simply without this, the need to regulate, and the possibility of positive democratic mobilisation, would be absent. To acknowledging 'the steady flow of knowledge of all kinds from the media and the selective and varied absorption of these flows into individual consciousness and social space' (Corner 2011, 95), is to perceive the media as having both a productive and destructive power in 'democratic improvement and cultural enhancement as well as of political management and populist exploitation' (Corner 2011, 95). Analysis of symbolic power is relational, questions of power often ending in 'an opaque space, social and psychological' (Corner 2011, 42) where 'consequences of media activity and the consequences of all the other significant factors bearing on consciousness and action are played out' (ibid, 43).

The analytic problem in research of power has meant a long and varied history, condensed by Freedman (2014) into paradigms of power whose characteristics have bearing on conceptions of media policy. The consensus paradigm is one adopted in the analysis of power, within which a power to mislead is assumed (Freedman 2014). When audiences can be misled in a certain direction, media policy assumes an obligation of social responsibility to offer a plurality of voices so that society is not led into complete consensus from a dominant power (Freedman 2014:17). It is this assumption of power which underpins arguments for media plurality in markets and competition, an economic liberalism which argues for the 'freedom' of the press (Freedman 2014:19).

The control paradigm moves the focus onto a view that a dominant block of power *does* exist in society, which is conceived to control symbolic resources, at the hard end being the propaganda model of media power (ibid 22). This paradigm sees those who subscribe to the consensus paradigm, and thus pluralist policy, as failing to hold elite power to account (ibid 22-23). Finally, the chaos paradigm of power sees a volatile and diffused system as a result of democratisation and decentralisation of society (ibid 19). Consensus and Control paradigms both assume a power over audiences, and while chaos gives audiences agency, it has a premature vision of decentralised power and democracy. The paradigm which consolidates chaos' prematurity in decentralised power, avoiding the sometimes functionalism of control and the failed plurality of consensus, is the contradiction paradigm (ibid, 27-9).

Contradiction 'addresses both the relational and material aspects of media power' (Freedman 2014:25), with 'structure and agency, contradiction and action, consensus and conflict' (ibid 29), uneven power relations are recognised but are not fixed, where audiences and producers are both considered (ibid 29). Freedman (2014) looks to Gramsci in contradiction predicating capitalism, on the level of institutions and ideas; common sense distilled onto citizens is at odds with the good sense that comes with the struggle against it. Both can be simultaneously found in commercial media, as a neoliberal institution offering up its own fair share of contradictions (ibid). The contradictory power that Freedman (2014) outlines sees relational power come to the fore, where at once contradiction and dissonance ensure strength for the powerful, but also allows the possibility of empowerment. The media does not 'have' power, but relational aspects organise our knowledge about the world, within which access to the media as a resource is often unequal (ibid).

In imagining new ways to organise communicative industries, a key goal of media reformers and activists is to build coalitions and campaigns which challenge media policy (Freedman 2014). While reform must engage with media and political institutions, to engage with these alone is not enough (Freedman 2009). Freedman's second mode of engagement sees the audience for reform activists as not only politicians, and certainly not the media, but publics (Freedman 2014). An imaginative appeal to citizens is needed to shift attitudes toward media policy in order to pressure those who have the formal power to act (ibid). Within this recommendation comes the drive not to

*imagine* the citizen audience's positions but to empirically and directly access them.

## News audience

Audiences are implied in much research of news, to varying levels of implicitly. Some contemporary research is careful not to assume audience subjectivity, Schlosberg (2013) outlines his use of the term ideology as not falling victim to this assumption, 'which has not been substantiated by the empirical literature.' (Schlosberg 2013:215). Perhaps, and particularly, for news audiences, the term ideology should be put aside, as Corner (2011) writes of its analytic inefficiency. It is precisely the paradoxical and contradictory characteristic of discursive power and the varied and selective reception of symbolic power which problematizes the news audience as a focus of inquiry in political communication.

Discursive resources for political life are by no means confined to the news genre (Richardson, Parry, Corner 2013), while cultural media can assume a different rendering of truth (Allan 2004), news' specific discursive resources remain under-researched. Little is conducted by news organisations or academic researchers, while journalists hold weak conceptions of their publics, with skepticism to market research claims (Allan 2004, 121-3). News audience research may be minimal, but discourses of news audiences are plenty. Revealing is the elite discourse of tabloid readers, something Steel (2012) saw as obliquely and disdainfully discussed during the Leveson trial, endemic of the historical paternalistic elite-driven framing of the 'quality press' (Steel 2012, 8-10). Analysis of British tabloids suggests a hegemonizing discourse of tabloid audiences as synonymous with the 'array of prejudices' appearing in the 'light and breezy news items' (Allan 2004, 129).

Within the culture of British news, audiences have been shaped by both elite and socio-cultural discourses. The recognition of socio-cultural influence on audience reception has been placed as central to ethnographic studies of audiences, with Morley's (1999) work paving the way in researching the different readings between social groups. In the problematized audience-text focus of much reception studies, anthropological research moved beyond seeking how messages were received in the *context* of reception. In mass-media

audiences, the study of news looked at television's role in everyday life (Allan 2004).

Livingstone (2007) describes the audience reception traditions key focus of the 'dynamic of interaction between text and reception, giving due emphasis also to questions of context' (ibid, 12). Continued research should focus on textually structured reception and the reception's structuring by psychological and social factors, as well as the interrelation between both processes (ibid, 12). Coleman and Moss (2016) seek not whether media results in politically important outcomes, but to *ask* audiences what they 'feel entitled to gain from the debates and the extent to which these capabilities are enhanced, diminished, or unaffected' (ibid, 19), contributing to 'a deeper understanding of how people imagine themselves as democratic citizens and how the development of self-determined civic capabilities might impact broader patterns of civic engagement and disengagement.' (ibid, 19). Blumer and Coleman (2015) outline the purposes of civic communication; for all citizens to surveil, in reliability, that which matters to their lives, to access the substance of *stakes* in order to make meaningful choices and to facilitate dialogue and exchange (ibid, 113-114). The notion of the public is often evoked and represented by a mainstream media which tightly manages voices of the public (Coleman & Ross 2010).

In the under-researched area of news-audience, studies tended to focus on the television and mass audiences. In the changing role of media to social life, Abercrombie and Longhurst (2003) introduce a new paradigm of audience theory in which contemporary audiences are recognised as both simple, mass and diffused (ibid, 159). Within Abercrombie and Longhurst's spectacle and performance paradigm (SPP), contemporary society is seen as performative, where we are simultaneously performers and audience members (ibid). The focus of research changes as the diffused audience is introduced, here media is embedded and contingent to everyday life, thus audience's performative identities are placed at the analytic centre of research.

Livingstone and Lunt (2011) point out Abercrombie and Longhurst's, (including the wider audience field) lack of interest in regulation, and those who research regulation's lack of interest in audiences (ibid, 2). The language of communications policy and regulators assumes a certain type of audience, in 'media-savvy consumers who demand quality, choice, diversity, and value anytime, anywhere' (Livingstone & Lunt 2011, 172). Addressing the

audience as consumers over citizens is not only semantics (ibid), but ‘plays a significant role in public deliberations over policy’ and ‘common sense in subtly legitimating one position or another’ (ibid, 186). If re-introducing the citizen into regulatory debates is integral, then reform activism can only be enriched by an understanding and centralization of the processes of citizen-audiences.

## Engagement and the citizen audience

Voters have a ‘sense of what they are capable of doing in the political world’ (Coleman & Moss 2015, 19) which corresponds on their behaviour within it, ‘performances of citizenship entail a relationship between what people think is expected of them and how far they perceive themselves to be potent democratic agents’ (ibid 19-20). In this way Coleman and Ross (ibid) have extended the argument for the audience’s *uses* of media, through capabilities in what citizen’s require in order to function democratically, to the notion of *entitlements*. Through the implication of capabilities as entitlements, what the citizens-audience needs from media becomes the obligations of public authority and policy (ibid, 6). Coleman and Ross take a normative stance is seeking perspectives of audiences to what they feel their entitlements should be. (ibid, 6-7).

The theoretical processes and conditions of civic life are mapped by Dahlgren (2009) in a civic circuit, named such that all conditions are interdependent. *Knowledge* comes in the active appropriation of information through frames of subjective meaning (Dahlgren 2009, 108-10) where new and existing resources are used. Knowledge can entail ‘system, process, people and events’ of political life (Richardson, Parry & Corner, 2013). Resources of knowledge are not only rational, the experiential resources of emotional knowledge do not detract from actuality, and are important in balancing engagement with a degree of enjoyment (Richardson, Parry & Corner, 2013). The media’s role in knowledge is associated with the pedagogical function of learning to become a citizen (Miegel & Olsson 2013).

Closely linked to knowledge; practices circulate with experience, are individual and collective, from voting, civic talk, research into an issue and civic networking (Dahlgren 2011:117). Practices are normative and thus open

to debate, defining practices' are modes of understanding and values as to how political change can and should be enacted. Sociocultural factors as preconditions of democratic life (Dahlgren 2009) have an impact on much of the civic circuit. Where knowledge and practices concerned partially with education, invariably socio-cultural contexts come into play.

Substantive and procedural democratic *values* should be debated, but both categories must be recognised for democratic functionality (ibid 110). In debating substantive values of 'equality, liberty, justice, solidarity, and tolerance', procedural values such as 'openness, reciprocity, discussion, and responsibility/accountability' become increasingly important (ibid, 110-11). Dahlgren points to Mouffe's indication that democracy will work only in recognising a general loyalty over group interests, in playing out political conflicts in agonistic debate (ibid, 111). Norms and values can dictate where and when it is 'polite' to talk about politics, where the consequence can mean an avoidance of the political (Eliasaph 2010). It is more likely that citizens will disagree with those they are familiar with, where the bonds of daily life mean disagreement does not threaten solidarity (Eliasaph 2010, 46). There is a cultural tendency to avoid disagreement, where political talk is thus struck from the polite repertoire of casual interaction (ibid).

*Spaces* are the context in which talk is done, they embody action and access; where mediation expands communicative spaces in chains and through time, affecting legitimacy and opportunity (Ibid,115-116). Spaces are communicative places for discussion, 'for democracy to happen, citizens must be able to encounter and talk to each other' (Dahlgren 2009,114), in having contact with each other, those who represent them, the discussion of decision and policy making, involves the physical and experiential proximity to people (ibid,114-5). While not having ceased, physical spaces for civic debate have declined (Mouffe 2005). Sandal (2017) outlines the importance of spaces where people from different backgrounds can gather in everyday life, not necessarily space and time carved out for political debate, but where political talk has the potential to arise.

For Mouffe (2013), spaces of civic life are central to the communicative struggle of democracy. *Agonism* is the very aim of democratic politics, it is the consolidation of antagonism as inherent of the political, into a state and space where conflict can be played out between adversaries (ibid). An agonistic form of politics transforms public space from the public sphere conception of space

for consensus, to a space where conflicting views can meet (ibid, 112). The procedural values which must be carried across space (Dahlgren 2009, 111), are thus essential in defining spaces of conflict as agonistic and democratically productive, rather than antagonistic.

## **Civic identity**

At the centre of Dahlgren's circuit, is *identity*, the subjective understanding of one's self within society (Dahlgren 2009,118). Empowerment and agency materialise within subjective identities when political actions are felt to be meaningful (ibid,121). Dahlgren (2009) stresses the importance of the affectual dimension for political engagement, its role in connecting identity and experience to realise a political self. Political identity is at the centre of Mouffe's conception of the political, where an agonistic model of democracy rests on 'the ever-present possibility of antagonism' (ibid, 17), an understanding and approach to democracy that begins in individual subjective processes which see discourse and identity gain meaning in difference. Within this centrality, affect has a crucial role in the constitution of political identity, where passion is a key driver in political life (ibid). This is one sense in which affect is a resource, it's performativity is also, with 'emotionality as a resource in journalistic storytelling', and 'the types of emotional response which political performance may foster in audiences' (Richardson, Parry & Corner 2013, 175). Yet it is important to note that a focus on affect broadens understandings of the political, releasing it from its overly rationalist roots, complementing, not reducing cognitive processes. Indeed Richardson, Parry & Corner (2013) found audiences holding an emotional sense of politics did not detract from 'the capacity to draw on political knowledge, or to craft opinions based on factual information rather than rumour or misinformation' (ibid, 175). A passionate politics need not mean an irrational populous.

Dahlgren places civic identity as one amongst a plurality of identities constituting the individual, a way of recognising the plurality in different conceptions of politics which may inform different modes of citizenship (2009, 119). Mouffe also recognises this plurality, an agonistic pluralism depends on a citizen position which negotiates and recognises difference.



Conditions are set upon citizenship, making it performative, with Dahlgren's *procedural* values making citizenship viable.

Public orientation in regards to the media is, both 'as much about the separation of each of us from each other, as about the separation of political elites from ordinary citizens.' (Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham, 2007,15). Representation in the life of the citizen has as much to do with the representation of the other, where media increasingly narrates *affectual* recognition as inward, thus so too is social responsibility (Coleman & Ross 2010). It is in this sense of civic responsibility, of connection and disconnection, to which Silverstone (2006) places importance on the role of the media. Particularly in the representation of the other, there is a responsibility to embed morality into media and discourses of regulation (ibid). Discourse and identity gain meaning in their difference (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), so in the representation of the other, the collective and individual self articulate. Mediation is thus important for the self and the self's relation to those beyond familiarity. Dependent on these processes is Dahlgren's last factor in citizenship; *trust*. Optimised and directed between people and with government, thin and thick forms of trust between citizens depend on the degree of separation but are essential in cultures of citizenship (ibid,110-4).

## Discursive praxis

A normative project of reform must consider democratic change in terms of communication and processes. A point of rare agreement between Habermas and Mouffe are the dangers of antagonism; understanding the right of the other is essential to democracy and eliminating them from the debate through antagonism is unproductive (Mouffe 2013). The political spectrum has been narrowed in the UK and other western democracies, where real choice in selecting political parties is negated (ibid). Just as affective and cognitive recognition of engagement should be adopted in citizenship, so too should a broader interrogation of the political (ibid). Conflict and difference define the political (ibid), and the political must be understood on a broad level, bridging distinctions of 'doing politics' and 'being political' (Fenton 2016), making 'personal' issues political (Dahlgren 2009).

Difference in the political spectrum of ‘doing’ politics is negated by a central neoliberal hegemony, marginalising views into, and met with, antagonism, the results of which can be seen in the rise of the populism (Mouffe 2013). Sandal (2017) similarly argues to look beyond the economic, to the moral, political and cultural grievances have caused right-wing populism and flirtations with authoritarianism. The remedy to which is a progressive movement owing understanding to those grievances, with a centralization of citizenship over a main strategy of protest and resistance (ibid), requiring a broad democratic discussion over issues which call into question Dahlgren’s (2009) substantive democratic values. Setting the ideal for democratic change as a broader and more inclusive conversation, loses efficacy when mediated communication is not addressed (Fenton 2016). Both in the regulation of communicative industries and in the grounded understanding of citizenship.

*Praxis* is what Maiguashca (2011) adopts over *strategic* actions for political strategy which aim for temporary allies and a singular mode of dissent. Maiguashca (ibid) empowers the notion of political strategy by giving a mode of *principled pragmatism*, which is to base political activism in the ethical processes of the everyday (ibid). This moves the focus of political change into a focus on everyday practices and spaces. The notion is that by engaging with audiences in their practices, the political can be analysed in a way that more meaningfully contributes to change. In relation to news, this means a consideration of audiences as active agents in citizenship, being involved in processes of transformation of media and its policy. Leaving behind strategic actions aimed at gaining temporary allies and elite action (ibid), the rationale in this research is to include theories and motives of critical audiences into discussions of media activism and thus expanding the notion of activism and politics.

Aiding this notion of praxis is the everyday articulation of identities, and Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) recognition that emancipatory power can emerge in rejecting or transforming discourse. Pointing out contingency is a normative and analytic practice which aims at looking under the surface, which power relations determine the current arrangements, and how they could be arranged differently (Dahlgren in Dahlberg & Phelan 2011, 231). Introducing discourse analysis into the way we conceive audiences is a contribution by Singh (2006), connecting two complementary fields in media and communication.

*Articulation* is the process whereby people connect discursive signs together to create meaning, a concept which highlights the processes in which reality and identity are defined (Singh 2006). Articulation is more often seen as connection, but Zienkowski (2017) sees articulation also as ‘performative and interpretative practice through which we link the discursive elements of realities’ (ibid, 37). Articulatory processes within a performative view of society take on a performative quality. Performance as heightened behaviour gives relations tension (Abercrombie and Longhurst 2003:40) whether this is the relation between audience, news and context, or doing and being political, which tension defines (Mouffe 2005). It can be thus seen in the micro and meso (Carpentier 2006) moments of articulating political identity, connecting the SPP with Discourse Analysis dialectically and opening up the focal of analysis to individual and collective identities.

Simplification of political space entails the processes of organizing identities in difference and equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). This offers a symbolic power of news, offering discursive resources for the self and unknown other (Silverstone 2006). Overdetermination, the striving but ultimate impossibility to reach discursive closure is the process of the individual in appropriating different available discourses in trying to create stability, alleviating the anxiety of contingency (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

Within textual and social determinants of audiences, research should aim to seek an array of answers, not only to questions of the characteristics and conditions of reception (Livingstone 1996), but to ‘why audiences make sense of media in the ways that they have been shown to do’ (ibid). To understand *why* in relation to news, could be to offer discursive explanations to the processes of engagement with the political. By bridging audience research with news and democracy within a discursive praxis, the aim is to discursively connect politics and people with their engagement with news. Equipped with *overdetermination, articulation, difference and equivalence*, representing the (sub)conscious processes of *why* audiences make sense of the political in the way that they do.

