Excellent MSc Dissertations 2019
Media and Communication Studies, Lund University

**DENIZ NERIMAN DURU (ED.) WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
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& DANIEL SVENSSON**

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Introduction

Deniz Neriman Duru

This edited volume, Excellent MSc Dissertations 2019, is the forth in the series that brings a selection of five postgraduate dissertations, written by the students who undertook the MSc degree in Media and Communication at Lund University, in Sweden and graduated in June 2019. During the Masters Programme in Lund, students develop their curiosity for issues that concern us all and are trained theoretically and methodologically for two years to ask critical questions and explore the place, the role and the use of media in people's lives. This volume seeks to inspire future students and media scholars with its originality of research design, the use of multi-methods in qualitative media research as well as critical and analytical thinking in investigating contemporary issues that challenges the world we live in.

The studies in this volume draw our attention to the role of media in people's everyday life and people's engagement with it: to question and challenge patriarchy, gender inequalities, democratic deficiency and environmental issues. They investigate a range of different mediums and genres: crime reporting in newspapers, digital technology and digital media, television talk shows and art museum exhibitions. The authors explore a wide spectrum of political, environmental, technological and gender issues. They investigate media production and audience engagement in expressions of political views, concern over patriarchy, democracy and climate change, media ethics in representation and the role of technology in people's lives. Daniel Svensson explores the ambivalent relationship between humans and technology as proposed by Google's *Digital wellbeing* initiative. Michal Gieda uses Volt Europa as a case study to explore the ways in which digital media facilitates a space for cosmopolitan democratic dialogue in the European Union. Rania Savitri Mafiroh examines the civic agency of young Indonesian women audiences and the ways in which they engage with a public discussion talk show, *Mata Najwa*, in Indonesia. Lina Lockean explores the ways in which the Acclimatize exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm opens up creative spaces for citizens to articulate their civic engagement with concerns over climate change. Last but not least, Giulia

Masciavé analyses how mainstream press represents men responsible for femicide in Italy, by combining theories from radical feminism, critical masculinity studies and journalism ethics.

The book starts off with Daniel Svensson's piece, which explores the ambivalent relationship between humans and technology by investigating Google's *Digital wellbeing* initiative. The philosophy permeating *Digital wellbeing* argues for improving people's relationship with technology, providing tools to gain control over how one's time is spent. However, the overall situation brought by Google suggests digital technology as omniscient, where users might end up with even less control over their digital activity. In this first chapter, Svensson uses a Science and Technology Studies approach, to better understand what role Google ascribes to technology in everyday life. This is done by analysing the keynote presentation of Google I/O 2018, drawing from theories on the social shaping of technology and critical modernity theory, bringing a contextualized understanding of the visions presented on stage and their relation to the products and services that are shown.

The findings show that on the one hand, the *Digital wellbeing* initiative presents digital technology as something one can step in and out of, a distinct domain of the everyday life, put in contrast to "the real world". We can measure and limit our time spent with technology, and the applications provided by the *Digital wellbeing* initiative are presented as means for gaining control over our devices as well as ourselves. Wellbeing in this sense is an autonomous subject, able to use technological devices to increase efficiency, with the power to disconnect whenever needed. On the other hand, the overall vision brought by Google suggests a situation where digital technology is fully integrated into daily life, no longer bound to particular devices and always available by voice. It is envisioned as an omnipresent servant that covers more tasks and domains with every software update. The ideals of efficiency and time-saving that permeates Google's vision of technology encourages users to give away control to Google, in order to gain control over their time. The lack of control over time spent with technology that users report is turned into an argument for potentially giving up further control.

Chapters Two, Three and Four shift our attention to people's media engagement in articulating their political views and civic engagement with issues of democracy, women's agency and climate change. In Chapter Two, Michal Gieda employs a case study on Volt Europa in order to gain a holistic understanding of this growing political movement as a European expression of cosmopolitanism. He highlights

that the study of Volt Europa, a political movement and party aiming to reform the European Union through a pan-European platform, reveals significant findings about the current deficiencies of European democracy and how they can be resolved. Gieda argues that this approach is grounded in a cosmopolitan democratic and communicative framework, which reveals evident expressions of this phenomenon. The chapter aims to describe this expression in the larger context of the EU, while simultaneously aiming to prescribe how a cosmopolitan approach may be a solution to the deficiencies of European democracy. The findings reveal that this fix may very much be grounded in an emerging cross-cultural communicative framework for EU citizens, and a growing public sphere based on digital democratic participation.

In Chapter Three, Rania Savitri Mafiroh examines the civic agency of young Indonesian women audiences promoted by a public discussion talk show, *Mata Najwa*, in Indonesia. While existing studies in Indonesia pay more attention to the subordination of women as the product of media, this chapter analyses how female audiences interpret their engagement with the social and political issues on the show, and in what way this engagement becomes their resource for civic talk in the private sphere. The chapter also explores their critical opinions and feelings as part of their engagement, concerning the role of the female host who challenges the ideology and culture of Indonesian patriarchy. The findings show that beyond the political and social information acquired from the show, audiences also get the enjoyment of entertainment as their reference to reflect on Indonesian politics, social conditions, and participation in civic talk.

The findings further reveal that the appearance of a female host in this public discussion talk show is seen as representation of women who challenge the patriarchy in the public sphere. By analysing a talk show and political engagement within the context of gender, the study concludes that the media stimulates the civic agency of young women in ways in which they feel engaged and relatable. Further, this form of civic agency of civic talk in the private sphere, is tightly correlated to the construction of patriarchal culture and the situation of politics. The chapter calls for further research on the civic agency of female audience research by looking beyond their viewing engagement with the television programme in Indonesia.

In Chapter Four, Lina Lockean investigates the Acclimatize exhibition at Moderna Museet in Stockholm (The Stockholm Museum of Modern Art) by

conducting a multi-method qualitative case study aimed at holistically understanding what role creative practices in a museum setting can play in the climate change discourse. She explores the ways in which digital participation can cultivate cultural citizenship by creatively practicing civic identity, and through accessibility and inclusiveness open up alternative routes into the climate change conversation. What this research suggests is that art and creative practices can, when given a digital, participatory platform, construct an interspace between the political, personal and social wherein the individual can explore what it means to be a cultural citizen. The institutional conditions and design of the platform determine the affordances of the exhibition, directly affecting the potentials of the participatory project. In the climate change discourse, these platforms can provide a space for reflections on the cultural and personal experiences of climate change, which in turn can contribute to the construction of civic identity and cultural, civic and political participation.

Finally, in Chapter Five, Giulia Masciave´ explores the ways in which mainstream press represents men responsible for femicide in Italy. Her approach combines radical feminism with critical masculinity studies and theories on journalism ethics, a theoretical approach never applied to the studies of crime news, discourse and gender representations. She uses critical discourse analysis and thematic coding to investigate the mainstream press coverage on femicide in 2018, to deconstruct the articles in order to obtain a series of representations and discursive themes concerning the male perpetrators.

The main findings of the research can be summarised as three themes. The first deals with a normalisation of the killer, by diving deep into his personal life, career and details of his relationship with the victims. The second one is about the constant focus on the lurid details of the criminal act, and the aftermath of a femicide. The third one emerges as an explanation of this crime, playing with the emotions, the dialectic lucidity-madness. All of these themes are mixed into each other, resulting in inter-discursivity coming from the use of the official (i.e. investigators) and the more intimate voices (i.e. relatives, friends, neighbours). These findings stress that the mainstream press failed the normative appointment with their Italian citizens, by not highlighting how femicides are the extreme result of a patriarchal culture ongoing in Italy, rather than of an "emotional storm". Therefore, this chapter urges the media to make better use of their voice and influence on the public sphere when it comes to femicide and the broader issue of

violence against women: from changing the only apparent neutral reporting style to explaining which laws can be improved to signal that the institutions are by the side of abused female citizens.

All five texts published in this edited volume were originally presented and evaluated as part of the final thesis exams in May 2019, in which they were awarded top grades. During the autumn of 2019, 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. They were selected because they possess solid theoretical analysis and analytical thinking, are methodologically rigorous and empirically grounded. With this publication, we hope to inspire future students writing dissertations, and contribute to debates inside and outside of academia on media, communication and cultural studies. In particular, the work in this book asks us to critically reflect on media's role in challenging patriarchy and gender inequalities, as well as people's civic engagement and concern over democracy, political and environmental crises; and human's relationships with media, technology and AI. All of the issues brought up in this book make us think, question and understand ourselves within the socio-cultural, and mediated environment we live in.

December 2019, Lund

Digital wellbeing, according to Google

Daniel Svensson

Introduction

"The great thing about technology is that it is always evolving" says the Google CEO Sundar Pichai. He is on stage at the keynote opening Google I/O 2018, the company's annual developer conference[1]. It is a three-day event where thousands of developers, industry professionals, enthusiasts and journalists meet for talks, product demonstrations and seminars: a celebration of technological progress and its possibilities. In a rapidly changing business, the event is all about "showing the progress from last year".

The Google I/O keynote is both an information event and a show. New technological inventions, after being kept as a secret for long, are unveiled on the big stage, before thousands of cheering enthusiasts. Celebrities demonstrate the powers of AI. Products seemingly appear from out of nowhere, anything can come next. From medicine and wellbeing to driving and speaking, there seems to be no limits to what computers can do. Once made public, new features quickly become available through software updates. They are invented in Google's labs and brought to the world.

Google's promises of what the digitally enhanced life can be are constructions of what Spigel et al (2010) calls *electronic elsewheres*: representations of a faster, better, or at least different future. Technical inventions historically have a prominent role when imagining the future, often presented as means for liberation and a better life (Spigel 2010:58; Jasanoff 2015:321ff). These *elsewheres* come to us from magazines, advertisements or a sunny stage in California. From the stage, Google

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[1] This and the following quotes are taken from the Google I/O 2018 keynote, unless something else is mentioned. It can be watched on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogfYd705cRs.

delivers their vision of what human–technology should look like in everyday life, aimed at a general public and told without much technical jargon. Listening to the stories told by Google employees echo familiar promises of new technology alleviating us from everyday chores. In a narrative of continuous progress, the solutions to our immediate problems are always just around the corner.

However, many of these contemporary problems seem to rise from digital entanglement. Running through the I/O keynote is Google's diagnosis that there is something wrong with contemporary digital lifestyles. "Our team has heard so many stories from people who are trying to find the right balance with technology" is said on stage. People feel tethered to their devices, consuming time instead of freeing it up. As users blame their stressful present on technology, Google's goal is to "give users back time".

Despite the magical belief in technological liberation, freedom is always one more step away. "Overwhelmed by the volume and velocity of our lives, we turn to technology to help us find time. But technology makes us busier than ever and ever more in search for retreat" writes Sherry Turkle (2011:17). Turkle echoes the worries of Jacques Ellul, who, in the 1950s, posed concerns about the limitations of instrumental thinking, which he saw encompassing more and more of life's domains. "Doubtless, technique has its limits. But when it has reached these limits, will anything exist outside them", asked Ellul (1964:85). With such confidence in the powers of technology, what should be done when the smart devices that so much of our lives revolve around themselves pose a threat?

Google's answer is called *Digital wellbeing*, a new initiative to give users a healthier relationship with their devices. The initiative focuses on four areas: understanding habits, focus on what matters, helping to switch off, and helping families find the right balance with technology. As the headline on the *Digital wellbeing* website says, "great technology should improve life, not distract from it". *Digital wellbeing* constitutes a general philosophy permeating all of Google's undertakings, putting the users' wellbeing in center. These values are materialized into some concrete tools for users: The *Digital wellbeing* app, built into Google's mobile OS, enables monitoring user activity, showing time spent on one's device. Google wants to "create healthy habits" by "giving everyone the tools they need to develop their own sense of digital wellbeing".

This thesis takes a closer look at the *Digital wellbeing* initiative in order to better understand the values guiding Google's vision for digital technology. What should it be like to be human in a world of algorithms and digital devices? With their prominent position in a world increasingly intertwined with digital technologies, Google have substantial influence over how digital life is shaped. Not only are they creating the hardware and software used around the world, Google also help shaping the visions of what technology can be and how humans and these systems should interact with each other. Studying *Digital wellbeing* makes us better understand Google's ideas for the future, as it shows their attempt to come to terms with some of the problems they see in the digital present. Technology is always evolving. But when it moves in the wrong direction, it forces Google to articulate how things really ought to be.

Research aims and questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following questions.

– How does Google frame contemporary digital technology as a problem?

– What constitutes digital wellbeing according to Google, and how is it addressed through the *Digital wellbeing* initiative?

– How do the values guiding *Digital wellbeing* relate to the other products presented during the Google I/O 2018 keynote?

Together, these questions can open up for a better understanding of the human–technology relationship that is proposed by Google. My aim is to find out what it means to be human in a world increasingly lived with, and mediated through, digital technology.

Methodology and methods

Interested in how the concept of *Digital wellbeing* is envisioned by Google, this study applies a social constructionist approach. Social constructionism asserts that while there is a physical world that exists independently of us, knowledge about

that world is socially constructed (Couldry & Hepp 2017:21). This means that *Digital wellbeing* should not be treated as a stable concept, but a normative construction made by Google. How the problem is conceptualized will shape the solution, and by looking closer at the Google presentation, we can get a better understanding of Google's idea of a better world. Therefore, a fundamental part of this study lies in examining what beliefs are expressed and how Google shape certain assertions about the world through language.

As this study asserts that technology and the social are closely intertwined, the other aspect of this study is to put focus on how the products and services shown on stage relate to what is said. More specifically, I want to understand how the range of Google products fit into the *Digital wellbeing* initiative.

With this methodological foundation, the methods are not meant to be seen as means for finding knowledge about the objective nature of reality. An account of how 'things are' is not fruitful to seek with interpretive methods (Saukko 2003:9). Social sciences shouldn't try to emulate the truth claims of the natural sciences but emphasize the contextual dependency for understanding about social phenomena (Flyvbjerg 2001:4).

A deeper understanding about the questions posed above is gained through a qualitative case study. The case study has the benefit of taking a clearly defined empirical material and examine it thoroughly (Merriam 2009:40). In this way it is possible to get near the object of the study and see it from several aspects, with the intention of getting a deeper, more nuanced understanding of what is explicitly shown at a first glance in the presentation. Using the Google keynote as a clearly defined material can provide better insights to Google's overall vision of what role digital technologies should have in people's lives, while at the same time keeping the amount of empirical material manageable (Merriam 2009:54).

The main method for doing this is a qualitative text analysis. Here I focus on the speakers on the stage, and to interpret what they say. Technology companies have a long tradition of displaying their products in settings that show how they should be used, adding a normative dimension to their material affordances (Spigel 2010:58). What is Google's idea of a good life and how do they describe the role of technology in achieving this? In magazines, advertisements, news and popular culture, representations of technological inventions help people form an understanding of how to incorporate them in their lives. As Spigel (2010:58ff)

shows, technology often plays a lead role when imagining the future, as means for overcoming the problems of today. These new products are not just something to add into everyday life, but that helps creating and transform the preconditions for our lived experience. My approach here is to reflect on how the products shown at Google I/O try to tie together the discursive element of the presentation with the material reality it addresses.

This method shares similarities with what Saukko (2003:126ff) calls genealogy of the present. Traditionally, we think of genealogy as an archaeologic method for tracing discourses. When I seek to understand the role of humans and computers that emerge in Google's vision, it is done by "following statements that begin to recur in diverse areas of life, weaving together a discursive formation with its specific social and political connections and effects" (2003:127). How do the different areas of life relate to each other in Google's proposed vision?

Since *Digital wellbeing* is a new initiative and lacks scholarly research, I have tried to utilize the privilege to be able to approach the material without too many preconceptions about what to find. An inductive approach has allowed me to be guided by the material rather than a preset theoretical framework (Merriam 2009:15). This method allows me to move back and forth between empirical material and theory, to revisit the material with new theoretical insights in order to do new observations. This is not to say that I have entered the process with a blank mind, but tried to follow the material as much as possible and build a theoretical framework from the findings (2009:16).

More concretely, the research process started with some initial scouting observations of the Google I/O 2018 keynote, accessible in full on YouTube (Google 2018). The presentation runs for 106 minutes and constitutes of a walkthrough of Google's new products, services and projects, presented in a fashion aimed toward consumers. I started out watching the presentation several times, taking notes along the way. After getting an overview, I found some themes that helped me approach the literature: Initial findings included a recurring mentioning of giving users back time with the help of technology and the focus on rational behavior and fear of irrationality. Another initial theme I found, was the discussion whether people should use their devices less or more, which seemed to differ across the keynote. These preliminary findings helped shaping a relevant theoretical framework. With new theoretical knowledge, I, then, revisited the presentation for new findings, while reevaluating theory and material. This

moving back and forth between empirical material and theory allowed for a successively broader understanding of the human–technology relationship proposed by Google.

Following Flyvbjerg's (2001) advice on the strengths of qualitative case studies, I have, here, provided a narrative, "gradually allowing the case narrative to unfold from the diverse, complex, and sometimes conflicting stories that people, documents, and other evidence tell them" (Flyvbjerg 2001:86). The question about technology's place in people's lives is a big one, this case study provides a managable way to approach it.

Living with technology

The social and material

What is the relation between technology and society; the material world and the social? A common theme in social sciences is to focus on either the material or social, treating the two as distinctly separated from each other, usually with a focus on the social. Technology is often perceived as something that's "just there" and therefore escapes critical analysis (Orlikowski & Scott 2007:436). Analyses focusing on the textual dimension of communication may neglect the mediating role of technology, and vice versa.

A Science and technology approach argues that technology should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon but deeply intertwined with the social (Feenberg 2010; Gillespie et al 2014). To understand modern media technologies, one should therefore consider the context in which they emerge and are inescapably related to. Scholars such as Feenberg reject a technology determinist view of society for being too simplistic, lacking the nuances of how it emerges and how individuals engage with it. Concepts such as linear progress, can be problematized by showing how technological inventions have looked different across the world depending on the context.

With technological development deeply embedded in society, there is no obvious right path forward with technology; invention and use are subject to social struggle (Feenberg (2010; Wajcman 2015:4). Consider the early days of telephone and radio, mediums that both could have been used for mass communication as

well as point-to-point contact. "The issue is not so much the inherent properties of the medium as the social constellation of speakers and hearers that became enforced as normative" explains Peters (1999:195).

Turning this assertion to the devices that Google have built their business around, there are countless possibilities that are not utilized in the mobile phones we have in our hands, dismissed as 'bad ideas' or not even thought of (Feenberg 2010:10). Smartphone apps are all suggestions of what the devices should be. New software reshapes a device and make us see it a new way. It is on this condition *Digital wellbeing* aims to change our relation to digital technology through refreshed software and mindset. The very same phone can be made less of a threat and more a utility. Instead of treating Google's innovations as an autonomous force of linear progress, Feenberg (2010:7) encourages to better understand what beliefs are guiding its origin.

The social shaping of technology

The social shaping approach asserts that technological inventions reflect the society in which they are created (Wajcman 2015:165). They are materializations of a particular sociocultural context (Feenberg 2010:70). This approach downplays the agency of modern technology: it must be understood in relation to its surroundings.

Companies like Google hold power to influence the reality for people all over the world, and in their services, it is reflected what they consider important and not. Wajcman (2015) and Feenberg (2010) criticize the geographical concentration of tech companies, arguing that the devices playing a central role in our lives often are developed in a different context than that of its users. The risk is that this fosters technology as alienated from everyday experience (Feenberg 2010:xvii). By studying technology as deeply related with the social, one can uncover the material affordances that invite its users to use it in certain ways and what beliefs are guiding such affordances (Gillespie et al 2014:23).

Companies like Google, might help us feel better, but in doing so they also help define what that means. The technological inventions that are meant to improve wellbeing, are created with certain ideas of what those terms mean, which reflects in their materiality (Light et al 2018). Feenberg uses the concept of technical codes to point at how interests or ideology is implemented into material things

(2010:68). The technical code is "a criterion that selects between alternative feasible technical designs in terms of a social goal and realizes that goal in design." It allows us to describe how technical activity is "deeply marked by culture" (2010:184). What interests does the technical solutions in our lives adhere to? Made up of parts that are relatively neutral, Feenberg explains that the end product inherits certain design choices that make it "fit" within a social context (2002:77–8).

Technologies can be designed to justify a certain social order or economic model. The ideals of freedom and individualization in contemporary digital devices can be understood not just as a mean in itself but also in the context of what Zuboff (2019) calls "surveillance capitalism". The responsiveness of these technologies is made possible by their ability to collect behavioral data from the users. They render usage into valuable information by design.

The impact of technology

Studying how technology is shaped by the social is important just because of the impact that technology has on society and on individuals (MacKenzie & Wajcman 1985). The properties of technologies "influence how people are going to work, communicate, travel, consume, and so forth" (Winner 1985:30). The things surrounding us have existential implications. Treating them as neutral increases the threat of failing to see how they affect us (Verbeek 2011:2).

Thus, technological objects are not only shaped by the social but play a part in further shaping the social. The spread of mobile phones "directly help to generate new ways of communicating and interacting" (Verbeek 2011:4). They change one's relation to space, time and other people, and the world "shrinks" (Rosa 2013:104). The world with the mobile phone, then, is not the same world as the one in which it was invented, which indicates that existing technology is "an important precondition for new technology" (MacKenzie & Wajcman 1985:10). The saying "give a man a hammer and the whole world will look like a nail" captures how the world reveals itself to us through things.

Furthermore, the media infrastructures themselves often risk being overlooked. Couldry & Hepp (2017) have explored the issue of agency in a time where digital communication technologies have increasingly become an important part of our social interactions. We not only use technology to communicate with other

people, but a lot of communication takes place between humans and machines. Machines have become computerized conversation partners to which people turn to for information and help (Jones 2014). The design of digital infrastructures mediating our perceptions of the world have the power to, as Woolgar (1990:59) writes, configure its users through allowances and constraints, shaping the conditions on which actions can be based.

What happens to human agency, when we base our decisions on a reality that is generated through algorithms? Much social interaction is mediated through the services of a few large companies, forming a 'platform society' (Van Dijck et al 2018). When we log onto social media sites or interact with personalized smart assistants the reality that we meet is different from that of another person, because it is based on individual interests and prior actions. When we place trust in smart technologies for helping us throughout the day, we delegate them the power to influence our perception of reality. These services intervene in our everyday life to promote us to act in certain ways (Verbeek 2011:123). Being accustomed to a data driven world means being reliant on algorithmically intervened information flows. For the user it is not always evident how these algorithms intervene in what is being shown.

Late modern temporal troubles

Google offers technological solutions to "give users back time", a mantra that runs through the keynote. This section will look closer at the relationship between modernity, time and ideals of productivity and self-optimization: starting with an account for these relations on a macrosocial level and then look more specifically at technologies for monitoring oneself and the ideals that they encapsule. (Wajcman 2015:33).

Social acceleration

Rosa (2013) defines modernity as characterized by the phenomenon of social acceleration, where technology, social change and the individual pace of life are mutually influencing each other. Technical acceleration refers to the speeding up of communication, transportation and production of goods (2013:63). Accelerating social change includes a general destabilization of time horizons,

manifested by changeover of jobs, preferences or norms (2013:77). The pace of life accelerates both objectively in an overall increase of actions carried out per unit of time, and subjectively, with the feeling of lacking time (2013:79).

While these are three distinct analytical categories, they are highly entangled in practice, reinforcing each other (Rosa 2013:151ff). While technical acceleration saves time, it opens up more possibilities and promote a higher pace of life to cope with these. Digital technology has reduced the Internet to the size of a smartphone, always readily available. Hayles explains that "perhaps most significant at this level is the feeling one has that the world is at one's fingertips. The ability to access and retrieve information on a global scale has a significant impact on how one thinks about one's place in the world" (2012:2). Technical acceleration finds us new ways to do the same things faster and affects time in a phenomenological way, affecting people's expectations. What once seemed fast, rapidly becomes slow. Old computers now make a dreadful experience, traveling by train have gone from fastest to a relatively slow mode of transport (2013:82). This is further reinforced in the narrative of progress in which previous technology becomes "that which we shall learn to dislike and change" (Riis 2015:171).

In a paradox, faster means of communication and production do not free up time but rather the opposite. "The temporal scarcity of modernity, arise not *because* but rather *even though* enormous gains in time through acceleration have been registered in almost all areas of social life" (Rosa 2013:67). Should not people have more time at their hands when e-mails let us communicate faster than regular letters, modern transportation is faster than horse carriages and so on, asks Wajcman (2015). Instead, these time-saving inventions are placed in a social context that praises a heightened pace (2015:2). With a busy lifestyle considered a status symbol, time freed up by time-saving inventions will enable people to increase their temporal density with more layers of activity (2015:83). The result is that the same smart devices that are meant to alleviate us from time pressure become are the ones that are contributing to it. Wajcman (2015) shows how the social imperatives for a fast-paced life make people see the newly freed up time as a way of getting even more done. Technological inventions are made with this in regard and allows for a higher temporal density, turning freed up time into a chance for multitasking.

The increasing pace of time thus manifest itself through the growing number of things while time itself stays the same (Turkle 2011:164). Hence, the time one

can spend on each activity shortens (Rosa 2013:125). In conclusion, the solutions for coping with time scarcity by inventing faster means of communication and increasingly efficient technologies becomes "an essential element of its causation at the macrosocial level" (Rosa 2013:156).

Digitized activity

Late modern temporalities are reflected in contemporary consumer technology. Berg (2017; 2019) shows how self-measuring devices let individuals outsource information gathering about themselves that can be used to diagnose and improve everyday activity. Such practices are often aimed at providing data with a degree of truthfulness that transcends human capabilities. Self-measuring devices are often envisioned as tools for objectively revealing the world (Sharon & Zandbergen 2017).

In the pursuit of increased productivity and efficiency, computerization plays an important role, both gathering information as well as for alleviating cognitive tasks from people. The increasing interest in self-quantification partly derives from the emergence of widely available digital consumer technologies, including sensors and smart devices to collect, store and analyze data about oneself (Lupton 2016:1). Devices used for self-tracking sometimes gather "heretofore inaccessible data" (Van den Ende 2015) and enable more rigorous control over one's activities. This is further facilitated by a social life that is played out increasingly in the digital domain, making it more easily captured in metrics (Lupton 2016:39).

Self-tracking technologies provide metricized information to act upon and also function as a motivator to do so. Berg (2017) looks at *Moodmetric*, a device for quantifying mood levels, presented as an instrument for situations where users "cannot trust their own experiences". In a fast-paced world with too much possibilities to focus on, such devices promise a technological cure for ontological insecurity (Berg 2017:4–5). They provide a "sense of comfort" with the help of datafication (2017:8).

Self-measuring tools are "pushing us to rethink life in a data-driven manner" (Pantzar & Ruckenstein 2015). They allow for individuals to both "live by numbers and […] tell their stories by numbers" (Oxlund 2012:53), echoing the central role digits and data play in rendering the world understandable. These conclusions are reflected by Van den Ende (2015) who offers a post-phenomeno-

logical approach to self-tracking, suggesting that the devices encourage their users to see the world in a new way, as through the possibilities enabled by the devices. However, it should be added that that these devices materiality tells us little about how individuals incorporate them in a meaningful way into their lives (Ruckenstein 2014).

Productivity ideals

Self-measuring devices indicate how principles regarding productivity and optimization have spread from the workplace into other aspects of everyday life. In her study of time management apps and self-help literature, Gregg (2018) points at a sort of Taylorism of everyday life, where every aspect of life is subject to optimization. In the productivity paradigm, "realms such as leisure, play, culture, education, and family relationships have been gradually penetrated by rationalization logics and organizational patterns" (Bakardjieva (2017:210). Productivity is alleviated into common sense. As technology is made to help us with contemporary problems, the struggle for increased productivity and efficiency is reflected in consumer technology (2018:84).

Productivity holds the promise of alleviating one from the struggles of everyday life. Gregg borrows the term *shore subjectivity* from Sloterdijk (2013), referring to the idea that "superior individuals are those who have the will to separate themselves from the river of life and enjoy the unimpeded view from the shore" (Gregg 2018:77). A good life then equals being in charge of how one's time is spent (2018:78). Temporal sovereignty, to have control over how one spends time is a significant measure of wellbeing (Wajcman 2015:164). In order to reach this state, self-measuring apps can provide an elevated perspective of ones' life, fostering ongoing evaluation and improvement of the self (2018:90). "In those societies that come to value the individual, reason, and freedom, self-control becomes a virtue" (Stivers 1999:205).

Productivity allows for an ideal that needs no higher moral impediment (Gregg 2018:98). It works on the condition that whatever goal the individual or society desires, it can be carried out with a higher rate of efficiency. In a way, productivity as a paradigm means freedom because it's not limited to a specific end goal. On the other hand, it fosters an instrumental view of the world where all activity becomes reduced to its measurable qualities. "Under this new dispensation,

meaning and ends appear subjective, nature and means objective, and no mediation reconciles them" (Feenberg 2010:216). Instead of an omniscient deity, it is sensors that see everything. Rosa (2013) concludes similarly, describing modernity's "directionless movement" manifested trough continuous technological and social acceleration but without an overarching goal to strive towards, creating a "frenetic standstill" (2013:314).

Invisible technology

The term "ubiquitous computing" was introduced by computer scientist Mark Weiser in a 1991 article on the future on personal computers. To Weiser, "the most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it" (Zuboff 2019:200).

There are two ways of making technology invisible. One is to integrate it into everyday life in a way that it feels like a natural part of it. Spigel's (1992) account of the entrance of the television into postwar American households showed how suddenly the whole room, furniture and practices, was ordered after the new apparatus (1992:107ff). Makers of new technology face the challenge of turning them into unreflected parts of everyday life. We see this in the Google presentation, which demonstrates new inventions in everyday settings. The people on stage explain how they face the same everyday struggles as you and me, and how these new innovations enhance their lives (Gregg 2018:87–8).

The other way is ubiquitous technology in a more literal sense. That way users barely notice that they are interacting with it. Google's *Digital assistant*, a mediator between user and the digital sphere, is preferably controlled by voice. It signals a departure from stationary objects to omnipresent computing interacted to via voice and sensors.

Smart devices

Ambient intelligence refers to a paradigm in information technology where technological aides become detached from concrete devices and becomes a part of the environment. They are intelligent in the sense that they can adapt to the user,

for instance bring personalized answers. Ideally, people can get technological help any place without keeping track of a dedicated device, with computing hiding in the background. It is often envisioned as means to empower everyday life with sensors and ubiquitous computing (Brey 2005:157). One variant of these smart surroundings exists today via digital assistants, such as Google's *Digital assistant* or Amazon's *Alexa*. These services are integrated in devices and need no tactile interaction but can be talked to and respond back.

Smart assistants not only execute tasks but conveniently hide them away from the user. "We will no longer need to search for anything since we are perpetually monitored, with the relevant information sent to us on the basis of perceived need" (Wajcman 2015:172). Crawford and Joler (2018) studied the inner workings of smart speakers. Opened up, the smart assistant consists of a few microphones and sensors to mediate information between user and remote server halls that carry out the computation. Nothing in its material appearance "will alert the owner to the vast network that subtends and drives its interactive capacities".

However, the conveniences brought by voice assistants also raise critical questions as their computing becomes increasingly obscured and omnipresent. Ambient intelligence systems "though often designed to enhance freedom and control, has the potential to limit freedom and autonomy as well" (2005:157). With these systems, the user takes a managerial role and delegates control to the computers instead, creating a situation where users give away control in order to gain control (2005:160). We can now let our (digital) assistants read and send messages, control the lights, thermostats and other home appliances.

As these technologies weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life, many scholars raise ethical questions. The era of ambient intelligence raises "unprecedented challenges" with regards to privacy and data protection (Rouvroy 2008). The adaptiveness of smart technologies to the users' needs have implications for human autonomy and it becomes harder to see in what way they intervene. This new way of interacting with media technologies "challenge, quite radically, the classical Enlightenment notion of the sovereign subject" (2008:43). Questions of agency become complicated when much activity is mediated and altered by algorithms (Van Dijck 2009). As communication with machines become more prevalent, it becomes more important and also more difficult to understand its consequences Jones (2014:254). It becomes harder to see the impact of technology when it's taken for granted Verbeek (2011). The invisible

nature of voice controlled digital assistants brings new risks as it "enhances the influencing power of AI" (Taddeo & Floridi 2018:752).

Smart voice assistants have been compared to "technological Trojan horses" (Zuboff 2019:513) due to their ability to incorporate surveillance deep into everyday life without the user necessarily reflecting on it. They make their way into people's lives promising to alleviate tasks and free up time, while also creating new markets for advertising and influencing behavior (see also Vaidhyanathan 2011).

Zuboff (2015; 2019) provides an insight into the economic incentives guiding the transition to voice guided smart assistants. They embody what Zuboff calls surveillance capitalism, a logic that guides companies to turn people's actions and experiences into valuable data (Zuboff 2019:219). Convenience and data collection goes hand in hand. To get personalized help from smart technologies, they need to know who we are. This also means new arenas for advertising, in kitchen applies and other connected devices (2019:259). Zuboff argues that the automation of society really is "the replacement of society with machine action dictated by economic imperatives" (2019:221). Seen this way, loss of agency is not just a consequence of smart technology but a motivation for it.

A critical approach to datafication practices of Google is recently made by Cheney-Lippold (2017). Data doubles have considerate impact on our online and offline experiences are shaped. They are, however, never really doubles but a collection of traces, like footprints to a person.

While smart technologies are often seen as an ethical threat, Dorrestjin (2009) argues that they primarily become a problem when not designed with users' wellbeing in mind. As a way to maintain the benefits made by artificial intelligence while still allowing humans to be in control, ethical frameworks that foster human wellbeing could be a solution (Taddeo & Floridi 2018).

Digital wellbeing, according to Google

The analysis is divided into four parts. The first half focuses on how Google defines current problems with digital technology, and, based on their diagnosis, what they present as a solution. The second half widens the scope to see how the

values guiding the *Digital wellbeing* initiative relate to the other Google services presented at the Google I/O Keynote.