Though an imaginary of *why* is important to understand engagement, the primary focus of this research seeks to frame the news as a *resource* in order to understand engagement from an emancipatory and discursive inflection. The notion of Coleman and Moss’s (2015) audience *entitlements* are used in the same normative function which gives an obligation to policy makers. Added

to these civic entitlements is a primacy of the performative and political subject, and the consideration of symbolic media power to the citizen experience in the form of discursive resources. Thus entitlements become *resources*, in which the representational and symbolic aspects of news are incorporated into the social and cultural contexts of engagement.

## **Interviewing the news-audience with a qualitative perspective**

Research with regards to political communication is often concerned with the functionalist and quantitative approach, which negates the symbolic and discursive processes of agency in citizen performance (Coleman & Moss 2016, 19). The dynamics of citizen engagement as nuanced necessitated corresponding methodologies, Coleman and Moss (2016) advocate the use of more qualitative methods. Qualitative research enabled the study to ‘explore empirically how the media generate meaning’ for audiences, while retaining a role of the researcher as being an interpretative subject (Jensen 2013, 236). Researching and occupying the performative and interpretive social meant these steps were essential in accessing audiences broad experiences of political life.

Part of understanding engagement in this study relies on subjective reflection of how the news has resourced audiences’ civic cultures. Combined with a Discourse Theoretical Approach (Carpentier & DeCleen 2007), objective reality is not only dismissed but also its contextual value. Indeed, the subjective ‘mis-remembering’ or ‘misrepresentation’ is more telling in processes of identity and differentiation. Furthermore, appropriate data for the perception of news is opinion; audience articulations and performance. With these processes, campaigns are informed and citizens claim a voice, in this vein the interviews occupied an affective and cognitive perspective.

In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face in my home locality of Anglesey and Gwynedd in North Wales, with 16 one to one interviews, 23 respondents in total. Locality was seen as an important context in engagement, thus with a sample of this size the same locality was chosen to alleviate regional context. Gender, class and age reached a significant breadth for the sample size, *Leave* and *Remain* interviews were in relative balance, but those abstained from voting were under-representative of the wider

population, only 2 in 18 interviews and 23 respondents, represented the 30%\* of the population who abstained.

## Constructing the interview

The qualitative interview has few established methodological *rules* (Jensen 2013), rather a craft honed with experience. Intuition was a guiding principle, communicative processes applicable to researcher as much as respondent where skills were developed with practice, the piloting processes significantly aiding in this. The study assumed a conception of the interview as a co-production, where talk and gesture is mutually monitored, a localised collaborative event, yet situated within the wider context (Seale et al 2004). The value of face-to-face interviewing giving a sensitivity and attention to the relationship (Rubin & Rubin 2011). In the dismissal at the possibility of neutrality, the aim was to engage in naturalistic behaviour but not assume a position of neutrality (Seale et al 2004).

The centrality of news to the research was not reflected as a centrality in conversation. In hopes of not over determining responses in relation to media and news' role, Brexit was instead offered as a focal point with the aim to mitigate overstating news in the experience. In the analysis, the interplay of discourses of politicians and media, campaign and news, information, education, and news, served in its inseparability to underline the significant and entwined role of news and the futility at attempts of separation, thus news as accessed as a contextualised resource in the lives of citizens.

From a position that assumed personal experience was varied and subjective, questions were open to interpretation from interviewees, the guide arranged chronologically to build upon past reflections and propel future imaginaries. The introductory question into current affective/cognitive state as a way of letting the respondent introduce their positioning to the event. Then the interview generally followed a combination of affective and cognitive questions aimed at encouraging a personal narrative of pre, during, and post Brexit, culminating in prospective thoughts and feelings of change.

Respondents tended to have plenty to say on their experience, but some respondents were unfamiliar with the notion of an in-depth interview and

would begin with concise and factual responses, presumably expecting many questions. Responses were drawn out and invited to be elaborated on, and in the end, the interviews were all successful in regards to the respondent's depth and breadth. Core practices were adopted in simply; asking questions, following up on specifics and allowing plenty of time for respondents to talk (Seale et al 2004). A key premise of interviewing was a political move in giving agency to audiences, while a political interaction in itself, thus listening and respect were paramount to the process.

## Analysis of data

Verbal content of the interviews was transcribed, creating the empirical data for this study. Throughout the process of coding and thematizing, the interviews were re-read and listened to, recalling the voice of interviewees as not to be lost in the analysis process. A Discourse Theoretical Approach (Carpentier & DeCleen 2007) was used in the coding and use of data, where qualitative research methodologies open and iterative procedure was used in the first stage of heuristic coding, sensitising codes from the transcripts in order to explore the experiential and social aspects of the interview data (Jensen 2013, 249).

Codes were then organised thematically in theoretical categories (Saldaña 2009) along a timeline of experience, different stages of the political event drawing different uses of the news as resource and representation. Resources and perceptions of news were collated in sequence, all of the interviewee's engagement with these analysed alongside each other with an aim to get a representative experience of news' role. The circuit of civic cultures (Dahlgren 2009) offered an analytical entry point into the contextualisation of audiences and their practices, offering a concentration on the social as a respite to discourse analysis' primacy of the political over the social (Carpentier & DeCleen 2007).

The use of Qualitative research's sensitising concepts to deepen and ground perceptions are complemented by Discourse Analysis, where sensitisation is sometimes limited to a point of departure in the analysis, a grounded focus of qualitative meaning can be built upon with Discourse Analysis' structuring of meaning (Carpentier & DeCleen 2007). This translated into the use of

sensitized codes and themes, where Discourse Analysis could be used to structure identities and media concepts by treating discourse as representation (ibid). Analytical and political concepts, such as hegemony, antagonism, and articulation (ibid), can be used in a grounded way by this methodology, offering not only a description of audience engagement but a theorisation of media use as a resource.

## Ethical reflections

Important ethical standards for the qualitative interview are *Permission, Respect, and Commitments* (Myers & Newman 2007). *Permission* was asked of interviewees in the transparency of the interaction's aims and in written consent for the recording of the interview (see appendix 2). *Commitments* to the interviewee were fulfilled in ensuring anonymity to the process, where recordings were handled only by myself and names were changed in transcripts and analysis. A dimension of power is inherent in interviews as moments structured, recorded and taken away by the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In the study of a sensitive and ethical political topic, *respect* was key in the tone, design, and interaction of the interview.

This thesis sees political interaction as a theme through method and analysis, thus must also be a methodological reflection. A key finding in analysis and interaction was that *Brexit* was a divisive subject within pre-existing social divisions. With the interview as interaction, my own political subjectivity was reflected upon. In attempts at rapport, transparency, respect and understanding, were other's performance toward my political identity mitigated, while attempting to set aside my own political leanings in favour of the normative aims of the research. The research is coloured by these processes, remaining indicative of the political issue which this research aims to contribute to; more experiential understanding by researchers and activists of the people with whom they wish to understand and communicate.

## Local news audience's reactions to brexit

The locality of Anglesey and Gwynedd, is the rural northernmost area of Wales, U.K. Anglesey voted to Leave the EU with 50.94%, Gwynedd was the only region in North Wales to vote Remain, with 58.91%, the counties had 73.8 and 72.3% turnouts respectively. Wales has a distinct language and culture as a nation within the UK, yet Welsh citizens overwhelmingly watch and read English news, with localised BBC coverage limited in a 'roundup' style (Evans 2016).

As a poor region within Europe, North Wales receives significant funding from from the EU compared to other UK regions, and the absence of this information from coverage was consistently addressed by respondents. For Bryn, who voted to *Leave*, this lack of coverage was disappointing, the absence not only lamented, but seen by Bryn as 'crucial' in his decision.

Spatially and informatively decontextualized from the Brexit debate, the connection between policy and everyday life is lost. The notion that Welsh identity and politics is not represented for Welsh citizens (Evans 2016) is supported in this study. Local news was never stated as a source for Brexit, with the vast majority confirming the tendency (ibid) of English news consumption, the funding example illustrated Wales as a devolved nation with a different political context, but without corresponding news representation.

## News as an informative resource

The campaign, the coverage and the level of debate were perceived to be markedly lacking in accurate and reliable information as the base resource to make a decision. On being asked if they felt informed:

There was one side, everything is going fine. The other side, there wasn't any information, there was no information even as to the actual outcomes.

Brian, 51, Senior Technology Manager



I felt like I had a bit of information, I felt i had a good idea of the pros and cons enough to make my own decision, but what I feel now, I feel that the information had not been accurate or it has been misleading.

Bryn, 25, M, Civil Engineer

Alwyn (82, M, *Retired Architect*) felt significant familiarity with the issue and thus felt informed; ‘Very. I don’t know whether Brenda told you, we’re members of UKIP’. Caren (65+, F, *Company Director*) felt ‘Reasonably informed, and a lot of it was my own thoughts.’ The news was mostly negated or negative in its role of informing. This absence increased the likelihood of falling back upon broad notions and ideas which already corresponded to political values, for example the tendency towards collectivism over nationalism (Nick, Llyr, David, Ian, Helen, Ioan), or financial fiscalism and a conservatism to immigration (Bryn, Caren, Brenda, Alwyn).

Information was often seen as absent or inaccurate, through a combination of incompetence and dishonesty. In the absence of information, and with representation as binary, broad values constituting political identities were overdetermined (Laclau & Mouffe 1985). In the presence of untrustworthy news, family and friends, party values, and membership had a more pronounced role in deciding. The place of decision making blurred between private and public, thus too the inconsistency of their separation, highlighting the need for understanding how the private as shaped by culture, has bearing on the public sphere (Livingstone 2005).

Just getting into the habit of fact checking, it can be a bit tiresome having to fact check *everything*

John, 42, M, Pub Landlord

At a certain point I was very keen to see if I was missing something, what neither parties in terms of remain or exit were able to espouse anything tangible

Brian, 51, M, Senior Technology Manager

Brian and John both had broad and thorough news practices, critically assessing sources and their own positions. Brian goes on to say ‘it was hard to

vote for something when there wasn't anything to vote for', revealing the notion that in this case there is only so far media can go in informing, when 'was the information there in the first place?' (*Martin, 46, M, Network engineer*).

Those who did feel informed sourced their views not from news, but from experiences of work, social life and education. While news cannot occupy singular responsibility for informing, its presence can be seen weaved into audience explanations of feeling ill-informed. Despite critical practices and a broad consumption of news from John and Brian, both remained exasperated with the process, their critical practices unmet in effort and reward. A combination of a vote 'for nothing' and an absence of tangible information meant even those with sufficient knowledge and the most practiced skills, felt their efforts to engage lacked a meaningful compensation.

There was a consistent perspective in the study of a biased and 'hostile media' (Coe et al 2008) permeably perceived in politicians and social debate, reflecting a hostile mode of politics. This was felt to block the ability to be informed, on feeling informed in the 'silly exchange of propaganda at the time. It was utterly pathetic on both sides' (*Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster*).

On how useful the coverage was, Barbara 'found it was too much arguing and bickering, it wasn't a nice clean debate, it got too nasty'. Emulating her perception of the government, who she sees as 'bickering' 'school children', ignorant to the needs of citizens:

It's all about one-upmanship and I don't like it. And definitely not putting the people's interest first.

Barbara, 47, F, Shop Owner

Nick (*24, M, Doctor*), somewhat jokingly likens it to a style of reporting by 'one of Putin's guys'. Whether intentionally or not, the coverage blocked information through confusion and disagreement;

‘.. they create this media effect whereby nothing makes sense. It felt like that was happening with Brexit, you had so much cross-party disagreement, and disagreement within parties, that there wasn’t a narrative, there was no logic.. So you couldn’t form your own narrative about it.’

Nick, 24, M, Doctor

Nick : ..it was such a quagmire of decisions, none of which seem to actually lead anywhere. So none of it made any sense and everybody just ended up going..

Chris: Gut instinct..

Nick: Yeah, Oh dear. Everybody just gets this viewpoint, you hear it so much, that I just don't bother reading the news anymore because none of it makes sense.

Nick, 24, M, Doctor, Chris, 35, M, Software Developer

There is a strong association of political and media elites, of ‘personalities’ and ‘propaganda’, overly concerned with partisan debates and united in their unclean and heated methods. Audiences easily criticise these news methods as transparent; silly and pathetic, a clear sense of disconnection and disdain for the elite who are concerned only with childish, superficial and hostile debate, disregarding public interest. The result of political infighting, produced and reproduced by news, is a state of political quagmire. Where the news’ role as a resource has been abandoned to pander to political point scoring, leaving a lack of information, an uneven representation to the hostile aspects of debate, and a lack of political narrative to the issue at hand. In citizen entitlements (Coleman & Moss 2016) of news, the value of public interest and informative content is noted and lost, this state criticised, and decisions and narratives moved out of public and news based deliberation, and inward to personal narratives or ‘gut instinct’.

## Knowledge, specialism and responsibility

The responsibility to engage with politics is synonymous for some audience members with the keeping up of the news, of staying in knowledge of 'what's going on in the world'. The route to political knowledge is often expressed this way, news watching encompasses civic engagement. The ability to engage with news is sometimes lessened by aspects covered, the mode of political talk, the performance of politics, sensationalism, bias and partisanship.

Repeatedly the issue is brought up by audiences that local schools lack political and civic education. The responsibility in adulthood is placed on the self to learn more about politics, and while some urge themselves to watch more news in order to learn more, frequency is correlated with understanding. Though a lack of understanding means following the news is difficult:

But it's already in motion isn't it.. they want to get the news out but they also want to teach us, like they would have to dedicate a news channel to it or incorporate it into schools, that would be great, if they incorporated it into schools I'd go back to school. Be like, can I just take this class, please?

Peter, 27, M, Administrator for NHS

Peter expressed the news as attempting to teach and inform, failure to keep-up in inability to understand. Leading to him not engaging in political talk, where he doesn't understand 'the terminology' and where he usually feels it 'outdoes my ability to carry on' (*Peter*). Similarly Alan doesn't engage in political talk:

I can never bring politics up, because I don't know enough about em, to make an argument out of it, you know? It's just, it's just individual thing isn't it?

Alan, 80, M, Retired Truck Driver

The representation of politics as an interest and specialism is a common theme. The understanding, or even presence, of the notion of citizenship is limited. Within politics as specialism, the understanding of how politics affects everyday life is limited, when politics is 'people in a room dressed in suits arguing' (*Barbara*), has no tangibility to *being* political (Fenton 2016).

An elitist representation of government, combined with low understanding, disengages citizens; politics seen as not for everyone is democratically problematic, a lack of understanding accompanied by a lack of purpose to engage.

The time and skills needed to access alternative sources of information are at once supported (they just switch off, they don't have time to google or fact check every single piece of information. *John, 42, Pub Landlord*), then negated; the abundance of online information as an ill-excuse to not be informed, 'in this day and age' (*John*).

Elsewhere this sentiment is reflected, being informed as dependent on personal responsibility rather than social circumstance. The balance of responsibility and choice is an interesting one, where some audiences struggle with their understanding of politics, heavily grounded in a perceived lack of education, yet a personal responsibility to frequent news in order to gain a deeper understanding and interest. Though politics is seen as a specialism, ironically there is some kind of personal duty to engage with news as a way of participating in an unnamed citizenship.

## Partisanship, positioning and bias

Coverage was perceived to often incite fear tactics from both directions, this perceived discursive polarisation was unwelcome and largely resisted, sometimes having the opposite intended impact. Barbara voted to *Leave* but recognising the fear mongering of the *Leave* campaign:

The media are the ones who publish it, broadcast it.. There's too much scaremongering going on, which to be honest did swing me the other way as well, towards staying.

Barbara, 47, F, Shop Owner

Ian, consistently in favour of Remain, was nearly swayed to reverse his political position:

'You should stay'.. almost in a threatening way.. So that almost turned me into sort of going, hang on a minute, you can't threaten us. I almost voted out, and I was very close, I was very close

Ian, 52, M, Systems Engineer

Some audiences in the study were deeply dissatisfied with the tone and level of the political debate and its coverage, resisting it and even reflecting on their own stance in voting. Audiences retained their positions but critically place themselves outside of the grasp of threatening and scaremongering news, rejecting a simplistic debate. Connected to the sense of binary positions, particularly in absence of information, was the imagined followers of the campaigns. The Jones family:

I feel like I only had a basic understanding of it

Helen, 52, F, Civil Servant

I thought the people who wanted to Leave, they were being too nationalistic and I didn't want to be part of that I suppose.

Ian, 52, M, Systems Engineer

Without a clear grasp of the issue, the Jones family all expressed, as Ian does above, a decision based primarily in opposition, articulating themselves more strongly in difference than association. Representation of the 'other' (Silverstone 2006) becomes an assumption which definitively coloured engagement.

No it is a bit of a confession yeah.. you know, I was a default inner.

n being a socialist, that I didn't have anything in common with the team that were representing the brexit vote.. and being associated with those people.. well I don't want to be associated with those people.

Martin 46, M, Network engineer

Martin felt an absence of a socialist voice backing *Leave* or addressing and contextualising his concerns of the EU. The experience presented Martin with a kind of dissonance, in not being able to identify with the narrow representation of the *Leave* voter presented to him. In not seeing himself represented (Coleman & Ross 2010) or in accessing the substance to the stakes of his decision (Blumer and Coleman 2015), Martin's process of decision making is ongoing; 'still not sure'. In othering 'those' people, he distanced himself from their 'completely different' values, suggesting binary representations.

There was a tendency to articulate affiliation, yet less investment and more reflexivity to their partisan *source* than their partisanship. Individuals with strong political affiliations were less fervent with their long-term subscription to newspapers, by money or loyalty. Michael initially stating the *BBC* and *The Guardian*'s reporting on Brexit as 'fair', then going on to see a decline:

The BBC have been pretty hopeless over the left-wing Labour Party over the last couple of years, you know. Just ready to pounce. Ready to say something people want to hear.

Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster

While some audiences have a sense of loyalty to their chosen news sources, they remain critical and reflexive about that same source. Media agenda and bias are linked directly to political influence and concentration of ownership (Fenton 2015). Some audiences recognise the direct link between political and media collusion, and thus the role of vested interest in their combined failure to inform. Others don't state directly and overtly the role of ownership and corruption, but there is consistently a symbolic connection between media and politicians, reflecting the soft and personal connections elites do share (Freedman 2015).

BBC News is a staple in all respondents lives, on Television, but mostly Online through the website or mobile app; throughout age, demographic and political leaning. As wide as its audience, was the perception of its bias:

Well the BBC are violently biased, they're left wing and they're also pro Europe, so I do watch it but I take everything they say with a large pinch of salt.

Alwyn, 82, M, Retired Architect

The BBC have been pretty hopeless over the left-wing Labour Party.. Just ready to pounce

Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster

Audience complaints of BBC bias don't exist in the far the *right* or *left*, but in powerful centre. Where Alwyn sees the BBC as pro-Europe, many agreed to this point, its bias for the *Remain* campaign seen to follow 'the neoliberal consensus, it's just one-track' (*Brian*), as the central voice of establishment. The failure to represent the voice of the left in the debate, and the absence of air time for the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, was broadly noted.

The central bias of the BBC as not a partisan issue, but one of institutional power. Catrin perceives news bias as generally favouring institutional power, comparing her lived reality of social care work with news representation. Catrin sees cases in the news, their failure blamed on those working at the point of care, with little attention to court orders, funding and changes in policy. The underfunding of the NHS, is an issue which angers many respondents, Catrin explains;

But it just annoys me, the coverage the NHS has, its at breaking point because it's underfunded, and I just wouldn't like to work in that sector, it would be completely demoralising.

Catrin, 41, F, Social worker



## Echo chambers; recognition and re-evaluation

I don't remember having a lot of discussion with people who didn't think the same as i do, as I said we live in our echo chambers..

Mary, 59, F, Retired Accountant

The phenomenon of information echo chambers, or political filter bubbles, is one widely mentioned. It would seem that online social media bubbles are not independent, but reflective, of audience's offline experiences of interaction. In a context of limited spaces for democratic debate, sometimes social media is the space where oppositional views are more readily encountered. John (*John, 42, M, Pub Landlord*) singled out online space, along with the gym, as where most differing views are accessed. Llyr (*50, M, Musician and Teacher*), as space where debate could be found in absence of 'few and far between' face to face opportunities. Alice (*58, F, Public Relations*) seeing the most debate of differing opinions in comment sections of friend's posts, where friends of friends comments widen the sphere.

Those on the periphery between the binary of Leave and Remain, Chloe (*Chloe, 25, F, Waitress*) and Peter (*Peter, 27, M, Administrator for NHS*) both of whom didn't vote, and Martin (*Martin, 46, M, Network engineer*), who was largely undecided until and beyond the vote; all experienced this feeling of being in the middle with interaction from both 'sides'. Chloe's encounters were mirrored online, where she mentioned a great deal of interaction with 'both sides' prior to the vote and seeing her Facebook feed as divided, 'about 50/50'. Barbara sees hostility on Facebook, almost driving her to deactivation like Peter, reflecting the hostility she experienced offline, with family and friends of an equally divided state.

With the echo chamber as a prominent theme, people used this as an explanation of their experience and the result:

I was talking to them and saying it was just really nice to partake in stuff, and then this man and his wife came in, and they were like, 'bloody hell I can't even believe we need to discuss this, I mean clearly we're better out of Europe, haha', and put their votes in the box. And I was like... fuck!.. two votes to my one.. you've given it loads of thought, you've read articles, then people just come off the street, who you obviously haven't had that discussion with.

Nick, 24, M, Doctor

Tearing down his bubble, Nick 'assumed' that everyone just knew the 'right thing to do', then realised 'you've just been having your back rubbed by a bunch of your mates', the 'middle left is surprised' 'because they're so out of touch with what a lot of people think.' (*Nick, 24, M, Doctor*). Nick passionately narrates the moment his bubble burst, the perception of his thoroughly deliberated and rewarding participation had given way to a reality he wasn't aware of. Brexit has brought the phenomenon to the fore of public consciousness and the citizen-audience is thinking about communicative separation. In releasing the phenomenon from its online filter, talk of why and where the separations exist is prevalent, and practices are adopted in order to try and escape separation of talk.

## Emotion, passion and the fear of talk

Tension was felt in the immediate aftermath of the result, Alice (58, *F, Public Relations*) and Mary (59, *F, Retired Accountant*) both expressed anger at this stage, which prevented talk with *suspected* Leavers. After lessening, Alice at least has felt able to interact, but the tension is clearly felt on both sides, as talk is only with those who 'admitted it'. Llyr's (50, *M, Musician and Teacher*) experience prior to the vote was also one of tension, where 'if anyone had an opinion, it tended to be a strong one'. Brian recalls an encounter of heated response:

I had the misfortune of sitting in a room with a bigot, and when I raised a point his head nearly popped off and he ranted about spitfires and things like that.. just that kind of level.

Brian, 51, M, Senior Technology Manager

John attributed anger and passions to his political other, the 'right wing', who are 'always a little bit more emotional', where 'less than one in ten are able to debate it and talk about it without getting all emotional' (*John, 42, M, Pub Landlord*). The tabloid press is directly implicated by respondents in stirring hatred, in passion preventing talk. The tension goes both ways, and John sees it as a significant barrier to political talk, the cognitive and affective modes of politics out of balance, where:

People just need to step off a little bit. And realise that you know, we are all basically being lied to by these different sides.

John, 42, M, Pub Landlord

Stepping off, used to describe physically or emotionally backing down from antagonism, is used as a way of reflecting on the reality of the situation. A reality in which elites ignite anger to ensure division, misleading those who are easily led. In separate political bubbles, the other side, in this case the 'right wing' are compounded into a passionate and uneducated *Daily Mail* or *Sun* reader.

Caren does reiterate that she, as someone who is anti-immigration and voted to *Leave*, sometimes avoided political talk. 'Only with people that were like minded, because people who weren't, it tended to end up as an argument.' (*Caren, 65+, F, Company Director*) Certainly the picture is wider and Brenda is an example of an *Leaver* whom does avoid talk, but for different emotive reasons and opposing the stereotype. Brenda realised upon the prevalence of the term of echo chambers that:

.. in fact I and the people with whom I agree, we talk to each other, we confirm each other's concerns

Brenda, 65+, F Retired Social Worker

Company is shared with 'socialist' friends, but for 'a long time', politics is 'just a part of our relationship that I never explore', a 'closed book'. In membership of UKIP, Brenda is 'put in a box', where her concerns of immigration are in relation to the depleted social services she encountered as a social worker. These concerns, rather than being discussed, 'they will tell me i am prejudiced, racist...anti-anything-you-like, and I'm not any of those things.' Being educated and informed, what prevents political talk outside of Brenda's echo chamber is a painful lack of openness from the other: 'you see I find it.. Compassion. I respect. I feel'. Brenda sets boundaries of political talk which safeguard her from attacks of her identity, her political concerns bound to a hateful archetype. Mediated representations contribute to her feeling of being typecast;

..talking about Leave voters as though they're thick, as though they actually shouldn't have the vote.. there is increasingly this big gap in between people who feel that they are the ones who know the answers, and anybody with a different opinion, has to be wrong... and ill intentioned and thick.

Brenda, 65+ F, Retired Social Worker

Again for *Leave* voters, there is a sense that even after the vote, *Remain* is associated with a hegemonic (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) position, with a dominance of thought and morality. While simultaneously, a representation of *Leave* presents a simplification of political space and identities (ibid), resulting in less debate with those across the divide.

## Resource: imagining the *other*

Llyr stated few opportunities prior to Brexit to discuss, and in expectation of debate with some older people he was familiar with, said:

I was afraid of what that conversation might reveal about them. Because once you get into a discussion about immigration with somebody who reads the Daily Mail everyday, then you have to listen to what the Daily Mail is telling them, and there again it's just quite a painful experience really.

LLyr, 50, M, Musician and Teacher

After his bubble bursting at the polling station, Nick has a new approach in escaping his 'back being rubbed':

It's more important to understand people that you disagree with than the people you agree with.. but it's so fucking hard to read the Daily Mail. Because you're reading it and it's just complete unchecked madness.

Nick, 24, M, Doctor

Brian (51, M, *Senior Technology Manager*) also reads the 'Daily Mail, for a laugh.. sometimes it's not that funny.' Representing a consistent reiteration of the 'other side' as a group of 'people like your daily mail readers' (*Catrin, 41, F, Social worker*).

Audiences accept the newspaper ecology in the UK as deeply partisan, synonymous with division and creating separate spheres of information which have 'been going on for centuries probably, since there was more than one newspaper' (*Chris, 35, M, Software Developer*). Partisanship is also endowed with demographic and social divide; where *Leave* and *Remain*, and the separate spheres of political talk, are seen to have become manifestations of deeper societal issues, within the falsity of a 'classless society' (Nick, Mary). Many perceive *Leave* as resistance from below, resulting from austerity, division and a failure to engage.

I started to realise pretty soon after that we were being quite patronising to what became the Brexiteers, the white working class, in a word.

Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster

Michael points to the social and political repercussions of one, powerful, section of society's failure to consider the other.

..we need to be a nicer place and we need a nicer government who treat the people as though they are grown-ups and stop just treating the average and above like they're grown-ups.

Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster

The treatment of people in rational political talk is important to Michael, where respect and kindness are depleted, it is the fault of the 'liberal elite' and government, who have neglected their positions of power in encouraging intelligent debate and interaction. As a result 'I think they were doing two fingers to the establishment' (*Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster*).

News is placed as the route to escape echo chambers and into the minds of the other, a tactic to understand their position and the wider debate is to read 'their' newspaper. The understanding of a pluralistic news as a diversity in ideas (Freedman 2005), is invoked in this tactic. Yet just as market liberalism only diversifies providers, not quality and ideas (ibid), audiences also are limited in pluralistic tactics in a partisan press. The separation of information spheres by a partisan press on a highly divisive topic does not bode well for multilateral debate and understanding, partisanship overtaking pluralism. When partisanship and readership is also endowed with class divisions, audiences feel a moral responsibility for citizens to engage with the wider debate, thus an acuteness in the media's representational role.

Throughout the interviews the issue of immigration is mentioned, more commonly the fear of a rise in prejudice, often representational:

We've now got the rightest wing government for a long time and you can see it through Europe, you can see this otherness, the *fear* of the other.

Alice, 58, F, Public Relations

In a region of very low immigration, personal relation to 'the immigrant' is highly likely to originate in mediated representation.

'I do know that it's quite easy to come here.. you get food, clothing, accommodation, education.. You can't do that in any other country in the world.. some don't even have papers, you don't know where they're coming

from, you don't know who they are, what their background it, and they're here. No other country in the EU certainly.'

Caren, 65+, Company Director

Experiences have passed through the news into reality, where Caren negates mediation completely, in stating she 'knows', not 'she's seen'. Representation assimilating into truths in the social imaginary, an example of where news can cause tension and fear, placing the moral responsibility on news in marginalised representation (Silverstone 2006). Even the news' role can be lost where its place in citizen-audience lives is unnoticed, naturalised into reality and denied as a source of opinion.

Naturalisation of the idea of *Leave* as strongly nationalistic was seen to be problematic for political talk and interaction, representational issues of immigration on two fronts. The more heterogeneous picture of *Leave* voters is recognised and not everyone posits immigration as having a deciding role in the result, but still a contribution:

I imagine a great majority of people who voted *leave* are not racists and they're not nasty people, but sadly I think that there was a large proportion of them who are nasty, racist, bigoted and full of bile, and that kind of behaviour shouldn't be tolerated.

Brian, 51, M, Senior Technology Manager

*Leave* and *Remain* voters are passionate in their dismissal of the news' focus on immigration. Jack (24, M, *Mechanic*) remembers the use of refugee pictures in *Leave* campaigning: 'I think it's disgusting really', 'the media, it was all about immigration.' With the result seen to sanction racism (*Nick, Llyr, Mary*) There is a severe intolerance of intolerance, these mediated tensions summarised by John (42, M, *Pub Landlord*): 'We hate you because you hate'. News may have had an igniting effect on the fear of immigration, with two in the study expressing hate speech. More commonly found is the passion with which citizens disassociate and condemn intolerance with. Setting a precedent of entitlement (Coleman & Ross 2015) to the news in less attention to, and more humanity in, representations of immigration.

The type of coverage that audience *want* to see is encountered. Populism epitomises a form of political communication in which space and time for talk is overtaken with hostility at the expense of debate. Where an energy is needed in progressive forms of politics, valuing talk across difference in order to move forward. This value is negated when coverage draws energy to the populist right, or is left to the hegemonic centre:

.. there was nothing on the remain side that said: we recognise your concerns are legitimate, we're going to try to deal with them in a constructive way

Brian, 51, Senior Technology Manager

Entitlements (Coleman & Moss 2015) encompassed a value to widen political talk to include marginalised views and responsibility to meaningfully engage.

.. quite nice, decent people, they get stirred up and they get angry and defensive. That creates the power for people who are these networks of information

John, 42, Pub Landlord

Collusion of elites here includes the media, where their power exists firmly in their propensity to deceive and reproduce hate, to divide publics. It's specifically an issue of oppression for John since those who are uneducated are more easily misled and appropriated for power. While critical discourses of truth versus opinion are varied, audiences speak in unification of elite bias as a problematic aspect of news. Affecting accuracy and reliability, but more passionately; engaging people's disdain for the elite.

A common vein in the power of control of *Leave* campaigning, was the appropriation of passion; emotion as irrationality, the power of news rhetoric to mislead and control fellow citizens. There is also a forgiveness to the imagined other, hate as routed in misinformation and incapacity, means responsibility is placed partially outside of the individual.



I can't remember where things come from they just seem to.. maybe the newspapers and stuff do work. And I, without realising it, it goes in. But then if that was true then with all those newspapers saying Leave there would have been more of a ... thing.

Jack, 24, M, Mechanic.

Along with 'propaganda' and 'brainwashing' seen previously, the dominant discourse for audiences is one where consensus and control (Freedman 2015) reign. As we heard from Jack, how can the newspapers work if the majority was so marginal? Here Jack cannot reconcile media's power to create false consciousness, without realisation of complete consensus. With the exception of Jack, most theorising of media power is done about another, not the self.

Without recognising that power can be contradictory (Freedman 2015), this discourse of media power means audiences have trouble placing themselves and others in relation to it. Over-determining the position of the other as being *under* full control, or negating power when incomplete. Agency and reasoning here was not only between the self and text, but the imagined relationship between other citizens and a text, expanding the ways in which media resources our representations of the other (Silverstone 2006). In theorising what is happening to others, audiences give more of an insight into their own agency in differentiation, as rebuttals and refusals of perceived media efforts to control. Agency as complete or absent, meant only the *other* is under control, combined with a notion of passion as a loss of control, produces a binary of the hateful fool and the compassionate intellectual, and that the news does or does not 'work'.

## Places of political talk

A key component of democratic engagement is access to space for political talk. Within these spaces newspapers offer a material resource for debate:

... I get the paper there. And if there's something on a headline which is some nonsense that the EU is inflicting on us, I say, look at that, isn't that disgraceful?

Alwyn, 82, M, Retired Architect

A supermarket and sandwich shop provided spaces of quick exchange in a consumer setting, where people experience news as a resource in initiating political talk. Civic empowerment can emerge in the domain of consumption (Dahlgren 2009), but with public spaces declined (Dahlgren 2009, Mouffe 2013) and these consumer settings embedded in the social, its emergence is essential for citizens.

The workplace and the pub were the most common situations of discussion, both with limitations;

It's not good to mix the pub and politics really... not after a few drinks.

Jack, 24, Mechanic

If you got really passionate, a really heated debate, then that could stop you from doing your work.

Peter, 27, Administrator for NHS

Theoretical reasons which in practice, Jack and Peter go on to say, were mostly ignored or rarely adhered to, the rules and conditions of political talk being loose and unpredictable, yet it is within this type of talk of connecting the personal to the political, that the political emerges (Dahlgren 2006). Nevertheless as the cultural imperatives to avoid conflict can hamper talk (Eliasaph 2010), the mode of talk becomes important, and here the implication from Jack and Peter is the possibility of conflict, which is undesirable. Political talk at work depends on the culture of that workplace:

No, no, we actually got told not to. Yeh, we had an announcement email from higher management saying if you would like to talk about the referendum please do it in your own time.

Peter, 27, M, Administrator for NHS

Chloe's management on the other hand, a private company, emailed their staff and urged them to vote Remain, clearly not dissuading *talk* of the subject, where there was 'Lots! So many!' (*Chloe, 25, F, Waitress*). Nick didn't receive the same NHS message and rejects the disallowing of talk in hospitals, though his friend Laura is surprised:

*Laura:* ..obviously outside of working hours, because you're pretty pressed for time, *right?*

*Nick:* Well you just do, I remember one patient that I spent a good amount of time with, she was there every day, and we had political debates...

*Laura:* How did you find the time?

*Nick:* Well you just find the time, it's important though, that time to talk to patients.. you have human interaction, that's all it is, and so, I guess it inevitably comes up doesn't it?