Losing control over technology

Excessive use

Mobile phones and other digital devices pose a threat to individual autonomy. This is the main problem brought forward by Google, presenting the *Digital wellbeing* initiative at Google I/O. Lack of control over technology manifests itself in several ways, one of which is excessive use. The *Digital wellbeing* presentation starts with a personal story from Sameer Samat, VP of product management at Google. As one of the developers behind the initiative he explains that his excessive phone use became a problem:

> On a recent family vacation my partner asked if she could see my phone right after we got to the hotel room. She took it from me, walked over to the hotel safe, locked it inside, and turned and looked me right into the eyes and said: you get this back in seven days, when we leave. I was shocked. I was kind of angry. But after a few hours something pretty cool happened. Without all the distractions from my phone I was actually able to disconnect, be fully present. And I ended up having a wonderful family vacation. (Sameer Samat)

Samat's anecdote initially seems counterproductive to a company like Google, whose business revolves around digital devices and services. With most of the company's services being free to use and widely available, Google generate profit out of the time and information that people invest in their services, providing user data that can be used for targeted advertising. In terms of revenue generation, Google's core business is not providing tools for searching the web but selling users "attention to advertisers" (Vaidhyanathan 2012:26). The more time users spend with Google's services, the more revenue the company generate. Yet, Samat tells the world that locking our smart devices into safes might help us feel better. The smartphone, linking humans with Google's services, is described as a threat to a meaningful vacation.

The smartphone, undoubtedly a useful device for productivity, can also have the opposing effect, consuming people's precious time on less useful things, says Google. As with tv, smartphones can function as temporal gap fillers, requiring

little preparation or follow-up, providing bite-sized entertainment whenever needed (Rosa 2013:138). It might feel rewarding at the moment, but not in retrospect. Many Google users experience these problems:

> People tell us a lot of the time they spend on their phone is really useful. But some of it they wish they had spent on other things. In fact, we found over 70 % of people want more help striking this balance. So, we have been working hard to add key capabilities right into Android to help people find the balance with technology that they're looking for. (Sameer Samat)

Always connected and available, smartphones make it easier to check the work email outside office hours. They have helped blurring the distinction between work and leisure time (Ragsdale & Hoover 2015). On stage, Google's Sameer Samat shows a diagram of his email activity over the last weekend: five minutes here, six minutes there. Together it adds up:

> …when I saw this, it did make me wonder whether I should have been on my email all weekend but that is kind of the point of the dashboard. (Sameer Samat)

Furthermore, the ease of connecting can turn into a problem when people cannot resist their devices at the wrong time:

> We heard from people that they often check their phone right before going to bed. And before you know it, an hour or two have slipped by, and honestly, it happens to me at least once a week. (Sameer Samat)

Smartphones and constant connectivity are presented as ambivalent: One the one hand it fosters individual autonomy. Smartphones are shown as tools for liberation, increasing individual's ability to plan life without being tethered to a specific place or office hours. They enable instantaneous access to information. On the other hand, without discipline the technology might take control over its users. In a market model where many apps are free to install but generate revenue out of people's time spent using the apps, business is flourishing when users lose track of time. Talking about the pervasiveness of smartphones, Google's examples revolve around people using their devices and regret it afterwards.

In the battle for users' attention, Google wants to place themselves on the users' side. The *Digital wellbeing* initiative focuses on giving users a better sense of how they spend time on their devices. Time that previously 'disappeared' now becomes

tangible in clear metrics and interactive diagrams. Without forcing its users to either use the functions or take action based on the results, the wellbeing app can be interpreted as a mainly revealing service, a common use for self-measuring devices (Lupton 2016). The dashboard provides documentary evidence for persuading users to switch off.

Too much information

The same capabilities that make smartphones useful also become their problem when exaggerated, Samat explains:

> People have also told us that they struggle to be fully present for the dinner that they are at, or the meeting they are attending because the notifications they get at their device can be distracting and too tempting to resist. And come on, we have all been there. (Sameer Samat)

This unintended mishap of technologies designed for speed can be understood as what Rosa calls "slowdown as dysfunctional side effect" of acceleration (2013:84). Each new app may foster productivity, but taken together, all instantaneous possibilities may lead to inefficiency. Google mentions that too many incoming notifications can turn individual pieces of useful information into a collective flow of disturbances.

More efficient technologies do not necessarily lead to people having more free time. It is often the contrary. This has been the case since long before Google, as Cowan (1983) shows in her historical analysis of the impact of new technologies on American households. The transition from hearth to stoves indeed made cooking more efficient, but also facilitated more advanced cooking. Additionally, households also got the ability to cook several dishes simultaneously through multitasking, which may have led to more work rather than less (1983:61–2). Although each meal took less time to prepare, stoves "probably increased the amount of time that women spent" in the kitchen. The stove, like the digital devices Google seek to tame, did not force an increased pace or amount of work, but its constitution allowed for social changes. Wajcman notes that "the same technologies that promote the extension of working time can also increase autonomy and control over when and where work tasks are accomplished" (2015:159). But as Google's CEO Sundar Pichai points out on stage, there is an "increasing social pressure to respond to anything you get right away. People are

anxious to stay up to date with all the information out there." Technologies and the social intertwine.

Digital wellbeing addresses this problem with a smartphone function called *Wind Down*, a way to remove disturbances by limiting its communicative capabilities. *Wind down*, preferably turned on when the user is done for the day, turns the screen into greyscale and blocks incoming notifications. It is "far less stimulating for the brain and can help you put the phone down" says Samat. To help users put away their devices, Google make them less appealing.

Digital wellbeing essentially consists of technological inventions to give a better experience of other technological inventions, showing great belief in technology as a tool of improving human life. The fact that solutions can be applied through software updates highlight the malleability of digital devices. Google do not have to produce new phones, but instead enhance the already existing ones. This approach supports the argument that smartphones aren't good or bad for wellbeing in themselves, but that the same devices can both threaten a good life and be the proposed facilitator for it (Verbeek 2011:120; Brey 2017:9).

Regain control

Self-optimization

Are the problems associated with technology intrinsic to design or caused by how people use it? Scholars arguing for the social shaping of technology often point out that the media technologies themselves merely can suggest how to be used through materializing certain affordances (Gillespie et al 2014; Feenberg 2002; 2010). This illuminates the problems of designing perfect devices, as they require a fully adapted user to function as intended.

Google acknowledges that although there are problems with contemporary consumer technologies, there would be less problems if people were better prepared for it. Too often they are not behaving with sufficient self-discipline, easily falling into technological misuse and irrational behavior. "We have all been there" says Samat. When he explains that "over 70 % of people want more help" it also signals that some have the capability to handle their devices. With proper discipline it is possible to thrive in late modernity: empowered, not burdened by technological devices (Gregg 2018:89). *Digital wellbeing* suggests that it could be

possible to live with pervasive technologies if human willpower was strong enough.

To reach digital wellbeing, Google prescribes a healthy amount of device use:the smartphone is a fantastic device as long as users can keep a healthy relationship to it. Thus, *Digital wellbeing* is not only about improving technology for humans, but also helping humans to optimize their relationship with said technologies.

The Digital wellbeing app

The *Digital wellbeing* app acts as a tool for optimization of smartphone use. It is designed to help users "find the balance" with the digital technologies that always call for attention. Balance is established through time management, which becomes evident when looking at the functions brought by the app.

The app is a personal control center, measuring all smartphone activity to display it in interactive metrics. It is always running in the background, collecting information about how much time has been spent in different apps, how many times the phone has been unlocked and the amount of notifications received. If users only have sufficient information about their screen use, they can make better decisions. Users are then encouraged to act upon the metrics, to set restrictions and take breaks. Like a fitness tracker, the *Digital wellbeing* app turn behavior into metrics that can be measured against a set of goals. It is an approach that echoes the prominent explanatory role numbers have in contemporary western societies (Lupton 2016:96). Based on the numbers, users can get a sense of fulfilment or a clear message that they fail. Without enforcement, Google encourage users to voluntarily engage in optimizing their own lives using self-surveillance techniques (Lupton 2016:50). This is what Feenberg (2002:74ff) refers to as technical codes, materializations of ideas built into the technology. The *Digital wellbeing* app turns everyday life into an activity that should be monitored and improved.

Taylorism of everyday life

The practices for improving efficiency by Google follow the same patterns as that guiding worker efficiency in the workplace as described by Lupton (2016). Monitoring services are useful "as employers seek to identify the habits of staff members in the interest of collecting data that will assist in maximizing worker efficiency or in reducing costs" (2016:25). The main difference is that unlike in the workplace, this is voluntary self-measuring. *Digital wellbeing* thus follows

Gregg's (2018) argument that productivity ideals in the workplace have spread as a norm guiding other parts of life. Productivity and efficiency are here an end goal in itself. Whatever one wants to do, Google's role is to speed up the process.

The *Digital wellbeing* app alludes to a sort of Taylorism of the everyday life (Gregg 2018). By breaking down device use into smaller components that the user can analyze in order to identify and optimize redundancies, in the same way as scientific management sought to streamline workplace practices.

The *Digital wellbeing* app offers techniques for handling current technology on a personal level instead of transforming it. A parallel can be drawn between *Digital wellbeing* and how modern mindfulness techniques inspired by eastern religions serve a purpose in maintaining the high paced life in the west rather than being a resistance against it. Inspired by the old Marxist notion of religion as an 'opium of the people', Zizek (2001) argues that mindfulness techniques serve as a treatment against the symptoms, a tool for the individual to endure without touching the cause, an "imaginary supplement to terrestrial misery". Western Buddhism, as Zizek interprets it, is a rationally grounded form of coping with accelerating technological and social change. It sees mindfulness as a tool guided by the notion of progress, the very opposite of its eastern roots, reducing it to a power nap to return recharged into the same society one needs a break from. Similarly, the *Digital wellbeing* app functions as a 'speed therapist' (Sharma 2013:89), to raise overall efficiency. It provides a tool to co-exist with something that threatens wellbeing. Users can take short breaks from their smart devices as a way to disconnect for a short time and return with their own batteries charged (Rosa 2013:87). In the optimization of everyday life, "leisure too has been reduced to a rational technique" (Stivers 1999:202).

With Google's revenue mainly coming from matching advertisers with suitable users through mapping of user behavior, their "core business is consumer profiling" argues Vaidhyanathan (2011:9). The more information Google have about its users, the better basis it has for business. As the *Digital wellbeing* initiative states, one major problem with contemporary digital technology is that people lose agency over their device use. If people do not spend their time online according to their own desires, the data they produce becomes less relevant to Google, which makes it harder to match them with relevant ads. Helping users take back control over their technology can therefore be valuable not just for the users themselves but also for Google.

Quality and quantity

Digital wellbeing is not so much about using technology less as using it more efficiently. With so many possibilities, users should be more effective in their technological engagement. Samat explains:

> When you are engaging is one part of understanding. But what you engage with in apps is equally important. It is like watching TV: catching up on your favorite shows at the end of a long day can feel pretty good but watching an infomercial might leave you wondering why you did not do something else instead. (Sameer Samat)

There is obviously time for people to spend on their devices. The problem is that it is spent wrong. It is not just the quantity of time but the quality that is main source of contemporary sense of lacking the time to do what is sought for (Wajcman 2015:4). The pace of life is much a matter of perception, defined not only from the amount of time one has but through expectations of how time should be allocated (Rosa 2013:135).

Seeking more meaningful engagement, emphasis is put on *more*. Outside of the part of the keynote reserved for *Digital wellbeing*, the time given back by Google is not so much presented as a way to relax, but to get more things done. Google's new smart screens "makes it so easy to enjoy my favorite shows while multitasking around the house" says a Google employee during the demonstration. The general idea is that with better technology, people can fit more meaningful interaction in the same amount of time. The idea of multitasking is to do several meaningful things at a time, and Google can help us allocate more into tight schedules. Wajcman (2015:104) use the concept 'temporal density' to explain people having several processes going on at the same time.

Google's solutions are presented as a way of getting even more done using the tools for the self-optimization that are embedded in the *Digital wellbeing* app. As long as these values prevail, the conditions of increasing pressure from digital devices that made *Digital wellbeing* needed in the first place thus remain in Google's vision of how human–technology relations should be.

Make Google do it

Technical assistance

Technology is not just a threat to wellbeing but also the prescription for it. To Google, there are seemingly no limits to what can be done using computation. For instance, one problem brought forward in the *Digital wellbeing* presentation is that smartphones pose a threat to healthy sleep habits. "Getting a good night's sleep is critical and technology should help you with this, not prevent it from happening" says Sameer Samat. The problems associated with smart technology are not because of technological integration as such, but current technology being insufficient. What is needed, then, is further development and integration towards a future where these problems are solved technologically.

Initially, there seems to be an antagonism between on the one hand, *Digital wellbeing* with its focus of reducing time spent on digital devices, and on the other hand, the rest of Google's products, which promote digital technology as a means for improvement of every area of life. Google's news app, *News*, for instance, is marketed with the complete opposite of reducing time with technology: the more you use the application, the better it gets. The common denominator across these services is to increase efficiency in order to save time. Just like one should cut down on unnecessary screen time to promote wellbeing, Google wants us to stop wasting precious time doing menial tasks.

There are several reasons to "Make Google do it". The first is that why should we do things that does not feel meaningful to us, when machines can do them instead, asks Google. Many tasks can be alleviated from a hectic schedule: Finding information (Search), editing photos (Photos), navigating (Maps), or driving (Waymo) to name a few. Google's e-mail client *Gmail* has also seen improvements in order to save time for users. It can now use artificial intelligence to help composing messages, says Sundar Pichai, while demonstrating it on stage. "It takes care of mundane things like addresses so that you do not need to worry about it, you can actually focus on what you want to type" he says while the smartphone application helps writing an email about dinner, based on the headline "Taco Tuesday". "I have been sending a lot more emails, not sure what the company thinks about it" he adds jokingly.

Many of the tasks that Google wants us to leave to the computers are far from complicated to do in person, writing an e-mail is a good example of that. But that

is why we should not spend time doing them. They consume time that prevent us from doing what we really want to do. In the presentation of *Duplex*, Google's AI service to let computers do automated phone calls, examples include situations far more boring than complex, at least for humans:

> A big part of getting things done is making a phone call. You may want to get an oil change scheduled, maybe call a plumber in the middle of the week, or even schedule a haircut appointment. You know, we are working hard to get users through these moments. (Sundar Pichai)

The solution is to automate said tasks. Automation is often applied to tasks that are considered unwanted, time-consuming or include intensive labor. Actions that have previously been considered typically human, tend to become perceived as machine-like once they are able to automate, even in the situations when carried out by a human (Turkle 2011). We can see this in how Google market their new services. Things that have been taken care of by people until now are met with the question: why should we do this when computers can do it instead?

Another reason to let computers overtake tasks is because they can do them better than us. While computers lack the ability to handle qualitative concepts, such as those regarding moral and meaning or contextual thinking, they can handle larger quantities of information than any human could ever imagine (Stivers 1999:6). Google start their presentation by talking about the progress made by their AI systems in medicine, where computers can process large quantities of patient information, "more than any single doctor could analyze", to help make diagnoses.

When computers take over tasks it not only provides faster execution speeds but also decrease risks of human error caused by stress or inexperience (Parasuraman & Riley 1997:235). To Google, humans are great at deciding what should be done, but often would benefit from letting the computer carry out the task. This relates to the usual role of humans in fully automated systems, which often "involve human operators in a supervisory or monitoring role" (1997:232).

One example of where computers should replace humans is driving cars. *Waymo*, Google's company for self-driving cars, cite security concerns as a main reason for replacing humans with automated vehicles. They are not quite there yet, but every step on the way is "moving us closer to a future where roads are safer, easier, and more accessible for everyone". Self-driving cars also progress in a way that humans

cannot. Because all cars share a common software, every mile driven will improve the whole vehicle fleet. In addition to improving Waymo's cars in real world settings, the cars are being trained in simulations. "In this virtual world, we are driving the equivalent of 25 000 cars all day, every day", which adds up to a total of over five billion miles.

The idea of self-driving cars fit well into Google's narrative of time optimization and eliminating tiresome tasks. Old fashioned driving shares the same problem as smartphones in that it occupies the drivers' hands and eyes. Turkle (2012:171) writes about drivers feeling a "need to connect" and the problems that arise when hearing notification sounds while driving. It's hard to stay connected or be productive while steering. With *Waymo* taking care of the driving, passengers do not have to take a break from productivity when moving from one place to another: it's public transport but made to support individualism.

Maybe using *Waymo* is more like a taxi service than a replacement for one's own car. Taxi drivers, as Sharma (2013:62ff) have shown, are often used by customers as technological assets. Their role is to submit to people with "temporal demands" (2013:63), enabling them to keep up a high pace. Drivers' days often consist of standby times, ready to serve those who do not have time to wait. It is a business that shows the relationship between time and power; to have others investing their time in making one's day more efficient.

Google envisions technology, instead of other people, to enable us to keep our pace throughout the day. Computers not only process information faster than humans, but they also do not mind being on standby. The taxi drivers, however, whose jobs could be at risk in a future inhabited by self-driving cars, will have to retrain as their job turns into a thing of the past.

Reveal and obscure

One of the problems that was brought up with *Digital wellbeing* is that there is too much information and possibilities on the Internet. How can we know what's important when it's impossible for humans to scan through all information? The updates presented to *News* and *Maps* address these issues by trying to make the web experience more efficient, filtering out redundant information and give users an algorithmically curated version. Knowledge is not the gathering but discarding of information (Peters 2016:318). Today, news sources are expanded from established newspapers and officials, to tweets and blog posts, making everyone a

theoretical contributor to the news flow. With so many versions of stories available, which ones are right? Seeing the whole world as a newsroom, Google is volunteering for the editorial role.

As Google's head of *News* tells us, there is simply too much information available online for humans to navigate through it all. The benefits of letting Google's AI curate the newsfeed for us is contrasted against human limitations. Unlike humans, *News* can "bring together everything". Google's AI continuously scans the web for "the millions of articles, videos, podcasts, and comments being published every minute, and assembles the key things you need to know". Users don't have to tell Google their interests because the app already knows what you like, based on previous internet activities. User profiles are generated and maintained invisibly in the background as web activity is processed automatically (Couldry & Hepp 2017:126). *News* becomes better the more it's used, a selling point that doesn't go too well with cutting down on device use.

News is presented as a necessity in a time of information abundance. Media platforms like *News* have the ability to reshape the digital environment (Van Dijck 2018:8ff), turning large amounts of information from threat into utility (Peters 2016). Google brings order to a "deluge of information" through algorithmic filtering. Humans should not dive into this torrent unequipped, argues Google, offering a safer and more efficient way of news reading, gathering information from all over the web and presenting it through a familiar interface. This sort of algorithmic selection of content taking over from humans is common across web platforms (Van Dijck 2018:63). In doing so, services like *News* are co-shaping the ontological dimension of everyday life (Couldry & Hepp 2017:126). They gain control to curate what information is provided to users, the information out of which the social is constructed (2017:213).

Like *News*, *Maps* makes a convincing argument for itself by mere existence. *Maps* reveals how much there is to be known, showing that "the world is filled with amazing experiences" as Google's Jen Fitzpatrick says on stage. The digital map covers "hundreds of millions of businesses" and is getting increasingly detailed with the improvements in computation.

With so much information available, *Maps* covers more than users can process. Fitzpatrick acknowledges how overwhelming it can be to choose the right restaurant. The new updates to *Maps* will take use of machine learning to filter all

possibilities to give the most relevant information for each user. *Maps* thus contains technological improvements to help users through the problems that previous versions of *Maps* have brought up. All of its information creates the need for computerized curation, allowing users new experiences without the dangers of making the wrong decisions. "This is super useful, because, with zero work, *Maps* is giving me ideas to kick me out of my rut and inspire me to try something new."

Both *News* and *Maps* are ways to navigate through a life that contains so much information that external computation is needed to "get the full picture". This corresponds with Rosa's (2013) argument that social and individual life is changing with new technological inventions. *News* and *Maps* do not just make our current lifestyles easier but enables even wider intake of information into our daily routine.

Adapting to new possibilities enabled by this computing makes it hard to go back. Couldry and Hepp (2017:212) explain their worries about tying ourselves to "an ever more complex infrastructure of interdependent communication". It creates a world where companies like Google have the power to shape the ontological dimension of everyday life (2017:126), and since life is ordered around the availability of these services, they become hard to renegotiate. Today the social life and media communication technologies are interdependent (2017:215). This is reflected in the *Maps* presentation:

> Today our users are not only asking for the fastest route to a place. They also want to know what is happening around them, what the new places to try are, and what locals love in their neighborhood. (Jen Fitzpatrick)

The scenario presented by Google is one where users are in need of smart solutions in *Maps* to sort through the innumerable possibilities surrounding them, originally made visible by *Maps*. It is a lifestyle that urges the need for smarter technologies (Rosa 2013:174ff).

Users do not know the inner workings of the algorithms curating what information should be visible and what should be hidden. This should be understood as one of the benefits. Google does it so that users do not have to think about it. However, some transparency is provided in both *News* and *Maps*. They provide information about what previous actions have influenced the recommendations that appear in the apps. Based on the "Restaurants I have rated,

cuisines I have liked, and placed I have been to…you will see reasons that it is recommended just for you".

The Digital assistant

In a world overcrowded with information, the uncluttered existence is appealing. To mediate human and computer, Google have created the *Digital Assistant*. It is the way Google thinks we should connect with their services, preferably by voice. The Assistant is a software interface for handling user queries. It is summoned from devices by saying "Hey Google," followed by a question or demand. People can then delegate cognitive tasks such as searching for information, send messages, scheduling, adjust the thermostat or tell a joke. The *Assistant* gets lot of attention in Google's presentation, as it is meant to be the service tying all other Google services together.

The *Digital Assistant* is made to "make your day easier". It connects with other devices to make them smarter. At the time of the presentation, the *Digital assistant* is connected to half a billion devices worldwide. It exists not only in smartphones and Google's own devices, but in cars and 5000 different home devices, "from dishwashers to doorbells".

The *Assistant* promises the experience of technology being fully on the individual's terms. It hides in the cloud, always ready to help, yet never intrusive. "Our vision for the perfect assistant is that it is naturally conversational. It is there when you need it, so that you can get things done in the real world" declares Google's Scott Huffman on stage. The *Digital assistant* is made even more tempting by alluding to the ideas of a real-world servant, an exclusivity for the wealthy, loaded with connotations of personal prosperity (Zuboff 2019:257). Like a butler, the *Assistant* will effectively carry out tasks without questioning, taking care of work and conveniently hiding the process. Because it is always there yet cannot be seen, the *Assistant* exemplifies how technology is getting increasingly "ubiquitous and invisible" (Taddeo & Floredi 2018). The actual computing takes place in remote data centers. The user doesn't need to see what is going on. It is a way to reach *shore subjectivity* as described by Sloterdijk (2013), the ability to escape the rushing river of information of everyday life and watch the process from aside.

However, the examples Google show does not promote a slowdown of the pace of life but technological tools to increase the tempo. The video ads exemplifying everyday interaction with the *Assistant* shows people using it while being off their

phones. The *Assistant* allows one to continue the mail conversation while showering or driving. It encourages increased temporal density by allowing another layer of interaction (Wajcman 2015).

When we "Make Google do it", everything that leads up to the result is obscured behind the user interface (Crawford & Joler 2018). The computation behind the Digital Assistant is carried out in remote locations. Open up one of Google's own smart speakers in search for the *Assistant* is like disassembling a telephone in search for the person in the other end. Inside are sensors and microphones, mediators between every home and the Google servers: "nothing will alert the owner to the vast network that subtends and drives its interactive capacities" (Crawford & Joler 2018). The need for control over technology emphasized with *Digital wellbeing* is here at odds with the obscuring qualities of the *Assistant*.

Instead, Google's products are meant to just work. Not only can they overtake unwanted tasks, but also conveniently hide them from view. The *Digital Assistant*, like human assistants before it, maintain a professional and effortless demeanor while obscuring the workload enabling its convenient services. "While consumers become accustomed to a small hardware device in their living rooms, or a phone app, or semi-autonomous car, the real work is being done within machine learning systems that are generally remote from the user and utterly invisible" (Crawford & Joler 2018).

People utilizing technical features without fully knowing how they work is nothing new. Since industrialization, humans have been accustomed to "tools that can be neither manufactured nor understood by the workers who use them" (Cowan 1983:7). In Weber's (1977:20) definition of the disenchantment process in modernity, he argued that people have no problem traveling by train unknowingly of how the vehicle actually functions. Yet they believe it can be rationally explained if needed. The convenience of the end product, whether public transportation or AI, can be appreciated without knowing the underlying processes that power them. In Google's world, their technologies are widely used, yet deeply understood by few.

However, lack of knowledge about the technologies implemented in one's life risks that person to be dependent on them. "The less we know about [our tools], the more likely it is that they will command us, rather than the other way around"

writes Cowan (1983:10), which is still relevant in a time of algorithmic interdependency.

Instead of disconnecting, Google proposes even deeper integration of digital technology in everyday life. People spend lots of time with digital technologies, the problem is that when they turn away from their devices it can feel like the time has gone to waste. For a company like Google, who relies on its users to spend time with their services, this experience of technology as a barrier to being present is problematic. It is not the large amount of time spent with digital devices that is the problem, but that it is experienced as an activity separated from 'the real world'. Hence the solution cannot be to further distance ourselves from the technologies (disconnecting) but to deepen the integration to make it a more natural part of everyday life. Using Google, it should be clear that although the intelligence is artificial, the benefits are undoubtedly real.

Google's shift towards voice-controlled and more elusive technology with an omnipresent *Assistant* makes it easier to put the phone down but harder to escape the Google ecosystem. The *Digital assistant* can reduce the feeling of being tethered to devices, allowing to stay connected without having one's hands occupied. Several video clips promoting the *Assistant* focus on situations where people otherwise would have to choose between the phone and something else; a steering wheel or coffee mug.

Summing up, desires to regain control is met with even more encompassing and elusive technological integration. Google offers convenience at the cost of insight. However, autonomy is at risk as the influencing powers of AI are enhanced when it does not appear as they are there (Jones 2014:247, 250).

Humanlike machines

Talking to the phone

With AI interaction becoming more common, the goal is to make the interaction itself feel more natural. Voice is "the foundation of the *Google Assistant*," and a way to deeper (and naturalized) integration between humans and computers. The humanness of the *Assistant* is shown through its capability of natural conversation, giving the impression of speaking to another person instead of a computer. This makes the *Assistant* more intuitive to use. For anyone new to a digital device, it can be unclear how it should be used correctly. Google says its goal is for users to

talk to the *Assistant* like if it was a real person, "without having to adapt to a machine" (Leviathan & Matias 2018). When it's obvious that one is talking to a computer, it may change the way of speaking, trying to be extra clear (Bottenberg 2015:175). We should not have to adjust our ways communicating with technology when the technology can be adjusted to suit us.

Since the first computers, it has been "human frailty, rather than rationality, that machines have difficulty mimicking" (Peters 2001:237). Google's new software is capable of synthesizing human voice. It "models the underlying raw audio to create a more natural voice. It's closer to how humans speak, the pitch, the pace, even all the pauses that convey meaning". Compared to text, voice delivers information in many more ways than the series of words uttered.

Google wants its *Assistant* to be "a great conversation partner", which requires it "to fully understand the social dynamics of conversation". Users shouldn't have to begin every inquiry with "Hey Google", just like they do not call their friends by name at every sentence. Therefore, new software updates include the ability keep ongoing conversations with the *Assistant*, and to ask multiple questions at once, "something that feels really natural for us, but it's very difficult for computers to understand".

Anthropomorphizing computers reduces the feeling of engaging with a machine. This is useful for how we interact with digital assistants, which becomes a more natural experience when not having to reflect about it too much (Zuboff 2019:260). It helps solving the problem with technology feeling too intrusive in one's life, as was brought up as one of the issues before *Digital wellbeing*. However, this also blurs the distinction between human and computer, making it harder to tell whether one is interacting with a real person in the other end or a machine.

Blend in

Google's quest for making technology seamlessly blend in everyday life is best shown with *Duplex*, an "AI system for accomplishing real-world tasks over the phone" (Leviathan & Matias 2018). Users can ask their *Assistant* to book a table at a restaurant, whereupon it'll make the call in the background, without human intervention. Afterwards, the *Assistant* confirms the reservation. The demonstration shows *Duplex* calling a restaurant and a hair salon to schedule appointments, simulating human behavior and voice without the other person knowing it talks to a computer. Why would they? There is no reason to believe

such a thing if the criteria for being human in the specific mediated situation is fulfilled (Hutchby 2001:81).

Duplex shows how different media technologies provide different expectations of what is considered human (Kittler 1999). The human features that *Duplex* is unable to replicate, such as bodily appearance, are irrelevant on the phone. Therefore, media are co-constitutors of what it means to be human, providing the preconditions for presentation and expectation of the self. "The large social significance of the media" writes Peters, lies "in their rearrangement of our bodily being" (2001:228). In the digital environment, messages are separated from their senders and turned into data. Both human personae and computer is represented solely through data, which constitutes an environment where it is easier to equate humans and computers. All that can be digitalized can be replicated (Hayles 1999:2; Bakardjieva 2017:213).

Therefore, when human voice can be effectively synthesized, humans as a whole can be replicated in a mediated situation where voice is the sole source of authentication. *Duplex* benefits from the phone medium's inability to see who is at the other end. Unable to show facial expressions and gestures, the telephone puts the speaker in a situation of 'cuelessness' (Hutchby 2001:86). Still, through emotions and subtleties, it's capable of what Hutchby (2001) calls 'intimacy at a distance'. Occasional filler words like 'umm' and 'uh' gives *Duplex* a more humanlike impression (Turkle 2012:8) plus extra processing time.

Duplex's ability to mimic human behavior is aided by the straightforward situation of calling a hair salon. The calls usually consist of a set of questions and answers – concerning time, date, type of service – it holds a degree of predictability that enables the computer to overtake the task. Surprising elements are unlikely to appear. When calling for an appointment, people act like machines. *Duplex* only works in limited settings, but Sundar Pichai explains the vision for the future:

> Done correctly, it will save time for people, and generate a lot of value for businesses. We really want this to work in case, say, if you are a busy parent in the morning and your kid is sick and you want to call for a doctor's appointment. (Sundar Pichai)

With *Google Assistant* made more humanlike, it can become a substitute for real people, helping users avoid real human interaction. Striving to "get things done", human interaction becomes an obstacle and liability. The *Assistant* always provides

interaction on the users' terms, feeling like speaking to a real person, but without the risks associated with it.

With this automation of everyday life activities, *Duplex* lets users step out of unwanted processes, and they will still be done. Because the user does not want to do it, losing insight to how the call is made is not a problem but a convenience. "When we are done, the assistant can give you a confirmation notification saying that your appointment has been taken care of" explains Sundar Pichai. It's the same interaction that you would have with a human assistant.

New problems

The problems with *Duplex* come from the irrational human in the other end. In the demonstration, the first call goes as planned, while the other show how *Duplex* handle conversation with a restaurant employee who lacks sufficient understanding of English. When the human fail to play its part the demands on AI rise dramatically:

> **Employee:** "Hi, how may I help you?"
>
> **Duplex:** "Hi, I'd like to reserve a table for Wednesday, the 7th".
>
> **E** "For [pause] seven people?"
>
> **D** "Umm It's for four people"
>
> **E** "Four people? When? Today? Tonight?"
>
> **D** "Next Wednesday, at 6 pm."
>
> **E** "Actually, we reserve for upwards of five people. For four people, you can come"
>
> **D** "How long is the wait usually to be seated?"
>
> **E** "For when? Tomorrow? Or weekend? Or?
>
> **D** "For next Wednesday, uh, the 7th."
>
> **E** "Oh no it's not too busy. You can come for four people, okay?"
>
> **D** "Oh I gotcha, thanks."
>
> **E** "Yep. Bye, bye."

The restaurant employee misinterprets the date 7th with seven people, an example of the contextual understanding that is hard to train computers to (Leviathan & Matias 2018). She struggles with conversation but not with being human. The

Assistant, however, is supposed to be a conversational partner that, unlike a real person, always has the right information and does not forget.

> We have many of these examples where the calls quite do not go as expected, but our assistant understands the context, the nuance, it knew to ask for wait times in this case and handled the interaction gracefully. (Sundar Pichai)

Humans are a liability when it comes to efficiency: easily distracted, cannot handle large amounts of information and prone to make errors. People interacting with technology shown in Google's presentation form another argument for why we should let computers take over.

The *Assistant* was invented to complete tasks without the redundancies of human interaction. But as humans are integrated in the technological system, compatibility errors occur. An unintended consequence that Google diagnose is the possible negative effects on children caused by the rise of digital assistants. The *Assistant* is both a tool for, and caretaker of children, always ready to keep them entertained. The two months leading up to Google IO, 130 000 hours of children's stories were told by the *Assistant*. But as more communication is played out between humans and machines, questions arise about whether their increasingly humanlike qualities change our behavior towards machines, and other humans (Jones 2014:253–4). As Scott Huffman at Google says:

> Now, as we continue to improve the experience for families, a concern that we have heard from many parents, including people on the team who have children is: are kids learning to be bossy and demanding when they can just say "Hey Google" to ask for anything they need? It is not a simple area, but one step that we have been working on is something we call *Pretty Please*. (Scott Huffman)

The *Pretty Please* feature makes the assistant recognize and encourage kind behavior, like ending an inquiry with "please" or "thank you". The video demonstrating *Pretty Please* shows how the *Assistant* "understands and responds to positive conversation with polite reinforcement" by answering with "You are very polite" or "Thanks for asking so nicely" before completing the task. *Pretty please* thus follows a familiar pattern (Couldry & Hepp 2017:218) of technology serving as "a compensation for the impact of technology" by solving the unwanted and unintended consequences of earlier technological inventions (Stivers 1999:38–9).

Google often mentions the phrase 'in the real world', distinguishing the artificial and the real, but *Pretty Please* further fuses the two together. A new generation being born into digital assistants should learn not to separate machines from living beings but to treat them as such. Then technology will lose a bit more of its otherness and become more closely integrated into everyday life.

Conclusion

What role should technology have in our lives? The analysis finds the relationship between humans and technology articulated in two different, and not so easily conjoined ways at the Google I/O keynote. On the one hand, *Digital wellbeing* presents digital technology as a distinct domain of everyday life, contrasted with "the real world". No matter how human the voice of Duplex sounds, technology is essentially different. We can measure and limit our time spent with technology, and the *Digital wellbeing* initiative provides tools for doing so. Wellbeing in this sense is being an autonomous subject, able to use technologies as a means for empowerment, yet able to disconnect whenever needed.

Yet, the overall vision brought by Google suggests a situation where digital technology is fully integrated into daily life, no longer bound to particular devices and always available by voice; envisioned as an omnipresent servant that covers more domains with every update. The ideals of efficiency and time-saving permeating Google's vision of technology encourages users to give away control in order to get control over their time. In this vision, humans and computers blend together and distinctions are blurred. It is one where communication with human or machine is the same, and where digital assistants should be treated nicely. In the first definition, AI means *artificial*, in the other, *intelligence*.