Nick, 24, M, Doctor, Laura, 33, F, Teacher

Apathy to talk to delimit conflict (Eliasoph 2010) is adopted by Peter onto direct institutional instruction, opposing the need for institutions to encourage debate (ibid). While Chloe's management sanctions talk by introducing the issue, conflict is limited in a setting which is a 'political bubble' of *Remain* (Chloe). Peter extends Eliasoph's learned apathetic avoidance (ibid), into the reasoning that political conflict can cease productivity in the workplace. Directly in opposition to Nick's value of political talk as essential and characteristic to social relations. Highlighting the dependency of political life to occupation, where within the same institution, the social practices and political talk for an administrator and a doctor are experientially different.

The pub was referred to often and automatically as a place of political talk. A place for Llyr (*50, M, Musician and Teacher*) to discuss, having 'a bit of an argument' with friends; conflict acceptable in familiarity (Eliasoph 2010). For Peter (*27, M, Administrator for NHS*), when trying to imagine a place where he could get more into political discussions; 'it does have to be a pub.. everyone's sort of a bit looser.'

John's (42, M, *Pub Landlord*) pub is 'a bit of an intellectual bubble', where predominantly pro Remain citizens would frequent and talk. The expectation of whom you might find at a certain pub may prevent you from talking there, while not exclusively, some pubs are separated in the political and demographic persuasions of their customers. Shrinking the political space of democratic debate to those who may already have similar opinions suggests a social divide to Brexit which can manifest spatially. Social spaces as defined by Socio-cultural positioning are now imbued with a categorization of *Leave* and *Remain*.

Mentioned Spaces of political talk were never formally dedicated to politics, highlighting the importance of everyday talk for citizenship (Dahlgren 2006, 278). Vast differences were encountered in the comfort to talk politically. As shown, everyday spaces for political talk become contingent upon cultural and social factors. These factors generally allow political talk when it, and its conflictual tendency, is seen as appropriate or not, much as Eliasoph (2010) suggests. This appropriateness is realised when a) the individual sees the political as imbued in the social, and b) when conflict in political talk is seen as acceptable or manageable. An antagonistic and narrow understanding of the political (Mouffe 2013) can dissuade political talk, thus the representation of the political and of the mode of political talk is an essential cultural and social resource for audiences.

## Modes of talk

The word *argument* is used often where 'debate' might be, and for Peter, the mode of politics he sees is argumentation, from the representation of institutional politics..

They were having a big argument in Parliament. and I think it's quite childish the way that they shout at each other and 'eyy' 'oooyy' like, please stop it, you know, you're not five.

Peter, 27, M, Administrator for NHS

The performance of politics translates from parliament to interpersonal and online political communication. Talking about politics at work is under constant likelihood to turn to ‘having arguments’(Peter). And ‘arguments everywhere’ on social media, resulted in deactivation of Peter’s Facebook account in the run up to the vote. Political talk and discussion involves a certain amount of dominance and conflict to which Peter just isn’t prone to or comfortable with ‘..maybe I’m just too peaceful’. As was noted earlier, Peter and Chloe were left undecided, unguided in an absence of their own political narratives. Drowned not by an abundance of information, but a political quagmire where hostility tuned out information. Where individual political performance is embedded in the social (Rai 2015), news offers a resource of representation for the social in what to expect of political debate, the news experienced as a resource in imagining oneself as a citizen (Coleman & Moss 2016). Here the representation of political performance sees a productive and performative tension (Mouffe 2013, Abercrombie and Longhurst 2003) succeeded by a perception of antagonism.

## Shocking leave and hegemonic remain

You know.. ‘what?!’ I sat up, put the lights on, and listened to it.. I just thought I was wrong, I thought I was in the minority.

Caren, 65+, F, Company Director

The vast majority in the study were markedly shocked at the result, for Caren there was a new confidence in her decision, while Alice (58, F, *Public Relations*) was ‘absolutely incensed’, I ‘couldn’t believe it. I actually couldn’t believe it’. The shock pouring onto her social media feeds, Alice’s next stop on ‘that fateful morning’. The result represented a political change for most *Remainers* which they were intensely opposed to, experiences dominated by emotion and shock:

I was just black, dark, depressed. Unbelievable.

Michael, 68, Retired Schoolmaster

There was a broad recognition that media and politicians had fully expected a different result. Some perceiving the result may have been different had *Leave* voters known *Leave* was a real possibility. Indeed, Catrin knows a few people who ‘protest’ voted, to which she’s ‘quite annoyed’, and Martin’s own experience was much as they describe:

Well there was a part of it that was a protest vote. I didn’t, I mean did you? I didn’t think for a minute that brexit would win. Not for a minute... I know that’s a bit reckless, but I may well have made the same decision again.. but I may not..

Martin, 46, M, Network engineer

Martin’s Protest vote lost its core function in the perception of inevitability. The protest aspect was partial, and considering how resistant he felt to be branded a *Leaver*, may have been a performative hedging. Nevertheless, Martin (46, M, Network engineer) expresses that *Remain* as a safe result meant he didn’t give the vote as much attention as he ‘should have’ prior to its result. Presumed victory was a significant factor for others too, complacency leading to a regret of not engaging more with the campaign.

For Bryn (25, M, Civil Engineer), ‘when it sunk in that we had (left) it was a bit of a shock’, which turned to unease as he saw that ‘the majority of the things they’d said was a load of rubbish’, with Boris Johnson’s resignation as ‘absolutely shocking’ and the images of swarms of Londoners around him ‘who were devastated that we’d left’, as a *Leave* voter he ‘felt that I was responsible.’ For Bryn the disingenuity of campaigners depleted his trust and *Remain* as the status quo caused some unease through representations of devastated masses.

Caren (65+, F, Company Director) was surprised the ‘sort of brainwashing’ didn’t work, Brenda (65+, F, Retired Social Worker) was shocked that a ‘very powerful’ *Remain* ‘despite all their efforts, they were defeated’. Both as longitudinal supporters of *Leave*, their perception of *Remain* was one created and reproduced by a powerful central force. The popular reaction of shock due to perceived inevitability suggests a hegemonic representation that *Remain* would win. This dominant discourse is seen by some audiences as originating in their separate spheres of news, The Guardian telling them ‘it will all be fine’ (Michael, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster), their personal spheres

supporting this. For others the inevitability was due partially to authorship; those seen to back *Remain* were the powerful centre of politicians and the BBC, creating a perception for *Leave* voters that they were on the margins of public opinion.

Perceived complacency of engagement, and then shock at the result, highlight both a hegemonic (Mouffe 2013) representation of *Leave*, in narrowing and simplifying political space (ibid), as well as hegemony's role on processes of engagement. The importance of social imaginaries for political participation, and the confirmation of mainstream media's, particularly the BBC's, tendency to limit framing to the dominant view (Schlosberg 2013, Allan 2004, Wahl-Jorgensen et al 2013) and limit social imaginaries.

## Conclusion

The representation of North Wales in coverage was seen as lacking, the tendency for national over local news to be sourced for political information (Evan 2016) confirmed. Particularly in the case of Brexit, the absence of the debate and context of Wales' EU funding was perceived to missing. A perception of hostility, partisanship and sensationalism detracted from citizen's resources. The role of identity, pre-existing membership to political parties, values or newspaper, filled the informative gap in making decisions. Without an anchoring of information or narrative to fill the stakes of either side, some audiences were left undecided or overwhelmed, decisions remain unmade despite the importance instilled, a chaotic experience in communicative *noise* (Coleman 2013).

Political talk mostly occurred privately, between family and friends, private relationships and spaces would sometimes see talk between differing political opinions, sometimes talk was avoided between family and friends perceived to be on the 'other side'. While news offers a material and discursive tool for political talk, the representation of the political can subside as a resource. The political hovered between work and leisure, where individual expectations of political talk would prevent or produce it. As the political hovers between work and leisure, spaces already imbued with cultural rules, political talk is acutely dependent on representation and conceptions of the political. This

implicates a representation of the performance of politics into the potential of communicative *spaces* (Dahlgren 2009).

This study has found audiences consistently equate political engagement, political knowledge and news consumption. The key to agency is seen commonly to be *knowledge*, the most valued part of Dahlgren's (2009) civic circuit. Audience articulations reveal an entitlement to be educated by news, engaged by it, expressing an entitlement to citizenship and agency when it is felt to be absent. The knowledge aspect of citizenship is problematized culturally when the responsibility of its realization over-relies on the individual. Within a discourse of media plurality and online abundance as democratization, the consumer-audience attribution (Livingstone & Lunt 2011) overtakes the citizen-audience. Where frequency and diversity of news consumption equals knowledge and engagement, civic knowledge becomes meritocratic, the interrelation of other aspects of civic cultures and their reliance on socio-cultural context (Dahlgren 2009) lost. Contradictory to the recognition of experiential and formal education as uneven in this local context. Where news is entwined in circuiting the civic, a 'perfect storm' of agency and empowerment emerges, yet is only partially recognised, implicating the news, as a resource and discourse, as an issue of equality and access.

Audiences critically place themselves in opposition to what they perceive to be threatening and scaremongering news tactics, even when this means a reversal of their political stance. The perception of news to be highly partisan was a key factor in the loss of information and debate. Relatedly, engagement for *Remain* centred more often around distancing than affiliation, particularly in reference to imagined others. Yet the perception of *Remain* as inevitable stemmed from a hegemonic authorship of the powerful centre in politics and news. For some Brexit presented a democratic choice, one not often encountered by publics (Mouffe 2013). The choice of *Leave* represented an opportunity of resistance to the hegemonic centre, with its realisation commonly seen to be unlikely. Assumed hegemony sometimes prevented engagement with individual and collective deliberation, leading to a sense of civic regret. Here the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) was directly implicated for the processes of participation, heightened emotion at the shock of the result leading to temporary disengagement or heightened engagement with news. News was used as a resource in reasoning *why*, positioning the self in attempts to configure the situation anew.



In centralising the citizen, this thesis has shown the importance of news in mediated relations to the 'other' (Silverstone 2006) for civic life, thus the importance of this centralisation for moral media regulation (Silverstone 2002). The audience use discourses of the other to imagine the political landscape, in explaining political events, in making political decisions, in engaging or not in political talk. In revealing empirically that news is used as a resource in the imagined or realised behaviour toward the other, the news has become a moral issue. The use of localised audiences to imagine immigrants in fear sets an obvious precedent for the responsibility (Silverstone 2006) of mediated representation. News thus has a moral responsibility to equip citizens with the informative and discursive resources to debate complex democratic problems, rather than a polarised or hegemonized view. At the same time, this tendency is recognised by audiences in elite news and offers insight into the more 'measured', 'reasoned' and 'meaningful' debate to which they feel entitled.

There was broad recognition of communicative separation in society, contextualised by audiences within their everyday lives. Echo chambers were a popularised phenomenon, a discourse released from media, appropriated as a term to describe communicative, material and social divisions in society. The context of narrowed space for political talk (Dahlgren 2009, Mouffe 2013), and the cultural tendency to confine disagreement to familiar relationships (Eliasoph 2010), was affirmed. Potentiality of political talk was narrowed by the perception of the political as a site of antagonism (Mouffe 2013).

As a site of elite antagonism and specialism, the news is resourced by some toward an imagination of political debate as a performance of knowledge in antagonism, narrowing access to, and reflexivity of, debate: thus as a resource in imagining the self as a democratic citizen (Coleman & Moss 2015). The news was directly implicated in the political mobilisation of prejudice, through communicative appropriations of passion. This contributed to a regressive perception of society in which passion has a harmful role in the political. Austerity, consumerism and right-wing populism, as projects of an elite media, are perceived to distract attention, to take away limited time and energies from political progression.

Antagonistic politics as dangerous to democracy (Mouffe 2013) is operationalised through citizen experiences, shown as damaging to civic

processes. Talk across political and social divides has been brought to the fore of public consciousness, with most recognising its absence, some valuing the need for it, an ideal of *agonism* (ibid) touched upon in imagining political progress. News representation as integral in reproducing the idea of politics as inherently antagonistic, with some disregarding the use of political talk in inevitable antagonism, an 'orientation to the public world through media' (Markham, Livingstone & Couldry 2007) undermined. In lacking compensation from the experience (Coleman & Moss 2015) audiences express and highlight the wish for a different mode of political talk.

The incompatibility for a public sphere of rational consensus, the need for an agonistic democracy (Mouffe 2013), and the news' role in reproducing antagonism, can be seen in this case through audience's experiences of immigration coverage. The binary of immigration being framed in nationalism, fear and prejudice on one side, led to an antagonism toward the immigrant, while also a critical distaste for the coverage which sometimes caused reversal in political positions. The perception of the anti-immigration argument framed in such a way meant citizens sometimes not engaging in personal deliberation and avoiding debate. The ignorance of the issue from the hegemonic centre (Mouffe 2013) meant the resources to debate the issue were seen as binary and superficial. By failing in coverage of democratic issues, the news is complicit in hegemonizing the debate, narrowing political talk, and marginalisation, discouraging the possibility of agonistic (ibid) exchange.

Citizens resource and equate the news with political engagement, thus the news' audience perspective is essential in offering depth to civic literature in understanding the audience's imagination of their own civic possibilities (Coleman & Moss 2015). Where it is possible for audiences to be highly engaged with an issue but not vote, public apathy and disengagement cannot be meaningfully measured by quantitative data. Where news is a resource beyond the confines of the private moment of consumption, into political talk, individual and collective imaginaries, quantifiable techniques of audience measurement have little bearing or description on the news' role in civic life. Including the experience of audiences into news and democracy offers a more nuanced understanding of engagement and revealing a broader conception of the political, as essential in democratization (Fenton 2016).

With the idea that citizenship should be central to a progressive politics (Santal 2017), and a rejection of revolutionist rhetoric in favour of

empowerment, access and opportunity (Livingstone & Lunt 2007), the citizen should be centralised in discourses of regulation and political change. News audiences take the citizen as central and news as entwined with the processes of civic culture (Dahlgren 2009). Understanding audience entitlements (Coleman & Moss 2015) to news as a resource involves audience's perceptions of why news is not fulfilling its civic role in practice and discourse. News-audiences show that one of Freedman's (2015) main strategic tenets in making media policy *political*, is already formulating in the public consciousness, the perceptions of audiences firmly politicized.

News audience perspectives can expand the regulatory and commercial narratives of audiences, while contributing to methods of reform. Commercial incentives were broadly recognised as embedded, particularly in the appropriation of political passion for ratings and sales, a perception of the supplanting of citizen for consumer. The lack of interest from regulators and researchers of regulation into audiences (Livingstone and Lunt 2011), presents a top-down view of regulation, where audience's mode of citizenship or status as consumer is presumed and materially embedded in institutional practices (ibid). Audiences commonly recognised the news to be a business, operating for financial gain, but do not adopt the insinuation of themselves as consumers, they rather vocalised the aspects of consumerism which have eroded their civic culture, in trust, enjoyment and engagement of news and politics. Thus the audience perspective of news should be adopted not only normatively, but pragmatically. Where regulators and news providers might continue to discursively shape the audience as consumer, qualitative research shows they cannot imagine them consumer *satisfaction*, which may be particularly salient in the volatile news economy.

Research which seeks reform for a normative democratic project must take into account *who* they are working for (Livingstone & Lunt 2011), where the *subject* of democratic improvement is citizenship, the sense is to consider what audiences feel entitled to gain and how they can imagine themselves as citizens (Coleman & Moss 2015). An aim realised in centralising the citizen-audience, showing the entitlement audiences feel, revealing the missing democratic resources needed as part of a wider progressive politics (Fenton 2016, Freedman 2015).

In targeting the citizen for reform campaigns (Freedman 2015), the notion to study them more closely is simple, it is more time consuming and complex

than quantitative methods, but may be integral in determining the viability for and character of media reform within complex institutional and discursive structures. The complex and longitudinal task of reform, when centralising citizenship through consulting audiences, is then imbued with civic agency. Thus reform can take upon a praxis in which it is circular to the processes of citizenship and democracy. This can be seen with the above example of the 'echo chamber' discourse; where civic awareness to communicative problems alone can lead to new practices in overcoming them. This research has confirmed that audiences, while multiple and contradictory, and as intimately linked to news, use discourses in civic life, impacting decision-making and political participation. Discourse can thus be accessed and analysed through audience research in order to formulate an understanding of engagement to specific political issues.

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## Interviews

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- ‘Bryn’, 25, M, Civil Engineer. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 14/10/16
- ‘John’, 42, M, Pub Landlord. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 2/3/17
- ‘Jones’ Family. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 5/3/17
- (Ian, 52, M, Systems Engineer, Helen, 52, F, Civil Servant, Ioan, 18, M, Cadet)
- ‘Mary’, 59, F, Retired Accountant. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith. 4/3/17
- ‘Michael’, 68, M, Retired Schoolmaster. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith. 4/3/17
- ‘Brenda’, 65+ F, Retired Social Worker. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith. 7/3/17
- ‘Alwyn’, 82, M, Retired Architect. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 7/3/17
- ‘Alan’, 80, M, Retired Truck Driver. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith. 4/3/17
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- (‘Nick’, 24, M, Doctor. ‘Laura’, 33, F, Teacher. & ‘Chris’, 35, M, Software Developer.)
- ‘Caren’, 65+, F, Company Director. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 10/3/17
- ‘Barbara’, 47, F, Shop Owner. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 14/10/3/17
- ‘Peter’, 27, M, Administrator for NHS. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 11/8/16 & 3/10/3/17

‘Brian’, 51, M, Senior Technology Manager. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith,  
6/3/17

‘LLyr’, 50, M, Musician and Teacher. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 14/3/17

‘Catrin’, 41, F, Social worker. Interviewed with I.Lopez-Smith, 11/8/16 & 7/3/17

# Framing Climate Change

## The climate scepticist framing of climate change in a US political context

*Julie Yung Kirk*

### Introduction

The debate on climate change has divided politicians across the globe and especially in the U.S. Climate change was top priority during the Obama-administration and now seemingly prompted the former President of the United Nations General Assembly, Mogens Lykketoft, to return to Denmark and continue his work as a climate activist (Madsen, 2016). On the other side of the table, sceptics among the political elites in the U.S. have downplayed the effects of human activity to delay action on climate change (Nisbet 2010, in D'angelo et al. p. 53). Some of the sceptics have used Congress to block political decisions on climate action and spent millions of dollars on billboard campaigns equating “belief” in climate change with terrorists and mass murderers. In spite of scientific consensus that “climate change is occurring” and that “human activity [is] the primary driver,” (Nasa.com 2016), climate change scepticism continues to exist, and it is as real as the occurrence of climate change itself.

On March 17, 2010, a new exhibition hall offering among other a view into “the drama of climate change, survival and extinction that have characterized humans’ ancient past” opened at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, in the United States. The position taken on the issue of climate change at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC portrays climate change as a natural occurrence in the

environment and depicts how humans have developed traits in response to “extreme weather conditions” and that species, which did not survive, did not so because they were unable to accommodate and evolve in ways that would ensure their survival.

To this should be added that the building of the hall was founded by a \$15 million donation from one of the museum’s board members of 23 years, David H. Koch.

Since the commencing the process of writing this thesis on climate change, the world in which this thesis was conceived has changed considerably. This can only be taken as a testimony that the knowledge produced by social scientists is as temporary as the knowledge itself - in this world today – is to be ruled by gut feelings on its validity. In terms of a changing climate within the new administration governing the U.S. today, the current President has taken it upon himself to eliminate policies such as the Climate Action Plan as well as withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, as it is deemed “very unfair at the highest level to the United States” (CNN.com 2017). Among other examples of this new direction on climate change has seen the term of “climate change” changed to just ‘climate’ on the government website of The National Institutes of Health as well as the deletion of the climate change section on the website of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (Theguardian.com 2017). Considering this new trend from the highest office in the U.S., scepticism is not only as real as climate change, it is crucially damaging now and in turn – in the years to come.

## **Research questions**

In this thesis, I will examine particular examples of framing and the mediation of climate scepticism as some of the many efforts undertaken to undermine climate science consensus. In this regard, the political framing of climate change as posed and exhibited for example in the Hall of Human Origins should be viewed also as an example of the politicised environment for talking and dealing with climate change in the U.S. This empirical case further allows me to examine how interests opposing action on climate change have used the museum as a tool in the attempt to mitigate people’s responses to climate change to change their opinion. The aim of this thesis is first and foremost to examine the political framing of climate change at the exhibition in the

context of the political environment for discussing climate change and actions necessary to combat it in a U.S. context. In the course of this thesis, I will answer the following questions:

1. What examples of scepticist political framing of climate change exist and which views on climate change are exemplified?
2. What does the scepticist framing of climate change tell us about the political environment for discursive practises on climate change in the U.S. as a political issue, and how may we understand this framing of climate change as an expression of the political environment surrounding climate change in the U.S.?
3. What implications for political engagement around issues of climate change does climate scepticist framing entail?

To answer these questions, I will analyse the case of the Koch Brothers as an actor in the U.S. political debate on climate change in the so-called 'climate wars'. This account will further show a broader context the initiatives to promote a certain type of discourse on climate change and the urgency to mitigate political efforts in its wake.

### *Climate change: the science, the sceptics, the research*

For us to understand climate change, we need to be able to relate to it through its relevance to us by making sense of it as a social issue belonging in the social world. On its own it is but a phenomenon and is acknowledged only as a social issue as long as we treat it as such. However, to understand the basics of what climate change is and where it 'comes' from, we have to look to the world of natural sciences.

Data collected by scientists show that "increased levels of greenhouse gasses must cause the Earth to warm in response." (Climate.nasa.gov) The Paris Agreement was built around actions taken to keep the global level of temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius. Yet, although we are responsible for - as well as drivers of - the very societal structures causing climate change and the only ones who can mitigate and prevent further rise in temperatures, implications arise when "science ... is the politics of climate change" (Lahsen in Pettenger, 2007: 190), and when that science seems to demand political action to respond adequately to this, further requiring less of the same politics which caused rise in emissions and thus climate change in the first place. But

it's not scientific breakthroughs but social science and humanities that will change people's behaviour" (Larkin in Sørensen et al., 2014). As such, climate change advocates, scholars and policymakers have further looked to the realm of communication and media to address the psychological barriers hindering concrete action.

Furthermore, climate change if anything has divided public opinion re-directing discussions away from concerning what actions need be taken and instead turning them into discussions about climate change itself as well as the science behind it. Emerging from this, climate change scepticist voices have established themselves as a strong entity in climate change politics. Although the truth of the matter is far from as clear-cut when delving deeper into the motivations for aligning with these opposing views on climate change.

Examining climate change in a social science, media and communication perspective, the research covers a variety of perspectives, all of which hold key analyses relevant to the explanation for why CO<sub>2</sub> levels still managed to rise globally this year despite efforts and intentions of cutting back emissions to prevent further global warming. The paradox of the latter also addresses the interplay between the individual, globalisation, the risk society and the level of mediation and communication of the perceived material reality permeating it all. The broad range of themes and media and communication studies covered within the field of climate change underscores this.

## Literature review and theoretical outline

The amount of climate change-related subjects in the media has grown over the years. Research on climate change in public media has noted how the emergence of climate scepticism originally entered the stage as a by-product stemming from conflicts over environmentally concerned policy-making at the political level.

Pielke, Jr. (2010) argues that one reason for climate policy going off the tracks has been partly because of "a fundamental disagreement about what climate change itself is" (143). The question of defining climate change in this instance extends beyond the "sceptics versus the convinced," it is something

starting already with the scientific and policy institutions responsible for climate change, subsequently fostering an environment for debates on climate change guided by “political motivation to produce or spin science that shows or dispels “dangerous interference” (Pielke, Jr, 2010: 143).

*The US context of environmental policy and the battle for the public opinion*

Although originally “founded” within the strictly political sphere, the scope of climate change scepticism in media research has today had its focus expanded to include public perception in terms of the effects of political discourse as mirroring the politicised climate change debate in the U.S. Besides research showing that the U.S. climate change debate are more polarised than in other countries, political adherence to so-called anthropogenic (human-made) climate change versus climate scepticism or denial has been aligned with liberal versus conservative politics (Castells, 2013: 313). By applying the same strategies and methods on climate science as found in the tobacco industry, the aim has been to “keep the controversy alive” (Oreskes and Conway, 2010). In the political world of climate change, the move to oppose and discredit climate science has been expanded to the broader term of the ‘conservative countermove’ (McCright and Dunlap, 2000 referred to in Painter and Ashe, 2012).

Research into the economic argument versus climate change policy suggests that the economic incentive takes the winning argument. (Roger Pielke, Jr., 2010: 46) In large, this is because we believe in a system of logic where profit-making equals social stability, where GDP growth is a measure for progress “resting on the premise of using nature as a resource rather than as our living environment” (Castells, 2013: 3015). Following this logic, researchers find that combating climate change in the political and subsequently, the public opinion, becomes a trade-off with economic growth, and these two issues in the debate are therefore commonly seen as incompatible (Roger Pielke, Jr., 2010: 46).

Whereas some scholars identify opportunity for climate change framing by linking it to technological progress, other scholars express concern over adherence to climate change seen as yet another business opportunity, exactly because of the implicit relation to the economic incentive therein. As an example, Dahlgren (2009) remains sceptical by foregrounding the presence of market logic in normative politics (ibid: 22). This concern focuses on how

climate change linked to economic models becomes part of the very problem of economic thinking which helped to create the problem in the first place.

At any rate, shifting focus to climate science uncertainty over policy-making has left climate advocates to deal with countering scepticism rather than the means necessary to combat climate change. Instead of finding their core interests to be implementing climate policies, climate scientists have seen themselves forced to go back to defending the basis of their argument, namely the evidence of climate change itself. This is also a testimony of how politicians and others wanting to act on climate change have taken for granted for too long that showing the right numbers and statistics would be enough to convince the public as well as politicians of climate change. (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Pielke, Jr., 2010) That science itself would provide the right amount of knowledge necessary for taking action to combat climate change. That science itself is self-explanatory. As such, there exists no scientific "one size fits all" when it comes to delivering the message in the necessary mode to provide the right understanding. In this context, revising the framing on climate change becomes a necessary means or tool to this end with its seeming promise of delivering political impact if done correctly.

#### *Shaping public opinion on climate change: The media and meaning-making*

With the division of U.S. politics on climate change, research shows that "where governments take the issue seriously, the media are inclined to follow suit" (Lewis and Boyce 2009: 10). This is to say that the negative impact on media stems from debates within U.S. governmental politics. An example of this relationship has since been reported in a case by Oreskes and Conway (2010), who found a report from 1989 questioning climate change science to be repeated by mass media after first having been through the White House (ibid: 7). Underlining Dahlgren's (2009) views, the role of media in this sense is twofold: It enhances mutual dependency between political actors and media (ibid: 35, 51) and it opens up for a discussion on "the power *over* the media, for example, how politicians, private interests, and audiences influence how the media operate and the kinds of representations of reality they provide" (Dahlgren, 2009: 50). Media in this sense does not merely constitute a messenger but plays an active role in terms of the reproduction of conflicting views from governmental politics on climate change. At the same time, it can be controlled and used to promote particular interests and purposes. In this context, it is further useful to consider the role of the media as a messenger



but also as an active player in the formation of knowledge and everyday realities.

In later studies within the journalistic field, Boykoff's (2013) research points to a greater focus and acknowledgement of climate scepticism and outlier voices influence of media, and Brüggemann and Engesser (2014) find that journalists, although working independently, share "common ideas and discourses" through their mutual relations to the same spheres of information flows. Another study on climate change in U.S. media discourse showed how the 'translation of scientific concerns' oversimplified the complexity of the science resulting in an opposition between scientific and political discourses on climate change (Sonnett, 2010).

Of a more notable finding for this thesis, Brüggemann and Engesser's study revealed how academic titles are used by sceptics to "open doors" to the publishing of climate sceptic articles in "leading news outlets" (Ibid: 419). The level of authority or the recognised specialist behind whatever message put forward plays a role in assessing the validity of the contents of that message. So when Boykoff (2013: 797) contends how levels of trust are "fickle" in the public, authority in this example is used to generate scepticism points on the one hand to a legitimacy of exactly that scepticism but also to the politics of climate change and how climate change is never discussed on the basis of climate change itself but on the motives for pushing against or pushing for political agendas backing policymaking to address climate change. As such, journalistic practices as well as media's inclination to adopt government discourse in this respect have helped to consolidate climate scepticism as a valid point in official political climate change debates.

Recent studies on climate change in the media focus on the relationship between the media and the audience, and especially the impact on the formation of public opinion and attitudes. Boykoff (2013), Nisbet and Myers (2007 in Castells, 2013) have been occupied with the correlation between the agenda-setting effect of media and public opinion on environmental issues. In this instance, rather than telling people what to think, the media has the ability to advance specific agendas on climate change through 'select narratives on scientific issues' to make it "understandable by the public" (Boykoff, 2013; Castells, 2013). This also implies what several other scholars have been occupied with in their research. Namely that scientific issues such as 'climate change' is not easily comprehended by the public, and that it is an area where

“public understanding is limited,” and based on ‘repeated associations’ (Lewis and Boyce, 2001: 13). Additionally, it recognises the process of meaning making itself to be more complex than what can be reduced to a media-centric stance (Olausson, 2011: 282; Nisbet, 2015: 286; Dahlgren, 2009: 3).

## **Conclusion**

Considering the amount and depth of the body of research, in which climate change and in particularly climate scepticism have been undertaken attest to the interest and the complexity of doing research on climate change scepticism. Research has mainly focused on the need for bridging the gap between climate science and climate change scepticism, where scepticism in this instance is seen as a result of seeming disagreements within climate science. Less research has focused on the concrete measurements taken to deliberately derail, maintain and opt for more scepticism on human-caused climate change. As research also shows, adherence to human-made climate change is more so divided and ‘gapped’ in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world. Where research into the notion of climate change in the social science world took hold of risks to society, research into climate scepticism have shown how the aim has been to greatly reduce or even to remove the level of risk climate change, be that human-caused or due to natural fluctuations. As such, this thesis addresses climate change scepticism by examining concrete examples of the efforts taken to undermine climate science consensus.

## **Theoretical outline**

The Theoretical Outline will outline the relevant theory on the existence of climate change in the social world, the nature of the human understanding of climate change, where the notion of mediatisation as well as the notion of so-called media effects play important roles.

## **Placing climate change in the social world**

Anthropogenic climate change puts emphasis on the level of responsibility of humankind for causing these changes on the one hand (Andersen, 2016). On the other hand, it places climate change in the realm of social reality. People can talk about it as more than as observed facts and statistics about things happening outside and in other places in the world. Through these facts, people can relate climate change to fears as a result of the proposed risks it poses. Or they can dismiss these facts as well as the proposed risks. People can also acknowledge these facts, but dismiss the level of human involvement in their existence. As such, these facts have come to mean something to the social world and have been given meaning as social facts belonging to social reality through social construction (Pettenger et al., 2007). From this perspective, climate change is “real”, because people “treat them as real,” and our ability to act and “do” something about climate change “depends on the stories we tell,” as these stories reflect how people think the world is connected. Therefore, the differences in these stories determine people’s understanding of what climate change is, the level of human responsibility in those stories, and what people think they should “do” in response to climate change. As such, the social construction of climate change is political (Pettenger et al., 2007: xiii-xv).

Second, the social construction of climate change further emphasises processes of meaning-making and the construction of knowledge as central to understand climate change (Haas, 2004 in Pettenger et al., 2007: 3) and therefore also to this thesis. Stressed also in the literature review, there are multiple reasons and levels of implications for addressing the nature of why climate change is difficult to comprehend (Stoknes, 2015) and the disagreements this causes (Hulme, 2009) on several levels. These levels of implications are exemplified through: the expressed knowledge on climate change in terms of the common stock of knowledge (Lewis and Boyce, 2001), the public need for intermediaries in the shape of journalists (Boykoff, 2013: 809) and the media (Olausson, 2011) to shape the a better understanding, as “the perceived material reality of climate change is defined in social settings by scientists and policymakers (who may or may not be experts) (Lahsen, 2005 in Pettenger, 2007: 4).

Because climate change takes on existence in the social world due to social construction of it, and because multiple layers in the process of making

meaning entail understanding, the science behind climate change itself would seem the obvious place to direct attention for more settled knowledge based on its positivist frame as a natural science.

Although it enjoys a relative status as “the ideal of the scientific method,” (ibid: 2) Popper’s philosophy of science is also said to be “not well suited to the challenges posed by an Earth System that is characterised by high degrees of complexity, non-linearity and a lack of definable cause-consequence relationships” (Oldfield and Steffen, 2014: 70-75) in Mercer 2014). Science claims and scientists find their strengths in how they and their achieved results are self-reflexive in terms of the scientist aim to aspire to validation and honesty of the field, and based on systematic method and approach. This calls for scrutiny and inclusion of relevant factors to any research, and a very critical eye of the scientists involved to make any scientific claims. As such, criticism is an integrated part of conducting science. As scientific claims are always bound up in a level of uncertainty, Popper’s falsification offers validation of scientific claims through testing, deconstruction and reconstruction (Mercer, 2014). However, the sheer scale of the science of the surrounding climate of the whole of the Earth poses challenges in the level and amount of different variables relevant to covering climate science, giving only more room to uncertainties in the science relating to these challenges. The mismatch of this approach of scientific testing and climate science as the object under scrutiny has given critics as well as sceptics the opportunity to adopt strategies of casting doubt founded by the philosophy of science itself, and by using rhetorical skills to back up their own claims and dismiss claims of climate science (Mulkay and Gilbert, 1981 in Mercer, 2014). For the purpose of this thesis’ aim, the use of science’s own device of falsification to develop strategies to cast doubt has been employed as it links struggles of climate science in the natural science world to rhetorical skills to back climate sceptic claims in the social sciences.

## Media and mediatisation

The need to socially construct climate change in the realm of the social world and the conflicts this involves underscore how climate change is a subject where the lack of “real precedents” or previous experience of the same makes

it difficult for the public as well as politicians to properly assess (Giddens, 1999). Media is a many-sided abstraction, and for the purpose of this thesis, some points have been drawn below to exemplify relevant aspects to the role of media in this regard. These points serve mainly to sketch out a brief frame of media and its role in democracy and political engagement in a broader context.

Attention to media, however, should also be based on the nature of its presence in society and what this means to the power it has seemingly come to hold. Hjarvard (2008) and (Dahlgren, 2009) contend that media today is “ubiquitous” (Dahlgren, 2009: 3) and permeates all levels of society to an extent that the media “can no longer be treated as separate from other institutions in culture and society,” meaning that media has “reached an independence forcing other institutions to conform the logic of the media” (Translated from Danish, Hjarvard, 2008: 13-14). As such, the power of media should also be regarded in how media has been integrated into society and therefore influences structures of interaction and communication, making culture and society “mediatised” (Translated from Danish, Hjarvard, 2008: 14). Following this, the notion of mediatisation refers to the process where media plays an active role in how society and politics are shaped and reshaped (Schulz, 2004).