Following the assertion that technologies have implications for our sense of reality, and that it is deeply intertwined with the social, this thesis has asked what it means to be human in the world of Google. I will now present some concluding thoughts.

What is wellbeing?

To Google, wellbeing and rationality seem inseparable. A healthy life means having control and avoid falling into irrational behavior; to be a productive and efficient being. Inefficiency is the main harm of technological devices. Google describes a battle of users' attention, with the users on one side and pervasive technologies on the other.

With this diagnosis of the current situation, Google also have a cure: *Digital wellbeing* is presented as a way of giving users the tools to regain autonomy over technology and live free and safe in the digital sphere. Ideals about individual freedom permeate both *Digital wellbeing* and the rest of Google's services.

If bad technology threatens autonomy, good technology can improve it. Using digital technologies should be on the users' terms, says Google. *Digital wellbeing* helps users block unwanted incoming information.

We measure and limit device use, because it manifests itself as a threat to the good life: stealing valuable time without making us more productive. This is what should be fixed, thinks Google. But disconnecting is not the right way. In this interconnected world, we need digital assistance to navigate safely.

Even if one of Google's executives tell the story about how joyful and liberating it feels to disconnect during the vacation, the rest of Google's presentation show that this doesn't mean that we should break up with digital technology, but rather the opposite. The problems with technology should be solved by making it better adjusted to human needs and even more integrated. After all, vacations are just a temporary break from the ordinary.

Google provides the tools for taking time off technology, while at the same time pushing for further technological integration in everyday life. We should learn to live without the smartphone, because in Google's vision, digital technology is not located in a distinct device, but as an ambient intelligence. The *Digital wellbeing* app, measuring screen time and phone unlocks, rewards using Google's *Digital assistant*, and to learn to put away the phone. Stop roam around the internet for answers when Google can get them for you.

Digital assistance

On the one hand, wellbeing is to have full control, and to have all the data necessary to do the right choices. At the same time, giving up control is necessary in order to live in accordance to the pace enabled by smart technology. The goal for the *Digital assistant* is to free users from the abundance of information and technological interaction of everyday life, by handing over chores and queries to Google. The technology hides it in the background, enabling users to take a break from the fast pace of late modern society, or to fill up the time space with other things. We should not choose between restaurants, algorithms can do that. Neither should we make the reservation, AI can do that. Drive to the restaurant? The car does it better. We are presented with a utopia in which struggles are conveniently vanished and the way to new, meaningful experiences is frictionless.

However, when Google take care of our duties – searching, scheduling, navigating, calling, driving – they become a powerful agent in shaping daily life. They compile information but also choose what is important (Peters 2016:318). A situation emerges where users are suggested to get more control by giving up control. To 'Make Google do it' means giving up insight to how it is done. This revives the old question of freedom versus security: is freedom to have all choices or not having to worry about choosing (Stivers 1999:211).

With so much everyday activity taking place through mediated communication channels, critical reflection is needed on how the media technologies themselves affect our lives. Companies like Google enable a new form of institutional powers (Couldry & Hepp 2017:217–8). They shape and influence the reality in which the user then can experience freely and autonomous. The services presented by Google are liberating and democratic in the sense that they empower individuals with instantaneous access to a world of information. They are widely available and does not cost any money. Everyone should be inhabitants in Google's world, but the world itself is not a neutral construction as it embodies certain values and interests from Google (Karppi 2018:2).

Too much to know

Today, lack of information is rarely a problem. When a Google search gives millions of results, it is a reminder of the amount of information out there. It is not humane to go through every result. Through their services for managing the world's information, Google effectively reveals how much information there is, and make an argument for the inability to cope with it without their help. Search, Maps and News create a world in which Google services are necessary.

"There has always been too much to know" writes John Durham Peters (2016:321), but new technology can make it more evident to us. Impressions of information abundance did not emerge with digital media, but has been around for thousands of years (Blair 2010). It's a a feeling brought up by a mix of personal and cultural expectations, media technologies as well as the quantity and quality of information available (2010:3). In the middle ages, as books became more widely available, so did also the concern that the abundance of books would lead people to waste time reading the bad books instead of high quality literature. With the printing press, one way of coping with the large number of books was to create even more books: Anthologies and encyclopedias were ways of fighting information overload with even more information[2].

Google can be placed in this historical tradition of indexing the world's information, making it more accessible. Compiling and mediating knowledge, they bring order and cleanliness to a web glutted with information, people and devices; reminding us how hard all of this would be without technological help. The loss of agency is not portrayed as a bad thing, but a benefit: When Google takes care of the menial work of compiling and sorting information, humans can focus on what is truly meaningful.

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[2] I got the example of anthologies and encyclopedias from a lecture given by John Durham Peters in 2014 called "What is knowledge good for? And what does communication have to do with it." It can be viewed on YouTube:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INEN6n2IR48

Being human

What is considered human is continuously rethought in relation to what machines can do. When the technologies around us change, so does the preconditions for living. New media technologies thus have existential consequences (Peters 2016:315; Lagerkvist 2017). They have us reconsider interaction with other people; what is useful knowledge and what is not.

History is filled with things we do not have to worry about anymore, thanks to new inventions. Cowan (1983:6) reminds us that few would know how to make their own bread without external help if so our lives depended on it. Baking bread 'from scratch' today rarely includes harvesting wheat or obtaining yeast. This kind of knowledge, once crucial for households, is now obsolete due to technological change and centralized, specialized production. We are constantly surrounded by technological inventions that are not noticed until they stop working or disappear. Living in late modernity means constantly using goods and tools we do not fully understand how they were made or how they function, as long as they work (Cowan 1983:7).

Google's technologies not only remind us of our inherent shortcomings, they also hold the promise of freeing us from them. "Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities" (Turkle 2012:1). We should be managers of the technologically infused world, deciding what should be done and then let machines do it for us, either because we don't want to do it ourselves, or the machines do it better, faster and more reliable.

Digital wellbeing is an attempt to help people live peacefully with the digital, because a life without it is impossible. Technology is an environment to us in the same way that nature has been historically (Stivers 1999:23): It presents us with the challenges and solutions of everyday life. As technology and society change, so does the demands on the people living with it. Google offers to help people transition into the world they create.

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Can cosmopolitanism fix the EU?

A case study of the pan-European political movement Volt Europa

Michal Gieda

Introduction

It has become obvious that the world is increasingly interconnected. Cosmopolitanism claims that we are now part of an international community of fate: we simply have to consider that images of melting glaciers send signals across the globe. Especially in Europe, we see that economic crises or terror attacks in one country give us cause for worry in another. These phenomena are on the rise, and we are becoming increasingly aware of their consequences as news flood (pun unintended) our feeds. Naturally, we are also gaining an awareness that something needs to be done on a global political level. There is in fact a general understanding that with inherently borderless phenomena, and phenomena that have become borderless through the processes of globalization, we are becoming less capable of dealing with them on a national political level (Held, 2010:13). Despite some notable attempts to actively tackle such challenges in the form of global organisation and continental unions, however, the nation-state remains the primary point of departure in this endeavor (Beck, 2006; Held, 2011; Kaldor, 1995). In a critical response to this, cosmopolitan theory argues that we have reached a point of no return, where the only way countries may catch up with issues beyond their borders is to pursue stronger international action (Beck & Sznaider, 2010). While a range of global political initiatives have been facilitated in the past century, they have to a large extent been ineffective in their ability to exert actual political influence.

One such initiative is the European Union. Numerous cosmopolitan scholars have argued that the EU is an evident model of a cosmopolitan political community (Archibugi, 1998; Delanty, 2005; Habermas, 2003). Nowhere else

have we observed a large-scale project of international governance such as the European Union. Despite this achievement, however, there is a broad consensus that we are beginning to see cracks in its governance, and at the same time, a broad disagreement about the appropriate remedy (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sifft et al., 2007; Steffek & Nanz, 2008:1). Arguably, however, these issues boil down to exactly that of nation-state centrism.

With this in mind, there are several factors which make a transnational democratic body such as the EU different from the national dimension. The national and local populations of member states are far-removed from the transnational decision-making bodies, which in the case of the EU has resulted in lack of awareness on how it affects people's lives, as well as lack of insight into how they can directly affect the decision-making (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sifft et al., 2007). As many of the political decisions have moved away from the nation-state, the new democratic structure has arguably failed in allowing citizens to catch up, leading to a "widening gulf between the EU and the people" (European Commission, 2001:7). Essentially, civic dialogue remains situated on the national level while politics have extended beyond (Sifft et al.,2007:128).

Moreover, voters are also more diverse and socially distanced from each other: decisions on the EU level do not only represent single national interests, but instead force all EU citizens to synchronize their political agendas. These differences, however, lie not only in diverse identities and cultures, but also institutional structures and economic development. Subsequently, we have entered into a time where the interdependence between states and citizens is causing serious debate: Brexit, mass migration, global terrorism or climate change are among many phenomena that have created an awareness of the interconnectedness of Europe (Beck, 2006), and have caused a clearer division between sentiments of openness and protectionism.

There has in fact been a rise of numerous populist and Eurosceptic political movements in recent years. Uniting such movements is the sentiment that state sovereignty is under threat as the EU exerts increasing political pressure. In addition to this trend, there have also been a range of initiatives arguing for the protection and strengthening of the European project. Many such initiatives have strongly argued the that EU is indeed necessary for the stability of Europe and to address transnational challenges, however, some of them also recognize that it is

in drastic need of reform, and a new way of doing politics. In fact, one such movement has grown amidst the precariousness of the European Union, prescribing a new approach to European politics: pan-Europeanism. Herein comes Volt Europa.

The case of Volt Europa

In 2016, the year that Brexit and Donald Trump were stirring debate across Europe and the world, a group of students decided to kickstart Volt Europa. The individuals believed that, to the background of various events which had shaken the world, something needed to be done. As Europeans, their target for action became the European Union, a project that was to be protected, but one in need of reform. The political project they envisioned came to take on a new and unique approach to European democracy - pan-Europeanism. Here, Volt is pursuing a different agenda where a single political party with a common platform aims to represents the citizens of *Europe*, and not just citizens of sovereign states. What then motivates such an agenda?

To begin with, a pan-European approach is motivated by a concern for the ever-growing transnational issues. In this regard, the movement recognizes that such processes cannot be managed by nation-states alone. Here, we begin to observe the key issue recognized in cosmopolitan thought: nationally grounded politics are no longer sufficient if we are to address the ever-growing transnational interconnectedness (Beck, 2006; Habermas, 2003; Held, 2010; Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011). According to Volt, however, the issue also runs deeper in that Europe is currently under the "visible threat of populism and nationalism, corruption and the fruitless 'old way' of doing politics" (Volt Europa, 2019a): The continent as a political arena is currently a battleground for ideological forces, where disagreement, rather than consensus, dominates the political and public debates. Here, another key vision is thus to operate outside ideological boxes, where ideological categorizations are abandoned for a best-practice approach. Furthermore, the transnational program is established based on shared values among all Europeans. The movement envisions a continent where the shared history, experiences and values give the potential to unite citizens across the EU. For this purpose, Volt highlights the importance of stronger transnational communication and common understanding. By working under a grassroots and citizen-empowerment program, it aims to give each EU citizens the tools to shape

their lives and societies from the bottom-up. In order for this to happen, Volt envisions a digital revolution providing effective platforms for European citizens to mobilize and together bring real change into European politics.

The political platform has emerged with the simple intention of "changing the way politics is done and shaping the future of Europe!" (Volt Europa, 2019a). As the thesis will argue, this framework indicates that Volt Europa is a clear manifestation of a cosmopolitan project. As such, it provides us with a strong empirical case in order to understand its broader context of the European Union as a cosmopolitan phenomenon. Most importantly, however, it provides a significant perspective as to how cosmopolitanism may be a solution to Europe's deficiencies.

What do we mean by cosmopolitanism?

In the analysis of transnational processes, the social sciences traditionally speak of globalization. The process of globalization explains a social fact of interconnectedness through the blurring of boundaries between the local and global. The concept of cosmopolitanism adds an important layer to this conceptualization: interconnectedness is not just a social fact, we are also becoming increasingly aware of it. As individuals are continuously exposed to the world through increased cross-border mobility and global digital media, they are adapting a mindset of a global people with a shared fate (Beck, 2006:7; Habermas, 2006:43).

The idea has in recent conceptual developments began evolving into a legitimate methodological framework to study various levels of human organization. It departs from the critical assumption that the social sciences are currently stuck in a methodological nationalism paradigm, where even global society is studied strictly from the point of view of the nation-state. The criticism is simple: as globalizing processes are an increasing reality, nationalist frameworks are insufficient if we are to understand the new societal order (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:382).

The thesis argues that the case at hand, studied in the context of the transnational community that is Europe, reveals significant empirical findings about the manifestations of cosmopolitan identities. Volt Europa presents an alternative unit of research to uncover a real-world cosmopolitan manifestation (Beck &

Sznaider, 2010:395), which serves to bringing us closer to uncovering the frameworks proposed by methodological cosmopolitanism. As the thesis will uncover, the people subscribing to Volt are involved in a continuous process of renegotiating their democratic identities as "belonging both to local and to supra-national entities", which in turn may "give rise to a genuine cosmopolitan identity." (Pendenza & Garcia Faroldi, 2015:698).

In the context of the EU, we have seen a rise of nationalist forces, but as a response we have likewise seen transnational movements arise. This tension will likely continue in the coming future, and therefore, it is more important than ever to highlight these movements and their role in European society. With this in mind, Volt Europa is arguably the most suitable case for this purpose.

Purpose and research questions

The aim of this research is twofold. First, an overarching goal seeks to further contribute to the study of cosmopolitanism by researching a real-life case. It departs from the key assumption that a cosmopolitan approach is necessary to address the transnational issues we observe today. Subsequently, the second aim is to understand what a cosmopolitan approach may mean for the functioning of transnational governance and cross-border democracy in the context of the European Union. The key assumption is that the political movement Volt Europa shows a clear manifestation of a cosmopolitan democratic approach. By looking at this movement, it aims to utilize a broad theoretical and methodological approach in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of a real-life cosmopolitan experiment and its implications.

Cosmopolitanism offers two important contributions to social science. First, it is a normative, future-oriented theory explaining *how things should be*. This moral framework prescribes that, with the resources and capabilities we realistically possess, we can reach an alternative cosmopolitan future, something we may refer to as utopian realism (Giddens, 1990:154). Second, recent critical cosmopolitan thinking argues that we need to begin applying it as an empirical framework to help us analyze *how things actually are.* We need to understand the realities of people and in what way cosmopolitan expressions actually emerge on the ground. Consequently, the thesis will utilize both perspectives, providing both a descriptive and a prescriptive conclusion. The aim is to provide further legitimacy

to the cosmopolitan approach and strengthen it as a methodological and empirical framework. Simultaneously, the thesis argues that the case of Volt Europa reveals significant perspectives on the current state of the European Union, where it is heading, and how it may be improved. Thus, this research seeks to develop results which show how a cosmopolitan democratic framework may - as the title of the thesis suggests – provide a fix for the European Union.

To address this purpose, the thesis poses the following research questions:

1. What does Volt Europa reveal about the European Union as a cosmopolitan democratic community?

   a How does the pan-European approach of Volt Europa attempt to address the issues in European democracy?

2. How can a cosmopolitan framework address the issues in European democracy?

   b How can digital media facilitate a space for cosmopolitan democratic dialogue in the European Union?

Consolidating cosmopolitanism

The thesis departs from the theoretical and methodological assumptions provided by cosmopolitan thought, a long tradition that has evolved through intensive academic debate. To begin with, the evolution of this concept will be dissected in order to understand where academia has found itself today and where it is heading.

Perhaps the most prominent debate has been that between the theoretical and methodological application of the concept. Cosmopolitan thought has recently been scrutinized for being strictly theoretical in its application, where a new narrative is proposing for cosmopolitanism to develop into a clearer methodological framework. As a concept which has, in relative terms, only recently been framed in academia, cosmopolitanism currently remains a contested and often ambiguous notion. To this end, one of the key aims of this review is to establish a concrete but comprehensive concept which can be utilized in the study of cosmopolitan processes and expressions as indicated by the case at hand.

To the advantage of this thesis, an important argument has been made by scholars that Europe and the EU are perhaps the most prominent experiments of a cosmopolitan community (Archibugi, 1998; Delanty, 2005; Habermas, 2003). In fact, the EU has been widely utilized as a case to study this concept. As the point of departure is a manifestation of cosmopolitanism in the context of the European Union, the review will therefore additionally highlight how this phenomenon has been framed in the European experiment.

A contested concept

The first scholarly interpretation of cosmopolitanism was framed by the 17th century political thinker Immanuel Kant. As an early scholar of international relations, the starting point of his analysis was primarily on the global political level. Kant's goal was to establish a concept of participation in a global cosmopolitan society, referred to as "cosmopolitan right" (Reilly, 2011:369). This argument proposed that world citizens must possess the agency to be heard across diverse communities, leading to the establishment of a "universal ethical realm" (Held, 2010:45). It is here that the idea of citizenship and identity comes in, where individuals are seen both as citizens of nations and of the world. In an almost utopian reality, at least by the standards of his time, he saw the world as in need of establishing a universal cosmopolitan society "which can administer justice universally (Kant & Reiss, 1991:45). Interestingly, it could be argued that he was ahead of his time, recognizing the effects of globalization already in the 17th century:

> The peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of laws in one part of the world is felt everywhere (Kant & Reiss, 1991:107-108)

With the first academic account of cosmopolitanism, we are presented with a world where local events have transnational implications, and vice versa. In *Cosmopolitan Vision*, Ulrich Beck (2006) provides a significant development in this analysis. He argues that our realities have undergone a transformation toward increased awareness of global interconnectedness and its consequences: humanity is now engaged in global events through new information and media technology, where the lives and misfortunes of humans beyond our borders are brought to us directly through mass media, expanding the "spaces of our emotional

imagination" (Ibid.:6). Likewise, phenomena such as migration, multiculturalism and mobility across borders have forced us to directly observe our connection to humanity.

This forces us to view the world from a new perspective, one that breaks away from what Beck (2016) refers to as methodological nationalism. The argument proposes that academic and political thinking remain stuck in analyzing the social world from the starting point of nationalism, where questions of democracy are exclusively limited to the nation states. In this paradigm, humans are "naturally" divided into a set of nations, defined by internal organization of society and external boundaries separating them from other nations (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:383). This poses consequences for social science: empirical inquiry and theoretical developments are guided by a methodology which forces them into narrow categorizations of society and politics.

Considering the increasing global interconnectedness and our new awareness of it, if future citizens and transnational constellations want to address "genuine global problems", then the nation-state cannot be the only frame of reference (Stevenson, 2011:257). To the background of this, Beck (2016) proposes a range of factors to demonstrate why we must understand the world from a cosmopolitan perspective. He elaborates on Kant in first explaining that risks and crisis are no longer territorially bound. Risks such as climate change, international crime or terrorism force us to feel and think about global "interdependence and the resulting 'civilizational community of fate'" (Ibid.:7). Another crucial element is the relationship to the "others". Arguably strengthened by the rise of mass- and social media, as well as increasing migration, individuals have become curious about foreign identities and cultures. All this results in an "impossibility of living in a world society" where "social boundaries are being redrawn due to an interconnectedness of cultures and traditions…" (Ibid.:7). The question of ethics and morality thus take a center stage in the cosmopolitan discussion. To be cosmopolitan first and foremost means the ability and will to emphasize with "victims" on the other side of the world. As a result of the global interdependence and a "globalization of emotions", Beck (Ibid.:5-6) claims that "…the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a transnational sense".

The discussion of the role of media is crucial to understand cosmopolitanism and how this emotional imagination is expanding. Mass- and social media have forced us into a diversity of transnational confrontations with people and events across

the world, resulting in identities increasingly expanding across borders (Beck, 2006:7). According to Beck (Ibid.:19), this results in an *unconscious* cosmopolitanism, where exposure to global interconnectedness makes us "part of another world", without us necessarily "realizing or expressly wishing it". On a similar note, Roger Silverstone (2007:5) puts forward the perspective of the Mediapolis, discussing the critical role of media in the creation of a global "social, civic and moral space" as a force increasingly penetrating our reality. In this regard, humanity has become dependent on media for our everyday lives and experiences. By extent, we are thus situated in not only our own realities, but that of other individuals and communities (Ibid.:5).

A slightly different approach to cosmopolitanism takes into account rights instead of obligations, proposing a democratic theory stating that "wherever people are joined in significant social relations they have a collective right to share in control of these." (Ibid.:539). As a response to the traditional approach, David Held (2010) therefore considers a cosmopolitanism where human allegiance is more nuanced. The counterargument is that individuals belong to *both* local communities and to humanity. In this regard, the cosmopolitan identity should not be seen as a replacement of local identity, but as a supplement to it. The key contribution here is therefore that cosmopolitan theory must also recognize how its meaning is interpreted in local contexts (Ibid.:16). Scheffler (2002) likewise discusses the idea of moral obligations to all human beings as inadequate to explain the reality of cosmopolitan expressions in society. In understanding local affiliations, he (2002:7) argues that this extreme version of cosmopolitanism views local favouritism as justifiable only if it is "by reference to the interests of all human beings considered as equals". On a similar note, Roudemetof (2005:114) argues that we must be careful in the application of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, as they are "far from innocent description of an actual situation" and have often been applied based on privilege. Thus, if the world is moving in a cosmopolitan direction, what is then the course of action for "real people who are necessarily situated in particular webs of belonging…" (Calhoun, 2003:535).

Despite the debates, it is important to continue asking whether the global and local actually "have dissolved and merged together in new forms" (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:383). As will be observed, much of contemporary research on cosmopolitanism takes this criticism into account and highlights that local

realities cannot be neglected. While these new conceptual developments have only scarcely been observed in real-life contexts, the idea of an increasingly cosmopolitan world should arguably continue to develop and be tested empirically. A broad agreement in this endeavor is that analysis must begin on a grassroots level (Calhoun, 2003:532; Rovisco & Nowicka, 2011:8).

If we are to move away from methodological nationalism, Beck & Sznaider (2010:395) argue that we must "redefine the basic concepts of the social" by looking at alternative units of research. What is crucial is to answer what the alternative units of research would be. In their own research, they consider the idea of "transnational regimes of politics" and "transnational spaces and cultures of memory" as units to observe the blurred distinctions between national and international, and the "plurality of interdependencies" of states, organizations and various other types of social groupings (Ibid.:395). As will be discussed this is exactly what defines Volt Europa and its context of the European Union, making them ideal units of research to study the growing cosmopolitan reality.

The cosmopolitan perspective on Europe

As previously mentioned, the transnational processes pursued by the European Union, with a unique "layer of governance beyond the nation-state" (Pichler, 2009a:707), make Europe perhaps the primary example of an actively cosmopolitan unit of research. An important argument here is that cosmopolitanism does not necessarily need to refer to a global space, rather, "it resides in social mechanisms and dynamics that can exist in any society at any time in history where world openness has a resonance." (Delanty, 2006:43).

The European Union has in the last century pursued an "economic, political and also cultural" integration into a unified community (Pichler, 2008:1110). When speaking of culture, an important characteristic of the European community has been the continuous renegotiation of difference and the reinvention of history (Delanty, 2002:354). A key example of a cosmopolitan cultural expression is the collective memory of the Holocaust, which with time has become European rather than bound to a specific nation (Ibid.:354). In fact, many studies have considered the aspects of history and memory as feeding into the cosmopolitan community of Europe. This particularly pertains to the question of morality and human rights, which saw its expression especially with the establishment of the human

rights paradigm following World War II. Thus, while the state is still the key actor in shaping its citizens' collective memories, this role is being significantly extended to the European project (Levy & Sznaider, 2011:201).

By means of the economic and political dimensions, Delanty (2005:406) considers the concept of Europeanization. By this he refers to the ongoing processes of European integration and the emergence of a European identity alongside national communities. It has been theorized that, especially in the case of Europe, identities can no longer be seen as homogenous: As a consequence of the globalizing processes, Europeans are increasingly forced to embrace a "reflexive post-national consciousness" (Delanty, 2002:354). While recognizing that Europe is moving in a direction of increased continental integration, it also needs to be acknowledged that the EU does not necessarily "supersede the nation-state but exists alongside it in constantly changing relations." (Delanty, 2005:407). Subsequently, the EU in its current form is not replacing the nation-state, rather, it is redefining the notion of statehood and forming new expressions of it (Ibid.:407).

Klaus Eder (2004:90) provides an important critical argument to explain why the local and the national still matter. He discusses the case of "New Europe" as a community constructed upon a strong vision to "synchronize its differences". When discussing the process of Europeanization, he highlights that Europe is "a space with differing speeds" (Eder, 2004:90; Habermas, 2006:82). What he means is that there are clear social, cultural and geographic variations between the Northwest and Southeast, where different nation-states are developing at different speeds, while simultaneously following a "culture of synchronicity". He argues that this culture, however, is also prone to be contested (Eder, 2004:104). As the Northwest takes the lead in development, it also becomes the social and political geographic space that sets the agenda. In contrast, the Southeast tends to be a step behind and thus becomes the less powerful set of actors, increasingly contesting the unequal relationship. On a similar note, Habermas (2006:69,81) argues that the eastern enlargement of the EU increases the complexity of the transnational governance project, where "the divisive force of divergent national histories and historical experiences that traverse European territory like geological fault lines remains potent". The protectionist and EU-sceptic stance taken by the Visegrad Group (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) in the past decade exemplifies this perfectly.

There are several shortcomings in the sociological analysis of Europe in that it lacks the proper analytical tools to understand the real-life contexts of a European society. In this way, mainstream analysis has not moved beyond concepts of methodological nationalism, where Europe is understood in plural terms as a set of diverse societies, while it should also be analyzed as one society (Beck, 2007:47). The key here is therefore to expand the concept of a "public" to encompass a European public (Ibid.:47-48).

The case study in political movement research

As the literature overview observed, the traditionally theoretical perspective of cosmopolitanism has been in the process of transforming into a methodological framework. Much of contemporary thought has recognized the need to not only empirically test such assumptions, but to explore them from a grassroots level to understand the tensions between local and cosmopolitan identity. For this purpose, the thesis employs a qualitative case study research model as to provide a contextual understanding of this phenomenon.

Similar to the methodological debate of cosmopolitanism, Bent Flyvbjerg (2001:166) makes the argument that the social sciences have traditionally attempted to understand the world with the aim to forge predictive conclusions as to compete with the natural sciences for scientific legitimacy. He argues, however, that the abstract nature and complexity of human values and the social world are not meant to be understood in this way. What makes humans unique is that they are themselves capable of a reflexivity about their actions and values within their contextual realities. In this regard, no theory of social science is able to predict how individuals and groups "determine what counts as an action", because this ability stems from a complex set of social frameworks that the subject is situated in. The key distinction between social action and the behavior of the material world is thus that humans assign meaning to their actions. This action is based either on intention from the individual, or on "the system of meanings to which it belongs" (Della Porta, 2014:230).

Human rationality is therefore to a large extent unpredictable due to the vast differences of underlying practices, values and interpretations that cannot be reduced to "predefined elements and rules" (Flyvbjerg, 2001:136). What this

means is that for social research to be a legitimate scientific endeavor, the researcher must attain detailed understanding of social values and actions based first and foremost on contextual analysis, with the purpose of providing results that can have genuine real-life implications (Flyvbjerg, 2001:166).

Case study research as a social scientific method utilizes multiple sources of data in order to inquire "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (Yin, 1984:23). Through a qualitative approach, this method allows to attain a holistic understanding of a particular social phenomenon (Snow & Trom, 2002:151-152). As the case study research entails the collection of data from multiple sources, it is often carried out over a longer period of time in order to better understand the social processes as they unfold. Therefore, the research design must also be "open-ended and flexible in terms of both the design and execution of the research", open to the discovery of new analytical findings which might alter the design of the research (Ibid.:153)

For this thesis, triangulation was employed, by using a single method in focus, with the complement of several other types of data including participatory observations, documentary material, and various forms of digital material. This approach to data collection and analysis means that several types of data are utilized in order to gain a "multilayered" understanding of the case at hand (Blee & Taylo, 2002:105; Snow & Trom, 2002:150). It allows to gain an understanding of the complexity of the social phenomenon being studied, as well strengthening the research by accounting for limits and biases (Ayoub, Wallace & Zepeda-Millán, 2014:67).

The data collection was conducted primarily with the help of qualitative key informant interviewing. This is an effective technique to investigate "strategies, cultures, and internal dynamics; and map out the relationships between social movement organizations in a larger social movement industry." (Blee & Taylo, 2002:105). The choice of interview subjects as key informants represents the need to address individuals who "serve as an expert" and thus provide first-hand information about the "microdynamics of political participations" (Blee & Taylo, 2002:106; Della Porta, 2014:228). We should however not exclude the function of the key informants also serving as respondents. Therefore, the aim of the semi-structured interviewing is also to uncover individual life-worlds and provide thick descriptions of how informants "construct the world around them, what they are

doing or what is happening" (della Porta, 2014:241; Kvale, 2007:x). In total, eight informants, based in three local boards in three separate countries, as well as one informant on the federal level, were interviewed to provide insight into the movement's operations and participation. All informants were selected on the basis of their leadership roles in the party as to provide an "expert" perspective.

For this investigation, the interview guide was constructed upon the initial research questions, the theoretical groundwork, and with consideration to some of the main strategies of the political movement. Due to the open-ended nature of case study research, however, minor aspects of the guide were adjusted during the entire interviewing process as new themes arose. Kvale (2007:43) argues that this may be desirable as the researcher gains new insights during investigation, and will result in a more detailed understanding of the topic as well as the possibility to uncover new evidence relevant to the inquiry.

With this in mind, the interview method may not always provide a full-proof account of the case being studied, as informants may give different and sometimes conflicting recollections of how the movement functions. Thus, to strengthen the validity of the research, the thesis also utilized participatory observations and documentary data (Blee & Taylo, 2002:110). Various types of documentary sources have been used to complement the interview data (Della Porta, 2014:237), such as content in the form of a party program, policy proposal and other digital material. This is particularly important when carrying out key informant interviews, where respondents are meant to provide an "expert" view on the movement's organizational and strategic dimensions.

Observations are likewise a useful complementary method in order to further understand the actions of participants and the meanings ascribed to them. The aim is for the researcher to familiarize themselves with the community aspect of the movement by submerging themselves in everyday culture and political debate, which helps uncover the relationships and potential conflicts of interest between the participants (Balsiger & Lambelet, 2014:145). The participatory observations and discussions were carried out at two separate local meet-up events in Lund and Copenhagen in order to highlight the interactions between participants and to gather preliminary data in the research design process.

Understanding the cosmopolitan experiment

Beyond national boxes

The slogan of Volt Europa is simple: "to do politics in a different way, outside ideological and national boxes" (Cahen-Salvador, 2018). The idea for the movement came about in 2016 out of these exact concerns: the founders described it as the year of Brexit, Trump and Marine le Pen, and that the inaction to these developments had shocked them (Boeselager, 2019). The slogan represents several key issues which the party sees as in need of addressing: First, the current focus on national politics does not suffice in addressing the transnational problems that we see today, while the ambition to address such issues through European governance is facing threats from nationalist and populist forces. Second, Volt recognizes that current party structures are guided by ideologies and dogma, obstructing political actors from engaging in effective dialogue and limiting their capabilities to finding solutions. Finally, Volt argues that the European Union currently suffers from a democratic deficit where voters are not sufficiently included in the democratic processes, and are not receiving sufficient opportunities to take active part in the political processes that affect their lives. These factors form a strong motivation for the movement and are crucial in its efforts to mobilize, expand, and to bring effective change to the EU.

Overcoming national boundaries

To the background of the pan-European element of Volt, the transnational nature of many political issues creates a need to reshape the way politics is done in the European Union. The political platform of Volt Europa works to connect actors on a local and national level together with a European party structure, pursuing a common political agenda and working along a unified platform to "solve the issues we all have in common." (Volt Europa, 2018)

In order to understand the unique nature of this approach, we must first understand what the movement considers to be the current challenges to European governance. To begin with, there is a clear argument to move beyond the national paradigm of democracy, which, according to the informants, is no longer sufficient in addressing the increasingly transnational problems.

So when we start with the nation, there is so much politics right now that is so grounded in the national context that we fail to see beyond [...] But the winds will blow against our coast regardless of sovereignty, you know, we will have floods because guess what, the water doesn't care about where your borders go. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

This resonates with one of the main assumptions of contemporary cosmopolitan thought: As globalizing processes accelerate and expand, we are faced with a "crisis in world society" where risks and crises increasingly blur the boundaries between the "internal and external, us and them, the national and the international" (Beck, 2006:7). To this, David Held (1998:19) argues that climate change is the clearest example of a "global shift in human organization and activity", increasingly exerting pressure on the effectiveness of "state-centric policies".

As highlighted by the interview discussion about climate change as an evident cross-border issue, we observe a sentiment to tackle transnational challenges through stronger transnational governance as the only option moving forward. In fact, this sentiment appears to be self-evident to the respondents:

I think the chance to actually act on a practical level is very small for the European institutions. Because most of the power is still in the hands of national governments, and I feel like nations should give up sovereignty, a little bit at least, and put it in the hands of a federal government in Europe. (Interview 9, City-lead Copenhagen, Volt Denmark)

Evidently, the party platform is constructed upon the vision to establish a federal European Union with the potential to exert stronger influence over its member states. According to one informant, this is the only way politics can effectively be implemented on a transnational level:

As I said I firmly believe that a federal Europe is necessary and would be very good for all European citizens. And a federal Europe could be very useful to implement policies […] I feel like a European citizen, but I feel like I'm not properly represented by the current European institutions because they don't have enough power. (Interview 9, City-lead Copenhagen, Volt Denmark)

To this end, the respondents believe that we are becoming more aware of shared global issues. According to cosmopolitan thought, individuals are indeed obtaining a new perspective, where risks such as climate change inevitably create

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a rationale of a "civilizational community of fate" (Ibid.:7), one that becomes increasingly inescapable in the current digital media environment (Silverstone, 2007).

Considering this, discussions with the informants reveal an active reflexivity showing a "genuine commitment to living and thinking beyond the local or national" (Skrbiš & Woodward, 2011:61):

> ...having established the first pan-European political party, and then creating the identity over those years, making this new paradigm in young Europeans' mindsets... that it's not only through your national parliament that you can have an impact on European politics, but you can actually do it directly through the parliament in Brussels. (Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark)

We thus begin to observe "internalized cosmopolitanism": cosmopolitanism takes into account the idea that the awareness of transnational processes is internalized into our worldview - it is a "globalization from within" (Beck & Sznaider, 2010:389; Stevenson, 2011:249). In this regard, globalization does not simply exist out there: when we find ourselves in an increasingly multicultural world, and when news from across the world flood our social media feeds on a daily basis with the headlines "*Where Europe would Be Hurt Most By a No-Deal Brexit*" (Mccann, Schreuer & Tsang, 2019), we have no choice but to reflect on the transnational interdependence. What the party envisions for the citizens of Europe is exactly that of increased awareness.

> And that's not a short-term goal, you might even say that it's a challenge for our generation to make the world understand that we have global challenges ahead of us, and I don't mean another banking crisis necessarily. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

This idea of a global awareness and a paradigm change thus gets us closer to understanding what is different and new with Volt's approach. Of course, doing politics transnationally is not an entirely new phenomenon: Since the establishment of a multilateral world order, we have seen numerous initiatives toward international collaboration. At the institutional level, this has been done through various constellations, among them the EU as perhaps the most prominent one. Considering Volt Europa's critical position, how then can we understand the EU's ineffectiveness?

While the post-war order was arguably a strong age for transnationality, it was also the beginning of an age of territoriality. Following the World Wars, the "entire globe was parceled off into separate nation-states", strengthening the roles of sovereign states (Kaldor, 1995:68). Especially in Europe, the nation-state has continuously been in focus in the European integration debate (Rumford, 2005:6). Here, Held (2011:171) argues that the key obstacle currently facing international governance is grounded in the "tension between universal values and state sovereignty built into them from their beginning".

Subsequently, the nation-centrism has also meant that the idea of citizenship has developed strictly based on the idea of the individual's relationship to the sovereign state, by extent shaping the scope of political and cultural solidarity (Calhoun, 2003:532; Kaldor, 1995:71). What this means is that, while the European Union has a multitude of initiatives to foster European democratic dialogue, there is a structural issue in that public conversation remains organized in a national context, even with regard to transnational issues (Stevenson, 2011:254). As will be discussed, the tension between state sovereignty and universality poses numerous challenges to the pan-European project of Volt Europa. What first needs to be brought to attention, however, is how the nation-centric public debate results in a democratic deficit in European governance.

The deficit of European democracy

Various thinkers argue, and what is key to Volt Europa's own platform, is that there are evident shortcomings in the European democratic structure (Habermas, 2006; Hix, 2008; Rohrschneider, 2002; Sifft et al., 2007). The main idea is that citizens are not adequately included in the transnational democratic process. To understand this, we need to consider how the transfer of power to the European Union affects the nation-state and its citizens.

Habermas (2003) provides an important discussion to highlight the ineffectiveness of states toward transnational interdependencies. He claims that with the transnational economic and societal convergence, states "forfeit their own capacities for autonomous action as well as their democratic substance." (Ibid.:89). He observes several key components to this disempowerment. First, states are losing their capacity for control on a national level; they are unable to effectively protect citizens from external factors such as climate change, migration or organized crime, and from the consequences of other states' political decisions

(Ibid.:89-90). Second, there is a democracy deficit particularly evident in the European Union: as political power is increasingly transferred from the nation-states to intergovernmental commissions, important decision-making processes are "withdrawn from democratic opinion formation and will formation" (Ibid.:90). Thus, while decision-making has been significantly brought to a transnational level, the structures of civic engagement have not adequately allowed citizens to participate. The distance between the voter and representative is thus further increased, and the voters have in a sense lacked the opportunity for their civic duties to keep up.

The presence of a democratic deficit is thus of particular interest to Volt and its mission to reform the EU. In fact, Volt Europa recognizes that the EU is in many ways insufficient in terms of voter representation and transparency. One informant sheds light on this issue when discussing the alliances in the European parliament, which consist of groups of national parties with the same ideological platforms.

> Within the SND, there are many parties who are nominally, if you look at the name tag, social democrats. However, there is a major difference between the social democratic party - and I would hope this is self-evident - of Romania, which started the referendum on banning gay marriage constitutionally… (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

The overarching sentiment is that citizens are not fully informed as to what they are voting for on a European level due to the "cluttered" nature of political alliances. This results in a sense of discontent with representation in the current political climate, which, according to the informants, has led to increasing disenfranchisement on the part of themselves and their members.

> One reason I often hear is disenfranchisement with the current political status quo. They want something… they don't think that the old parties represent their views. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Western democracy, and not least in the EU, has in fact been under increasing scrutiny for being "remote from citizens" and not effectively addressing the interests of voters (Steffek & Nanz, 2008:5). While the EU has an increasingly higher impact on peoples' lives, the extent to which this body provides opportunities for them to be included remains invisible (Statham & Koopmans,

2013:137). In this regard, Coleman & Blumler (2009:14) argue that citizens have been left feeling like spectators in the political process.

The "spectator" perspective also highlights the dimension of ideology. Due to the clear ideological nature of EU politics, Volt Europa argues that many citizens are not adequately represented in the various EU bodies. Representatives express a clear issue in that parties are stuck in their specific ideological frameworks, which prevents them from finding the most effective solutions to societal problems:

> ...what I hear a lot, and what makes me vomit, is when people say 'I believe in this, I'm voting for this decision because I'm a member of this party and this party has this ideology'. [...] It limits and narrows the scope of debate and solutions. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

To conclude this chapter, we can observe that a cosmopolitan democratic platform is called upon as a response to the negative effects of globalization: there are processes at play that transcend borders, and it becomes clear that the transnational governance body does in fact recognize that such processes must be addressed through collaboration. Volt Europa recognizes this potential, but it also highlights the need for awareness of the issues that connect Europeans through a shared fate; they need to begin overcoming their differences, not least ideological ones; and they need to begin finding common ground as a European community and people. This bring us to the next key goal of the political movement: the establishment of a transnational program that reflects the common values among every EU citizen.

Toward common European values

What does Volt tell us about what it means to be European? Here, the idea of European identity, or Europeanness, becomes particularly relevant to the ambitions of Volt. As previously mentioned, scholars of cosmopolitanism have considered Europe and the EU as the first international body to take on a "cosmopolitan model" (Pichler, 2009a:707; Stevenson, 2011:244). This, however, should not simply be understood in terms of political ambitions: the cosmopolitan model must also be analyzed with a consideration of shared history, culture, values and experiences, where we need to consider "the rise of a Europe cultural model in which social realities emerge out of discursive frameworks."

(Delanty, 2005:410). As will be argued, the creation of shared memories and values sets the groundwork for a cosmopolitan Europe to arise.

Uniting Europeans through collective experiences

In his discussion on maintaining the stability of the European project, Habermas (2006:43) asks: "are there historical experiences, traditions, and achievements capable of fostering among European citizens the sense of a shared political fate that they can *shape in common?*". He argues that a shared sense of a common fate is crucial for European democracy to function, but it does however not "materialize out of thin air" and is based on shared historical and contemporary experiences (Ibid.:43). Levy and Sznaider (2011:195) argue that the idea of collective memory "serves as an important analytical tool in order to understand the meaning making processes within the negotiation of transnational experiences in Europe".

In this regard, we often look to the 20th century in order to pinpoint a significant development of universal values. This naturally connects to the formation of the human rights paradigm as a result of the atrocities of World War II, after which "memories of the great wars have transformed human rights sensibilities" (Levy & Sznaider, 2011:204), creating a cosmopolitan human rights consciousness (Ibid.:205). These types of memories are exactly why the European Union was established in the first place, and are to this day a motivating factor for the development of "post-national forms of solidarity and security." (Stevenson, 2005:48).

When asked about the importance of shared values, informants highlighted the significance of history to the stability of the EU, and the need to acknowledge past trauma as to protect the European project:

> Then I would also say, it's not a value but more in terms of what are not our values, the memories… [...] So the memory of state terror and authoritative regimes, which is something that we should learn from... and then what I would say is very important is also a value of maintaining peace and even going further than that, collaboration. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Levy & Sznaider (2011:197) argue that historical memories have a meaningful function in that they reflect the "shared understandings of and responsibilities for the significance the past has for the present concerns of a community". It is one

of the most crucial ways for a community to validate, challenge and reproduce itself. The pan-European vision of Volt Europa likewise adopts this reasoning:

> Beyond its boundaries and despite its flaws, the European project carries a message for the world. It is a testament that centuries of war and opposition can be overcome by common values, that we have more in common than what divides us, and that we can shape our destiny together. (Volt Europa, 2019b:177)

Whether they are triumphant or traumatic memories, Delanty (2005:410) argues that shared memories have become a marker of a European identity, typified by Europe-wide commemoration of events such as the holocaust, or in the solidarity shown across Europe following deadly terror attacks in recent years (Alderman & Bilefsky, 2015). Here, another dimension of cosmopolitanism comes into play which is that of "empathy and perspective taking" (Beck, 2006:7). A cosmopolitan identity means the ability and will to emphasize beyond one's own nation state. As a result of interdependence and the "globalization of emotions" Beck (Ibid.:5-6) claims that "…the spaces of our emotional imagination have expanded in a transnational sense". A sense of solidarity among Europeans thus comes into question, which can be observed as informants reflect upon the shared values.

> So from traveling mostly to eastern Europe and so on, I developed a feeling of, I would say European solidarity. And basically the realization that the only way to actually make European solidarity real is by establishing a true political union, a real federal Europe. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

While the traumatic experiences in European history are an important point of reference to a shared identity and solidarity, we can likewise see that "triumphant" experiences and values hold a significant function in the establishment of a European community.

> The common values are those that have traditionally been represented within the spirit of the European project up to this point. It would a bit of a bastardized, or a bit of a stereotypical view, of the progressive European. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

The idea of a progressive Europe, guided by factors such as liberal values, democracy, human rights or the rule of law, is something that the respondents

find to be an important common ground to unite not only their members, but all European citizens:

> So what I would say are our common values is our belief in democracy, our belief in human rights, and the rule of law, where we accept that the law is almighty so to speak (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

What can be concluded is that, while past experiences are crucial in the creation of a European identity, contemporary experiences are likewise a contributing factor. This especially considering how events and processes are now perceived by individuals whose lives are embedded in the digital era. The recognition of otherness and the solidarity toward strangers observed here is an important aspect of what facilitates shared European values and commitments for participants of Volt Europa. To dig deeper into how this solidarity is made possible, we need to investigate the question of generations. This sheds light on a particular aspect of Volt, which is that the movement as a whole is built upon the participation of young citizens.

An emerging European generation

Typically, generations are viewed in sociodemographic terms referring to individuals spanning over a certain age group. Relevant for this discussion is the group often referred to as "millennials". What makes this generation particularly distinct is that they are considered the first "digital natives" and possess a unique expertise in navigating digital media. They have been raised with internet technology as a primary means of communication and are thus more prone to express cosmopolitan views (Pichler, 2009a:711).

> We are a generation - talking now about the millennials - we are a generation that grew up with the sense that the world is actually literally at our doorstep, you know it's very accessible… (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

While this definition is important, we may also consider a more nuanced concept of generation as prescribed by Karl Mannheim's (1936). His point of departure is to not simply view a generation as a particular age group, but additionally as a group with historically contingent experiences binding them together. With this in mind, individuals may share life-defining experiences regardless of age

differences. For instance, we observe freedom of movement within the European Union as one such experience:

> So what I think motivates people like me, and then slightly older, is first of all that these people have had the pleasure of really experiencing a Europe of free travel, through Erasmus, through simply no border controls, and so on. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Still, there remain conceptual distinctions between generations. Departing from Mannheim's generational analysis, Miegel & Olsson (2012:489) argue that a crucial factor which differentiates a youth generation is that their reception to significant global processes is not defined by prior experiences to the same extent as older generations. This comes to light as one informant reflects that what attracted him and what he thought attracted other young people to join Volt is that they "don't have affiliations yet so they like to join new parties." (Interview 4, Expansion-lead, Volt Sweden). Another clear differentiation is the use of digital media: as previously mentioned, contemporary youth are the first generation to have grown up with digital media and are more proficient in- and open to navigating the world through these new technologies (Dahlgren, 2009:200).

> Like, if you would look at the difference of older and younger generations, the older by far have their know-how of governance and connections, while the younger generation has way more input in communication, social media, for example. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Mannheim (1936:303) further explains that in order for a generation to become an analytically identifiable group, individuals must become "exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilization", subsequently creating a "concrete bond" between its members. A range of such processes can be identified by observing the sentiments of the informants:

> I know that Volt is the result of Brexit, I know that Volt is the result of the frustration being felt by national politics. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

The connection can particularly be seen following Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as POTUS, both issues that are considered destabilizing to the European Union and the world order. The participants all share a sense of an

urgent need to take action to address these changes, after all, this is why the movement was established.

> So these people are right now seeing that this project of free movement is being attacked by nationalist, populist forces, and so on. And I think what motivates people to act is they do not want to lose those freedoms. [...] So I think this awareness of the importance of a united Europe, and the sense of duty to work hard to maintain that united Europe, is what unites most young people in terms of getting active in Volt. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Another destabilizing factor is the access to free mobility across borders. Delanty (2005:410) argues that the increased access to travel has been a crucial factor in the process of Europeanization. Education through the Erasmus program in particular has made youth generations travel more extensively across Europe and increasingly interact across borders. When asked about the generational aspect, one of the informants explained that mobility is a particularly important issue for "millennials", one which is at stake when EU-sceptic movements "want to take a step back from this globalized world":

> I think it's very important for this generation [...] yeah this is also one of the drivers for young people now to step up and join these transnational parties, because more and more you feel that there is this part of the population, a more older part, who wants to take a step back from this globalized world... and this is hard for these younger citizens (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

The concept of generations as elaborated above is thus clearly linked to cosmopolitanism: Members of such generations in their contemporary global realities, and especially youths referred to as millennials, possess a unique set of resources grounded in a constant digital presence as well as access to free mobility which have led to a degree of transnational openness.

> We actually had the privilege to live in Europe, to live in many places, to communicate with people from different backgrounds. [...] So if you could work in an intercultural environment, if you could study in an intercultural environment, if you could hang out with people from different countries, then I guess it's easier to also do politics in an intercultural environment. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

This quote serves as an important transition to the topic of the coming chapter, namely, the communicative dimension of transnational politics. In order to efficiently communicate in the pursuit of shared democratic identities and ambitions, individuals need to tap into the shared memories, values, and experiences, which grant them a sense of belonging. This is already present in the nation-state but is yet to be fully realized on a transnational governance level. Dahlgren (2009:111) argues that shared values are a stepping-stone to a common communicative culture, which creates effective cross-cultural dialogue and enables the "playing out of political conflicts". Here, he distinguishes between two sets of democratic values. The first ones, which we have addressed in this chapter, are substantive, which refer to "equality, liberty, justice, solidarity, and tolerance" (ibid.:111). The second set of values are procedural, referring to "openness, reciprocity, discussion, and responsibility/accountability" (Ibid.:111). These values will be discussed in the following chapter, uncovering how they are grounded in the internal communicative culture, as well as the internal communicative space for democratic dialogue.

Through a European communicative space

We have observed how the informants and the party platform elaborate on the importance of a pan-European approach, and how it can be facilitated by a stronger European identity grounded in collective memories, experiences and substantive values. However, we also need to understand how this European sense of duty and unity is actualized through active political engagement. The manner in which communication and participation is facilitated is an important factor in how and why individuals integrate a cosmopolitan/European sense of belonging.

There are several key aspects of how the movement is organized which provide insight into how Volt aspires to address the issues in transnational governance. We will start by investigating the aspect of transnational communication. What is of particular importance here is the question of how a broad diversity of citizens can function to accomplish collective goals. The most significant challenge here is posed by the vast differences in political structure across the EU and the manner in which political values are framed in different member states. In this regard, there are several strategies by which Volt Europa attempts to deal with such challenges.

A culture of communication

The thesis already touched upon the shared values and experiences among Europeans. The European continent as a social, cultural and political unit undoubtedly owes its development to common memories, experiences and values. However, as previously discussed, the European project remains constructed upon sovereign nations, with their unique political structures and cultures strongly embedded in how politics are carried out. Considering this, despite the perceived shared values among Europeans, we must also be critical as to their effectiveness in uniting a vast array of political aspirations. In fact, it cannot be denied that qualitative differences in culture, society and politics remain across the European nations that impact the potential for transnational political action. How then should we understand these barriers?

There are many ways in which to divide the EU along political, social and geographic lines. Starting broadly, we may speak of Western and Eastern Europe based on Cold War categorization. Here, countries in Western Europe found themselves integrated into the liberal world order from the onset, becoming more open to international convergence. On the other hand, countries in Eastern Europe were for a significant period of time part of the Soviet Bloc, forced to integrate its institutional frameworks. What this means is that Western European nations have arguably had the advantage in regard to the adaptation to global transformations, while the Eastern nations had not reaped the fruits of globalization to the same extent, leading to varying degrees of embeddedness in the global transformation (Pichler, 2009a:711). For example, the Visegrad countries have been particularly vocal about their discontent with the European Union, fearing that the transfer of political power to Brussels is threatening their sovereignty (Than, 2018). As we will uncover, this has meant that national politics in various member states might not always be aligned with the political direction and goals of the European Union.

The political and legal differences are acknowledged as requiring a significant effort to overcome in communication, policy-making and mobilization. One such difference is notable in the discussion of how ideological perspectives are framed between various countries:

> So in Germany we can communicate that we are progressive, but we cannot do that in Bulgaria or in Greece, or even in Portugal. Because in Greece progressive means left. So if you just communicate progressive then you are already into the

box [...] We really struggle sometimes to communicate the same point in all these different political environments... (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

The label of "progressive" is often assigned to the movement, a communicative tool which proves to work in Western countries, but carries negative connotations in some Southern and Eastern Europe. The contingencies of each national party cause tensions in communication across the movement's various national parties.

A lot of people ascribe the label progressive to Volt... However, as it happens, and as our colleagues in Bulgaria never fail to remind us, if you go into Bulgarian politics with the label of progressive, you will be laughed out of the room. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

The particular political context of each local party often forces them to adapt the overall party framework to fit into the local narratives. This connects both to internal as well as external communication. Discussions with communications-leads reveal that media strategies often face the task of having to adapt their political agenda:

And we know that when you have a narrative that is universally European, it's going to flunk in some countries [...] if we start talking about like, I don't know, values like human rights etc., then we're gonna lose the Danes right away [...] it's literally up to each chapter to narrate it so that it fits into the larger narrative of that country (Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark)

Investigating about the challenges in communicating with a diversity of members, one informant highlighted the issue that, from a communications perspective, the general agenda of Volt might also be skewed toward a Western European perspective.

Yeah that's a very relevant question and it keeps me up at night, I have to admit. Like, the danger that we are currently in Volt, is that we are becoming a Western European party [...} I feel like we do take into account the southern European perspectives on a lot of issues, but we do not take the eastern European perspective into account enough. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

According to the same respondent, another issue is that current political climates in countries such as Romania or Bulgaria also entail that the political disenfranchisement carries with it a certain political burden, posing an obstacle

for expansion and mobilization in Eastern Europe where people can be difficult to motivate to commit to a political movement.

> …this has to do of course with the political context in lots of Eastern European nations… In Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and so on. Lots of the political systems are almost broken. People are completely fed up with politics, they have no interest in politics anymore. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

Many of these differences lead to tensions at the organizational level, where members from different member nations bring with them different approaches. This is perfectly exemplified by the country-lead of Sweden, jokingly reflecting on his use of the catchphrase "in Sweden we have a system", something he admits has implications on his own engagement with the party.

> Because I have a very particular view on how organizations are supposed to be run, this view would resonate very well with the ideas of the Dutch team, and the German team… maybe not so much with the Spanish team. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

How does Volt attempt to address this? And how does cosmopolitanism address this? Linklater (1998:24) argues that communication must be the basis of the growing cosmopolitan reality. He proposes that cosmopolitanism needs to take into account more than simply moral commitment to humanity – it also needs to consider "universal frameworks of communication" (Ibid.:24). In addition, for this type of communication to be effective, people also need to be curious about both the similarities and differences of others. Appiah (2006:97) argues that we must have the capability to enter into conversation with a distant other as to find that which connects us. This connection does not need to be based on universal values, rather, it needs to depart from the things that particular people have in common within a specific context.

The informants discuss that certain norm cultures are emerging within the party that help facilitate the vast array of opinions and approaches to politics, which all boil down to an active awareness of differences and an acknowledgement that disagreements may arise. To one of them, what is crucial to working with a diversity of people and cultures of interaction, is the acknowledgement of one's

background and how that impacts people's understanding of what you want to communicate.

> You know, these are basic norms that are not linked to any national identity or any cultural awareness […] And I'm happy to see that this is not an issue in Volt, that we, regardless of our ethnicity, regardless of our language, we can agree on these fundamental values and norms, which help the way that we communicate. (Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark)

Appiah (2006:46) makes an important argument in this regard: a cosmopolitan endeavor which aims to engage people across moral differences must anticipate some disagreement. According to him, fundamentally, a disagreement is a result of the introduction of a foreign concept into a communicative setting. In such a situation, "the struggle is not to agree but just to understand" (Ibid.:46).

> ...we have conflicts where one team strongly disagrees on the way we're doing things, or the rest of the movement strongly disagreeing with how one team does something very specific, but we find ways forward... (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Appiah (2006:57) argues that "all cultures have enough overlap in their vocabulary of values to begin a conversation", but the same vocabulary also does not necessarily mean agreement. In this regard, the informants propose that active communication and understanding is key. In a discussion, the members highlighted that the movement is slowly establishing a "culture of communication" where members are beginning to better understand each other (Field Notes, 2 March 2019).

> So it's not only about communication, it's not only about trying to understand each other, it's also about trying to jump into the history and culture of each country [...] So let's say we're trying to find the words that fit better with the culture and the community, and in that way we come closer to what we want to achieve and what is the vision that we want to promote. (Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa)

According to Appiah (2006), the ability to be curious and take the perspective of particular social contexts is an important aspect of the cosmopolitan endeavor. He (Ibid.:xv) argues that in order to understand each other, we need to "take seriously

the value not just of humans lives but of particular human lives, which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance". Indeed, the leadership of Volt acknowledges that "what is good in one country is not good in another" (Field Notes, 14 March 2019), realizing the challenges of integrating a common agenda simultaneously on a federal, national and local level, and therefore allowing local and national teams a certain level of autonomy.

> ...you know, we're starting a city team here and there, and they can remain, and they can go about their business, and they don't need long philosophical waxing from the leadership, and they don't need direct orders... They just go out with a purple flag. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Returning to the earlier discussion on ideology, we observe that Volt Europa's discourse to work beyond ideology is yet another factor which helps in the integration of various cultural or political perspectives and is a strong tool in adapting their agenda to local contexts. A key goal is to utilize the variety of political perspectives and solutions, and through deliberative discussion arrive at solutions that are not based strictly on left, center, or right policies.

> Well, the fact that we don't stick with one certain ideology already facilitates this a lot, because for example... let's say this weren't the case, we wouldn't do this, and we would say we are a left party... then you could say, you're left in Eastern Europe, but for Western Europe this is right for us... so this wouldn't help the integration at all. By saying we are pragmatic, we are open to everything we just look at what the impact is. (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

What we observe from this is a strong incentive for members to familiarize themselves with each other's differences as a driving force to work towards common political ends. The discussions reveal a high degree of openness to other cultures, supported by the willingness to pursue a collective vision. Appiah (2006:99) provides a crucial point in this discussion:

> ...when the stranger is no longer imaginary, but real and present, sharing a human social life, you may like or dislike him, you may agree or disagree; but, if it is what you both want, you can make sense of each other in the end.

He highlights the importance of conversation and common understanding, in order to learn living with one another. Citizens need to be curious, anticipate

disagreement and possess efficient frameworks and opportunities to meet and pursue dialogue with the distant other. Thus, to facilitate interaction and conversation about democratic rights, citizens also need adequate communicative spaces for this purpose. This brings us to the next chapter, where we consider the mechanisms by which political dialogue and participation in European democracy can be facilitated. As we will uncover, Volt's unique communicative structure provides significant insights into this issue.

Connecting Europeans through a digital public sphere

> … I became curious as to how they managed to write an almost 200-page policy document and simultaneously get the input from members in 11 different countries. The answer was quite obvious: social media. I looked over at one of the informants, and he responded: "I told you, we live on social media". (Field Notes, 2 March 2019).

The idea of "living on social media" is perhaps not surprising. As previously discussed, Volt is a youth project, and the contemporary youth generation is strongly embedded in digital media. However, what is particularly interesting is that the movement does not only pool together a generation of media users, it also utilizes social media for its entire operations.

Before we explore this further, we must first return to the issue of the democratic deficit in the EU and understand the problem of the "missing public" (Statham & Koopmans, 2013). The issue lies in that there are currently insufficient opportunities for citizens to mobilize on a European level to claim their rights to democracy (Fossum & Schlesinger, 2007:2; Statham & Koopmans, 2013:141). To this Statham & Koopmans (2013:137) pose the question: "How is it possible to maintain adequate links between elite decision-making and citizens when power shifts to a level beyond the nation-state?"

The remedy for this, according to Statham & Koopmans (2013:141), is the creation of a strong European public sphere based on three key elements: "collective action within institutional networks; a field of public communication that can be seen by a public; and resonance, the mutual observation between institutional actors and audiences…". These elements are very much present in most Western nation-state settings (Steffek & Nanz, 2008:4); there is a "*single public sphere* where people discuss the same issues, at the same time and with the

same frames of interpretation". (Eriksen, 2007:31). However, this is something that many authors argue is insufficient in the current democratic framework of the EU (Eriksen, 2007:33; Steffek & Nanz, 2008:1).

How can this type of participation, then, be elevated to a transnational level? Dahlgren (2009:115) argues that in order for a stable democracy to flourish, citizens need opportunities and spaces to interact, mobilize, and to connect with representatives. In his view, the solution for a strong public is the emergence of interactive digital media, allowing citizens to be "co-present with others who are physically removed, contributing to the growth of 'despatialized simultaneity'" (Ibid.:115). Political discussions and mobilization on a transnational scale can thus be effectively carried out via a digital social space (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:27). In fact, much of political organization in the current digital era already occurs through social media. Political parties as well as activists effectively complement their mobilization efforts through social media networks, as exemplified by the rapid spread of the Arab spring or the Occupy movement (Castells, 2015:93,156; Della Porta, 2013:85). Verboord (2016:460) argues that a key essential property of the internet is its "ability to increase democracy and ¨global understanding¨ through its connectivity…". The main question therefore becomes: how can this digital political engagement be carried over to cosmopolitan democratic practices? Volt's strategic dimensions reveals significant insights to understand this process. As previously mentioned, Volt's political agenda is based on a strong focus on technology and digital media. As part of their citizen empowerment platform, the movement envisions a digital revolution in European politics (Volt Europa, 2019b:9).

> Our freedom of expression and our economic, social and cultural rights depend on our ability to engage with technology. Volt will create a new type of politics, forming the forum to debate our common future with emerging technologies. (Volt Europa, 2019b:41)

Interestingly, this agenda is likewise reflected in the structures of participation of the party. Volt's own internal organization is in fact an experiment of their prescribed digital revolution, which brings us back to the aspect of "living on social media". As Silverstone (2007:5) argues, people are increasingly "dependent on the media for the conduct of everyday life". According to the informants, it is

almost inevitable that a party mobilized across an entire continent is based on one or several social media platforms.

> ...but, the party organization model is social media. Because it is absolutely impossible to organize in any other way [...] So, we don't use social media internally, the party *is* a social media platform (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

When digging further into the digitally embedded communication and organization, we uncover a range of practical implications for participation, democracy and transparency. We begin by observing what this means for providing a space for political and social interaction, as facilitated by the main digital platform Facebook Workplace.

> So, workplace works a lot in groups, which most of the time everyone is welcome to join. So I think that workplace is a good platform for us in terms of making sure that we communicate effectively on a European level, on a transnational level. (Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium)

With the use of digital media, connecting thousands of volunteers and party officials across the member states, Volt provides an openness to the internal communication for all participants: The manner in which the platform is used is that anyone can connect with anyone to discuss political, organizational and everyday issues.

> Only Volters can join and there is an approval process to get in, so that basically everyone on the inside is an insider. And, the way we do this is, you join the teams that are relevant to you, and/or the teams that you just want to follow. (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Furthermore, the connection is not only between active members, but is likewise extended to an open communication with the leaders, as well as the federal party and all local parties.

> So if I want to say something to the people in charge of something, I can reach them directly. If a member wants to take something to the VCR (Volt Country Representation), which is the leadership council of all the national presidents. Basically, shoot us an email and we'll discuss it (Interview 1, Country-lead, Volt Sweden)

Another crucial factor of the digital communicative space is its function for Volt Europa's own internal democracy. In this regard, the media structure takes on a deliberative character where online discussions are constantly taking place and members can provide input as the agenda develops. Here, the party platform recognizes the potential of digital technologies to further participatory democracy in Europe:

> Political innovation in general, and digital technologies in particular, have given rise to a variety of tools and processes that make it possible for citizens to more actively take part in democratic civic life beyond elections alone. (Volt Europa, 2019b:169)

For instance, on the party's main organizational platform Facebook Workplace, debates and decisions on policies are made open and transparent, where members are invited to take active part in developing policies and receive access to a digital voting system.

> So for example we have written our policies which has become a huge document, because for example, if you have an issue with specific points on animal rights, we can just ask this to our members: do you agree with this amendment? do you agree with this position that we are taking? And then everybody will receive a link, and then they can just vote… (Interview 6, City-lead Brussels, Volt Belgium)

Here, we observe how the movement constructs an open and transparent communicative space for democracy. These spaces allow members to address their concerns, communicate, and mobilize their efforts for organizational and political change. Dahlgren (2009:161) argues that the availability of digital spaces is crucial for citizens to enact their democratic rights and duties:

> It can potentially help contribute to the long-term transformation of the institutions of democracy and the modes of participation [...] Democracy today is seen to be, precariously, at a new historical juncture, and in this context, the impact of Internet use becomes significant.

This structure arguably resembles what Coleman & Blumler (2009:38) refer to as "more deliberative democracy", which prescribes citizen participation and influence on the onset of decision- and policy-making processes. In this regard, a democratic government must operate in an accessible manner to encompass

public discussion in the everyday work of "policy formation, legislation, policy scrutiny and post-legislative review" (Ibid.:38). As a result, democracy flourishes as citizens are empowered to further influence the political direction. If neglected, confidence in democracy decreases and feeds into disenfranchisement.

> All of this leads us to conclude that there is a need for real-world experimentation in public deliberation, utilising technologies which support effective democratic interaction, and embedded in structures and processes that can result in meaningful consequences (Coleman & Blumler, 2009:40).

> …it is the role of the politicians to make sure that the people are informed, to facilitate a discussion, and to help bring best practice [...] you vote for people whose job it is effectively to come back to you and to help you remain engaged in the political process. (Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium)

It thus becomes clear that an adequate space for a public sphere to flourish is an enabling factor for the realization of a cosmopolitan form of democracy. An efficient and accessible public sphere of the form proposed by Volt may well help address the issues that arise with methodological nationalism (Sifft et al.,2007:128). The internet possesses not only cosmopolitan communicative properties, but it also plays an important role in the organizational aspect of any movement or transnational governance body. Hix (2008:9) argues that the national "societies allow for greater direct participation in government and ensure that political elites are less distant from the people". Thus, when political institutions are increasingly detached from physical spaces, internet technology is arguably the primary way forward to allow citizens to influence transnational political processes.

Conclusion - A realistic utopia

That we are faced with cross-border issues is nothing new. There are problems that affect us all as part of a humanity; there are global problems that have local implications; and there are local issues that reverberate across the globe. These are increasingly escaping the grasp of the nation-state and its political processes. Many know this, yet, the nation-state remains the primary point of departure. Even in

the case of the European Union, the dominant discourse of sovereignty continues to pose barriers to the ambition of tackling cross-border issues.

Whether or not the minds behind the European Union envisioned a cosmopolitan project of democracy, it has undoubtedly developed into a clear manifestation of this phenomenon. Departing from the assumption that a cosmopolitan framework is desirable to understand the EU and to address its shortcoming, the thesis embarked on outlining a holistic overview of the political movement and its goals and strategies. By applying a range of conceptual and theoretical ideas in the case study analysis, the thesis combined into a comprehensive cosmopolitan framework to address two overarching findings.

The first aim is descriptive: we want to understand cosmopolitanism empirically to find out *how things actually are* in real-life contexts. The case study analysis, guided by a methodological framework allowing us to attain thick descriptions of the vision, values, strategies and participation processes, and with qualitative key informant interviews at its core, reveals significant findings for this inquiry.

Having started with the intention of becoming a pan-European political party, Volt Europa was born out of the passion for Europe and a belief that the EU has an important function. The aim is to protect European democracy and to "re-energize it", as this is the only way that transnational issues can truly be overcome. Indeed, the informants all share the belief that overcoming national boundaries is the only way forward, something that is likewise a core assumption of cosmopolitan thought. Subsequently, Volt represents a vision for Europeans to adapt a new mindset, where individuals have an active awareness that the key challenges ahead are European and global, not national. This, however, is not sufficient in the quest to unite Europeans under a common platform. Equally as important is the awareness of what Europeans have in common, both in their historical and contemporary experiences, and the substantive values of the European Union, an argument which is likewise deeply embedded in cosmopolitan thinking. Volt presents the ambition for solidarity to expand beyond the nation state and onto a European and global level.

Interestingly, this discussion has forced us to consider the aspect of generations. Volt Europa, a project largely driven by the passion of young Europeans, is a clear reflection of a cosmopolitan generation. These are individuals who motivate their ambition to the background of contemporary processes that have destabilized

their realities. Indeed, Volt is the result of disenfranchisement with the political status quo, and the realization that the fruitless old ways of doing politics are not working. As Loader (2007:1) argues: "traditional political activity no longer appears appropriate to address the concerns associated with contemporary youth cultures".