The above illustrates the nature and one perspective of the many abstractions relevant to gain the broader understanding from a macro-level of how media influences not just interaction but also the very structures in which interaction happens. Within this perspective, Hjarvard (2008) locates the “mediatisation” of politics to which the media is seen as having a contributing role in negotiating consent and connectivity to political issues in public (ibid: 74). Although Hjarvard’s point here relates mainly to the role of journalism, the nature of media operating as a mediating space in which political debates are structured and subjects negotiated to consent is an interesting point to this thesis. Media in this sense not only plays the role as an intermediary, but as an integrated part of society, it is an open plenary for political discussions whereby “political exercises of power” are “democratically legitimised” (Hjarvard, 2008: 53). Hjarvard further refers to Weingart (1998 in Hjarvard, 2008: 20) in linking science to public consent through media, noting also a move of a media-oriented scientific world, and not least the impact of media attention on circulation of scientific knowledge and interpretation of scientific issues in return. Additionally to the “political exercises of power,” so too must

science pass through the “obligatory passage point” (Latour, 1988 referred to in Hjarvard, 2008: 20) to enjoy public “legitimisation.” On the one hand, Hjarvard points to media’s role to deliver and prioritise the scope of the political issues in debates, and on the other, he points to the formation of public opinion through media as a public playground or battlefield for being able to politically participate in society.

To this end, as Gripsrud (2010) holds, it is exactly the context the media provides, which is important to being able to participate in democracy, because political engagement:

“...depends on people’s ability to see themselves as members of society and political citizens, and as such, people rely on the media to provide important and relevant knowledge of the world to constitute the necessary foundation for taking part in decisions regarding the future development of society. This puts effort on the media to prioritise relevant knowledge and material, by which people understand the world and themselves” (Translated from Danish, Gripsrud, 2010: 35-36).

To study media, it is necessary to work from an outset of acknowledging the ubiquitous nature of media in society on several levels all at once: as an institution mediatizing society and culture (Hjarvard, 2008) and thus affecting not just interaction but also the structures of society in which people interact. As such, media takes part in what constitutes society and herein what constitutes democracy and politically engage in society and shows certain implications in the process (Gripsrud, 2010).

As such, mediatization presents a double-edged sword, whereby media can be perceived as both a disease and the antidote for that exact disease at the same time. On the one hand, media creates the structures for a democratic space and political engagement; however, on the other, it is also the space for legitimising political ideas presented in frames, which conditions the level of understanding of these political ideas and the shape of reality.

Media matters in how it mediates issues on climate change to people, and the reality of climate change depends on how it is understood and mediated. Here, it should not be forgotten that any intent to mediate concepts or tap into processes of meaning-making relies on the receiver and not least the “more or less active participation” of the receiver at the other end (McQuail, 1983: 338).

The point made clear by Gripsrud holds that media texts and the realm of media on their own cannot be held responsible for influencing individuals as well as society as a whole (Gripsrud, 2010: 51), which is to say that the power of media is related in a broader context, in which media takes part along with a “range of social, cultural and psychological conditions,” further placing media in a broader context of the social sciences (Translated from Danish, Gripsrud, 2010: 51).

## **The promise of media effects**

Although, the power of media has been reduced to that of the “agenda-setting”-effect, Gripsrud (2010) also contends that in situations where the public and opinion-makers do not have other sources than the media in assessing a concept, the media does have some say in what people think (ibid: 66). In recognising the media power beyond that of “minimal effects”, Entman (in Callaghan and Schnell, 2005) becomes a spokesperson for amending the agenda-setting effect to a power of media that “lies in telling the public what issues to think about, as well as how to think about those issues; in turn this “directive” ultimately suggests what their policy positions should be” (ibid: 15). And with this, the promise or the premise of the effects or influence of media follows in the study of media (McQuail, 1983). Since the scope of this research is to look at framing more specifically, the level of effects either by means of media or framing effects are acknowledged more implicitly in terms of its seeming ability to either “facilitate change” or “preventing change,” McQuail, 1983: 334-335) however, it will not be applied explicitly to the research. Instead, McQuail’s theory is brought into use based on the overarching perspectives of influence it provides for interpretation.

### *Framing theory*

Framing theory builds on Goffman’s (1974) research approach in which individuals are seen as taking part in the social world by interpreting and responding to social interactions. Frames then are depicted as “the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives” (Goffman, 1974: 13). This approach makes frames the interpretive vehicle to how experience is understood at a personal level, but also eliminates framing from the view of social sciences, as Goffman also states (ibid: 13). However,

modelling on Goffman, the notion of framing and frames have led researchers and research to some confusion depending on what is meant by framing, since it seems to yield possible readings as both a use of the concept as a 'metaphor' and a more extensive concept than what appears from the mere qualitative interpretation thereof (Deacon et al., 2007).

Taking on Gitlin's (1980) later definition of frames as "...principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters," and further "that the role of frames is to certify the limits within which all competing definitions of reality will contend" (Gitlin, 1980: 6, Gitlin in Deacon et al., 2007: 161), again confusion exists in the different formulations of what refers to the same word of 'frames'. The first formulation refers to the practical construction of the text of frames, whereas the second definition refers to "how an ideological horizon governs the general orientation within which text is framed (Deacon et al., 2007: 161). Depending on which approach is adopted in the process of researching framing "as structures embedded in elite discourse" or as "cognitive structures that citizens use to make sense of politics" (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005: 5), framing has both communicative and mental implications. As such, research within framing can be undertaken from either a perspective looking at discourse or meaning.

Building on this, Entman (2004) defines framing as: "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution." (ibid: 5) From this follows: How we say something affects how we think (Entman, 1993; Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011; Fausey et al., 2010) and may ultimately influence how we respond and act accordingly as a result of that response. (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984: 343 in Entman, 1993) As such, so-called "framing effects" occur when "(often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) change of opinion" (Chong and Druckman, 2007: 104).

Framing in the process of sense-making and generating meaning in the social sciences field refers to the effects of political framing, and how the personal response is linked up to this. To understand the inner workings of framing effects, cognitive science can help to understand how framing affects how we think. Lakoff and Wehling (2012) contend the function of language to set in motion the network of neurons or *cascades* in the brain to grasp meaning and



define logic of people's understanding (ibid: 29). Because "language triggers" these cascades, framing activates the brain in a particular way that evolves around the idea that has been presented by that particular frame. By activating this particular way of thinking about the presented idea also means that attempts to not think about the issue in the presented language or attempts to negate the frame actually means the reinforcing of it. "When we negate a frame, we evoke the frame" (Lakoff, 2004: 3). In Lakoff's example, trying not to think of an elephant, once the word *elephant* has been presented, testifies to how difficult it is to not think about something, once language has lodged the something in the human brain.

Framing is the next step. Because framing "is not just language," but ideas of a worldview carried by language, attempts to negate these ideas by using the same language or frame, rather evokes or reinforce the frame instead of the wished negation of said frame (ibid: 3-4). As such, Lakoff takes a more direct stab at framing within the field of cognitive science in calling frames: "mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as good or bad outcome of our actions" (Lakoff, 2004). Similarly to the premise of media effects, the study of framing rests on a premise of effects stemming from organising or conceptualising information of an issue to direct or invoke a particular thinking about the issue in question (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Instead, Tversky and Kahneman's (1986) research showed how altering the frame of thinking about a public policy for instance could also alter people's response to that policy. As another example showed, describing crime as either a beast or a virus can lead people "to generate different solutions to a city's crime problem" (Thibodeau and Boroditsky L., 2013), and "framing the consequences of a public policy in positive or in negative terms can greatly alter its appeal" (Kahneman and Tversky, 1986: 258).

On the other hand, this view that the interpretation of frames happens at a level to fit with pre-existing interpretations and instances of personal dispositions and is organised accordingly to make sense (Nisbet, 2009 in Boykoff, 2012) is important, yet relies on additional research. To this, Chong and Druckman (2006) contend that people's values are important nonetheless, but that these values can be "linked to either side of a controversial issue through framing" (Ibid: 29). Additionally, that the context

in which a frame is put forward also has importance in reference to the effect of that particular frame (Ibid: 30).

Although frames can be a tool to link understanding of a subject to values, considerations for context must also be in focus when exploring the effects of framing on the public. Framing has thus the ability to develop and produce useful understanding of abstract issues such as climate change through the organising of information, however, it is at the expense of other information. This means that the same mean to promote understanding also means setting limits for debating the issue with regards to its “causes, consequences and responsibility for solutions” (Olausson, 2011: 295). As the literature review has shown, literature and theory on framing are unconsolidated in size and consensus, which has prompted some framing researchers to see the many approaches of researching framing as a disadvantage (Entman, 2004) and others as an advantage (D’angelo & Kuypers, 2007). In sharing the latter view, the body of theory on framing and effects adopts various theoretical perspectives based on their relevance of application to the scope of the thesis in the process of applying theory to methodology on framing.

The nature of framing as a scholarly discipline covering various fields and yielding operational implications is important to take into consideration in the process of frame analysis. The difficulty of carrying out specific measurements due to the level of subjectivity as noted above places the researcher within an analysis that is aware of this level of subjectivity in terms of analysing the results. Because of this awareness, the researcher would like to acknowledge the level of subjectivity by remaining critical to the researcher’s own perspective on the interpretation of both the research results as well as the approach of applying methodology and methods.

## **Conclusion**

Both media and framing are seen as vehicles or tools for processing social facts such as climate change, and both are seen as powerful tools to generate intended meaning: media seem to hold power in its promise of inducing so-called media effects meant to have influence on personal action through its use. However, the matter of media effects should be viewed conditionally, and more from the point of how media affects interaction through its own logic; framing is seen as a more direct way of shaping experience into the structure

and context by which abstract events such as climate change can then be understood. In both cases, the aspects of influence and affect yield interest in their seeming relation to exerting power and control to inhibit change. Although this view on media and framing reveals a more sinister usage, media and framing should also be viewed in reference to exactly the potential of advancing meaning-making and generating understanding of abstract structures and events. Both views are important to include for the reference of the thesis questions. However, it is also to make a further note that both media and framing hold the power to advance or hinder understanding, and that in any case, advancing information or understanding of an event will always happen at the expense of other information.

## Analysing the sponsors of the scepticist framing of climate change

To understand the motivation for the scepticist framing of climate change, it is useful to briefly map out the background of the large-scale influence and instigators behind it.

David E. Koch is the brother of Charles Koch. Together, they are known as the Koch Brothers, and they are the owners of the family owned business and America's second largest private company (Forbes.com, 2016), Koch Industries. Today their business is employing "over 100,000 people across more than 60 countries" (Kochind.com). From previously dealing within the oil refinery business, Koch Industries, Charles and David have been involved in politics over the years (covered extensively by Mayer *in* The New Yorker, 2010). They are also known to be sceptical towards climate change science and in opposition of policy initiatives to combat climate change.

Some of the more notable headlines in the news of recent times have been surrounding the Koch Brothers' involvement in countering political action on climate change by funding research going against existing research on climate to derail the public debates (Goldenberg *in* The Guardian, 2015); and by persuading policy makers all over the U.S. and members of Congress to sign the No Climate Tax-pledge, a project initiated by the Koch Brothers' primary

political advocacy group Americans for Prosperity (Mayer *in* The New Yorker, 2013; Goldenberg 2010; americansforprosperity.com).

The No Cl!mate Tax-pledge is a pledge that will have its signature holders “oppose any legislation relating to climate change that includes a net increase in government revenue” (noclimate-tax.com). Or as stated elsewhere on the No Cl!mate Tax-website: “These bills should be revenue neutral, holding taxpayers harmless by offsetting every dollar of revenue raised through environmental taxes and regulations with tax cuts,” meaning that signature holders of the pledge will vote against any proposals on climate change unless this also involves tax cuts. So far (13 Oct. 2016), close to 400 U.S. and state representatives, governors, court justices, delegates and senators have signed the pledge including U.S. Senators and former presidential candidates Rand Paul, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, Governor Rick Perry, and Republican Vice President Mike Pence (noclimate-tax.com/pledge-takers/).

To further delve into what measurements are taken as well the mindset that controls the Koch agenda to counter climate action, the meeting of their network “(...) to review strategies for combating the multitude of public policies that threaten to destroy America (...)” (Koch Industries Invite 2010) held in Palm Springs in January 2011 and the subsequent invitation sent out by Charles Koch prove good examples in this case.

In the invitation it reads under the agenda on Energy and Climate: “What drives the regulatory assault on energy? What are the economic and political consequences of this? How discredited is the climate change argument? What effect does it have on the electorate, especially in key states?” And further below, under the headline of *Understanding the Persistent Threats We Face*, it reads: “(...) push for major new climate and energy regulations,” before concluding that “there is no lack of significant threats for us to understand and address” (Koch Industries Invite 2010).

Analysing the framing of climate change shows how climate scepticism is discursively constructed in the retrieved data from sources with strong ties to the Koch Brothers, and befitting that of the proposed “conservative countermove” McCright and Dunlap (2000). Comparing the identified frames indicates two sides of one strategy, in which climate change is revealed to be caused by natural circumstances beyond the human control.

Climate change scepticism here is not scepticism of science or climate change, yet this speaks from within climate change scepticism. Rather, this represents conservative scepticism of the hitherto proposed policymaking on climate change by suggesting the embrace of climate change as the proper response. Following this, this frame performs not the basic function of defining effects or conditions of climate change as problematic, but that policymakers are the ones causing or representing the problematic conditions in debates on climate change. In line with the Koch Industries Invite from 2010 mentioned earlier, which opted “for strategies for combating the multitude of public policies that threaten to destroy America,” the framing of climate change targeted at policymakers indicates a direct link to one such strategy. As such, it indicates a strategy that aims not to “facilitate change” through policy making responding to climate change, but rather to prevent such change by replacing an understanding of climate change as a risk with climate change and the effects of climate change as an opportunity. Instead of telling a story of the threat climate change, the strategy seems to adopt a positive narrative of climate change that is ideologically shaped “to inhibit change,” (McQuail, 1983: 334) or in this case, to inhibit change that will lead to unwanted policymaking on climate change.

Our ability to do something about climate change “depends on the stories we tell” (Pettenger et al., 2007: xiii-xv), and how we believe the world is connected – especially when it comes to the abstract nature of climate change, to which our ability to construct it as relative to the social world becomes all-important. For people to do something about climate change means to treat it as a real issue and as a real risk. Framing climate change is important to understanding the risks as well as structure the experience of human responsibility and involvement. The above tells a story in which climate change does not pose a risk in the sense of danger to humanity; rather, it tells a story of a positive development in which climate change is a driving force of human evolvment and social progress. Especially seeing how the “precedents” to climate change in this story rests on the natural flow of nature’s will. The lack of “real precedents” in Giddens’ view has been replaced with a competing alternative interpretation of what these “real precedents” might look like. Reiterating Mercer’s findings, climate science rests on non-linearity and complexity by which climate change science can easily be refuted going by classical adherence to the scientific method, to which the framing of

climate science as unscientific in the Koch newsletter attests a viable way of employing framing to cast doubt.

## Methods and methodology

Because the aim of the thesis is to focus on scepticism and political framing of climate change, the case study has been employed as the main research method because it allows for an investigation of the nature of framing climate change seen as a “contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context” (Yin, 2014: 16). Knowing that it is also the case that the complex set of many variables in any case study offers a variety of ways to explore the phenomenon, (depending on the levels of factors and relevant circumstances involved in the analysis of the phenomenon), the empirical inquiry of the case study is seen as the most applicable method in this regard. (Yin, 2014) However, despite the broad appeal of the case study method to cover more variables of interest at the same time, the aim is to further academic discussion on the subject of climate scepticism by contributing the existing body of knowledge rather than to expect an exhaustive examination of the phenomenon under scrutiny. At any rate, the case study as a research method involves both strengths and limitations (Yin, 2014) to which the researcher will remain aware throughout the process of undertaking the research and with regards to the evaluation of the later results.

To briefly line up the evaluatory instruments within philosophy of science this research holds, critical realism offers a middle ground between positivism and social constructivism by which truth remains out of the human grasp, but where transfactualism offers a way to infer probable explanations about that which is being observed. (Bhaskar in Sayer, 2010; Jackson, 2011) Following this view, researchers can make claims by explaining the different functions of how something works, and therein, that something exists.

## **Employing a mixed-methodology approach on frame analysis**

In exploring the scepticist framing of climate change, the research employs a mixed-methodology approach to frame analysis. This research will include a qualitative approach in an effort to examine the thematic units in the data.

Framing theory can help to understand why and how frames work at a general level. However, the unsettled mix of macro-micro-levels or qualitative and quantitative approaches within framing theory can distort the more practical groundwork for actually doing frame analysis. From this perspective frame analysis can be undertaken from different but equally valid positions, depending on what results researchers want their study to reveal. Since the attempt is to give an account of both the message and the underlying reasons for producing certain messages, Shoemaker and Reese (2014: 7), building on Gans (1979, in Shoemaker and Reese, 2014) and Gitlin (1980, in Shoemaker and Reese, 2014) provide a hierarchical model, by which the research takes into account the nature of influence through framing on media content by virtue of supporting special interests (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014: 8). I have found this approach of locating agency to be useful for the interpretive background of the frame analysis as well as the results of the frame analysis, since framework and framing theory tend to concentrate merely on content and less on the agents providing these frames as structures for thinking and talking about views of the world. Following this, a two-step methodological approach of locating themes of frames as well as their context has been employed.

In line with Yin (2014), Deacon et al. (2007) has labelled this approach the two-step methodological movement within framing analysis. The two-step methodological movement applies specific attention to both the organisation of the text and the subsequent move to how a frame “develops a definite angle or preferred line of interpretation”; a move they consider to be a “shift up from micro-levels of meaning in certain textual instances to the ways these draw on and connect with macro-levels of ideology and power” (Deacon et al., 2007: 162). Furthermore, the aim is also to “reveal ‘the imprint of power’ by registering ‘the identity of actors or interests that compete to dominate the text’” (Entman 1993, in Deacon et al., 2007: 162). As such, the case study plans to be descriptive in its approach to better understand the realisation of the scepticist framing of climate change as a social phenomenon; as well as to be exploratory in examining the relationship between the scepticist discursive

practices and the political environment for climate change in the U.S. (Yin, 2014). By examining separate instances of publications or data units involving and offering points on climate change, the aim is to explore the nature of their focus as encompassing the same political agenda, based on the mode of framing and frame of origin. The aim is further to uncover and set the stage for the following discussion on implications for doing democracy in society today.

Following the unsettled methodological aspects of doing frame analysis (Deacon et al. 2007), the research attempts to build on existing strategies and overall guidelines in developing its own methodological apparatus for the exploring the case study. With the risk of undertaking “ad hoc”-practices in frame analysis (Reese, 2010: 20), however, from the onset that most of the existing research has been done with regards to news framing where considerations to time-frame plays an important part (Lindström and Marais, 2012), and partly because the role of the journalist as intermediary (Boykoff, 2013) is of little relevance to the nature of the study. Instead the framing of climate change in this instance should be examined as evidence of a pattern rooted outside the news media, and where the message of the framing is the key to uncover this pattern, rather than the product of journalistic practices.

Following this, the aim is first to identify the interpretive “message” behind the framing, and second, to align it with the structure of the broader pattern, (as that most similar to traits of the campaign in media as proposed by McQuail (1983), but here seen as a much more discreet way of doing political campaigning), the analysis and subsequent results should prove to hold valuable insights.

Next, having established the methodological framework for approaching frames on climate change, I will present the case as well as the units of data for analysis in the next section. As well as examining the different parts of the located frames, the findings will be subject to analysis in reference to the theory and in terms of the political power structures, of which these are considered to be representative.



## Conducting frame analysis

Frame analysis within a qualitative perspective deals with discourse theory in how it involves identification of the materiality of the text, what constitutes the frame in words by also leaving out others. Nisbet (D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010) distinguishes the qualitative aspect from the quantitative in frame analysis by identifying frame devices and frames as two separate concepts. Frame devices in this sense rely on the discourse or rhetoric constituting the frame adding an "underlying interpretative meaning" (Nisbet in D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 49).

To accommodate the need for examining the broader structure revealed through the examination of framing, the research has employed Nisbet's (2010) schematics for carrying out frame analysis. Since this approach takes on frames in a more thematic-oriented categorisation where frames are located and identified according to their broader appeal by virtue of political importance (Nisbet in D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 52), the approach has been employed as the aim of this research is also to reveal the political imprint apparent in the located frames.

However, while Nisbet's typology is helpful in mapping out different latent meanings within framing, it lacks the ability to address the functions of each framing. Especially seeing how framing for this research already examines climate scepticism from within the position of advocating the uncertainty of climate science. More importantly, although categories such as *Social progress* by how it "defines science-related issue as improving quality of life, or solution to problems", and *Economic development/competitiveness* by how it defines science-related issue as economic investment, market benefits or risks; local, national, or global competitiveness, are of relevance, these categories do not relate to climate scepticism. Instead they examine framing of science-related issues (such as climate change) from a position of necessary means to combating climate change - be that policy-making or the development of new technology as causing this social progress or economic development (exemplified in Fletcher's study, 2009). This makes it difficult to apply these categories to this research examination of climate scepticism, as the identified frames on climate change related to economic development and social progress in this instance do not rest on the means to combat climate change but on the premise of climate change itself. I will further discuss this in reference to its application in the analysis. Therefore, Nisbet's typology will

only be applied by its original use for identification of frames relating to *scientific/technical uncertainty*.

For the purpose of the scope of the research, Entman's (2004) approach of building a so-called cascade model, as it involves basic functions of what he terms the "substantive frame" as opposed to the aforementioned "procedural frame", has been adopted. This is because, the substantive frame performs "basic functions in covering" issues: "defining effects or conditions as problematic; identifying causes; conveying a moral judgement; endorsing remedies or improvements" (ibid: 5). (Although for the analysis, it is only the use of the "basic functions" in the first step of this model, which will prove useful. The full cascade model is designed to understand a cascading flow of influence on several levels, the administration, other elites, news organisations and on several sites of different media, which is far too extensive for the scope of this thesis). However, this model enables the research the ability to analyse frames based on the different elements and according to their intended effects, although these effects will only be discussed theoretically.

However, as has been evidences in previous theory and attempts to narrow down the issue of framing to a tangible research model, this has proved a complex case, as the theory on framing is yet fully unconsolidated and forcing what (Reese, 2010: 20) called the 'ad-hoc' analysis. Aware of this, the attempt has been to build a workable theoretical framework based on and located in existing framing theory and guidelines for undertaking research and analysis on the subject. Where possible, motives and reasons for choices will be recognised and indicated for clarification and transparency of process. Additional considerations regarding the implications this involves will be further taken up in the section evaluating the methodology and methods undertaken in the process of the case study.

## Locating the frames

The units of data in this research have been gathered based on their mode of publication in public media and their relationship with each other through the relation to the Koch Brothers. In this section, the three examples of political framing on climate change as found in media sources related to the Koch Brothers are as such: an excerpt taken from an interview with one of the

brothers, an article from a Koch Industries newsletter, and printed school material in the shape of an Educator Guide found on the official website of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History.

First, the David Koch statement in *New York Magazine* along with the framing of climate change found in the Koch Industries January 2010 newsletter as well as the school material from the Human Origins exhibition at the NMNH in Washington, DC make for relevant examples in exploring representative material on their views on climate change. However, because of the location of the exhibition is in the United States, and the location of the researcher in Denmark, as mentioned, print material from the Hall of Human Origins has been retrieved instead. The print material from the exhibition consists of a so-called “Educator Guide” for “Grade 5-12”. As such, the *Educator Guide* is meant to target 10-17 year olds.

In order to gather all frames relevant to climate change in the collected print material, only references pertaining to that of climate have been included. The research is aware of the limitations this brings about by leaving out other material and will be discussed further at a later point. However, as the scope of the thesis is to look at frames directly targeting modes by which to frame the climate, a full investigation of the printed material from the exhibition has been deemed too extensive for this study and in that also redundant. It should here be noted that the full *Educator Guide* totals 40 pages.

Based on Nisbet’s generalisable typology of frames defining “latent meanings of each interpretation” (D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 52), the following framing of climate change taken from the Koch Industries January 2010 newsletter to their employees has been identified for examination of the frame of science uncertainty below in Table 1: (All relevant complete publications have been attached as appendices to the thesis to maintain transparency of the research).

## Analysing the frames

Under the title *Blowing Smoke*, the newsletter argues among other things that climate change policies are based on a “shaky understanding of the science”, and that “fluctuations in the earth’s climate predate humanity,” before

concluding “Since we can’t control Mother Nature, let’s figure out how to get along with her changes.” (Koch Discovery Newsletter, January 2010)

Table 1.

Koch Industries January 2010 newsletter:	Frame
<p>"Interestingly enough, all of these claims have been disproven or grudgingly retracted."</p> <p>"So why would a reasonable society rush to implement far-reaching (and costly) climate change policies based on such shaky understanding of the science?"</p> <p>"It's clear from the data that the science on greenhouse gases is not really settled"</p> <p>"All of this should be a warning flag for anyone proposing actions to respond to climate change on the mistaken assumption that "the science is settled."</p> <p>"The earth's climate is prone to sharp changes over fairly short periods of time. Plans that focus simply on stopping climate change are unlikely to succeed; fluctuations in the earth's climate predate humanity."</p> <p>"In other words, since we can't control Mother Nature, let's figure out how to get along with her changes."</p>	<p>Scientific/technical uncertainty: Defines science-related (climate change) issue as a matter of expert understanding; what is known versus unknown; either invokes or undermines expert consensus, calls on the authority of "sound science," falsifiability, or peer-review.</p>

The identification of frames in Table 1 shows how the frame of scientific uncertainty occurs on several occasions in the Koch Brothers’ newsletter. Several times throughout the newsletter, climate science is referred to as uncertain and therefore that the measurements in terms of policymaking to combat climate change will be “unlikely to succeed” (ibid: 10). This frame indicates and attests to a continued scepticism and effort to undermine expert consensus behind climate change by applying strategies to discredit climate science through uncertainty and alternative narratives as the means to combat policymaking (Oreskes and Conway, 2010; McCright and Dunlap, 2000 referred to in Painter and Ashe, 2012; Cass, 2007: 28-29). The example further shows how climate science is naturally vulnerable based on the complexities behind the science and the natural scepticism when doing science in terms of falsifiability, since this provides a valid base for adopting critique to accommodate the sceptic argument (Mercer, 2014).

Climate change in this instance is not perceived to be a risk, rather it perfectly ties in with the Koch perception of the many benefits that global warming will bring about, which was expressed in newsmagazine *New York* (2010): “The Earth will be able to support enormously more people because a far greater land area will be available to produce food” (New York, 2010).

Mapping out the initiatives as well as political efforts of the Koch Brothers gives way to a sincerely thought-out agenda on their own part to counter all political initiative and climate science to combat climate action. Through influencing a variety of political systems and available channels, the aim has been to target people within the political spheres and people with a relative connection to the Koch Industries.

With regards to the framework, Nisbet’s typology proves useful in providing a framework for categorising and distinguishing the underlying meaning for frames on climate change indicating scepticism based on invoking scientific uncertainty. However, the typology in practice also revealed points of considerations in terms of how frames on for example *social progress* and *economic development/competitiveness* are only identifiable in terms of looking at the remedies for taking action on climate change causing implications for a full investigation of the frames for this research, as will be explored in more detail in the next section.

For quotes retrieved in both New York Magazine and in the *Educator Guide*, a slightly different approach than Nisbet’s typology applies, as these relate more to a framing of the effects of climate change itself (also discussed in the *Theoretical framework*), and the effects on climate change on human evolution or development. However, altering Nisbet’s premise for discussing the *social progress* frame and the *economic development/ competitiveness* frame to relate directly to climate change itself, the coding of these frames would appear as in Table 2 and Table 3 below: (Keeping in mind, though, that the premise for discussing these frames would not be comparable to other frames identified within this framework, unless this same alteration for categorising frames is further developed and made a note of.)

Table 2.

New York Magazine: (Interview with David Koch on climate change)	Frame
<p>"The Earth will be able to support enormously more people because a far greater land area will be available to produce food"</p>	<p>Social progress: Defines science-related (climate change) issue as improving quality of life, or solution to problems. Alternative interpretation as harmony with nature instead of mastery, "sustainability"</p> <p>Economic development/competitiveness: Defines science-related (climate change) issue as economic investment, market benefits or risks; local, national, or global competitiveness.</p>

Table 3.

National History Museum of Natural History; Hall of Human Origins, Educator Guide	Frame
<p>"Humans evolved during a time of dramatic environmental change.</p> <p>Earth's climate has always fluctuated between warm and cool, moist and dry. But during the last 6 million years (the period in which humans evolved), these fluctuations became more extreme. The traits that early humans evolved helped them survive. Throughout the exhibit students will encounter examples of how early humans responded to the challenges presented by changing climates—and how this led to the evolution of unique human traits."</p> <p>"Fossils show how early humans made a gradual transition from walking on four legs to walking on two legs. Walking upright enabled early humans to move around in a variety of environments and to cope with changing climates."</p> <p>"...a series of brain endocasts (replicas of the insides of braincases) illustrates that brains increased in size as early humans faced new environmental challenges and as their bodies got bigger."</p> <p>"Students should also think about how the trait helped early humans adapt to different environments and how it expanded their capabilities."</p>	<p>Social progress: (Here seen as human development) Defines science-related (climate change) issue as improving quality of life, or solution to problems. Alternative interpretation as harmony with nature instead of mastery, "sustainability"</p>

As the research is interested in how frames work or the functions of these frames or the framing process, Entman's approach of examining the functions and objects of framing has been adopted. (2004: 24) In this next step of analysis, the mapping out of the Koch Brothers' apparent climate scepticism have been coded according to Entman's framework in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

Function of Frame	Issues	Events	Political Actors (Individuals, Groups, Nations)
Defining problematic effects/conditions	Need to understand the benefits of climate change rather than the negative effects	Changes in the environment/warming of the Earth	N/A ("Mother Earth")
Identifying cause/agent	The causes behind climate change are natural fluctuations	Climate change	Fluctuations predating humankind
Endorsing remedy	Use the changed climate as a resource (ex. Produce more food, become more robust people)	Concede that these changes are naturally occurring	Find a way to adapt: "Since we can't control Mother Nature, let's figure out how to get along with her changes."
Conveying moral judgment	Climate change can prove positive to humankind if we understand how to make it beneficial	Natural causes, humans are innocent	Humans before us have developed traits to make themselves stronger and to overcome the challenges brought about by climate change

The framing of climate change in Table 4 further reveals how the function and objects aim to disarm attempts to resist or combat climate change. In this perspective, for the framing of climate change, the following information is provided: no direct "actor" (other than "Mother Earth" herself) has been involved in terms of *defining problematic effects/conditions* at this level of specifying the event cause. From this follows that climate change as such is caused by naturally occurring fluctuations predating humanity over which we have no control. As climate change has happened throughout the history of mankind, this frames opt for an understanding and an endorsed remedy of how climate change can be seen as beneficial both in terms of how a warmer Earth will be able to provide for more people, but also that it is exactly this change of environments and extreme weather conditions, which has caused humans to evolve and develop traits for survival.

Additionally, the research reveals another prominent frame of scientific uncertainty as identified in Table 1, which more directly taps into the policymaking level of the "conservative countermove."

Table 5.

Function of Frame	Issues “War” on policymakers through war on climate science	Event Policymaking	Political Actors (Individuals, Groups, Nations)) Policymakers
Defining problematic effects/conditions	Need to change the views on the effects of climate change, because it causes economic losses in the end.	Policymaking on climate change causing economic loss: “Cap-and-trade is essentially a stealth tax on energy. As such, it inevitably leads to higher energy costs and job losses.”	Policymakers
Identifying cause/agent	Policymaking and regulations introduced as a means to combat climate change.	Shaky understanding of science: “So why would a reasonable society rush to implement far-reaching (and costly) climate change policies based on such shaky understanding of the science?”	Policymakers punish “bad industries”: “Policymakers have a history of using new revenue streams to promote pet projects and punish what they consider to be “bad” industries.
Endorsing remedy	Warn against the unsettled science on climate change: “(…)A warning flag for anyone proposing actions to respond to climate change on the mistaken assumption that “the science is settled.” “It’s clear from the data that the science on greenhouse gases is not really settled”	Resistance against science and policymaking.	Fight to stop attempts battling climate change: “Plans that focus simply on stopping climate change are unlikely to succeed(…)”
Conveying moral judgment	Find a way to adapt, since we cannot control the inevitable anyway, which by the way is a naturally occurring thing.	Climate changes are natural fluctuations of the Earth.	Stop trying to fight climate change by introducing regulations as these are futile.

Besides framing climate science as unscientific, by conveying the same moral judgement of the naturality of climate change, this frame is targeting policymakers. Although climate change is not dismissed as unproblematic, this frame holds the science and the policymakers wanting to act on science



as more problematic than climate change itself. To reframe the rhetoric of the conveyed moral judgment in both frames, the proper response to climate change is to “make lemonade out of the lemons” handed down by the life of an ever-changing climate.

## **State of things**

Although the sample of retrieved material for analysis has been very small in this research, as is not often the case for framing analysis, the selected data units have provided for a more in-depth analysis of the more specific functions and objects of the identified frames of climate change as a symptom of one realisation of climate scepticism in the U.S., albeit a prevalent one. Before moving on to looking at the so-called “conservative countermove” in attempting to understand these frames in the broader reference of climate change in U.S. politics, I would like to tie these frames to a more concrete background case of the Koch Brothers. This is important because the Koch Brothers take part in the conservative countermove on the one hand, and on the other, they are also the sponsors and the promoters of one such scepticist framing that is located and retrieved from the *Educator Guide* used for this research. In this way, I am able to reveal ‘the imprint of power’ by linking this particular scepticist climate change framing first to the “identity of actors competing to dominate the text” (Entman 1993, in Deacon et al., 2007: 162), and second, through them reveal the stakes raised in the broader overarching climate change debates in the media and more generally in U.S. politics.

## **Facilitating and hindering political engagement – an analytical discussion**

This section discusses democracy and political engagement from both a micro-level and a macro-level perspective. The aim is first to continue a discussion on the implications of framing in the political debates, and second, to locate this discussion in a broader context of modern democracy and media’s role in modern democracy. The research has been based primarily on framing from the point of influence on media content, and only in reference to the context of framing effects. As such, the further discussion for this

research will aim to contextualise and deepen the analysis and be theoretically based.

Although the data indicates a strong mobilisation of climate scepticism, the debates on climate politics has only been undertaken from one side in this research, and therefore it does not give a full picture of how different climate change debates are shaped and realised in U.S. politics. As such, it is only one interpretation of the results at hand. Different approaches to theory and frame analysis would be required to provide a broader understanding of the climate scepticism as well as climate debates within U.S. politics today.