The political movement recognizes the vast potential of the European Union to adapt a pan-European democratic approach. What the study reveals, however, is that there are numerous challenges currently facing the European democratic structure preventing it from enacting real political change. The first and essential challenge is exactly the methodological nationalist paradigm. Considering that the EU was constructed upon the protection of sovereign rights following the territorial violations of World War II, the nation-state currently remains the strongest political actor on the international level. According to Volt, however, the issue also runs much deeper. With regards to the current democratic structure of Europe, the nation-centric orientation in European governance not only prevents the EU from enacting real change, it also causes a deficiency in that citizens have little to none direct influence on debate and decision-making. As political power is transferred to Brussels, the structures of democratic engagement remain bound territorially, subsequently leading to a lack of insight into how citizens can impact politics on a European level. Yet another challenge arises when we observe the internal organization and strategic framework of the political movement. When discussing the strategic aspect of the movement, the differences in political structures and ideological discourses across the member states pose challenges Volt's vision to connect Europeans under a common platform.

How does Volt work address these issues? To begin with, the pan-European, cosmopolitan democracy approach is a strategy to face transnational issues head-on. By uniting citizens from local and national levels under one common platform, it brings forward a cross-border democratic engagement that aims to create opportunities for direct impact on Brussels. By extent, this means that civic engagement is brought closer to European democracy, addressing the citizen-government distance. Furthermore, the movement works under a clear vision of creating a programme that reflects common values among Europeans. Its leadership remind us that the trauma of European history, the triumphant substantive values, and the destabilizing experiences in recent years, are all reminders of why the European Union exists and why it needs to be protected.

While recognizing that the diversity of political perspectives poses obstacles to such a project, the movement works to actively promote cross-cultural communication and understanding. In the process of constant negotiation of values and political aims, the members of Volt are continuously exposed to the life-worlds of "the other", enabling a curiosity, understanding and realization that differences in approach may arise, but that the pan-European approach requires agreement on the outcome and vision. Finally, this "culture of communication" is enabled by a unique space for democracy provided by digital media. The entire party structure is based on internet platforms, providing direct access for participants to pursue dialogue, mobilize and have their voices heard by their representatives. In this regard, it takes on a "more deliberative" democratic model, providing citizens the capacity to be directly involved in the decision-making processes that affect their communities and nations. As previously discussed, while democracy has been elevated to a transnational level, citizen participation has not received the chance to catch up. Volt provides a legitimate solution to a transnational public sphere, via a digital revolution.

While the European Union itself may not fully live up to its cosmopolitan reputation, the fact that the members of Volt actively talk about these issues and attempt to solve them, recognize the values that connect them as Europeans, and believe that the EU can be fixed only through a unified European people, already reveals something significant about the potential of a cosmopolitan democracy in Europe. This brings us to second aim of the thesis, which attempts to guide us to *how things should be*.

Whether a cosmopolitan vision is the one solution to this, is difficult to answer. We should not neglect that anti-European sentiments are alive and will likely remain a strong opposing force to any attempts of a cosmopolitan agenda in the near future. To a certain extent, we should be sensitive to this sentiment: as globalizing processes increasingly take control away from the nation state and its citizens, the nation state will resist. For the European Union, the resistance of the Visegrad Group, the dramatic exit of the United Kingdom, or the rise of populism all exemplify this perfectly. Meanwhile, for Volt Europa, the idea of a progressive transnational platform clearly does not resonate everywhere in Europe. But what this thesis has attempted to establish is that cosmopolitanism has the potential to at least become a long-term ambition for the social sciences and for politics. Indeed, as the analysis has shown, despite the growing sentiments of nationalism,

sentiments of openness are also on the rise. The fact that Volt Europa - being one of many European expressions of growing openness - is becoming a recognized and attractive political movement in Europe, shows that a cosmopolitan vision may be a strong alternative.

Indeed, the sentiment that nation-centric solutions are insufficient is becoming attractive in Europe and across the world. The issue of climate change is a key contemporary example, as can be observed by the School Strike 4 Climate in 2019 (Local, 2019). Naturally, Volt Europa is likewise a clear manifestation of such a discourse. As the analysis observed, the goal to overcome national differences and to pursue a collective, cross-cultural understanding is challenging, but it is not impossible. In its current form, the European Union is unique in that it does in fact work to promote openness across Europe. Especially during European Parliament elections, a transnational community is continuously under construction as the "public engages in the discourse on current and future issues at the European level" (Pichler, 2009b:4). Volt Europa taps into this exact discourse by forcing people to start thinking in terms of Europe. Their engagement is a crucial factor in the construction and reconstruction of European and cosmopolitan identities: citizens must be curious about their European neighbors, they must engage in active dialogue with them in order to understand their local realities. The cosmopolitan generation exemplifies this process. Through study programs such as Erasmus, young Europeans travel more and are increasingly exposed to different cultures. They are also digital natives, where an everyday engagement and expertise in navigating digital media forces them to inhabit different worlds. Therefore, we can see that a stronger European public sphere can well be facilitated by a mediatized cosmopolitan space. The increasingly mediated reality is not just a social fact, but it also shows the potential for the development of more cosmopolitan communication, increased democratic dialogue across cultures, and the ability for citizens to claim their transnational democratic rights. Arguably, the internet will likely be the key arena of civic participation in the future, and as it possesses true cosmopolitan capacities, it can also pave way for the development of such identities and be used "as a tool for social change." (Olsson & Dahlgren, 2010:19). In this regard, we arguably need to move away from understanding the public sphere "in terms of selected space of co-present social interaction" (Barnett, 2004:191), especially when democracy is being elevated to a transnational level.

What the analysis has taught us is that tensions do exist and pose real challenges, but they also do not need to define the potential for a more open and integrated European Union. Volt Europa proves that different nations and diverse citizens do not have to be at odds with one another to address common issues, and therefore, a cosmopolitan model may well provide us with a remedy for a fragmented European Union. It is for future cosmopolitan research and political movements such as Volt Europa to really tell whether we have the answer in such a worldview:

> For we can envisage alternative futures whose very propagation might help them to be realized. What is needed is the creation of models of utopian realism. (Giddens, 1990:154)

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Interviews

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Interview 2, Country-lead, Volt Denmark. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-14. Copenhagen, Denmark

Interview 3, Country-lead, Volt Belgium. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-15. Video call, Google Meet

Interview 4, Expansion-lead, Volt Sweden. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-25. Lund, Sweden

Interview 5, Strategic communications-lead, Volt Belgium. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-03-27. Video call, Google Meet

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Interview 7, Secretary-general, Volt Europa. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-04-01. Video call, WhatsApp

Interview 8, Communications-lead, Volt Denmark. Interviewed by Michal Gieda 2019-04-07. Video call, WhatsApp

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Field notes

Field Notes [2 March 2019] Crossing Borders with Volt, John Bull, Lund, Sweden

Field Notes [14 March 2019] Meet Volt, Kulturhuset Islands Brygge, Copenhagen, Denmark

Conceiving a Talk Show and Civic Talk through Young Women's Eyes

Gender in an audience study on Indonesian Talk Show 'Mata Najwa'

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Introduction

> 'Democracy without the participation of women is not truly democracy'.

<div align="right">(Kathryn Robinson, 2009:159)</div>

The slogan above has been adopted by Indonesian activist women in relation to the lack of representation of women in the parliament (ibid: 160) because of the strong patriarchal ideology in Indonesia (Siregar, 2005). Indonesian feminists see the potential for Indonesian young women to participate in politics and bring the feminist agenda on the desk (Wildianti & Perdana, 2019). Young Indonesian women have shown their awareness of women's political struggle in the public sphere, as illustrated by the 2018 Women's March Jakarta (Mann, 2018).[3] During this event, they took the streets to voice eight demands for gender equality. This march illustrates both the underrepresentation of women in the public sphere, and the ability of young women to play a role in fostering democracy. It can also be seen as a form of women's agency in 'challenging the dominant definition of their citizenship as wives and mothers, which was the circumscribed definition of

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[3] Women's March Jakarta is a solidarity movement among women and minority communities to demand terms of tolerance and diversity, elimination of violence and protection for women, gender rights in every aspect, and eradication of discrimination against minorities (Women's March Jakarta Chapter).

women's social roles that were the core of the gender regime of the New Order' (Robinson: 8).[4]

As this thesis revolves within the realm of media, it is necessary to look at the interconnections between the media and the agency of young women audiences. The media have a role in 'shaping the democratic character of society' (Dahlgren, 2009:2) as they help the audiences build 'cultural citizenship', where they can feel connected with communities (Hermes & Stello, 2000: 219). However, Indonesian media, including television, have also been impacted by the legacy of the patriarchal culture developed by New Order. They have indeed not adopted gender perspective (Pratiwi & Iswara, 2003). They are blamed for not paying attention to gender issue (ibid.) and for considering women as second-class citizens (Astuti, 2016). Sarwono argues that this 'gender-biased tendency' could strengthen the inequality in Indonesian society (2012: 37), such as perpetuating the role of women in the private sphere, and the one of men in the public sphere (Astuti, 2016; Noviani, 2014).

Instead of looking at the subordination of women as the product of media, this thesis aims to understand young women's agency through their engagement with a talk show, as a resource to challenge the patriarchal ideology which shadows Indonesian society. Their media engagement is a form of civic practice during which they reflect, as citizens, while watching the show. This civic practice goes beyond their viewership experiences through their 'civic talk', which are significant for democracy, as they generate 'personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy' (Dahlgren, 2009:116).

Mata Najwa

This thesis will investigate an Indonesian talk show, Mata Najwa, to explore young female audiences' engagement with the show and their civic talk beyond the show. Mata Najwa is hosted by a female journalist and focuses on political and social issues at the national level, aired once a week in TRANS7 channel and uploaded in Najwa Shihab's YouTube channel. The host, Najwa Shihab, is well known for her critical and provocative questions while interviewing the elites on the show. However, Najwa is not a mere host, she is a senior journalist who also

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[4] New Order is the authoritarian regime of Suharto (1965-1998) in Indonesia

takes part in the coverage of the issues and affects the way she frames them (Setiowati & Nur, 2016).

As the presidential election will be held in 2019, Trans7 expects Mata Najwa to be a reference programme for the audience to observe the politicians who will participate in the election. Following Lunt and Stenner's (2005) argument about the categorisation of talks show, Mata Najwa could be classified as a public discussion talk show. By referring to factual genres addressed by Hill (2007), the format of Mata Najwa could be categorized as news, current affairs and investigation, and popular factual. This hybridity can offer various audience engagements, both rational and affective (ibid:14) regarding political and social issues. Yet, the most prominent formats on the show are news interviews and political debate. It mainly invites people or elites involved in a particular issue to be scrutinized through the interview followed by a forum of political debate.

According to the official branding from TRANS7, the primary target audience of the programme is male, while women are their secondary target audience.[5] However, according to the ratings report from TRANS7, more female audiences watch the show compared to man. It illustrates that the social and political discussion on Mata Najwa attracts female audiences, yet they are unrecognized. The stereotypical perception of women in Indonesian patriarchal culture, is similar to how Indonesian television perceives women.

There is a number of previous audience studies on Mata Najwa that lack the gender dimension and limit the focus on the 'interpretive practices' (Dahlgren, 1995:121) of the audience. The previous studies have noted the knowledge acquisition from the show, yet they simplify it without taking into consideration the affective element of the audience and the political and social contexts. Furthermore, there is an absence of the debate over the embeddedness of television programme viewing and the 'sociocultural interaction' (Dahlgren, 1995:121) that can enhance audience knowledge about the issues talked about on the show. Therefore, this thesis addresses the gap within the context of young Indonesian women in understanding their engagement with a talk show and civic talk in the private sphere to look closer at their agency which is unrecognized by the media.

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[5] On the website, it is written, 'Mata Najwa has the potential to attract male audience with the wide age range (youth - elderly). Furthermore, the flexibility of themes on the show could be expanded to accommodate female audiences (Trans7)

2019 is the year of politics in Indonesia when the general election is held, when Indonesians are highly exposed to political issues. It provides the opportunity to explore young Indonesian women's political perspectives, as citizens, who also are part of politics in Indonesia, and it opens new discussions on female Indonesian audiences and citizenship.

Aims and research questions

The main objective of the thesis is to critically investigate the engagement of young Indonesian women with Mata Najwa, and how they garner knowledge from this public discussion talk show as a resource in their civic talk on political and social issues in Indonesia. It also identifies if and how the host becomes the key player in young, female Indonesians' engagement with political and social issues raised on the show. Najwa Shihab is a female journalist who challenges the ideology of patriarchal culture. This thesis allows the voice of the female audiences' their critical opinion and feelings about social and political circumstances in Indonesia that foster or hinder them from civic talk in the public sphere. Moreover, it provides feminine insight into the political Indonesian talk shows primarily aimed at male audiences where women's issues are not mainstream yet. It thus addresses the gap between the talk show and civic talk within the context of patriarchal society through audience research on female audiences.

The following research questions are determined to answer the aims of this research:

- In what ways do young Indonesian women engage with Mata Najwa, in particular with social and political issues?

- How does the female host become part of these young Indonesian women's modes of engagement?

- How is the show a resource for young Indonesian women to participate in civic talk beyond their viewing engagement in the private sphere?

Surveying Politics and the Media: The Context of Indonesia, Television and the Talk Show

Democratic politics and media

It is important to recognise both the political and politics to underscore their relationship in understanding the ways in which people engage in democratic action, which potentially fosters political action. The political should be perceived as 'a dimension inherent in human practices' which is not situated in a particular type of institution or constitutes 'one sphere of society' (Mouffe, 1995:105). On the other hand, 'politics' attempts to organise a fixed order and 'human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of the political' (ibid). Following Mouffe (ibid), Dahlgren (2003:155, 2009:83, 2006:24) asserts that the construction of the political and politics is through 'word and deed' which cannot only be presented in a rational way as people need to first feel engaged before they participate in politics. This engagement involves the rationale and affection; he states that 'to be engaged in something signals not only cognitive attention and some normative stance, but also an affective investment' (ibid:25).

Alongside this approach, Coleman (2013) suggests that the media has roles in informing citizens and stimulating audiences to become engaged in the democratic process. He addresses the significance of the 'civic mix', the 'mixture of game and substance-oriented debate' within the media to serve democratic citizenship (2011, 2013). Adapting Jamieson's (1992) argument, Coleman implies that the notion of 'game' is rhetorical style, impression management, and winners and losers in the debate (2011:20), meaning 'candidates are seen as performers, reporters as theatrical critics, [and] the audience as spectators' (Jamieson, 1992:166). On the other hand, 'substance' refers to policy challenges, intentions and solutions, party records, and leadership qualities (Coleman, 2011:20-21). In this context, this game and substance mixture is needed for democratic citizenship in order to cover and make sense of policy differences, while energising agonistic democracy (ibid:31). This civic mix may thus acknowledge the significant mixture of cognitive and affective elements in political engagement. Thus, this study adopts Coleman's notion of the civic mix to grasp the engagement of the audience with Mata Najwa as the programme

contains both political and social discussion and entertainment, such as conflict among the guests and inspirational talk. Furthermore, the rational and emotional elements are pivotal in examining why and how the audience engages with the talk show.

Considering the affective and cognitive elements in the media to serve democratic citizenship, it is crucial for the study to grasp the engagement of young Indonesian female audiences, what they think and feel about the show, the host, the guests and the topics raised, which include their subjectivity in reacting and reflecting on their social life. Annette Hill (2019) develops the notions of the 'spectrum of engagement' and 'modes of engagement' which can help this study to analyse the engagement of audiences. By extending Corner's (2011) work on the 'stages of engagement' that involves the 'sustained cognitive' and 'affective work' that highlights individuals' 'subjectivity', Hill asserts that the 'spectrum of engagement' resonates the moving state of the cognitive and affective work of audiences (Hill, 2017:7) so that 'people switch between positive and negative engagement, or disengagement' (2018:7). On the other hand, the modes of engagement are used to describe the multiple senses of the objective and subjective elements in media experiences which reflect audiences' social life (Hill, 2019:10). Hill further asserts that 'engagement is a form of agency' (ibid:54), as it offers audiences the chance to act beyond the text.

Moreover, in understanding audience engagement, we can conceive how the audiences value the show, what knowledge they gather from it, and how a sense of trust in the show and actors in it is built. These *values, knowledge and trust* are three dimensions of civic cultures, the cultural prerequisites of 'civic agency', in which people can perceive themselves as participants in democracy (Dahlgren, 2009). It is necessary that this study is informed by the 'circuit of civic culture' to elaborate the connection between audience engagement and the way they are engaged in civic talk. Coined by Dahlgren (2009), 'civic culture' is 'a framework intended to analyse the conditions that are necessary for - either promote or hinder - civic engagement' (ibid:103). The circuit involves six intercorrelated dimensions: *knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices and identities*. With civic cultures in mind, the thesis explores young female audiences in terms of how they are empowered by the media to participate in civic talk, and how they reflect on their political subjectivities as female citizens.

With regard to civic talk, it is necessary for the thesis to approach the notion of 'deliberative democracy' proposed by Habermas (1996) to assert the relationship between communication and democracy. It is a normative category of the legitimate political process which occurs in the public sphere, where rational debate aims to justify political agreement (ibid:306, Elster, 2998; Schudson, 1997). However, Dahlgren (2009) criticises the exclusiveness of the deliberative instrumental view and suggests looking beyond the formal context of deliberation. Following Dahlgren (Ibid), deliberative democracy can be perceived as a process of generating 'public reasons' and reaching 'mutual understanding' through everyday civic talk (Kim & Kim, 2008:51). Therefore, everyday talk is treated as 'civic talk' when it turns into political discussion (Ibid) when it moves to a 'politically relevant theme' (Dayan, 2005:60). Considering the 'civic talk' that takes place in everyday communication, it is important for this study to consider the way audiences develop conversation into a rational argument about politics.

Regarding the places where people have political talks, the division between the public and private spheres becomes obscure. Drawing on the Habermasian traditional view of the public sphere, which is limited to instrumental deliberative democracy and openness (1989), informal civic talk is therefore associated with the private sphere. The private is usually referred to as a women's sphere, while the public sphere is a space for men (Dahlgren, 1995; Dahlgren, 2009; Plummer, 2003). Women's talk in the private sphere is considered as 'gossip' and it is perceived that their conversation is not rational (Wood, 2009:16). However, apart from the gendered sphere, there are intersections between the public and private spheres where the personal is 'connected to, structured by, or regulated through the public sphere' (Plummer, 2003:70). In line with Plummer (ibid), Lauren Berlant developed the notion of the 'intimate public sphere', where people can imagine, experience and govern their personal and collective identities in a private space (1997). Berlant asserts that the intimate public sphere in the context of the US is a place where people experience citizenship through intimacy (ibid.). Therefore, the thesis attempts to explore the intimate experiences of young female audiences which lead to civic talk.

Democracy, media and women in Indonesia

To contextualise the thesis research, it is necessary to identify the bigger picture of Indonesia from previous studies, in terms of democracy, the media and women,

providing the background and addressing the gap in the study of women within the realms of democracy and the media. Television in Indonesia has been a symbolic witness of the Indonesian journey from the authoritarian regime of Suharto to a democratic nation. The national broadcaster, TVRI, was worked as a tool of state propaganda during the New Order (Kitley, 2000; Sen & Hill, 2000; Hollander et al., 2009). It was a site for the state to invent a 'national culture', which was presented as cultural policies, practices and values (Sen & Hill, 2000:5). An example of cultural invention in the New Order was the definition of women as "companions to their husband, educator for their children, supplementary income-earners, housekeepers [...]" (Blackburn, 1999:200). An imbalance in power relations therefore prevailed between Indonesian men and women, in which women were perceived as subordinate to men (Fakih, 1998).

Therefore, the responsibilities undertaken by women as ordered by the state and the promotion of femininity that asserted that politics was for men, prevented them from participating in the public sphere as citizens (Blackburn, 1999:200). However, in the last decade of the New Order, young well-educated urban women started to establish organisations aiming for social change, and after the fall of Suharto in the Reformation era, under President Habibie they became more vocal and attempted to gain media recognition (ibid:201). They demanded a democracy that offered gender equity (Robinson, 2009:148). I argue that the pre-transition phase played a role in Indonesia, in which society forced the state to make democratic reforms, and conflicts among the ruling elite emerged (Kitley, 2003:105). During this phase, five commercial television stations, owned by Suharto's family and cronies, were established to fulfil the public's desire for entertainment (ibid), and the increasing demand for public information (Hollander et.al., 2009:41).

Although the state controlled the news bulletins, the emergence of commercial television stations, with their soft news and current affairs programmes, such as talk shows, encouraged 'the discursive participation of [...] audiences in social and political commentary and criticism' (Kitley, 2000:265). Kitley (2000, 2003) argues that commercial television stations' objectives were merely commercial, which generated a pseudo-public sphere of culture consumption. Following Habermas' (1989) discussion on commercialisation in the public sphere, Kitley confirms Habermas' (ibid, 164) statement that 'Discussion becomes formalised and […] loses its publicist function' (Kitley, 2003:104). On the contrary,

Coleman (2013:1) suggests identification of the potential of television that is relevant for democracy, in which 'democratic debate might be instigated, stimulated, or promoted'. As illustrated in the previous section on the civic mix of Coleman (2011), democratic citizenship relies on informed individuals who feel engaged in the political process. Therefore, the thesis explores this potential through research on young female audiences, as the context of gender in terms of audience participation in political talk has yet to be addressed.

Even in the new post-New Order era of democracy, the representation of women in politics is low, implying that Indonesian politics is dominated by males (Siregar, 2005). Male elites of politics considerably do not pay attention to gender issues because they believe it is women's problem (ibid). In terms of the media, the political discourse in Indonesia is under the influence of the media owners who are affiliated with political parties (Tapsell, 2015). Therefore, many studies criticize Indonesian commercial televisions for preserving patriarchal culture through underrepresented voices and misrepresented portrayal of women, and the lack of women's issues in the coverage of Indonesian commercial television (Murtiningsih & Advenita, 2017; Noviani, 2014:61). On the other hand, the Indonesian media report the participation of women in politics when women protest on the streets to demand their rights (Venny & Rahayu ed., 2014:19). Siregar (2005) contends that it is the case of the ambivalence of Indonesian television institutions, where they open space for women to express their rights; on the other hand, these institutions reinforce the patriarchal presentation of women.

Further, in the middle of this criticism, Indonesian televisions accept women who are against the patriarchal culture through their critical thoughts in hosting political and social discussion in TV such as Najwa Shihab (Mata Najwa's host). Her visibility contrasts the lack of attention given to gender studies in television. According to Carpentier (2011:88), the representation in the media 'leaves more space for diversity and cultural struggle and the role of identities and affect.' The representation of women in Indonesian television who participate in the mediated public sphere will give the space for Indonesian female audiences to reflect on their identity as part of the state, as Hermes and Stello (2000) argue in terms of cultural citizenship. Thus, this thesis argues that it is necessary to take a closer look at the representation of women in the public sphere that challenges the ideology of patriarchal culture in Indonesia through a public discussion talk show

from female audiences perspective, as it provides a different perspective on how female audiences give meaning to their viewing experiences.

Television as public information

Within the realm of democracy, television has long been regarded as one of the main media for audiences to obtain political information and to encourage discussion as part of their participation in democracy (Curran & Gurevitch, 2000:129; Dahlgren, 2009:34; Coleman, 2013). Through their roots in journalism, news and current affairs programmes serve to 'enhance public knowledge' (Dahlgren, 1995:46). This is related to the notion of the 'public knowledge project' of Corner (1991:268), which focuses on 'the politics of information and the viewer as citizen' to promote engagement in the democratic process. As a result, the audiences can develop a civic agency in which people generate knowledge together, such as through civic talk (Dahlgren, 2009). Menzes, Ponte, and Britez (2017) demonstrate that news become the source of conversation for young people talking about politics with their family and friends.

The study by Mirca Madianou (2005) on television news audiences in Greece demonstrates that news can be the 'mediator' between 'public institutions' and audiences' interests. However, the study illustrates that some audiences decide to 'switch off' from being part of the public due to several reasons such as their lack of trust in the media and journalists. In terms of gender, women audiences switch off due to lack of time to access news and/or dissatisfaction with the coverage of 'national issues', which is caused by 'negative personal experiences to the media and journalist (Madianou, 2005:107). This shows that even though news treat its audiences as citizens, the way audiences give meaning to news is unpredictable as it involves affective and cognitive engagement (Hill, 2019) that are contextualised and dynamic. This thesis strives to understand the way audiences engage with what appears on the screen and reflect as citizens.

Despite the significance of the audience's political identity in engaging with public information, it is also necessary for this thesis to contextualise audience engagement with its gender identity. A study by David Morley (1992) demonstrates the television programme preferences of women and men, claiming that women tend to watch 'fictional programmes', while men prefer watching 'factual programmes' (ibid:148). However, a more recent study by Hill and

Gauntlett (1999) does not find gender differences in the viewing process and audience preferences, as both men and women in their study enjoy the soap opera genre, which is stereotypically identified as feminine. A study by Ross (1995) on British women and news also found that women did watch news programmes but acknowledged that news stories did not cover women's issues and contained irrelevant content to their everyday lives. This shows that women engage with news and able to reflect on their lives that the news media di not fulfill their interests in women's issues. Following Ross' study, which cuts across the division of gendered media, Liesbet van Zoonen (1991:47) suggests that in terms of female audience research, 'the focus on the reception of soaps, romances and women's magazines seriously narrows our potential for articulating a comprehensive cultural critique, for we tend to ignore whole areas of social and cultural practice.' Therefore, based on this approach, the thesis counts on women's voices regarding their engagement with a public discussion talk show, to obtain in-depth comprehension of their engagement and their reflections on their identities as audiences, women and citizens within the context of patriarchal Indonesian culture.

Furthermore, the way audiences make sense of issues on television news is related to the role of the journalists and presenters who organise the programmes. They present 'the world, with particular events, feelings and experiences that are represented in the news content' (Hill, 2007:133) to the audience. As news representatives, journalists do not simply present the 'facts' based on statements from politicians, but they delve into and interpret them (Patterson, 1997:447), so that the audience can understand. Their involvement in interpreting issues is evident in the form of news interviews, in which journalists enclose their statements within the questions to protect the neutrality of their coverage (Clayman, 1988). This could be perceived as being the result of journalists' observations and their comments on the political scene (McNair, 2011:71). According to Nimmo and Combs (1992:24), those who 'voice their special knowledge in public forms' are considered as 'pundits'. This refers to people who do not only make authoritative judgments, but also 'mock the pretensions of those who nag politicians through public and widely circulated observations' (ibid:6). The opinions conveyed by pundits can therefore influence public opinion (ibid:8). The notion of 'pundit' is important here in order to grasp the contribution of the host, who has a journalistic background, in affecting the understanding of young women audiences of political and social issues.

Talk Shows

There is some discussion around talk shows and their role as a debate forum in public sphere. Public discussion talk shows offer a space for different actors to gather, where they can put forward 'claims and reason' in 'immediate challenges and response', so the audience will receive more obvious perspectives about public issues (Schultz & Wessler, 2007:22). Even though this format of talk show is an arena where debates on political and social issues occur, according to Lunt and Stenner's (2005:78) study on The Jerry Springer Show, talk shows could be treated as 'the mediation of public expression, reflection and deliberation'.

On the other hand, Liebes' (1999) argues that talk show is a spectacle of verbal battle and entertainment, which jeopardises their legitimation as space for rational deliberation in the public sphere (ibid). This follows the argument of Lunt and Stenner (2005) about talk shows as an 'emotional public sphere' which provides entertainment for audiences through the conflict arising on the programme. The entertainment value of the talk show is relevant to the 'popular culture project' introduced by Corner (1991), which concerns entertainment and emphasises 'the social problematics of taste and of pleasure' (1991:268).

Drawing on these discussions, this study acknowledges that public discussion talk shows do offer debate, which is very important for democracy, as the audience obtains different perspectives to generate their own opinion and knowledge. However, at the same time, talk shows provide entertainment for the audience, attracting public attention through verbal battles broadcast. Therefore, instead of examining talk shows as a debate forum with regard to the public sphere, this thesis attempts to analyse their potential for sustaining an informed audience through public knowledge and entertainment values and promoting public discussion. This refers back to the notion of the civic mix, which offers the 'high mindedness of rational political debate and the enchanting appeal of participatory democracy' (Coleman, 2013:6-7). It is also related to the notion of 'cultural citizenship' within the popular culture (Hermes, 2005:5). Through the 'practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular culture),' it allows the audience to feel connected with the community and reflect on that connection (ibid:10). Therefore, exploring talk shows and their values will help obtain in-depth understanding of the blurred boundaries between the 'public knowledge project' and 'popular culture' in serving citizenship, which Hill

(2007:13) addresses in terms of the popular factual genre that it is 'connected to the transformation of the public knowledge project'.

A talk show is 'host-centred' for the role of the host is significant in leading the talk and influences the quality of discussion (Schultz & Wessler, 2007:23). The thesis pays attention to the role of the host in driving the discussion through his or her 'questions and intervention' and ability to 'stimulate more or less substantial argumentation' (Timberg,2002:3). The role of hosts here is defined as being intermediaries between the guests, and between the audience and the public issued, as they help audiences to give meaning to the political and social issues discussed. This is what the thesis is aiming to achieve:to understand what meaning the audiences construct from the show in question.

As the host of Mata Najwa is female, it is necessary to consider how a female host plays a crucial role in affecting female audience. Timberg (2002) takes the example of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* to analyse the significance of the role of Winfrey, as a female host, in representing the 'double voiced' identity of an African and American woman, which can then be argued to empower her audiences (ibid). Adding to Timberg's analysis of Winfrey, Helen Wood (2009:28) addresses the trust relationship between the host and her audiences through intimacy, which fosters audience empowerment manifested in 'dialogue, self-help and solidarity to combat contemporary demons'. As a representative of women, who has talked about her background as the victim of child abuse, drugs and self-hate, Winfrey empowers her audiences to confess their own problems (Tolson & Brunvatne, 2001:154). The familiarity between the host and the audience becomes a resource to build intimacy between them.

The emergence of intimacy and familiar feelings between the host and talk show audiences are developed within the notion of the 'para-social' relationship coined by Horton and Wohl (1956). These feelings become salient in the 'informal, ritualized and interactive style' of talk shows, which encourages audiences to be part of the interaction (Livingstone & Lunt, 1994:169). This makes the host seem normal, accessible and an equal (Tolson, 2001:33). Mata Najwa clearly cannot be compared to The Oprah Winfrey Show, whose genre is a therapeutic talk show, rather than one of public discussion (Lunt & Stenner, 2005). However, what is useful for the thesis from this discussion is to look beyond the host's role, at how the intimacy that leads to trust is built, the way she positions herself as part of the audience in the Indonesian context, and the way she expresses her thoughts.

Qualitative Research on Mata Najwa

Methodological Approach

The cultural invention of gender (Kitley, 2000:5) in Indonesia is an evidence for gender is 'a social construction and culture' (van Zoonen, 1991:46). As the thesis aims to understand the agency of women in a patriarchal culture, it takes as its foundation the standpoint theory of Sandra Harding (2004). In this study, female audiences are considered to be marginalised people in political and social settings. By studying women's experiences and perspectives, Harding argues that they can be resources for understanding the social and political processes that shape their lives, as they look 'beneath or behind the dominant sexist and androcentric ideologies' (2004:6). Standpoint theory therefore provides the groundwork for the thesis to critically identify how the patriarchal culture of Indonesia affects the way young female audiences interpret their engagement with a talk show and civic talk.

Rooted in social constructionism, in which the meaning-making by audiences is significantly tied to the social construction of individuals, the audience research in this study is built upon the spectacle-performance paradigm (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998:37). According to Abercrombie and Longhurst, everyday life is constructed as a 'performance' and individuals are constructed as 'performers' (ibid:73). They assert that even though everyday life is dominated by the media in which constructed, audiences as 'performers' can give meaning to text in the media in a 'diverse' and 'unpredictable' manner (ibid:32) as a way of self-reflection (ibid:40). This paradigm fits this study as it allows agency for young female audiences even though they are constructed by their 'disposal' (given their education, class, background, etc.) (Hermes, 2014:62).

Following this approach, Seale et al (2004:5) suggest that there is a need for social researchers to focus on the practice of everyday life in order to identify the influence of the 'thoughts, feelings, and identities'. Those three aspects are 'brought to bear on our understandings of who and what we are, both in relation to what we apparently are within and to what we believe we share as members of particular situations' (ibid). Thus, the social context binding audiences cannot be taken for granted, and it is necessary to examine it critically (ibid). In order to achieve this, the contextualisation of research is crucial, as Flyvbjerg (2001:72)

suggests that social science could develop a 'nuanced view of reality' through case studies, as these can provide 'concrete, context-dependent knowledge'. Therefore, a case study on the female audiences of a talk show, Mata Najwa, is developed in this work.

This thesis examines the female audiences of a talk show, which goes against popular opinion, which deems it to be of almost exclusive interest of men (Byerly & Ross, 2006). Hence, it is important to identify the female audiences through exploration of the social and political context of women's lived experience (ibid). The study will explore female audiences' experience and opinions of a talk show, as well as civic talk beyond the programme within the Indonesian context. The importance of audience research is supported by Hermes (2009:124), who claims that 'media power and audience agency remain as important as ever'. Moreover, Jensen (2002:256) argues that research considers the fact that the media as a vehicle of meaning allows people with a 'sense of identity' to perform their agency and orient themselves in 'social interaction.' He adds that the connection between meaning and action by audiences is explored through qualitative research. In addition, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015:1) and Jensen (2002:270) argue that to understand an audience's perspective on media, in-depth interviews are the best method to search for meaning-making.

Design, piloting, sampling and conducting interviews

As the thesis employs semi-structured interviews to allow informants to answer the questions in their own ways (Seale, 2012:205), the questions and flow do not strictly adhere to a particular interview guideline. Snowball sampling was employed to access potential interviewees who filled the respondent requirements (Jensen, 2002:239). The informants were young Indonesian females in the age range of 23-28 years old, representing the medium to highest viewing percentages of Mata Najwa audiences.[6] Young female audiences were chosen as the research sample because their political interests are minimally recognised in the Indonesian

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[6] According to the ratings report from TRANS7 for the period January 2018 to February 2019, young female audience ratings are averagely higher than those of young males; the percentage of young females is around 1.2, while that of young male audiences is 0.97.

media, whereas the report demonstrates the number of young Indonesian women who watch this political television programme is higher than that of man.

Group and individual interviews were conducted. Fifteen informants were involved in the study, with nine individual interviews and three group (two people) interviews. Bahasa Indonesia was the primary language used during the interview as it was the informants' and researcher's native language. This allowed the informants to express their opinions fluently. All the interviews were conducted face to face and took place in Jakarta, Depok and Jember during my visit to Indonesia in March 2019 in order to obtain diverse voices from the audiences in different regions. Jakarta and Depok are neighbouring cities and closer to the political events in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, while Jember is located on East Java. All the informants actively followed the national news and the polarisation between the two presidential candidates (one of the political events at the time of the interviews was the presidential election)[7]; despite the different regions, their opinions about Mata Najwa and Indonesian politics at the national level were similar. Furthermore, all the informants came from the educated middle - upper classes. This reflects the fact that the majority of the programme's audiences are also from the middle to upper and well-educated. They, therefore, had the capability to express their opinions and critical interpretations of Mata Najwa, and the social and political situation in Indonesia.

Before the interviews started, consent forms and a brief explanation of the purpose, process, and estimated duration of the interview were given to the informants. Then, we watched one part of the episodes of Mata Najwa out of seven in total. Doing this helped the informants to recall their thoughts about the programme and to be a reference for them when explaining what they thought and felt about it. Although the watching process was not part of the method, I wrote down some notes on the informants' responses during the viewing. Guided by Corner's advice to 'assume less and investigate more' (2011:87), I clarified their responses in the interview afterwards to understand the reasons behind, which

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[7] Indonesian presidential election in 2019 was the continuation of the previous election in 2014. The presidential candidates were the same: Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto. Tapsell (2019) argues that the social media generates 'artificial atmosphere of polarisation' between two candidate's supporters. The discourse on social media defines Jokowi online supporters as "tadpoles" (cebong) and Prabowo online followers as "bats" (kampret) (ibid). This online polarisation, for Tapsell, affects the sensitivity of election topic in offline reality (ibid).

mostly concerned their previous experience with aspects such as the guest, issue or host. The episodes we watched were randomly chosen from ones screened in July, August, and September 2018 and which received high ratings covering various topics.

All the interviews were fully transcribed before the coding process began. I used English, as the required language, to code the transcripts in order to perform the empirical data analysis. For coding, I used a mix of inductive and deductive coding approaches, starting with open coding to give room for the data to 'speak it for itself' (Seale, 2012:372). Besides treating the data equally (Seale, 2012:370), the transcripts were coded line by line to ensure that no statements were ignored. The open codes were then put into subcategories and themes, which had evolved when designing the research.

Mata Najwa: Analysis of Female Audience Engagement with the Show and Civic Talk beyond it

Civic mix: audience engagement as citizens

All the study informants praised the novelty of the information provided on the show, which encouraged the curiosity of the audience about the issues. The acquisition of information from the show is also defined as a way of obtaining a broader perspective. This is expressed by Juju, a receptionist, who had stopped using social media as the main way of seeking political information:

> I was always in a position where my main source of information was Instagram.[...] Then I was thinking that making social media as the main source of information was wrong. Their captions are limited and the videos only last one minute. Sometimes my wisdom in understanding the information could be wrong. Back then, I judged something bad or good easily. And my fanaticism over something was easily affected. By watching Mata Najwa, I get more and balanced information. (Juju, 23)

Despite the social media's role in providing news, Juju disengaged with it as a news source. For her, its limited text and video duration meant that the provision of news was narrow and might lead to misunderstanding of issues, as was the case

for her. Moreover, using social media as news source can prompt 'like-minded citizens' to generate 'echo chambers' or 'filter bubbles' in which opposing views are blocked (Gentzkow & Allcott, 211). Juju also acknowledged that social media played a role in her 'fanaticism' over 'something' (implying political partisanship). Hence, she engaged with Mata Najwa to obtain wider and more balanced perspectives.

Mata Najwa was perceived as an effective programme because it invited the key actors involved in issue. It works as a more comprehensive source of information than social media, based on rationality and fact. This illustrates their critical engagement with the show and indicates that they were familiar with the issues as they could compare the information from the show to other sources and reflect on them. This situation corresponds with the argument by Dahlgren (2009:109) that information must be made meaningful through 'integrating it in relation to one's existing frames of reference' to become knowledge. Following Dahlgren (ibid), this understanding entails previous experience of the audience with the subject or issue in order to evaluate the information provided on the show. The audiences elicit knowledge from other news sources and integrate it with their understanding of the information given on the show. So the news can be a resource for them to give meaning to the show and make sense of the issues circulating in the media. Prior experience is not only mediated but can also be in the real world. Lily's judgment of the guests on the show illustrates this:

> I felt close to what the interviewee said when I was in Jakarta. At that time, a group who supported Ahok (a former governor of Jakarta) had explained their opinion, while the opposition group, one of the Islamic groups, talked about defending Islam. When I was in Jakarta, this group did not act like that. They were terrible. So (when I watched the episode), I felt like "you are lying". (Lily, 24)[8]

Lily challenges the credibility of the guest's answers through her personal experience. There is negotiation between the audience's experience and what they see on the show. Incompatibility between what is experienced and what is seen in

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[8] The case of former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) who was sentenced two years for blasphemy for claiming that some politicians had violated a Quranic verse to block Muslim for choosing him, a non-muslim, in his re-election in the Jakarta Governor Election 2017 (Wijaya, 2017). One of the Islamic forums in Indonesia, which Lily referred to led the protest against Ahok. (BBC News, 2017)

the media leads to negative engagement that includes critical judgement and emotional dis-identification (Hill, 2019:12). It follows Hill's argument that personal experience in people's lives generates emotions (2007:195). The negative engagement with the guests affected Lily's perception of them. This perception offers the foundation for 'engagement with the realities and judgment upon them' (Corner, 2011:89) in the media.

On the other hand, another informant interpreted the practice of judgment as entertainment which elicited by the interviewee's arguments and the host's response:

> I watch Mata Najwa for entertainment because the interviewees' arguments are sometimes buffoonery. I don't understand why they do that. Haha...In addition, the fierce counter responses from Najwa emphasise that "these people are stupid" (Eli, 23)[9]

The use of the term 'buffoonery' (or 'lawak' in Bahasa Indonesia) in this context implies that some of the guests make ridiculous arguments or refutations. This demonstrates that Mata Najwa emphasises rationality on the show, so the appearance of guests who give answers as described above reflects their incapability and thus becomes part of the audience's enjoyment. This emerges due to the way the host provokes the guests through her counter-responses embodied in the questions.

> [...] she does not let the informants 'flow' to wherever they want. She does not follow the informants. She already knows what to do. Her questions are very 'closed' and specific. (Wewe, 24)

The questions from the host are provocative. This generates intense cognitive and emotional engagement with the interviewees among the audiences. Wewe acknowledges that the host's role in formulating the interaction on the show is appealing to the audience. It creates 'emotional engagement, excitability and interest' (Lunt & Stenner, 2005:68) in the audience, which are sources of the

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[9] Eli gave an example from the episode we watched when Najwa asked an ex-corruptor, the head of Hanura party's branch, who would participate in the 2019 election if he assigned himself as the candidate of the legislator. He answered 'I chose myself (as the legislator candidate) [...] it's not for myself. First, my colleagues (politicians) won't be willing to participate if I did not participate first'. For Eli, the answer is funny because it was out of context.

'cultural public sphere' (ibid). The host builds the 'evaluative elements' from the guests' statements into a 'contentious statement' to preserve the live interaction of the show (Thornborrow, 2001:117). The audience relishes the flow of arguments on the show and are excited to judge the guests based on the values of truthfulness, honesty and capability which the host uncovers.

The interaction on the show also produces a sense of 'liveness' of the broadcast for the audience, a feeling of co-presence with what is watched (Scannell, 1996:84). One informant clearly remarked this:

> I love watching a debate (conflict), both in reality and on a digital platform. Hahaha [...] that is so interesting. I stay at home every day and do everything (domestic work). So it (a debate) is my entertainment. I can mock people (while watching) [...] Then Najwa asks something that could make the guests helpless and ashamed. (Gigi 24)

Gigi is a housewife. She spends her time mostly at home taking care of her baby. Watching Mata Najwa once a week is a source of entertainment for her, when she can scorn people on the show when conflict arises. It is part of the lively attraction, and an immediate moment on the show that is happening 'now'; as Gigi says, *I feel like in the middle of it (the debate)'.* This live interaction between the guests and host provokes the participation of the audiences at home (Hutchby, 2001:170). Insulting the guests in front of the screen is an embodiment of audience participation. This is related to the identity of the guests as elites and whom the host investigates, so the audiences can examine the values of the guests, as discussed above. The show might provoke the excitement of mocking the guests, yet it also can be seen as the expression of sarcasm and irony over the guests. It is expressed by Lily when she talked about a politician celebrity, who applied to be a legislator, invited on the show and could not answer 'simple' questions from Najwa. Lily (24) said, *when Indonesia will be a developed country if the legislators are stupid like that.* The audiences enjoy this mockery because they have 'serious emotional engagement' (Doona, 2016) between the audiences with the guest and the issues.

However, the sense of 'liveness' does not only work with negative engagement, as the audiences' emotions can switch between the positive and negative. Gigi addresses this point:

> I like the way Najwa takes control of the guests. She can make me, as one of the audiences, feel part of the debate. [...] But sometimes, when the guests have not finished talking, she cuts them off. I feel like, "wait...wait… Let those people talk. Don't cut them off' (Gigi 24)

This shows that Gigi likes how Najwa has power over the guests on the show, but she also expresses her dissatisfaction with her being 'rude.' However, this negative engagement has not led her to disengage with the show yet, as it switches to the positive again, such as in her admiration for the unexpected questions Najwa asks after she has cut off the guests. Although this switching has not resulted in disengagement, it can build up expectations of the host. This is indicated by Zizi (24): '*I expect Najwa to explore (the guest) more*'. When this expectation fails to be fulfilled, there is a possibility that the audiences will switch their engagement to disengagement (Hill, 2019:63).

From observing the data, cutting off the guests' answers is Najwa's attempt to make the discussion focused and to emphasise rational debate rather than emotional tensions on the show as this could repress the potential for conflict on the show and the enhancement of emotions (Lunt & Stenner, 2005:65). All the informants acknowledge that conflict between guests during the debates is inevitable, and is in fact a source of entertainment. Even for the audiences who are more concerned with rational discussion, conflict on the show plays a crucial role in attracting their attention.

> It's not possible that a program is not 'designed'. But what she (Najwa) shows us...if there's no gimmick, it feels like something is deficient. But it has not made the viewer weary. It is still acceptable. (Wewe, 24)

This statement is evidence for Lunt and Stenner's (2005:75) argument about entertainment within the rational critical discussion on a talk show. They argue that entertainment generated from conflict has the potential to disrupt rational discussion (ibid). However, the host plays a role in managing the conflict, which accentuates the entertainment value and instead emphasises the rational value of political debate.

The excitement produced by the conflict on the show is also deemed helpful for validating the audience's judgment about who is 'right' and 'wrong', and the guests' personality. As Lily (24) states: '*I enjoy it (the conflict) because it reveals who*

is the stupid one. They (the guests' real personalities) will be more visible. When there is a conflict, the high-tempered person is the wrong one.' She is entertained by the conflict, and the emotional expression from the guests affects her perception of them. This supports Livingstone and Lunt's (1994:166) claim that emotional tension plays a role in heightening 'the sense of involvement and authenticity' of what guests' say.

The emotionality on the show does not only appear as conflict but also as fun and light conversation in the format of inspirational discussion. This is addressed by one informant when discussing an episode of 'Habibie dan Suara Anak Negeri' (Habibie and The Voice of People). The episode talks about a vision of Indonesia as an independent country with democracy as its instrument. The show invited people considered to have dedicated their lives to Indonesia, one of whom was BJ Habibie, a former president.

> Sometimes I rewatch the episode of BJ Habibie. That is my mood booster when I am burning out with the job and deadline. Watching him on the show reminds me that Indonesia does have lots of potential. And it generates optimism for Indonesia's future. (Juju, 24)

This statement includes the rational 'potentials' and the emotional 'optimism.' These two elements are the foundation of citizens' engagement (Dahlgren, 2009:80) and are inseparable from the audiences' subjective level (Coleman, 2013). The way Juju perceives the episode is by reflecting on her pessimism with Indonesian politics, which has been abused by the power of the elites, and she gives examples of countless corruption cases in Indonesia. By watching the episode, she sees the 'potential' of Indonesia presented by the guest, which helps her to build 'optimism'. Different to the debate format that raises the cynicism of audiences with regard to Indonesian politics, in its inspirational discussion Mata Najwa offers content to foster civic engagement.

The experience of watching the show also includes the 'imagination' of 'the others' who are watching it, who are people with a concern for politics.

> The excitement of watching the show is when the topic is hot trending, or if the topic concerns elites or conspiracies, like being a spectator of a drama. This is exciting. Because we can identify the character of our officials in order not to get cheated by them. Don't you, elites, abuse your power! (Arti, 23)

This illustrates the reflection of Arti as a citizen. Watching the show is the embodiment of her surveillance of the possibility of elites abusing their power. The use of the words 'we can identify' above indicates that she has joined the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) as she has the sense of belonging, as a citizen. This is constructed by, and through, the process of viewing, as addressed by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998:117), who stated that 'the sense of belonging engendered by the imagined community is also a construction of identity'.

Therefore, Mata Najwa offers two roles for its viewers, as 'audiences' who rationally and emotionally engage with the programme, and beyond the show as 'public' who reflect on public issues as citizens through their engagement. The 'audience' and 'public' overlap because the sense of being a member of the public is constructed via the text during the viewing process, or constructed from other text. This status is explained by Livingstone (2005:57) as the fact that 'public must always have been audiences', which in line with the notion of the 'citizen-viewer' of Corner (1991). Furthermore, being a member of the public or a citizen means relying on the media to sustain one's understanding of politics (ibid:11). This understanding is affected by the knowledge (cognitive) and affective experience which emerge in the engagement with the media (Dahlgren, 1995:38). The mixture of rational discussion and the emotional appeal that emerged during the political debate and interview, termed the 'civic mix' by Coleman (2011), plays a significant role in 'informing and stimulating citizens' (Coleman, 2013:24).

In relation to Mata Najwa, Najwa Shihab plays a prominent role as the host of the show. She has to lead its flow, critically interrogate the guests to present information to the audiences, and help them to understand the issues. Discussion about the host will be made in the following section.

Najwa Shihab: the representation of the ideal woman vs. a representative of (female) citizens

In Mata Najwa, Najwa Shihab hosts the show without neglecting her status as a journalist. As a 'program manager,' she introduces the subject of discussion with a poem, presents the guests (who are mostly from elites), and manages the discussion through 'linguistic patterns' such as questions and interruption

(Tolson, 2001:32). However, according to the informants, she acts differently in different show settings. One informant understands these differences as follows:

> From the content, Mata Najwa is the same. What I mean is that when she does the interviews in the show, she wants to explore the facts, but when the show is at a university (Mata Najwa on Stage), it becomes semi-formal. She definitely asks the students (as the audiences) about something. She communicates with her audiences. I, as a member of the audience (at home), am (watching it) more relaxed. I pay attention to the interviewees because it (the show) in the studio focuses on the interviewees. Otherwise, when I watch her on the roadshow, she has another way of inviting the audiences. (Cici, 28)

Following Cici's statement, in the roadshow setting Najwa's role is in line with Tolson's (2001) idea about the responsibility of the host in building interactive communication with audiences. The host on the roadshow is deemed to be close to viewers as she can invite them to be part of the show in terms of its informality. There is also a feeling of 'intimacy' and 'familiarity' (Horton & Wohl, 1956:216) between them, which produces a relaxing feeling for the audience at home. Horton and Wohl (ibid) describe the 'social scene' presented by the host as 'the persona,' which creates the illusion of 'intimacy' and 'familiarity' for the audiences at home as she blends with them during the roadshow. This is called a para-social relationship. The audiences associate with the host as if they are close, 'in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends: through direct observation and interpretation of appearance, gestures and voice, conversation and conduct in a variety of situations' (ibid).

However, in the studio Najwa focuses on the guests, so this affects her relationship with the audiences. She emphasises her status as a journalist who questions interviewees, who here are the guests on the programme. The relationship between Najwa and Cici in the studio setting seems to absent, but it is actually present. Taking into consideration Horton and Wohl's (1956) concept of persona, and engagement that involves 'cognitive and affective work' (Corner 2011:91), the audiences develop the perception of intimacy with hosts through admiration.

> She is a role model. I've often thought how to be Najwa Shihab, I want to be like her. I observe her (on the show) seriously. It's not only about the way she asks, but

also the questions, her gestures, eye contact. How she could be a figure like that [...] her thoughts. (Arti, 23)

The statement by Arti captures how emotional engagement is manifested. Admiration for the host is significant in perceiving host-audience relationship in the context of Mata Najwa. Schmid and Klimitt (2011) claim that social attraction, such as admiration, is the main factor in a para-social relationship between the audience and media personalities. This clarifies the correlation between 'admiration' affection and cognition embedded in Arti critical thoughts. In other words, Arti and other informants place trust in the host as their 'role model'.

The presence of a para-social relationship between the audience and host is inseparable through reflection as females in the context of Indonesia, a patriarchal culture.

She can accentuate herself in the middle of a patriarchal culture. (Alfi, 24)

Additionally, another informant highlights the hardship Indonesian women face:

[...] she is a courageous enough...woman. Oh. I just realized that she is a woman. What I mean is, it cannot be denied that we live in a masculine country. A woman has to...maybe she has to be five times better than a man to be recognised in a public space. In the past, it was rare for a woman to lead an excellent talk show like this. So, even though she is associated with the name of "Shihab" and is a daughter of Quraish Shihab, she offers 'colour' and hope. She is a woman who is present in the middle of us and gives a different 'colour'. I am not a feminist, but I love the participation of women in the public sphere, so I support her. (Wewe, 24)

The way Najwa treats her audience as citizens encouraged the study informants to reflect on the images of Indonesian women and their situation which are perceived to be subordinated by the patriarchal culture. The informants use 'referential association' (Liebes & Katz, 1990:58) of their identity to relate to the host. The statement by Wewe that '*I am not a feminist but...I love the participation of women in the public sphere*' indicates that even though she does not regard herself as a feminist, who engages with politics in the public sphere, she acknowledges that the subordination of Indonesian women in the public sphere exists. Therefore, the acceptance of Najwa as a female journalist challenges patriarchy

because of her capability to critically investigate interviewees. Najwa is thus deemed to be a role model for participating in the public sphere. Many of the informants were fully aware that the visibility of females in the mediated public sphere is important, and that the presence of Najwa Shihab gives 'hope' for women to challenge the patriarchy itself. Eli (23) asserts that Najwa Shihab is a representation of an ideal Indonesian woman who can escape from the sexist stigma in Indonesia that 'women are considered to accept information simply without posing any questions thereabout' (Sarwono, 2012:37).

The involvement of a female in public discussion is considered to provide a different perspective, as Wewe (24) mentioned the term 'colour' in her statement. It relates to Ross' (1995) findings on women and their representation in the media, with the conclusion that female audiences expect to 'see more women on television [...] to provide alternative perspectives and practices' (ibid:14). For this reason, the appearance of a female journalist on the show makes many informants feel that Najwa represents their thoughts. One informant made the following remark:

> I've always felt like the questions on my mind about the guests are also asked by Najwa. That was when the guest was the Mayor of Surabaya City. She asked her in detail, saying things like "why couldn't you do that, Miss? Is it because there is a political party or officials who oppress you?" You know, this kind of question is also our question. There must be people (elites) who force the Mayor. (Cici, 28)

The experience of Cici having the same thoughts as the host demonstrate that she is imagining being involved as a citizen in the discussion of politics on the show. This brings us back to the discussion around the imagined community of the public or citizens and indicates that the host facilitates female audiences to understand the issues that they need to know about. Therefore, scrutinisation of the elites on the show by the female journalist encourages empowerment for the female audiences as citizens, not as 'mothers' or 'wives', the roles stereotypically associated with Indonesian women (Robinson, 2009:9).

Dahlgren (2009:100) argues that democracy will not work if 'virtues' such as the willingness to maintain its fundamentals and procedures are not applied in society. One informant talks about one of the substantive values of democracy, 'justice,' on the show: '*Fortunately, there are people (Najwa and the Mata Najwa*

team) still concerned about how justice and law should be upheld' (Cici, 28).[10] It is the case when Najwa and her team played a role in uncovering the bribery case concerning lavish jail cells at Sukamiskin. This implies that she is an actor watching over the elites and the state. By perceiving her as an actor, this emphasises her identity as a professional journalist acting as a representative of the public and their interests (Jones, 2005:43). Najwa, as a journalist, was then considered by Cici to be a part of the public or citizens who have a concern for how democracy should function.

To contextualise the analysis of how the audiences in the study perceive the role of Najwa in exploring issues through interrogating guests, I will focus on the topic of public affairs, which is then categorised as news interviews (Clayman, 1992). Discussion of her neutrality during the interviews cannot be avoided as the informants acknowledge her as a host, a journalist and the authority of the show.

> If there is a big case, she takes the issue (on the show), and she invites the key actors in the issue and (the proportion is) balanced. So the insights are not only from one side, and she does not really invite observers (experts), mostly just the key actors. [...] She asks the interviewees persistently, particularly if the interviewees dodge the questions, that's the interesting part...If I know the interviewees, I am like, "take that!" (Zizi, 24)

Some of the informants suspected Najwa to have a political stance on the Indonesian presidential elections of 2019, yet they believe she at least attempted to be objective in interrogating the interviewees. This strengthens the argument that Najwa acts on behalf of the public, which adheres to the basic principle of news interviews described by Clayman (1992:489), that the questions posed by the interviewer (host) must be impartial. The term 'persistent' used by Zizi above means two things: *'in my opinion Najwa is actively involved in the debate. She never asks a question and then says 'bye.' She directs it. If it (the statement of the guests) does*

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[10] The context of this statement is the episode which investigated Sukamiskin Jail. The episode shows that the cell of a Setya Novanto (corruptor) is fake; that he bribed a jail officer to secure him a 'deluxe' cell. In the episode, the show invited the current Minister of Law and Human Rights to obtain clarification about the case. Najwa interviewed him about the findings of the investigation and urged him to ascertain if Setya Novanto pretended he was in the original cell. The minister promised to check not only that of Novanto, but also others. According to the Indonesian news on September 2018 (Salim, 2018), it was proven that not only Novanto had an extravagant cell, but so did 52 others.

not follow the questions, she must cut it off. If she sees the statement is something that can be explored, she will ask a new question following the statement.' This implies that Najwa will re-ask a question if the guest does not answer it, and if there is a 'space' for her to comment on the statements made by the guests, she will explore them further. Hence, the questions she asks are interpretive ones elicited by the guests' answers. She formulates her perspective through her questions. In line with Clayman's (1992:487) argument that the point of view expressed through questions can turn 'the ownership of this viewpoint' over to the audiences, the reaction of *'take that!'* expressed by Zizi shows the turning of this viewpoint and the empowerment to say such a thing.

For the informants, the way Najwa asks the questions is a trademark of the show. She mediates the public that the audiences cannot witness directly and help them to grasp what is happening and identify the information around it. They observe Najwa scrutinising all of her guests, which is a reason why they refer to her character as being *'smart,' 'sharp,' 'critical,'* and *'firm'*, which they think fits well with the show's name "Mata Najwa" (Najwa's Eyes). However, the questions, as part of Najwa's point of view, influence them in confirming the credibility of the show.

> The differences between Mata Najwa and other talk shows are beside the content being 'solid' [...] I think in this programme...the team has prepared the data to back them up. The research on it is 'strong', so they know what they want to ask and who the guests are. The data support them. When the interviewee is arguing about something, Najwa knows what she has to ask. In my opinion, it's because the research is 'cool' (deep). (Wewe, 24)

Wewe believes that the capability of Najwa to counter the interviewees is supported by the research data which help her to understand the context of the issues. The interrogation on the show is not simply from her point of view, but she does it knowledgeably and authoritatively. The whole process of research and interviewing is then suggested as 'analysis' by Wewe. It is then argued that the acquisition of new information by the informants is from this 'analysis'.

The show itself is also considered to have power in revealing the hidden motives of the interviewees, who are mostly from the elites.

> When Sandiaga Uno was invited as a vice presidential candidate (of Indonesia in 2019), he revealed some issues that I've been questioning. I don't think he was

aware (that he revealed something). [...] Najwa is neutral...(in the episode); I can connect his answers to why the position of Jakarta vice governor has not been filled yet. I got the 'red thread'. (Lily, 24)

Sandiaga Uno is the vice governor of Jakarta and is still held that position when he registered as a vice-presidential candidate in 2019 election. During the pre-election, there were assumptions about why his position as vice governor had not yet been filled. The experience of Lily (24) getting the clue of Uno's case legitimates the identity of the show as a programme which questions the elites to find the 'truth.' Instead of speculating about the elites' hidden motives through her opinions, Najwa interrogates her interviewees about issues in a critical manner. This avoids the accusation of being partisan, as her identity is a journalist or a 'public spokesperson' (Clyaman, 1992:487). Additionally, the talk show genre makes the interrogation on the show more attractive.

The informants dispute that the examination and research of a particular issue on the show by Najwa is to challenge the elites. Zizi (24) even concludes that if particular elites do not come onto the show, it means they are 'anxious' about the possibility of hidden motives being unveiled. Examining the informants' responses, Najwa's values of capability, credibility and neutrality are the foundation for the audience to build their trust to the host and affect the trust to the elites. The values imply her ability to question the elites critically, supported by credible research, and her neutrality as a journalist, which is perceived to be objective by the informants. These values follow the procedural value of democracy pointed out by Dahlgren (2009:111) with regard to the value of 'accountability'.

Some informants recognise that Najwa's questions somehow lead their opinion of the responses she receives from the guests. Her comments and observations embedded in the questions. It helps the informants to make sense of the complexity of issues as Momo (27) expressed, '*the interviewee didn't really answer the question. Najwa asked him again to make sure that we understand it*'. [11] This

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[11] The example from Momo was on the episode talked about the raid of books which suspect containing the ideology of communism on it by Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) where she invited the Brigadier General of TNI. She asked, '*So, it is the initiative of some Military Territorial Command. But why the raid was done at the same time (in several areas)?*'. Communism in Indonesia is banned. However, the issue of communism during the pre-election of 2019 in Indonesia was one of the sensitive issues that evoked. One of the presidential

makes the host as a 'pundit' because she is a source of 'opinion-formation and opinion-articulation' (Nimmo and Combs, 1992:8). Further, they (ibid:12) posit pundits as figure who have the authority to voice their comments. In the case of Najwa, these comments are presented by the questions. A statement from Zizi (24) shows the authority of Najwa: *Najwa can ask anything to anyone, even to people who have a lot of power',* as does one from Lily (24*): 'even high-level officials respect Najwa'.* The fact expressed by the informants that the show is able to invite the 'key' actors in specific issues reveals Najwa's accessibility to elite sources. It is accepted that she can interrogate them and explore the information given by them critically and in confidence. This is the reason why informants call Najwa a 'brave' female journalist. Her role in exploring political issues on the show affects the way people discern politics.

> The question from Najwa is concrete...technical...so I know the plot of the issue [...] Mata Najwa strengthens what I have been believed (about the state). But when I watched one episode, it revealed that the inside of the (state) system is more corrupt than I thought. (Eli, 22)

The public knowledge obtained from the show affects the trust Eli bestows to the government, which is a significant component in political engagement (Dahlgren, 2009:112). However, we must acknowledge first that people's political perspective comes from the 'intricate spaces of their everyday lives' (Dahlgren, 2011:40). This means that the extent to which Mata Najwa affects the audience's perspective is not clear-cut; rather, Mata Najwa prompts the process of civic culture of the audiences. The show helps them to build two the cultural prerequisites for civic engagement: knowledge and trust. It has been discussed earlier that Mata Najwa provides public knowledge to the audience as a resource for them to reflect on their identity as citizens and to engage in political issues. Najwa has multiple identities: as a host, she acts to manage the flow of the discussion and keep the entertainment on the show; as a journalist, she acts to be a 'watchdog' (Norris, 2000:12) challenging the elites; and as a pundit, she has access to the elites whom she is able to criticise through investigation and plays a crucial role in producing knowledge about issues and the elites themselves. This

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candidates, the incumbent Joko Widodo, was falsely claimed as a communist (Bayuni, 2019). At the same time, the 'ghost of communism' was used for the political purposes provoking the 'existential threat' of communism for Indonesia (Harsono, 2018).

then leads the audience to the next dimension, of 'trust' in political institutions. Knowledge and trust are closely connected to practices (Dahlgren, 2009:117). The following section discusses how the informants in the study shift from citizen-viewers to participating in political-issues conversations as a way of understanding politics with others. The dimensions of civic culture, spaces, practices, trust, knowledge, values and identities, are elaborated in the form of female engagement with civic talk.

The Role of the Civic in Intimate Public Spheres

The empirical data shows that the differences in viewing practice affect audiences' ways of understanding political topics. With regard to solo viewing:

> I watch the programme on YouTube. The reason why I don't speak at all during the viewing is that I am getting used to not having a friend to watch the programme with. So, I don't have anyone to talk to. [...] I always read the comments section on Twitter make sure of my thoughts. Because after I watch the show, I have my own conclusion, so I want to know that of others. (Titi, 24)

In relation to social viewing:

> When I watch the programme on TV, I watch it mostly together with my family. I get different perspectives from others (family members). When my dad makes a comment, we continue to debate or discuss it between us. (Lily, 24)

Both statements encapsulate how space can influence how the informants access the forms of civic engagement. In the circumstances of everyday life, they illustrate the viewing habits of the programme, including the media used and who they watch it with. Watching the show alone on YouTube, a private medium, gives no chance in one's thoughts with others, as Lily is able to do. What Titi experiences can be understood by the fact that the programme does not invite the sociability of the audience, as the relationship between the show and the viewers is not predominantly built on a 'socio-communicative sphere' (Wood, 2009:148). Hence, in Titi's context, the reciprocity of the audience regarding the content is rarely encountered whilst viewing.

On the other hand, the presence of others, such as family, establishes social interaction during viewing and encourages discussion about the content at the

same time. In both situations, Titi and Lily witness what is happening in the public sphere through the private sphere. However, the way they understand issues is different at the time of watching the show. As discussion is absent in Titi's case, reading comments on Twitter is therefore her way to cope with her thoughts. In contrast, watching together with the family is Lily's 'communicative space' (Dahlgren, 2009:114) for discussing issues.

For Lily, talking about public issues with family members provides broader perspectives, which are produced from the negotiation of the knowledge, as 'conversational resources' (Gamson, 1992:117) about the issues. The knowledge does not only come from Mata Najwa, but involves all kinds of information, with a process of 'integrating it in relation to one's existing frames of reference and thereby make it personally meaningful' (ibid:109). As discussed previously, the knowledge acquisition could be from other sources of information provided by media discourse and personal experience.

> When I talk politics to my mom, it feels like her opinion is a representation of a citizen who needs to be heard. Sometimes my mom's view is funny and naive. But it is still the voice of a 'real' citizen. [...] My mom tells me about her problems. She owns a school, so what is the connection with politics? She raises the problem in the 'field.' She is not a theoretical or analytical person or whatever. [...] She talks as a citizen, about what she feels; not in the form of analysis, but as real cases that she encounters daily. Then I discuss these cases with my friends (Wewe, 24)

In an informal conversational setting, Wewe's mom tells about her personal experiences at school. This refers to 'real cases that she encounters daily', which become the source of reflection for herself and for Wewe in perceiving issues, and relates to the concept of 'experiential knowledge' (Gamson, 1992:122). The story is significant in the construction of shared meaning of issues because it has 'a privileged place' in the political talk (ibid:123). It is 'a privilege' as the story is directly experienced by Wewe's mom and is 'unmediated', so there is a feeling of reluctance for others to argue about her experience (ibid:124) and is 'valued precisely' (ibid:126). This is strengthened by the use of the terms 'real citizen' and 'real case' by Wewe to describe the accountability of her mom's story. The story, as the resource, then becomes a political talk with others and influences her in framing issues.

People bring their resources from media discourse and experiential knowledge, aiming for mutual understanding and shared knowledge of issues (Dahlgren 2001:40). This has an impact on the development of their political views, as it fosters critical, political thinking during discussions.

> Mata Najwa becomes our reference to talk about political issues. Although not all my friends watch Mata Najwa, they watch other political programmes such as Indonesia Lawyers Club. So we talk and share our perspectives. (Alfi, 24)

Most informants make a clear distinction between spaces, where they talk about politics and where they do not. They merely use social media to follow the news or read comments on Twitter and YouTube about the issues discussed on Mata Najwa. However, they do not share their opinions or discuss politics on social media, they read them merely for entertainment. Following Dahlgren's (2009:114) claim that 'for democracy to happen, citizens must be able to encounter and talk to each other,' the informants choose to have a civic talk in 'offline' private spheres. The example from Lily (24) above shows that the home, as the private space, is the site for 'political talk' (Gamson, 1992). This is contrary to the use of social media, as social networks are for people to connect and share (Dahlgren, 2013:37). In this context, the informants decide to refrain from talking about politics on social media due to the political and patriarchal contexts in Indonesia.

Gigi (25) mostly has political conversations with her family because she feels insecure with others' reaction to her opinions regarding the 2019 general election in Indonesia. She said that *I talk about Mata Najwa or politics with my family and my husband. They never judge my choice. Hahaha. They would never talk about me behind my back'*. Most informants admitted that this topic was sensitive to talk to others at that time. Therefore, they tended to avoid conflict with others who made different 'choices' than them. From a deliberative democratic point of view, the values of democracy which Dahlgren suggests (2009:111), such as tolerance, openness and discussion, in this context might be in a problem, as they indicate a lack of recognition and respect for others' political perspectives.

The patriarchal context in Indonesia also prevents some audiences from sharing political views in social media. The negative experience of being marginalised by men when talking about politics has become a consideration for the informants not to post about politics in social media. The stereotypical gender bias in

everyday life has been experienced by Arti (23), who said '*I get the sense from their gaze and intonation as if they are saying -women, what do you know about politics?*'. This shows that although Indonesian women have long struggled to exercise power to challenge the patriarchy (Blackburn, 2004:101), the patriarchal attitude in everyday life in society still exists. It becomes an obstacle for women's participation in public life. It also illustrates the hegemonic perspective of the patriarchy in Indonesian society.

Additionally, there is an assumption that Indonesian social media users, as a representation of Indonesian citizens, are not open-minded enough to talk about politics and women's issues.