The complementary frames analysed in the previous section reveal a pattern of climate change scepticism that follows a critical stance that is naturally found within the scientific method to position its argument in a befitting context. Building on framing theory presented in the *Theoretical outline*, and from the point of departure within the frames analysed, climate change in this instance has been limited to only discussing it in terms of either natural developments or harmful policies. By leaving out references to competing definitions of climate change as a result of human activity, subsequent climate change discussion is captured in a frame allowing for this one reading of the reality of the existence of climate change as a social issue: As an issue caused by natural events in the course of time. following this logic, (and since how we say something affects how we think and influence our subsequent response), framing theory further implies that attempts to mould an oppositional reality out of this scepticist framing of climate change will be equally limited to a response that pertains to the existing narrative of the scepticist framing, rather than alternative readings on climate change and human involvement. Because, when we attempt to not think of something in a particular way that has already been presented to us, then we do exactly that. When we attempt to not think of it as that, we reinforce it. We do not negate frames by attempting not to think of them, instead we evoke them. The same way we think of an elephant when we attempt not to do so (Lakoff, 2004). This is not to say that it removes existing knowledge on climate change and the reality of it in those who have studied it. However, remember also how exactly climate change is an issue where “public knowledge is limited” (Lewis and Boyce, 2001: 13). Much how Boykoff (2012) has argued for a ‘balance of bias’ in journalistic tradition, framing in this regard is an attempt to create a balance between opposing information. In this regard, scepticist framing here seems to have balanced out alternative readings of climate change

through the means of framing. Notice also how the statement of “naturally occurring fluctuations” as opposed to “not human-made,” recognises a version of reality as opposed to statements negating the opposing views. By opting for “naturally occurring fluctuations” rather than “not human-made,” and following framing theory, we would still have considered climate change in terms of being “human-made” even with the use of negation, (much the same way as people remember Nixon as a “crook” despite his claims not to be so (Lakoff, 2017). Furthermore, if framing has the ability to alter people’s perception of climate change or at least influence it, then it would follow that framing of climate change in this instance has the ability to alter how people think a potential public policy should look like in terms of responding to climate change also.

Although framing in this instance is seen from a very limiting perspective in terms of discussing climate change, it should again be reiterated how framing is perhaps a necessary tool to create analogies on something as complex as understanding climate change to make it more tangible.

On its own, the latter further presents an additional point for discussion regarding potential responses to any framed subject of complex matter such as climate change. Because, if framing can link our responses to complex issues, it does so by way of bridging understanding based on simpler terms through framing. However, it follows that the responses produced relate to the simplicity of the matter rather than the complexity of it. Subsequent decisions based on these responses may ultimately prove sufficient to the level of problem or issue in the framing; however, they are insufficient when it comes to the more complex matters of a problem. Indeed, when scepticist framing then intentionally removes the level of human activity, it further limits any available spaces for even attempting to understand the complexities of climate change – as though these were not difficult enough to grasp in the first place. Scepticist framing in this view becomes the means setting the limits for discussing “causes, consequences and responsibilities for solution,” as Olausson (2011) has it.

Additionally, framing theory acknowledges the process of meaning-making to be much more complex than what can be inferred from studies concentrating on the agenda-setting of media. Entman (1989) recognises a more interdependence of audiences approach, in which media influence is more sensitive to people’s “selectivity and inattention” in the processing of new

information (ibid: 78). In this view, the effect on people's perception from media stems from the salience of the information. This view puts effort on people's ability to "read" media and information from the media. Yet, although selectivity and inattention are important aspects, Entman further recognises how these cannot stand on their own to explain this process (ibid: 84-85). Additionally, positions contending "equal footing" with regard to "communicative competences", which this view also seems to hold, is "problematic" (Dahlgren, 2009: 8). Several additional internal and external factors and levels of consideration, as this research indicates, require attention. For instance, how the combination of framing on climate change in this instance to some extent bypasses salience of information through oversimplifying reality (Callaghan and Schnell: 186), which infers the omission of other salient information and through its mode of targeting audiences through the media of the museum (Entman, 1989: 84-85; Kellstedt in Callaghan and Schnell, 177-178). Echoing Dahlgren's fear for the influence of market forces on shaping the character of the media as well as the information proposed through those media and thus on the informed public sphere (ibid: 34), the character of democracy has taken on the position of help to "various power holders and special interest groups to pursue their goals (...)" (ibid: 49).

When it comes to the existence of climate change more broadly, the notion of risk in modernity and how we perceive it in our daily lives is interesting. Beck (1992) sees human activity itself as the main cause for the risks now posed to human life. These risks and the level of their effect on human life can be assessed in advance, which makes it possible for the risk society to plan ahead concerning whatever human activity might cause these risks. (Giddens, 1999) However, the lack of "real precedents" makes the consequences of climate change difficult to assess, and the lack of trust inhabitants in the risk society feels towards the authority of science as a traditional institution makes up an equally hard case solve. (Giddens, 1994: 4) Framing climate change as natural takes advantage of this "lack of real precedents," indicating the possible advancement of climate scepticism, as well as does removing human activity. As such, where scepticist framing of climate change can be seen as a mediating certain understandings of society, these views should also be recognised as evidence of more structurally anchored positions not just by those in power, but in a society that allows for it or does not have the necessary means to do otherwise.

Returning to the mode of scepticism analysed in Table 3. and Table 4, these frames do not fully disclose the conflict at the policymaking level to which climate scepticism, as the *Literature review* revealed, owes some of its biggest disputes. This is more to say, that where framing reveals intentions and the deeper-lying ideologies of a conservative countermove, they are the result of the conflict at the policy-making level. In reference to this, they can be seen as a measurable result of the course these policy-making conflicts have taken. That the opposing front to climate change policy in this conflict does not shy away from involving a public institution and therein the public more generally to reach their goal of combating climate change policy rather than climate change itself.

The case study indicates that not only does the public perception of climate change mirror the politicised environment for debate on the issue, the public is heavily drawn in more or less knowingly as playing a part in forming the subsequent environment for debating climate change. As such, these debates are not just primarily discussed at the political level before making its way to the public, the public is drawn in in the process of debating to influence the on-going debates at the political level.

This influence of partisan fronts is taken up more broadly in *Media and Political Engagement* (2009), where Peter Dahlgren holds how democratic principles have come under pressure from the increasing power of the private corporate sector, where even the organised politics have come to feel the consequences of an altered landscape for doing democracy. (On a point of reference, Dahlgren locates his views for the most part in the context of Western democracy, with particular interest also to the United States, which has also been adopted for this discussion and research more broadly.)

Central to Dahlgren's point is how democracy is changing in the late modern world. It is in transition. There are both positive and negative aspects of this, as well as complex structures to be discussed in the wake of a changing democracy. One important aspect is the increasing invasion of global capitalist market now holding stalemate the governments of nation-states. This is seen for instance in how economic rationality behind decision-making has come to "permeate many sectors of society," constricting other arguments not based on an economic incentive, discouraging participation by the people. (ibid: 7) Also central to Dahlgren's point is the advent of media in the middle of all of this. In line with Hjarvard and Grisprud, media's role is ubiquitous in and to

all sectors of society and holds new opportunities for democratic participation but the conglomerate structures within media, as well as media's development based on market logics and as part of and driving global capitalisation, call for critical assessment at all times. As time passes by, and the traditional ways of politically engagement are in evolution and under pressure from forces "beyond democratic accountability," (ibid: 6) Dahlgren proposes a democratisation of democracy, or more practically speaking, taking a step away from for instance the traditional mode of casting one's ballot to alternative ways to politically engage in democracy, in which less formal civic practices within non-political spheres may develop and eventually become formal politics. Dahlgren concedes that this view stems from normative motivation in how certain features are deemed mandatory in presence in order for political participation to take place.

Following the analysis of frames on climate change and the aspects of influence on media content, the research points to two overarching trends for further discussion with regard to doing democracy in line with Dahlgren's views. On the micro-level, the results indicate first how the political environment surrounding climate change in the U.S. has moved beyond the science governing the climate, (with climate sceptics founding their strongest arguments based within the realm of scientific practice). Second, and in the broader context of the macro-level, the results indicate how corporate interests and market logics taking on democratic practices through realisation of their political interests and advancing their goals based on principles of information to the public sphere. It stands to reason then that democracy suffers at the hands of its own principles of "promoting the idea of a public sphere, which builds on the universalism idea of something common, shared, to which all citizens are entitled (...)" (Dahlgren, 2009: 34) The drivers behind framing on climate change based on scepticism are citizens, and as citizens, they are entitled on equal footing with other citizens, as well as being part of and driving corporate interests.

Both Giddens (1998) and Mouffe (2013) address the difficulties of the opposition between liberal forces and democracy. In an attempt to reconcile the two, Giddens proposed a "third way" where wealth creation, growth and social justice and the state could take part side by side. (1998) Lodged in this thought, Mouffe sees a reformed democracy as the solution to reconciliation and democratic difficulties through her agonistic approach. "We" and "they" are in the agonistic perspective equally relevant to forming a workable and

pluralistic democracy, where the goal is the process of doing democracy rather than attempting to form consensus among all parties. Instead of seeing each other as enemies and attempting to eliminate diversities, the aim is to get opponents to fight for their position by also recognising other positions as well, and in the process reveal the availability of alternatives. (Mouffe, 2013: 77) For the time being, Mouffe sees an inability on the part of the left-wing to form a collective “we”, leaving a void for the right-wing to do just that and furthermore, to mobilise “passions”, and what Mouffe sees as the all-important “driving force in the political field.” (Mouffe, 2013: 12, 27, 30) Following Dahlgren, Giddens and Mouffe argue for this pluralistic and encompassing form of a workable democracy for adversaries in politics, the question of willingness from all parties and in the public sphere needs also to be addressed. Additionally, from another point raised by the research in its analysis of framing, there is further a question of differences of worldviews and languages spoken by either party, which holds the key to the realisation of politically engagement. In contending that fans of two different football clubs at the same match do not experience the same match (Goffman referred to in D’Angelo and Kuypers, 2010), framing, too, seems to reveal how oppositions do not experience the same world even though they may speak on the same issue.

Overall, in discussing implications for doing democracy, the role of media in offering a space for politically engagement is twofold and offers opportunities as well as limitations. In line with how Mercer shows how the merits of the scientific method have been used by conservatives to stir controversy, so has framing followed this same strategy by virtue of its ability to organise experience and understanding. Yet, both media and framing are seen as vital and necessary for doing democracy in their mode of providing structures for political engagement.

Besides yielding the power of a sort of ‘democratic seal of approval’ through attention in the public arena, media provides common grounds of experience for talking about politics and to ‘do’ democracy. At the same time, barriers and hindrances for political participation are found within the very structures of both media logic and the use of media as a means to a political end. (And even with the presence of media as a necessary tool to form and base democratic citizenship, because they are the bearers of political communication beyond face-to-face settings, they are not a guarantee for shaping the democratic character of society. (Dahlgren, 2009: 2)) With

reference to political framing of climate change in U.S. politics with special attention to the attributes of climate change denial (and market logic) paint a much broader perspective, in which democracy and democratic practices to a large extent are at the mercy of political interests on many sides governing U.S. democracy.

## Conclusion

This thesis has looked at the aspect of framing of climate change in media and public discourse in the U.S. from a climate sceptic perspective. To narrow down the scope of the thesis, the research has focused on scepticist frames on climate change. The research has further examined the findings from the data analysis of the frames as evidence, revealing the deeper motivations behind this framing by also including relevant background material for the further context of analysis from the data results. Several different theoretical frameworks within the fields of political science, social sciences and humanities have been employed in the undertaking of the research ranging from political communication to frame and media analysis. By employing such a broad spectrum of fields, the aim has been to gain an in-depth understanding not just of the data in question, but the data seen as a phenomenon happening in the social world. Methods and methodology yielded both opportunities and limitations to the study of framing. This was in part due to the many different approaches and possible methods available for undertaking frame analysis.

The research has yielded evidence of a framing of climate change in the U.S. media and public discourses indicating a politically motivated framing of climate change. Following this, of the more prominent frames, climate change has been framed as scientifically uncertain, an economic or social progress/competitiveness opportunity, “a hoax”, or naturally occurring fluctuations predating humanity. In this research, the frames on climate change were based on economic or social progress/competitiveness opportunity as well as naturally occurring fluctuations predating humanity. Of the most important finding was how the framing of climate change aimed to combat the idea of the anthropogenic or man-made climate change.



In line with previous research on the subject of climate scepticism, the framing of climate change found in this research indicates a political environment where climate change is not just seen as the work of a left-wing agenda, but also a heated issue marking up the opposition between conservatives and democrats. That the mere issue of climate change has become so delicate that conservatives take additional and extreme measurements for combating any policy-making with regards to climate change. More broadly, it indicates a political environment of discursive practises in the U.S., in which democratic principles (here referring to Dahlgren's depiction of the term) can be cast aside for the advancement of one political agenda, rendering political deliberation between adversaries irreconcilable.

In a broader perspective, framing as communications tool is useful for improving understanding of complex subjects, however, at the expense of other potentially equally relevant information. More importantly, framing is a process of communication whereby the use of analogies are constitutional in framing the subject matter of the frame to enhance understanding, and in political framing, a particular understanding of the subject matter. While analogies are helpful in this process of deciding what is what in complex political subjects by simplifying things, this process of simplicity has the potential to distort the complexities of exactly these political subjects. And even though making decisions based on simple analogies may come in handy, it may ultimately fall short exactly because these decisions are made based on grounds that were made simple by framing leaving out all the complexities that do not go away just because the framing process has managed to do so. Paradoxically, what is deemed a useful tool to improve understanding to begin with may ultimately undermine this same understanding on other levels exactly because other relevant information is left out. However, framing is an integrated part of communicating. When we communicate, we frame our perception of how the world is connected. As such, we cannot not frame. Therefore, framing will always be a trade-off between simple and clear communication and truth value at any rate.

In the context of climate change as made apparent due to the natural sciences, indeed, climate change arose based on the merits of the approaches and the field of studies of the natural sciences. However, the numbers and statistics are of no relevance to the public unless made relevant through modes of application that makes climate change a real issue in the social world. Through the means of simpler communication.

Lastly, the implications framing of climate change and media point to how similarly to moving away from doing democracy in the traditional ways, alternative democracy is equally at stake when it comes to yielding structures that offer both opportunities as well as limitations. Where framing is a necessary political tool to express ideas of how the world works and worldviews in the realisation of politics, framing can also hinder political participation in its mode of oversimplifying complexities and omitting information. The framing of climate change reveals the imprints of power through its presentation of what an adequate political response is to a particular framing of climate change, and in that, limits understanding of consequences and possible alternatives. Framing in this research indicates the inclusion of new grounds for battling scepticism in the public, as well as the drawing in of the public in the political agenda of battling policymaking on climate change not in favour of those who do not believe in anthropogenic climate change. Through its impact, media promises power through its mere ubiquitous presence. Similarly to framing, media has the possibility to direct attention and understanding simply through its ability to cast focus. It is important to remember that media itself is founded on and is therefore an active player in reproducing the market system. As well as there is the power of media, there is the power over media. At the hands of those in power, media by its mode of operation should always be the subject of critical assessment.

In concluding this thesis, although the research has yielded interesting results in its undertaking of framing on climate change in the U.S., additional research is needed for the broader understanding of how framing works in practice. Especially, the researcher would here like to consider current trends and developments (or rather the opposite) in U.S. politics on climate change for this point of reference.

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# Author biographies

**Tobias Linné** is a researcher and a lecturer in the Department of Communication and Media at Lund University Sweden. He holds a PhD in Sociology and is currently doing work within the interdisciplinary field of critical animal and media studies.

**Kevin Witzemberger** is a graduate from Lund University with an MSc in Media and Communication studies and holds a BA in Communication Science from University Bamberg. In February 2018, Kevin started a PhD in Zürich at the Department for Communication and Media Research (IKMZ). His new project within the Media Change & Innovation Division scrutinizes the significance of algorithmic selection in the everyday life of users. He is convinced that research within critical algorithm studies can evoke sustainable future policies on automated algorithmic selection applications.

**Agnė Raščiuotė** holds a BA in Journalism from Vilnius University and an MSc in Media and Communication from Lund University. During and in between her degrees she has worked as a journalist for a national television and as a communication specialist for European Parliament. She currently works as a head of marketing for *Comic Con Baltics* and as a foreign media coordinator for Vilnius international film festival *Kino Pavasaris*.

**Philipp Seufferling** holds a BA in Finnougric Studies and Media and Communication Studies from Hamburg University and an MSc in Media and Communication from Lund University. In September 2017 he started a PhD program in Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm. His new project is about media practices among refugees in Germany in pre-digital times (1945-2000). He believes that we can learn a lot from history about refugees and migrants.

**Krisztina Judit Tóth** holds a Bachelor's degree in Commerce and Marketing from Corvinus University of Budapest and a Master's degree in Media and

Communication Studies from Lund University. She also spent a semester studying abroad at the New Sorbonne University in Paris. Currently, she is pursuing a graduate traineeship at the European Parliament.

**Burcum Kesen** holds a BA in Cultural Studies and Literature from Kadir Has University and a MSc in Media and Communication from Lund University. She received different scholarships for both of her degrees. She is interested in women's issues and social media movements, and currently lives in Malmö.

**Isabella Lopez-Smith** holds a BA (Hons) in Costume for Performance from University of the Arts London and has an MSc in Media and Communication from Lund University. Isabella worked as a freelance Costume Assistant and Designer for the Entertainment Industry prior to her Masters. She is now training to be a researcher for public sector agencies and is pursuing Ph.D. positions in Communications.

**Julie Yung Kirk** holds a BA in English and an MSc in Media and Communication from Lund University. Next to her studies, Kirk has been occupied in public policy and is passionate about politics, international relations and climate change policy, which has also been the onset for her thesis.



This publication, the second in a series, showcases a selection of seven excellent postgraduate dissertations, written by the community of students that graduated in June 2017 from the MSc in Media and Communication Studies at Lund University, Sweden.

The contributions in this volume each shine a light on the many different roles that media plays in people's lives. They also demonstrate how without a situated approach to the study of media, culture and communication that recognizes the specificity of particular social and cultural contexts, we cannot understand the complexities of the phenomena studied. This volume explores a wide range of topics, including how algorithmic interactions influence our daily lives, how journalists separate work from free time in an age of increased digitalization, how mediated memories shape contemporary discourses about migration, how solidarity and mourning is expressed collectively online, how patriarchal structures can be challenged by people sharing their stories in social media, how neo-liberalism threatens access to political information crucial for democratic society or how climate sceptics framing of climate science inhibits initiatives to combat anthropogenic climate change.