> Not only things from Mata Najwa that I've never shared, but also all 'serious' topics, I rarely do it. Social media is just for fun. (Wewe, 24)

Relating to Mata Najwa, which mostly discusses 'serious' topics, Wewe usually discusses Mata Najwa only with her family and her particular friends whom she thinks are 'open-minded'. In this sense, her ability to identify the obstructions in exhibiting political engagement in the public sphere reflects her identity as a female citizen. Her conclusion about the inability of her followers to enter the discussion forums on politics is based on her observation and demonstrates the dimension of women's rationality to withdraw from social media. It also becomes obvious that all the informants are empowered to decide where and with whom to talk about politics in order to have an effective discussion.

Therefore, the informants have private conversations with trusted people such as family and friends, which take place at home, in cafes and in offices. This demonstrates that the private life of the female audiences in the study can be a way to understand their political attitudes in the public sphere; that they do not share their political thoughts on social media because of the political and patriarchal contexts of Indonesia. This takes us to the notion of 'front stage' and 'backstage' of Goffman (1959); in the 'online' public setting, as a front stage, the informants avoid talking about politics, yet their political opinion is expressed in an 'offline' private setting.

In line with Berlant's (1998:281) argument, the closeness and familiarity within the family and friendships establish the 'eloquence' and 'brevity' of sharing thoughts. Berlant suggests the concept of 'intimacy' to describe the "zones of

familiarity and comfort", as well as the specific type of relationship, such as "friendship, couple, and family, animated by expressive and emancipating kinds of love" (ibid). Therefore, talking about politics for the informants is practised in an intimate way within a trusted domestic sphere, which Berlant calls the 'intimate public sphere' (ibid:288). It is evident that the political engagement involved in political talk contains a mixture of the rational and affective engagement by the audiences with the topic, the people whom they talk to and the space. Hence, they can talk freely about politics in informal conversations.

Some informants asserted that they mostly talked about election topics with women. The fatigue with and lack of trust in political institutions were the main reasons for their male friends to withdraw from politics. Weariness with the state was also expressed by one informant as follows: *they (the government) are smart, so it's impossible if they don't understand the right 'concept'. But I think they decide not to pay attention (for the sake of country). It is a chronic disease which cannot be healed (Wewe, 24).* Her disaffection with Indonesian politics generates a distance between her and the topic itself. According to her, engaging with politics was 'useless' as the elites use their power for their own interests, and she was pessimistic about the presidential candidates, leading her to the level of abstention. However, her engagement with political topics through Mata Najwa shows a switching between engagement and disengagement, but not with civic talk. She asserted that talking about politics with friends started from informal talk, as she mentioned that *'at first, we talk about our job, anxieties, problems… and we conclude that they are complex'.* She might disconnect from politics due to her cynicism and remain muted in the social media. The informal talk with friends allows her to express her political views, even though she is politically overwrought. This reveals that 'informal etiquette' in the intimate public sphere makes 'some political intuition speakable' (Eliasoph, 1998:7).

Some of the informants were young women with a strong concern for women's issue. They noticed that Indonesian women were still facing marginalisation in several aspects, including labour and human rights. In relation to Mata Najwa, with the visibility of the female host in the public sphere, they recognise a potential for the show to raise women's issues in the public sphere. However, the show is assumed not to have optimized the power of the female host to scrutinise the women's issues.

Women's issues have not been mainstream. Even now, a draft bill concerning the elimination of sexual violence has not been passed. Why is the discussion only around the elections? We should look at what the priority in the constitution is. That is more concrete, and we can solve the problem together. It's more participative. (Eli, 24)

There is a sense of 'injustice' in the statement, and indignation at the cognitive and emotional levels toward the issues raised on Mata Najwa. It is 'a hot cognition, not merely an abstract intellectual judgment about what is equitable' (Gamson, 1992:32). The injustice is shown by the lack of media promotion of women's issues which Eli thinks is unfair for women and causes disappointment for her. It is intimately linked to her concern that women have the right to achieve justice.

The way audiences make sense of political issues exhibits their collective identity as women, cross-cut and bound up with their identity as citizens. This intersectionality results in the solidarity of women and the idea of 'sisterhood' (Brah & Phoenix, 2004, cited in Filimonov & Svensson, 2016), as highlighted by Eli's statement that, '*we can solve the problem together.*' This 'we-ness' also indicates the agency by which the audience is aware of collective action; or, in other words, 'we can do something' (Gamson, 1992:7) to protect women. For this reason, even though the show sets the agenda for political issues, audiences can reflect on their own subjectivity by connecting their lives and community, creating a connection between the private and the public.

Conclusion

This thesis has critically analysed the engagement of young female audiences with a talk show and their civic talk that emerged beyond the viewing engagement. It then touched upon the crucial role of the host on the talk show as part of this engagement. Both engagement and civic talk among young female audiences are tightly connected to the construction of patriarchal culture in Indonesia. It confirms the argument from Joke Hermes (1996:100) that the way women generate meaning is relative to the specific construction in a particular context.

In what ways do young Indonesian women engage with Mata Najwa, in particular with the social and political issues?

Young Indonesian female audiences in this study engage with the show as an audience and public across the cognitive and affective experience.

Through the viewing process, the informants are able to get information about the political and social issues through the entertainment aspects of the political debates and interviews on the show. The informants consistently noted not only the novelty of the information on the show but also the comprehensiveness of the information that allows them to see issues from a broader perspective.

The acquisition of knowledge from the show generates the positive engagement with content, that sustains their engagement. However, this positive engagement switches back and forth to negative engagement when it comes to the judgment of the guests (Hill, 2019). It shapes the affective atmosphere of the show and draws the affective and cognitive engagement (ibid). As the host provokes the guests through her interrogational style and the conflicts which emerge on the show, the informants are able to judge the capability and the truthfulness of the guests and encounter the enjoyment of mocking their lack of knowledge, lies, and short-tempers.

Furthermore, when informants are reflecting as citizens, their judgement over the guest transforms into negative engagement which goes parallel with the positive engagement. They do so when they get the enjoyment of mocking the guests. The guest are elites, which means that the revelation of their incapability and hidden motives become the informants' assessment of the government and its actors. Through Mata Najwa, the audience acts as the citizen, where they can surveil the politics and the political actors. In this sense, for the informants, the talk show becomes a place for acquiring knowledge, getting entertainment, and reflecting on Indonesian politics as well as observing the elite actors in this mediated space. There is doubling of identities of the informants as on the one hand they watch the show as the audiences, and on the other hand they reflect as citizens and generate meaning through the show. It confirms the notion of the 'citizen-viewer' from John Corner (1991) where the audience performs as citizens at the same time. The civic mix (Coleman, 2011) on the show, embodied in rational discussion and emotional appeals, serves the viewer as citizens and spectators, because it offers entertainment that makes the audience engaged with political and

social issues. It also illustrates that audience engagement works within the 'spectrum of engagement' across the cognitive and affective works (Hill, 2019) with the show, the host, the guests, and the content.

How does the female host become part of these young Indonesian women's modes of engagement?

The informants acknowledge the crucial role of the host, Najwa Shihab, in their engagement with the show. The admiration for the host is expressed repetitively during the interview even though the questions are not about her. This thesis argues that the engagement with the show is particularly generated through positive engagement with the host. It indicates that the host is the soul of the show. However, she is more than just a host who leads the show. She has multiple identities: a female, a host, a journalist and a pundit who is highly valued by audiences.

Audiences in this study build a para-social relationship with her through the illusion of intimacy (Horton & Wohl, 1956) that is affected by their admiration of Najwa as a female journalist. She becomes their role model in engaging with politics in the public sphere. It illustrates that the informants reflect on the portrayal of Indonesian women that are marginalized in the public sphere (Liebes & Katz, 1990:58). For them, Najwa Shihab is a role model who is accepted in the public sphere as someone who rationally and critically scrutinises the dominant elite men, through her role as a journalist. It is in contrast with the traditional gender stigma in Indonesia that women are emotional, in contrasts to men's rationality (Robinson, 2009:44). It is thus argued that the representation of liberated women, such as Najwa Shihab, in the media through her capability to challenge the elites in the public sphere might promote women empowerment as citizens. Even though one of the informants on the study does not regard herself as a feminist, it is assumed that feminists are the ones who join political activities in the public sphere. And while she engages with politics in the private sphere, she acknowledges the significance of women in the public sphere. As Ross and Byerly (2006:146) asserts, there is a potential for the media to reconstruct society. In this way, the acceptance of Najwa in the public sphere might change the gender stereotypes in Indonesia, especially regarding women's participation in the democratic process. Based on this, through the host, the show serves a social service in empowering women.

The informants believe that with the basis of research, Najwa is able to unmask the hidden motive of the elites who abuse their power. It illustrates that the values of democracy such as justice and accountability (Dahlgren, 2009:111) are explored on the show. It provokes the negative engagement with the guests, and it is embodied in the judgment of the guests. It also includes the 'emotional dis-identification' (Hill, 2019) whereby the audience is invited to distrust the elites who are representative of the government. The interview on the show contains the host's analytical and critical thoughts embodied in the questions that the informants feel, in some degrees, influencing their opinion. This links to the notion of the media pundit (Nimmo & Comb, 1992) where Najwa has the authority to comment on issues, through questions, in the public sphere. This demonstrates the power of the host in helping the audience to acquire relevant knowledge of issues through making sense of the intricacies of it. In other words, Najwa's role as the host, the journalist and the pundit, serves to, analytically investigate the issue and voice her views, in some point affecting the generation of (dis)trust of elites.

How is the show a resource for young Indonesian women to participate in civic talk beyond their viewing engagement in the private sphere?

Mata Najwa invites the audiences to be interactive. She challenges the elite guest through the civic talk on the show. It encourages the audiences, through social viewing, to discuss the issue that arise on the show during the viewing process. Furthermore, their admiration for the host in exploring a particular issue and revealing the hidden motives of the elites has provoked them to discuss the issue. This takes us back to the notion of the pundit, whereby the host becomes the source of opinion-formation and opinion-articulation (Nimmo & Comb, 1992:8). The civic talk among informants on the study starts with sharing personal stories and then transforms into talking about political and social issues. There is a sense of sociability and informality within it.

The circuit of civic cultures from Dahlgren (2009) has several dimensions: knowledge, values, trust, practices, spaces, and identities are used to analyse civic talk in the private sphere. The informants have remarked that informal conversation has the potential for the exchange of politically relevant *knowledge*. Through civic talk with others, they bring their resources from Mata Najwa, other

media discourses and personal experiences to compare and negotiate them. In this study, it has been shown that the informants create a clear division between the public sphere, social media in particular, and the private sphere as the *spaces* to participate in civic talk. This is because of the social pressure related to political and patriarchal contexts. The issues related to the 2019 Indonesian election are considered sensitive because talking about it with people, who have different choices might raise judgment from others. There is also an assumption raised by an informant that Indonesian social media users, as representative of Indonesian citizens, are not open minded enough to talk about politics and women's issues, so it hinders the informant to post or talk about politics in social media. The negative experience of being marginalized in political talk also becomes a factor for the informants' discussion of politics with untrusted people. It is the case where the *values* of democracy such as tolerance, openness, and discussion and the *trust* among citizens are under stress in the context of the public sphere.

However, as the use of social media for the informants is only for entertainment, the private sphere is thus optimised as a forum of deliberation by them. They create the public sphere with intimacy in the private and *trust*ed spaces, and with *trust*ed people. They practice civic talk as citizens (Dahlgren, 2009). In the 'intimate public sphere' (Berlant, 1997), they can talk about politics conveniently in an informal way. Through this civic talk, the *identities* of citizens can be strengthened, as Dahlgren points out, 'identities […] embodied in particular spaces via practices […] that in turn serve to reinforce identities (2009:119). Regardless of the informants' identity as citizens who observe the elites, they also desire equality for women and put that expectation in Mata Najwa to mainstream the issue of women. These connect to their agency as democratic citizens.

In the end, this intimate public sphere (Berlant, 1997) will nurture critical thinking and desire to actively participate in various issues including politics, gender equality, corruption, and government politics. There is a juncture between the 'personal and societal' (Dahlgren, 2009:89) when these female audiences are talking about the political through their engagement with a public discussion talk show.

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Cultivating Cultural Citizenship

Acclimatize and the role of creative practices in digital, participatory art exhibitions dealing with climate change

Lina Lockean

Introduction

The consequences of global warming are making themselves known throughout the world, still much needs to be done to adapt to and mitigate climate change. Greta Thunberg, Swedish climate change activist is speaking out about the passivity of political leaders, saying that "I don't want you to be hopeful, I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day and then I want you to act" (Guardian News, 2019). On May 9th 2019, the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released yet another report stating that "nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history", emphasising the need for immediate action on all levels of society (IPBES, 2019).

At the same time, the academic world is responding by trying to make sense of the irreversible damages that have already been made and what can be done to prevent additional destruction. Researching climate change has become an academic 'hot topic', not because of scholarly 'trendiness' but because of the urgent need for finding the routes necessary to meet the 1,5-degree goal (Paris Agreement, 2015). Most of these reports can be seen coming from a natural science perspective, focusing on the environmental risks and consequences. The "Arts" are continuously given limited space in UN's (IPCC's) climate change reports which has motivated scholars like Heise (2017), Hulme (2015) and Miles (2014) to research the cultural dimensions of climate change, looking at how "societies […] need to articulate a shared purpose that is both engaging and respectful of cultural diversity. Thus, there is a growing need to 'raise the

temperature' of integration between multiple ways of knowing climate change" (Galafassi et al., 2018)

Mike Hulme, climate change professor at Cambridge, states that the word 'Climate' should "be understood equally as an idea that takes shape in cultures and can therefore be changed by cultures" (Hulme, 2015:1). He defends the importance of social science and humanities in the climate change discourse, claiming that social and cultural dimensions are crucial for bridging the gap between *knowing* and *doing* something about climate change. The connection between personal life and climate change issues are for some abstract, and according to Giddens, "most people [experience] a gulf between the familiar preoccupations of everyday life and an abstract, even if apocalyptic, future of climate chaos" (Giddens, 2009:1). Therefore, making climate change a relatable social and cultural issue, not merely an environmental one, is an important step for not only fathoming the scale of the issue at stake, but also finding sustainable ways forward.

By researching a participatory art exhibition targeting climate change, this thesis investigates how people develop, discuss and problematise their own civic agency within the climate change issue. It reviews how creative processes can potentially affect the way one tackles a multinational concern on the individual level and, as a result, cultivate cultural citizenship regarding climate change. Dahlgren's perspectives on citizenship allows us to integrate the notion of civic agency in a larger perspective and "help[s] us analytically and empirically study the factors that shape civic agency and therefore impact on citizens' engagement and participation in democracy" (Dahlgren, 2009:102).

By focusing on the creative, individual level, the creative process is researched as a potential tool to affectively and intellectually move beyond cemented conceptions and social structures in society, from here on now referred to as *breaking lock-ins*. Lock-ins as a term is most often used in the environmental science discourse to describe the Carbon lock-in, where industrial economies are seen to be locked into fossil fuel-based energy systems due to political systems, economic advantages and social demand, but the term can be used in an interdisciplinary setting as well (Essebo, 2013). Lock-ins are in this thesis considered the result of the taken-for-granted stories told in a democracy, and by researching individual experiences from living in the Anthropocene, we can begin to understand the social and political disengagement that might follow them.

This thesis examines the individual, cultural dimensions of climate change by conducting a case study of Moderna Museet's (The Museum of Modern Art, from now on abbreviated to MM) exhibition Acclimatize, curated and produced by Ylva Hillström, Camilla Carlberg and Svante Helmbaek Tirén. At 10 October 2017 the institution entered the climate change conversation by launching this digital, participatory art exhibition to act as "a think tank, a source of inspiration full of ideas and reflections on climate change" (Acclimatize, 2017). This thesis conducts a three-step critical research study (triangulation) to review the role of creative practices in supporting media and cultural participation and cultivating citizenship for climate change issues. By doing so, the research sheds light on the importance of the *personal* experiences of climate change, indicating that creative practices can offer an interspace between the personal, civic and political where individuals can explore the climate change discourse in an inclusive way, outside normative, political and activist narratives. This way, Acclimatize is described as a communicative space in which individuals can practice their civic confidence and explore their own identity and relationship to climate change issues.

What is Acclimatize?

The interest in art engaging with climate change issues seems to be, just as the public interest in climate change issues, increasingly growing. Nurmis quotes Irene Lorenzoni who describes the artistic response as a necessary alternative to the, according to her, facts-based environmental discourse, by saying that "it is not enough for people to know about climate change in order to be engaged; they also need to care about it, be motivated and able to take action" (Lorenzoni, cited in Nurmis, 2016:502). MM expands the climate change discourse by not only displaying artistic interpretations of climate change, but also by making its exhibition digital and participatory. Between 10 October 2016 and 10 January 2017, the website was open for entry submissions which, as long as they were in some way connected to climate change, were displayed on the site after the submission closed[12]. This open invitation to participate granted access to the general public to display their work at MM, which is most often given only to established artists. Beside the entries submitted, the website has inspirational

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[12] The exhibition is still live by November 2019 at http://acclimatize.modernamuseet.se

videos of established artists prompting the participants to explore climate change issues creatively, an editorial blog by professional in the cultural and climate fields and a mirror of the social media interaction of the exhibition.

Researching Acclimatize

To get a holistic understanding about the potentials and limitations of the creative practices expressed in and through Acclimatize, a multi-method approach was used. The triangulation of methods for this thesis comprises a curatorial interview with Ylva Hillström at MM, a visual analysis of a sample of the entries submitted and participant interviews with the individuals whose work had been analysed. This multi-entry approach to qualitative research was useful to "map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:112).

By studying the invitation to participate, the personal experiences of those participating and the visual narratives displayed, this thesis aims to understand holistically what role creative practices in the museum setting can have in the climate change discourse. It strives to investigate how digital participation can cultivate cultural citizenship by creatively practicing civic identity, and through accessibility and inclusiveness, open up other routes into the climate change conversation. By looking into the role of identity in the construction of civic confidence, it strives to contribute both to the academic conversations on cultural dimensions of climate change as well as gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of digital, participatory designs of climate change art exhibitions.

Based on these aims, three research questions guide the critical examination of Acclimatize:

> 1a. How does Acclimatize and the Moderna Museet invite citizens to participate in the digital exhibition?

> 1b. In what ways do citizens participate through the digital exhibition on climate change issues?

> 2. What role can the participatory museum exhibition Acclimatize play in practicing civic identities on climate change issues?

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of climate change and creative practices, several academic fields intersect. The literature review shows the great scale of the academic climate change conversation and how it connects to several academic disciplines, spanning natural science, social science and humanities. The contribution of knowledge of this research is primarily to media and cultural participation studies, but it also contributes to the academic body of museum studies and art history, as well as civic culture. It takes the cultural turn of environmental humanities but also relies on the social science perspectives of Latour (2004; 2017; 2018) and Bennett (2010) who study the need for a new political ecology that is not constructed through solely rationality but also affect to non-human agents. The literature review ends with a mapping of the participatory paradigm and participatory art museum, narrowing the literature review from the environmental research field as a whole down to the context of this research, the digital participatory art exhibition Acclimatize.

The literature review is followed by a chapter on the methodology for this thesis, defending the importance of situated, qualitative knowledge. By conducting qualitative interviews with the curator and participants and visual analysis of a sample of the entries, Acclimatize is methodologically triangulated. It provides the opportunity to "cross-checking or cross-referencing the data by combining different perceptions of the same event to provide a more robust and holistic picture" (O'Donoghue, Punch, 2003:78) with rigorous empirical data.

The main analysis uncovers four themes that together indicate that creative practices can cultivate cultural citizenship when participants are given an accessible, inclusive communicative space to practice their civic identity. These opportunities depend on the design set by the museum institution and digital media space. The lack of affordance to communicate between the participants through the Acclimatize website is raised as limiting exchange between those who took part in it. Most importantly, the analysis ends with a reflection on how the cultural and personal experiences of climate change can strengthen the personal, civic identity and extend personal reflections to civic and political action.

Literature Review

Environmental Humanities

The environmental humanities scholar would argue that natural science and technology alone are not enough to adapt to and mitigate climate change issues, as humanist constructive knowledge and critique can assist the social and cultural transitions into sustainability (Heise, Christenson, Neimann, 2017). The research field is continuously growing, expanding the environmental research into investigating how *meaning* is constructed in times of climate change, causing a cultural turn in the academic climate change discourse. This cross-pollination between scientific disciplines in the Anthropocene is described by Heise as providing a platform which can "simultaneously critique and take action at the same time" (Heise, 2017:8).

This effort of lifting the *Anthropos* in Anthropocene has not always been met positively within the rest of the science community. Resting on a historical divide between researching the environmental *or* the human, environmental humanities challenge the divide by merging perspectives and rethinking "established truths", or lock-ins. (Sörlin, 2012:789). As a result, Sörlin means that environmental humanities can, together with other scientific disciplines, "bring a sense of realism back (…) [to] the environment and sustainability" (Sörlin, 2012:789).

Other environmental humanities scholars are turning towards researching contemporary narratives and beliefs in order to understand how to break current lock-ins. Maja Essebo does so in her work on "Lock-in as make-believe" where she questions the meaning-making of Barthesian myths in the age of climate change in the context of mobility systems (2013). A myth is defined as "giving a historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal" (Barthes, 1957. Reprint 1972:142) by Barthes. According to Essebo (2013), the 'climate change story' goes against some key stories and 'natural justifications' the global north has built its economic, social, political and personal systems on. Accepting the true extent of the climate crisis, and the human factor in it, would therefore require rethinking 'truths' such as 'tomorrow will always be better than today' (Essebo, 2013).

The Barthesians myth is based on Ferdinand de Saussure's work on systematic analysis of signs but is developed by Barthes by adding another level to research the construction of contemporary myth. Through the creation of a myth, history can become nature, "a statement of facts" (Barthes, 1972:143). In practice, the theoretical framework is used for scrutinising socially established values of today and looking at the consequences they have on society (Barthes, 1972). These established values, or 'truths', create intellectual and systemic lock-ins which, according to Essbo, prevents society from making the decisions and taking the actions necessary for minimising climate change (2013).

This investigation of Acclimatize is launched through the environmental humanities discipline. Art history and visual culture scholars have, just as many other humanist scholars, increasingly started paying attention to the relationship between aesthetics, creativity and climate change. Some would claim that by working with climate change issues in a sphere outside the political or financial, the artistic narrative can break lock-ins as they consider art as an underdeveloped tool for democratisation because it "1) eliminates the measurable instrumental purpose and 2) has historically been seen growing by defying dominating social systems, not confirming them (Nurmis, 2016:505).

Artistic narratives would also allow for new visual storytelling of climate change issues that goes beyond traditional news media narratives. Nurmis investigates the role of visuality in the climate change discourse and says that the contemporary press and activist media culture is "saturated" (Nurmis, 2016:501). She claims that journalistic storytelling has constructed its normative images on short-term, fast-paced spectacle, and through that, masked many of the structures that has caused climate change in the first place (Nurmis, 2016:501-502). As a result, the visual communication of climate change has suffered from "uninspiring representation", forcing journalism to rely on images "to attract eyeballs – especially [through] images that 'bleed'" (Nurmis, 2016:501), creating a noisy, sensationalist discourse. Here, artistic narratives could offer a more still way of telling stories, creating more inspiring imagery and experiences.

Nurmis is not the first to discuss the visual as saturated and distracted. The sensational has a history of being criticised by art historians and in the canonical piece *The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord predicts the role of the passive spectator, by mercilessly dissecting the modern human condition saying that "Spectacle is the sun that never sets over the empire of modern passivity" (Debord, 1967.

Reprint 2009:12). Ahead of his time, he questions the visuals' role in alienation from a Marxist perspective, claiming that the way of life is representational and not true and sees mass media as numbing social life (Debord, 2009).

Fifty years later, the risks and drawbacks of spectacle-based media is picked up by environmental humanities scholar Robert Nixon:

> In an age when the media venerate the spectacular, when public policy is shaped primarily around perceived immediate need, a central question is strategic and representational: how can we convert into image and narrative the disasters that are slow moving and long in the making […] and of indifferent interest to the sensation-driven technologies of our image-world? (Nixon, 2013:3)

He reflects on how we can in a just way represent climate change issues when the climate change discourse is currently based on spectacular narration. He says that the most dangerous consequences are silenced and hard to represent. His concept of "Slow Violence", and the hidden dangers it comes with, are developed as he studies the conditions for this saturated space of constant spectacle, and how it could be overcome through other ways of telling stories. In fact, he demands an investigation of new ways to draw public attention and engagement that moves beyond instant spectacle but have long-term effects. According to Nixon (2013), the disruption can be created through two strategies: On one hand, these non-sensational stories are told through the content and context of a cultural piece itself. For example, playwright Berthold Brecht said that "Art [should] not be a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it" (Brecht, 1941. Reprint 2014). However, groups within the art community would claim that activist climate change art is often be discarded as simply "not good", while an activist community does not necessarily see it as radical or impactful enough (Nurmis, 2016:503-512). On the other hand, the focus is turned towards the non-spectacle *affective creative process* and the individual and social implications of it. When actively taking part or creating an artistic practice, Kester states that processes of reasoning are evened out between artist and audience and new ways of thinking can emerge, leaving "the snares of negation and self-interest" behind. (Kester, 2013:112). As a result, leaving the spectacle story would open up for transitioning from "aesthetics to aesthesis", and the experience would draw attention to *feeling* art instead of only reviewing its aesthetic quality (Bishop, 2012:18).

Political Ecology and Affect

Having an affective reaction to what is outside your own immediate surrounding is considered one way to break through the lock-ins associated with climate change. Environmental humanities scholars argue in favour of a holistic approach that considers all living things as political agents that needs to be taken into account in a new, political ecology. Ursula Heise develops this by calling out for a planetary consciousness, or an eco-cosmopolitanism. By applying "a more complex formal framework [we can be] able to accommodate social and cultural multiplicity", leading to a brighter future than expected (Heise, 2008:21). Perhaps most known for his new political ecology framework is Bruno Latour, who claims that when scientists and artists are together in exploratory, creative fusions, one can break new ground on lock-in issues (Bifrost Online, 2018).

In Latour's new political ecology, he researches routes beyond the dichotomy of the human and non-human. In the 2004 piece "The Politics of Nature" (2004), he claims that the alienation of human agents from the non-human have devastating consequences on all levels of society, and therefore, new politics are needed. To reverse this, he deconstructs the dualism of nature/culture through a reformed political ecology. He means that we can create a political sphere which considers both human and non-human agents (Latour, 2004) and develops this further in his most recent book *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime* (2018) where he critiques the political response to climate change and questions the role of feeling a sense of collective in a global issue:

> There is no Earth corresponding to the infinite horizon of the Global, but at the same time the Local is much too narrow, too shrunken, to accommodate the multiplicity of beings belonging to the terrestrial world" (Latour, 2018:69)

Although, this expansion of voice acknowledgement to non-human, living agents are by other scholars not considered enough. Jane Bennett makes the post-humanist claim that humans as a totality must be deprivileged, as we, today, remain at the centre of political systems and academic inquiry, resulting in vital consequences for other agents. To get there, she claims that "We need to cultivate anthroporphism to the idea that human agency has some echoes in non-human nature and reverse our narcissism (Bennett, 2010:xvi)". By thinking about 'vibrant materiality' and 'thing power', she points the researcher towards the

spaces where things speak. Things have their own power and language, translated to, in and through affect, which is relevant as artistic work can expand the notion of what an object is and does (Bennett, 2010). She connects her idea with Latour's political ecology by asking "How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (non-human) bodies?" (Bennett, 2010:vii). Acclimatize can be seen as one platform, which acknowledges the impact of 'things', vitality and power, although not focusing on political responses but rather on personal ones. As a result, it is useful to think about the participatory entries as having this 'thing power'. Art in this sense is reflexive, reflective and alive, and can perhaps through creativity be able to affect us to go *beyond* taken-for-granted stories, or lock-ins, and challenge the ways we think and act on climate change issues.

The study of affect connects with the ideas of a new political ecology (Heise, 2008; Latour, 2004 & 2018) by challenging another dichotomy: the mind/body dualism and allows us to research beyond rationality and how creative processes and experiences affect the participants' civic identity. Papacharissi offers an overview to the cornerstone of the dualism by stating that:

> (a) like most dualisms, it is imposed by explanatory convenience, and that (b) it simplifies complex questions by equating the emotional with the irrational. In this way, affect is defined as that which it is not: rational, leaving us with little sense of the meaning or the place of affect in politics (Papacharissi, 2014:12).

Affect theory challenges the dichotomies of mind/body and rational/emotional by synthesising them, investigating the human experience, action and inaction as a result of both cognition and physique (Papacharissi, 2014, p:12). Affect should therefore be seen as the social forces that trigger the body to respond in a specific way. Papacharissi describes it as seeing the emotional as situated between thinking and participating, making it a crucial component in going from disengagement to engagement, and from engagement to participation (Papacharissi 2014:12)

Through its holistic approach to academic investigation, affect theory opens up for interesting entry points of research otherwise not as frequently seen. For example, Margret Wetherell (2012) promotes affect theory's ability to bring the everyday life into social analysis. As "climate change should be understood equally as an idea that takes shape in cultures and can therefore be changed by cultures" (Hulme, 2015:1), the everyday life is an important setting for understanding

environmental issues today. What is considered 'the ordinary' has therefore a lot to say about the ways in which people make sense of climate change, supporting the importance of researching the individual experience of participating in Acclimatize.

Raymond Williams ideas on: "not feeling against thought; but thought as felt and feeling as thought:" (Williams, 1977. Reprint 2011:133) offers a way into researching how a felt experience and intellectual motivation are connected to each other. To do so, he developed the concept 'Structures of feeling' to investigate the different ways of thinking and feeling that emerges at a specific time. In the Anthropocene, the structure of feeling becomes a relevant concept, as it explores how the affective route of approaching identity in a global issue can challenge lock-ins. Even though Williams developed the concept as a response to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Williams, 1961. Reprint 1978), his ideas are applicable today as he claimed that there must be ways to move beyond hegemony. In order to break lock-ins, there must always be a space for affect to emerge and drive new processes in society (Williams, 1978). Latour would say that the new political ecology will break the dualism between the human and non-human (Latour, 2004). By investigating the affective dimensions of cultural participation, we can get a broader understanding of creative practices, which can potentially cultivate cultural citizenship and break personal lock-ins. We can also investigate how affective creative practices can strengthen civic identity and how it perhaps could prompt civic and political participation in the climate change discourse.

The Participatory Paradigm

Livingstone describes audience research as having gone from focusing on how "people moved in and out of their status as audiences" to the contemporary "continual immersion in media" where audiences are not only consumers but are also producing, participating and co-creating content. (Livingstone, 2013:22). This means that increased attention must be given to the audience member in order to understand the relationship between private and public structures. By contextualising "participation in culture or community or civil society or democracy" (Livingstone, 2013:24), the interdependencies between political and social structure and participation can be mapped by asking why, how, and what happens when one participates.

However, some scholars have chosen to study what happens before participation, researching the role of engagement and disengagement as predecessors to participation in a collective activity. As term and concept, engagement is defined differently depending on the scholar referred to but will for this thesis be considered an internal force which is, depending on its intensity and target, may or may not lead to participation. Peter Dahlgren studies the relationship between the cultural aspect of engagement and participation. His circuit of civic cultures is useful for analysing the conditions that promotes – or hinders – civic engagement and analyses "the cultural patterns in which identities of citizenship, and the foundations for civic agency, are embedded" (Dahlgren, 2009:103). The circuit is made up by the dimensions of knowledge, values, trust, space, practices and identity. These six areas of democratic society are what constitutes the stage on which one's civic agency is performed and what can turn engagement into participation.

Dahlgren develops the way of researching emotional, affective side of society with his civic culture's framework by offering a way of looking at communication as *cultural theory*. This makes it possible for the researcher to highlight the role of identity construction and citizenship as important elements to the personal, social and political meaning-making taking place (2009:5). Before actually participating in anything outside the personal sphere, the individual must consider herself as a part of the context, a civic agent, and find the engagement meaningful, otherwise the participation will not take place. The affective identity construction is therefore a major part of the sociology of democracy and certainly important in a time of climate change. This research will therefore investigate how that might be possible through cultural responses and creativity as a way to support the agency, citizenship and identity construction of its participants.

An interesting aspect of Acclimatize is that it is located within the public art institution. The museum experience places the participatory experience in a civic space, making it a "societal terrain between state and economy" (Dahlgren, 2009:69). Because of that, the exhibition can become a place for participants to practice reflexive citizenship (Runnel & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014) in an interspace outside a political and civic context in creative ways. Therefore, it is important to not only reflect on participation as a general concept, but also consider the role of participatory art in the museum setting.

The Participatory Art Museum

Considering the institutional mechanisms and conditions are central for understanding participatory opportunities within the museum setting as it affects both definition and outcome of participation. Depending on those, the participation can take the form given from the institution, forming if after the willingness and transparency to re-work the traditional power dynamic between museum and visitor. Some museums have decided to take an 'open' approach, described by Tatsi as going from monovocal to multivocal, and that the role of the museum can not only be to create, but also support others' creations (2013). He is supported by Kidd who claims that museums and its visitors can get an increased sensibility for others and be in "open conversation" when hosting participatory activities (Kidd, 2014:74-75). This is, according to Runnel and Kidd, particularly true for digital settings. They claim that it is no longer enough to provide information to its visitors as the scale of user creativity and participatory opportunity has increased with digitalisation and democratisation.

However, whether digitalisation and participatory methods actually does democratise museums or not is disputed. Some scholars would argue that participation almost instantly brings diversity and inclusivity into the museum setting, creating a Museum 2.0 (Simon, 2010), while others raise a red flag for potential power- and digital divides. Just because a platform is presented as accessible to all, does not necessarily mean that it is (Carpentier, 2011; Runnel & Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, 2014). Instead, some would claim that is only the outer layers of the museum institution that is democratised, while the traditional power dynamic between the institution and the visitor is preserved. Coghlan describes this democratic 'façade' as "refus[ing] power-sharing in order to maintain the status quo" (Coghlan, 2018:796)

A similar form of critique is directed towards the medium of participatory art itself. Bishop frowns upon social art forms as she states they pays more attention to process and ethics behind it than the art itself (Bishop, 2012:19), making the ideals behind them often more powerful than its realities. She critiques the imagined impact of participatory art and claims that it lies too far from the political centre, where actual political change is decided on, to actually contribute to social development (Bishop, 2012).

Acclimatize is used as a case study to review the connection between participatory art and civic agency. By contextualising the civic dimensions described by Dahlgren (2009), we broaden our understanding of the role of the creative practice in the climate change conversation. The museum setting offers an interesting platform which stands outside the political and civic institutions usually associated with climate change issues and through that, the invitation allows for more diverse identity practices. The role of the media scholar is therefore extended beyond political communication and the public sphere tradition, and studies the cultural dimensions of communication within democracy. As a result, we can research the affective ways of dealing with climate change, and study what role creativity can have in cultivating cultural citizenship.

Qualitative Multi-Method Research Design

The climate change discourse is diverse, often associated with the natural sciences but a growing interest is turned towards understanding the cultural dimensions of climate change. By opening up for researching cultural responses to climate change like Acclimatize, the interdisciplinary field of environmental research is expanded, bringing different academic fields and paradigms together trying to find solutions to the climate change crisis (Flyvbjerg, 2001:30). Thus, humanities and the social science participatory paradigm of audience research are methodologically connected.

Accordingly, this thesis continues the multi-method way of researching climate change issue in order to develop a holistic understanding that goes beyond academic discipline divisions, standing on a triangle of methods where each one connects to the other. This way of doing science is referred to as a methodological triangulation and is for this research used to "map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:112). Due to the cultural complexity of human nature and creative expression, single observation and data collection would not suffice in order to investigate Acclimatize. A triangulation of methods provides a wider scope for understanding of the exhibition as a whole, but also creates an opportunity for "cross-checking or cross-referencing the data by combining different perceptions of the same event to provide a more robust and holistic picture" (O'Donoghue, Punch, 2003:78).
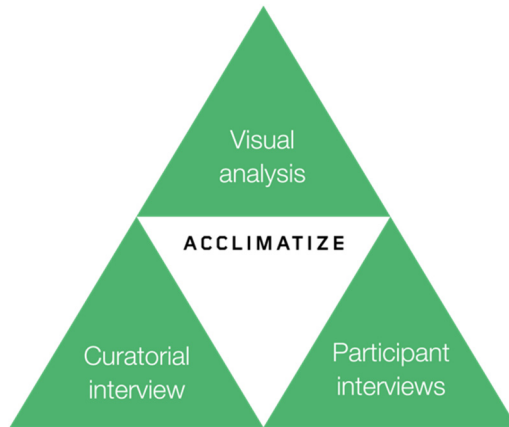
Picture 3:
Methods triangulation of Acclimatize

The two-part interview study with the curator of Acclimatize Ylva Hillström and a sample of museum participants is conducted to investigate the social factors of the exhibition. The curatorial interview provides important insights into the infrastructure of Acclimatize and how those mediate the experience of its participants (Livingstone, 2013:28). Additionally, by asking participants about their participatory experience and how they interact with the exhibition and each other, we get a holistic understanding of the participatory experience created through the exhibition and what impact it has on the individual (Livingstone, 2013).

The interviews are complemented with semiotic visual analysis, which not only provides important insights into the role of creativity in the age of climate change, but also acknowledges the visual in exploring the connection between "individual consciousness and with social and political order" (Corner, 2011:51). In his book *Theorizing media,* Corner encourages the study of visuals as a part of media research as he considers it previously having been given "secondary significance" (Corner, 2011:49). As a methodological tool, visual studies are sometimes critiqued for being biased and irrelevant in the qualitative critical case study. This implies a prejudice towards situated research as this one, specifically within the environmental science discourse (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004, p:8-9). Flyvbjerg argues for 'making social science matter', by confirming the value of context-dependent knowledge, disparaging the traditional hierarchy between

situated social science and natural science (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Challenging the absoluteness of the natural sciences is an important part in building an inclusive political ecology and a necessary step for breaking destructive patterns of thought and behaviour in the climate discourse (Latour, 2004). Latour claims that the academic community needs to "recuperate from values the requirement of hierarchy, and from facts the requirement of institution" (Latour, 2004:233), breaking the dichotomy between natural science and social science. Through this, Latour means that we can create a political sphere which considers both human and non-human agents together, which could be a possible intervention in dealing with climate change (Latour, 2004).

Design, Sampling and Conducting the Research

The material of the site is diverse ranging from an editorial blog to a livefeed of social media interaction. As this research aims to get a holistic understanding of what role creative practices in the museum setting can have in the climate change discourse, and its effect on the participants' civic identity, it investigates the entries made by the participants and not the other aspects of the site. Additionally, internal validity is a central part of qualitative research and can be constructed through several tools, one being thorough method transparency (Bazely, 2013:407-410). A description of the work process of this thesis is described and analysed below.

Curatorial interview

Before the actual data collection, an open, exploratory interview was held with the curator Ylva Hillström at MM in January 2019 to discuss Acclimatize and its context. The conversation was an important step in seeing the exhibition as part of MM itself. From this interview, a first draft of the aim and research questions could be formulated. The interview questions were guided by Hillström's reflections from the exploratory interview as well as the preparatory literature study that was made. They were designed to be reflexive and open to the direction in which Hillström took the conversation, making semi-structured interview a suitable method (Bazely, 2013).

The interview guide was piloted with a person not affiliated with MM as a way to test the questions, seeing if they were clear, concise and easy for the interviewee to understand, and by request sent to Hillström in advance. Thanks to Hillström's participation, the data contributed with important insights on the motivations and ideas that otherwise would have stayed within the institution. Bruhn refers to this style of interviewing as elite, and as an interview method it offered generous space for Hillström to associate and reflect freely as the conversation developed (Bruhn, 2016:132-134).

Visual analysis

As a method, visual analysis is not always considered truly 'valid' in its findings, leaving it critiqued by some media scholar for being 'too elusive'. This misconception is transcended by using an established framework for analysis and through transparency in the process (Corner, 2011:49). The semiotic analysis method was a strong choice as the interest was in signs, symbols and interpretation and not only the descriptive, formal qualities of the entries (D'Alleva, 2015:28). Media scholars Hansen & Machin bring the study of signs and symbols into the media and communications paradigm in their analysis of photographs through semiotic analysis. They, just as Corner, claim that there has "been a relative lack of attention to developing a strict methodology" for visual analysis (Hansen & Machin, 2013:174) and although Acclimatize entries take on more diverse mediums than just photography, their prompt questions about an image's denotative and connotative elements was used to guide this analysis away from the 'elusive'.

As the exhibition is made up by around 200 entries, a sampling had to be made. All entries were mapped and a thematic sampling was conducted based on medium (film, choreography etc) content (recycling, consumption etc). A selection of six pieces were made and the participant was requested to participate in an interview. Out of the six selected, four pieces were semiotically analysed prior to the interview with the participant, making them unaffected by the statements made by the participant about intended messages and interpretations.

First, the denotative elements of each piece were mapped (D'Alleva, 2005:17). The descriptive analysis is important as it slows down the viewing process and allows the piece to speak for itself. It was followed by scrutinising the connotative

layers to the work, prompted to investigate further the guiding parameters about the production, the formal aspects of the piece itself and the audience experience (Rose, 2013). In this way, the visual analysis is not only one of the three methods used for researching Acclimatize, but it is self-reflexive in itself. Corner called for researching the image's Organisation, Articulation and Apprehension (Corner, 2011:59) to get a critical understanding and contextualisation. Similarly, Rose speaks of a similar approach by taking the Sites of Production, Image, Audiencing and Circulation into account (Rose, 2013). By taking a critical, reflexive approach and contextualising the piece, the visual analysis became a systematic and transparent tool of analysing the content of Acclimatize. Hence, the aime was to avoid hastily over-interpretations which could negatively affect the validity of the research (Hansen & Machin, 2013:174).

Participant interviews

The creators of the four semiotically analysed pieces were interviewed separately in March 2019 following a semi-structured interview guide (Bazely, 2013). Their voices both validated and contradicted the findings from the curator interview and the visual analysis, supporting the choice of researching Acclimatize through triangulation to cross-reference the different perspectives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:112).

Analysing the Data

The curatorial interview and participant interviews were transcribed, and the visual analysis was summarised into tables and was used as the base of analysis for this thesis. Although the approach to all methods were open, the analysis was guided towards researching the role of emotional experiences and cultural construction of identity.

The iterative process of finding the themes was an ongoing process throughout the analysis. As the methods were aimed towards answering the research questions from different perspectives, they lifted each other through their varied character. The themes that came out was therefore aimed to uncover the 'motives' behind the exhibition, understanding the role and form of the entries made, as well as the role of cultural participation. Annette Hill emphasises the importance of having

these analytical dialogues between the producer and the audience member because "researching engagement sees the interface between media structures, content and processes, as difficult to identify and research but significant to our sense of the media producer–audience relationship" (Hill, 2018:29). The visual analysis becomes especially useful here as it bridged the curatorial perspective with the participants one, showing how the participants made sense of the invitation, the exhibition and their cultural citizenship. By making categories of the descriptive and analytical codes, and tracking them into categories, the statements made by Hillström was paired with the statements of the participants, creating a theme. Each theme was paired with the research question it related to, and from that, the findings were discussed in relation to the theoretical frameworks of affect theory and cultural citizenship.

Analysis

This analysis is divided into four sections. The first take a closer look on how art and creative practice can be used to support the development of civic identity. The importance of cultural citizenship in the Anthropocene is contextualised by Peter Dahlgren's framework of civic culture where cultural dimensions are considered as key to the practice of citizenship and democracy (Dahlgren, 2009). By analysing the invitation to participate in Acclimatize from curator Ylva Hillström's perspective, we draw the conclusion that 'quiet' participation can be a meaningful alternative to participating in the 'noisy' climate change discourse, creating a communicative space in which, as this participant said: "everyone has a corner" (Kristiansson, 2019) where one feels comfortable to participate.

In the second part, Hillström's perspective is put side by side with the participants in a discussion about the importance of the creative processes, the institutional mechanisms of the contemporary art museum and how those affect the participatory experience. It argues that Acclimatize should not be considered an attempt of political mobilisation but instead acknowledge the importance of the individual voice, and the valuable aspects of a digital art platform for practicing civic identity.

The third section analyses how the participants decided to express and practice this civic identity through visual analysis. The first theme includes how the subtle

ways of communicating climate change issues are expressed, which adds to the findings on 'quiet' participation in section 1 and 2. The second theme considers the role of affect for the participant as well as the interpretive process of the viewer.

The final part continues the investigation of affect, reflecting on its role in Acclimatize, showing that the exhibition is an opportunity to engage and participate outside the political context, therefore building civic confidence for oneself in the climate change issue, empowering the individual towards societal action.

Myth and Cultural Citizenship

The first step towards discussing art as a creative interspace between the personal, social and political, is to acknowledge the invitation to and design of Acclimatize as a project and exhibition. Ylva Hillström, curator and instigator of Acclimatize, spoke about the opportunities in working with creative processes as a tool to "think outside the box" (Hillström, 2019), which plays the role of a catalyst to steer society into a sustainable direction. By encouraging creative processes, collective stories and beliefs can be created, making Acclimatize not only on an art exhibition but simultaneously a learning- and educational project.

> Moderna Museet has had this idea from the very outset since 1958, that when you look at art, you become interested in creating something yourself. Perhaps not *art*, but a creative response to what you see. Looking at art engages you, and then you want to do something, have some output yourself. *Hillström, 2019.*

According to Hillström, participating and going through the creative and emotional process allows the participant to move beyond a normative mindset and instead explore other possibilities.

> When you look at art, you can perhaps be prompted to 'think outside the box'. When it comes to climate change, we need to find new ways of dealing with these complex issues, making art a good platform. *Hillström, 2019.*

Hillström does not only highlight the potential of art as a tool to be used for tackling complex social and political issues, but also points out that we need to find new ways to deal with them. She promotes Acclimatize as a platform that supports thinking about non-normative ways of dealing with climate change - a

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way to break free from those factors holding sustainability back. She is not alone in interpreting that the human response to climate change seems to be stuck and locked-in. Giddens speaks of it as a problem with recognising the gap between *knowing about* and *doing something about* climate change, which paralyses our fathoming of the scale of climate change implications in our everyday lives (Giddens, 2009:1).

Some researchers argue that for long knowledge was seen as *the* change-agent for climate change issues, leading to a lack of emotional involvement. "Delivering unbiased, science-based information on the probable impacts of climate change is not enough to change this perception, because what is missing in the public's mind are "vivid, concrete, and personally relevant affective images of climate change" (Leiserowitz in Nurmis, 2016:502). This suggests that the climate change narratives cannot solely rely on knowledge as a change-agent but must also acknowledge the multiplicity on how citizenship is created and developed on the cultural level, allowing the climate change issue to take centre role in the collective consciousness.

Peter Dahlgren opens up for investigating citizenship from a political, social and cultural angle through his theoretical framework on the circuit of civic cultures (2009). By looking at how and why one chooses to participate, the concept of cultural citizenship can be explored. The circuit of civic cultures is made up of six dimensions: *Knowledge, Values, Trust, Space, Practices* and *Identity*. A short explanation and a contextualisation within Acclimatize of the circuits dimension follows below as the terms will return throughout this analysis.

Picture 4:
Dahlgren's circuit of civic culture

Knowledge, information and facts have, as described by Nurmis above (2016), been a key element for prompting change throughout the climate change discourse. Dahlgren speaks of the role of knowledge in the construction of citizenship as "not just the question if citizens already have the knowledge they need, but, more important, if they are able to acquire relevant knowledge" (Dahlgren, 2009:108). For Acclimatize, it becomes a balance between having sufficient knowledge about not only climate change issues but also about how one can participate creatively in the conversation, relating it also to identity, practice and skills (Dahlgren, 2009:109).

According to Dahlgren, values are of significant democratic importance that result in willingness to follow certain principles, grounded in everyday life. He emphasises the importance of disputing these beliefs and contextualises it in a way that is relevant to climate change issues. He states that "Concrete situations, not least those concerning the relations between minority cultures to the majoritarian society, can well set certain democratic values in opposition against each other" (Dahlgren, 2009:110-111). This can for example be seen in how climate efficient circular economy is ideologically challenging the market-based ideals in public

debate (Aktuell Hållbarhet, 2018). In this research, these ideas are develop in regard to myth-making in contemporary society.

Trust is considered to be an indicator of how citizens experience democracy. Dahlgren states that "the bearers of trust are usually seen as the citizens, and the objects of trust are the institutions or representatives of government" (Dahlgren, 2009:112). However, a mistrust towards political systems can be seen growing in the public conversation concerning climate change. One example is the voice of Greta Thunberg, Swedish activist, who was mentioned by the interviewed participants in Acclimatize as a necessary figure who criticises the maintenance of political and financial structures instead of transitioning into sustainability (Watts, 2019). Trust is in that sense both a collective experience as well as an individual one, connecting it to identity.

The dimension of space is important when researching Acclimatize as MM has created the exhibition as a digital, participatory platform. Dahlgren looks at space as a ruling, situational context in which "civic cultures can develop and flourish, and in which the political can be developed and […] pursued" (Dahlgren, 2009:115). Reviewing the restrictions and possibilities of the participatory artistic space of Acclimatize is important as it determines the affordances of the exhibition. Therefore, the parameters of participation affect the kind of cultural citizenship expressed, relating it to Dahlgren's dimensions of practices and identity.

Practices are described by Dahlgren as what "help[s] generate personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy, and they must have an element of the routine […] about them if they are to be part of a civic culture" (Dahlgren, 2009:114-115). This refers to the practice of citizenship and meaning-making, for example electoral voting. However, in Acclimatize the practice of citizenship is unconventional. Through creative practices, Hillström sees Acclimatize as an opportunity for "thinking outside the box" (2019) and hopes for an alternative line of practices which stands beside and challenges the routinised ones.

In the circuit of civic culture, identity is considered to be "the most compelling link between civic cultures and the sense of agency that engages people and can help turn them into political participants" (Dahlgren, 2009:123) and refers to the subjective view of the self as a member and participant of democracy. On the one hand, it is about what one *is*: meaning an agent able to vote and participate in

public debate; but also more delicately what one *feels like,* a citizen able and unable to participate in a meaningful way. In this research, Acclimatize is researched as an opportunity to explore what the cultural dimension of *feeling* can do for cultural citizenship, making it the most important dimension of civic culture for this research.
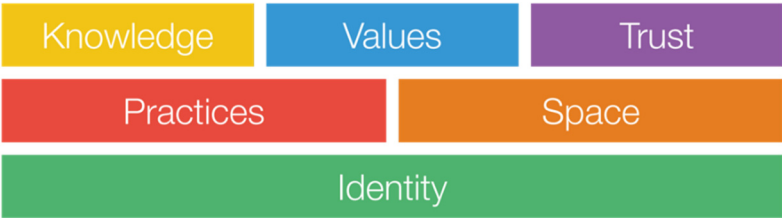
Picture 5:
Circuit of civic culture as seen in Acclimatize

Building on Dahlgren's circuit of civic culture, we can view the participants of Acclimatize as citizens using the exhibition as a platform to express and challenge their cultural citizenship in relation to the human and non-human aspects of climate change. Hence, this research will primarily focus on the dimensions of identity, spaces and practices due to their strong effects on cultural citizenship specifically. The elements of knowledge, values and trust will be mentioned for context. However, the main focus will be on identity due to the importance of researching how creativity may create a connection between feeling like an agent and acting like one (Dahlgren, 2009:123).

Hillström emphasises the creative processes as a democratic tool, and suggests that creative expressions can move beyond routine practices and values towards sustainability. Traditional dichotomies such as emotional/rational and nature/culture can be questioned, and focusing on artistic expression would allow for a synthesised interpretation of the relationship between the dimensions of Dahlgren's circuit. By doing so, it is not the amount of knowledge or quality of a piece submitted that is determining the impact of creative citizenship - but the process and thinking behind a piece that can challenge routine systems and behaviours. Hillström says:

> I believe that art and creativity can, regardless of the topic, play an important role since it can allow your mind to go in new, unexpected directions. *Hillström, 2019.*

Hillström believes that structural and personal beliefs, or lock-ins, can be broken and reconsidered into new directions. Lock-ins refer to the shared set of values and beliefs that must be challenged as society needs to transition into sustainability. These beliefs are seen in regard to personal attitude and behaviour, e.g. consumption and travel habits, as well as political and economic control means. According to Hillström, certain stories have been repeatedly told and must be made conscious (2019). They are found on both personal and collective levels and have the potential to build a 'sense of belonging', but it can also lead to a lack of connection in a highly individualised society:

> We've lost touch with our myths [...] which is quite sad, because I think [...] we need these stories to understand our place in the world. It's a way to deal with the big questions about life, death and the cycles of seasons [...], and creates a unifying connection. *Hillström, 2019.*

Maja Essebo explains myth as "the stories we tell in order to give order and interconnected meaning to events, especially in processes and situations which require explanation and/or justification" (Essebo, 2013:20). Similarly, it guides and defines the ideal civic thought and behaviour, relating it to Dahlgren dimension of values (2009). Barthes describes this kind of myth development as "giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal" (Barthes, 1972:142) but Hillström sees it as having "lost" its collective function in today's society (Hillström, 2019). Therefore, she sees participatory art as creating opportunities for new, more sustainable myths. According to her, myths and values can act as unifying stories, and by redesigning and creating new ones, society can begin to close the gap between knowing and doing. As a result, by seeing older myths and values as important history for challenging lock-ins associated with climate change, and the creation of new, sustainable ones as unifying act, she invites the participants of Acclimatize to explore new ways of thinking, acting and practicing myth through cultural citizenship.

Museums and the Participatory Space

We have discovered that Hillström talks about two routes to breaking climate change lock-ins: 1) the collective mythmaking and 2) providing platforms for creative thinking and interacting with climate change issues. In the case of

Acclimatize, both of these interconnected routes to change are situated within the museum environment.

Therefore, we must take the institutional mechanisms and functions into account when analysing the participatory experience of Acclimatize. The exhibition does this in several ways by challenging the traditional functions of the art museum, therefore providing a space for cultivating cultural citizenship. According to Hillström, the contemporary art museum does not only display the history of culture, but also presents the viewer a shared, human history. Through that, MM encourages the feeling of the collective in Acclimatize through its participants and visitors, but also within the history of art as a whole:

> Art and culture can make people come together and create a sense of belonging to a long cultural tradition. […] The art museum becomes a communal space where one can feel part of something bigger. *Hillström, 2019.*

When one can "feel part of something bigger", something happens on multiple dimensions of the civic circuit. The concept of identity has already been emphasised as fundamental to the other elements (Dahlgren, 2009:123) and is certainly part of feeling "a sense of belonging" (Hillström, 2019). The emotional response to democracy does not happen by itself but in relation to how "identities of membership are not just subjectively produced by individuals but evolve in relation to social milieus and institutional mechanisms" (Dahlgren, 2009:119). These institutional mechanisms determine how the participants can evolve the practice of their creative, cultural citizenship and "develop their democratic character" (Dahlgren, 2009:118), requiring an inclusive space generated to encourage engagement and participation.

> By making Acclimatize an online participatory exhibition, we strive to make it more accessible, allowing us to reach as many as possible. *Hillström, 2019.*

Dahlgren emphasises the importance of these platforms stating that "the availability and accessibility of suitable communicative spaces - physical or virtual - is central; the ease of networking offers one obvious answer to the question of where and how civic agency can be enacted" (Dahlgren, 2009:116). This means that mediated participation, such as Acclimatize, can create linkages and networking opportunities which support the development of one's cultural citizenship. However, the participants still mentioned little to none interaction

between each other. As they generally did not use other forms of social media to connect with each other, this could have discouraged opportunities to build communicative engagement and cultural citizenship through discussing their experience of the practices and identity exploration of being a participant.

This shows us that the importance of the institutional conditions should not be minimised. Participant Kristiansson goes into a reflection on the 'seriousness' of the project when asked about the accessibility of Acclimatize.

> Maybe [it's] not as 'serious' as other exhibitions at MM. That has somehow a negative effect on the hierarchy within the exhibitions at the museum. *Kristiansson, 2019.*

The importance of internal anchoring within the institution was raised by Ylva Hillström as well. The project as such is stretching the boundaries on what participatory projects had been done at MM before, resulting in an unsure place within the organisation. These often unnamed, institutional mechanisms are central to the outcomes of participatory projects such as Acclimatize and shows the strong impact of institutional conditions and aspirations (Kidd, 2014). Kidd continues by quoting Jönsson & Örnebring who says that "Participation does not automatically equal either production or power" (Jönsson and Örnebring in Kidd, 2014, p:59), claiming the importance of flagging up the institutional mechanisms surrounding participatory art exhibitions. By taking a multi- instead of monovocal approach, the role of MM becomes for her not only to create and display exhibitions, but also support others to create (Tatsi, 2013).

Out of the four participants interviewed, two of them were asked directly to participate by Moderna Museet as a way to set the scene for other entries, while the other two responded to the calling out of their own motivation. Runnel, who researches the democratisation of museum spaces, claims that participation as such support reflexive citizenship: "instead of providing visitors with ready-made and perfect answers, museums can use participation as a way to entice and support critical thinking" (Runnel & Pruulmann-Vengerstedt, 2014:50), which Kristiansson supported:

> I believe that everyone has creativity within themselves in different ways, on different levels. If your political engagement only consisted of writing speeches, then you need to have a certain level of language and knowledge to achieve

something. For art, everyone has a corner where they can produce something meaningful. *Kristiansson, 2019.*

This way of reasoning might suggest that Acclimatize can open up for participants to practice their citizenship in ways that might be more suitable to the individual self. As traditional means of mobilisation, such as voting and debating, within a democracy might not be accessible to everyone, Acclimatize can potentially offer a platform where everyone "has a corner" (Kristiansson, 2019), and political skills to participate are not the primary thing, but rather the feeling of having something to say, and a form through which one can express it. By offering a space for engagement and participation that stands outside collective, networked activism the individual is given the opportunity to potentially explore, practice and develop their own civic identity.

Responding to the Invitation to Participate

As a way to deepen our understanding, we need to review the barriers and potentials to the creative process. Building on Hillström, who states that creativity allows for free thinking, this thesis sees creativity as a tool to challenge lock-ins, to build cultural citizenship and construct new myths in line with more sustainable development. This potential capacity of the free mode of association and thought is for Hillström important as she saw some destructive narratives focusing on sensational facts as dominating the shared consciousness in society, and that those narratives must be challenged.

> Maybe these are just the narratives that we need to get away from to really change things? […] It's a representation of the imagery that we've been fed for so long, and it has become so common and depressing that it doesn't trigger action anymore. *Hillström, 2019*

By conducting a visual of a sample of four entries, five themes come out as shared denominators, but before deconstructing those in regard to Hillström's search for less dominant narratives, a brief formal description of each piece will follow.

Fanny Svensson, Female, 25

Dancer, choreographer

Blindfold

Fanny Svensson was invited by MM to participate and choreographed a dance that moves between nature and the museum setting. First wearing a blindfold, the central figure is exposed to an element that lives outside her ordinary life and comfort zone. After having this experience, something 'clicks' and she removes the blindfold.

Picture 6:
Screenshots from Fanny Svensson's *Blindfold*

Ida Alsterhed, Female, 19

College student

Destroy

Ida Alsterhed has made a painting of a face in blue and red colours that can be seen melting in a time-lapse, avoiding eye-contact as it's being destroyed.
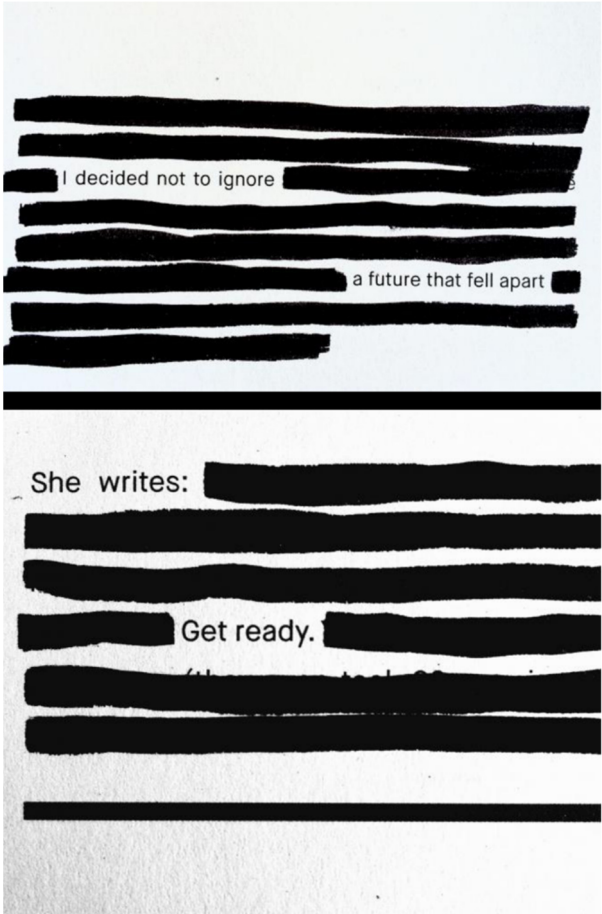

Picture 7:
Screenshots of Ida Alsterhed's *Destroy*

Anna Kristiansson, Bokpoesi, Female, 25

Poet, artist & NGO professional

The Voice

Bokpoesi, or Anna Kristiansson, was invited by MM to participate and has created a four-part series of square photographs of altered poems. By taking a text written by someone else, crossing out a majority of the words, creating new messages such as "the voice - that no one seemed responsible" and "She writes: Get ready.".

Picture 8:
Screenshot of Anna Kristianssons *The Voice*

Olof Kolte, Male, 54

Designer, teacher, researcher

Tuta om du gillar klimatförändring

A photograph of a traffic sign designed by Kolte saying "Tuta om du gillar klimatförändring" (Eng: "Honk if you like climate change"), located in a crowded parking lot by a university building with a child standing next to it.

Picture 9:
Screenshot from Olof Kolte's *Tuta om du gillar klimatförändring*

By conducting the semiotic visual analysis, four themes arose as common denominators shared by all or some of the pieces. These are listed and analysed below:

Breaking the Nature/Culture Divide:

Fanny Svensson takes the nature/culture divide and visually breaks it apart in her piece *Blindfold* by personifying and placing Nature in the Cultural space, and integrating the perspectives. Svensson herself describes the transformative experience as something that 'clicks' in the lead character, making her understand the true complexity of the climate change situation. The visual narrative becomes a representation of a political ecology that disregards old separations between nature and culture. Latour describes the dangers of the current situation as "The difficulty lies in the very expression "relation to the world," which presupposes two sorts of domains, that of nature and that of culture, domains that are at once distinct and impossible to separate completely" (Latour, 2017:42). Instead, the new political ecology can be seen mirrored in Svenssons work, arguing for a holistic understanding of human and non-human agents as equally important (Latour, 2004).

Other symbols and signs:

Debord spoke about the dangers of relying on spectacle imagery in his critical deconstruction of passivity as part of modern society in 1967 (Debord, 2005) and Hillström claims that this is currently being done throughout the climate change discourse as well. Ida Alsterhed offers an alternative to the sensational symbols of climate change in her piece *Destroy*. She gives Earth the form of a female face, Mother Earth, expressing a look of having given up. Mother Earth can be seen as one of the myths that Hillström talks about in her reflection on the role of the contemporary myth, and Alsterhed takes perhaps a more traditional interpretation of the Earth as the Mother and gives it new light in the climate change discourse. Ruthlessly, Mother Earth melts, over and over again due to the repetitive design of the image flow. The sense of abuse to the face seems to capture the same kind of violence as expressed by other more normative forms of narratives for climate issues, but the form is different, which might strike a different chord in the viewer than more dominant imagery. As a result, the common narratives must move beyond the dominant depictions of environmental damage and through her use of other symbols, Alsterhed does just that (Nixon, 2013).

Silence:

These four entries shared a rather human, almost careful tone. Neither attributed themselves with the label of 'climate change art' and did not specifically state one specific kind of interpretation or prompting one certain action in their interviews. Instead, the discourse is often described as being loud and aggressive due to the urgency of climate change by the participants. As a result, the stroke seemed gentler and more open in Acclimatize than in their overall interpretation of the climate change discourse. Instead of calling for action, Kristiansson for example seemed to be whispering instead of shouting, portraying a visual representation of the expression of 'silence speaks louder than words'. By taking the a more subtle approach in terms of both interpretation, form and impact, the participants do what Nixon calls out as a necessity: "intervene representationally [and] devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency" (Nixon, 2013:12).

Affective reactions:

Every piece, in its own way, aims to initiate an affective response from the viewer. Svensson's transformative choreography portrays a feeling that is easy to relate to, while Alsterhed leaves the viewer in a feeling of hopelessness. Kristiansson provides a small glimpse of hope in dystopia and Kolte adds a sense of humour to a gloomy conversation. Scholars such as a Nurmis criticise the climate change discourse for being saturated with rationality and scientific knowledge alone (Nurmis, 2016:501).

The visual analysis shows that the creative narratives displayed at Acclimatize could play a part in navigating climate change lock-ins. Although the pieces share some themes, there seems to be no absolute link between how they challenge the dominant narrative. Instead, the strength of the entries and Acclimatize as a whole seems to lie in the opportunity to cultivate the subject position through cultural participation. That, and how it is determined through institutional mechanisms and affective processes are analysed in the two following sections.

Building Civic Confidence

For Acclimatize, one participant who responded to the invitation said that creative and visual communicative form was an important step in claiming her voice in the climate change discourse.

> I'm a person who struggles with words and painting has always been my way of self-expression. So I think it felt good to paint, to add to the conversation and speak my mind, in this way. *Alsterhed, 2019.*

By going outside networked activism and exploring the individual relationship to climate change issues by creative practice, 'quiet' participation is offered in an otherwise 'noisy' discourse. Through *doing* cultural citizenship, thoughts and feelings can come together and not only create interesting insights into the climate change issue, but also give the individual confidence to see themselves as one of the affected stakeholders.

The dimension of identity keeps shining through as an important aspect of building civic confidence and considering oneself as a member of the community that is affected by climate change. The confirmation of 'self' came through when asked about their relationship to collective activities. Most of them hesitated to use the word "activism" and instead perceived their role entry as "open gateways" (Kolte, 2019) or "small steps" (Svensson, 2019) towards complex issues. It shows again how the participants saw Acclimatize as a way to *personally* explore climate change.

The personal experience of living in a time of climate change seems to be one of the guiding motivations behind participating in Acclimatize. Svensson spoke of an uncertainty about her own role within the bigger context, saying that:

> I'm [torn] between "It doesn't matter what I do" and "It really matters what I do!". *Svensson, 2019.*

Svensson expresses an uncertainty about what is her individual position in a complex collective issue. It indicates personal subject position as core to how one makes sense of climate change issues in regard to personal and civic action. When asked the same question, Olof Kolte spoke about dedicating substantial parts of

his personal and professional life as a university professor to cope with climate change issues.

> "I teach and in some vague sense try to live [in a sustainable way], but I don't succeed of course. […] So in that respect, I live my whole life with frustration and anger, and that's not always a good thing, but that's the case [laughing]" *Kolte, 2019.*

This emphasis on the participants' identities return in the participant interviews and Acclimatize is only one platform through which they are investigating, practicing and developing their civic identity. According to Dahlgren, "Identities develop and evolve through experience, and experience is emotionally based" (Dahlgren, 2009:119). Through that, he sees that affective reactions and responses in a democratic society can "contribute to the democracy's vibrancy" (Dahlgren, 2009:119). This means that one does really *become* a political and cultural citizen before one *feels* like one. Thus, exhibitions like Acclimatize does not only provide a platform to express themselves where "everyone has a corner" (Kristiansson, 2019), but also to explore the affective dimensions of civic confidence and identity construction.

Hillström considers affective responses and the role of emotions as crucial in the climate change discourse and in the design of Acclimatize. She sees it being "absolutely vital because if you don't engage emotionally, then you won't change, which is what I think is required of us as a human race" (Hillström, 2019). She speaks of the affective as a way to trigger the necessary paradigm shift. The participants tended to speak about the role of affect in a similar way, supporting Hillström's affective approach.

> I definitely think that waking people's feelings does something that figures, and numbers doesn't do. [...] It can pick up on feelings that people have and push for those, so that artworks can push people to go in different directions. […] *Kristiansson, 2019.*

Kristiansson affirms that affect can push beyond dominant patterns and lock-ins, whether institutional, social or personal. By criticising an unequal divide between rationality and emotion in the climate change discourse, they underline a need for emotional and affective spaces. By creating these opportunities to affectively participate, the accessibility to the issue is described as increasing. The creative,

participatory space can offer an alternative to the political contexts where democratic mobilisation is more commonly seen taking place. This places Acclimatize in the interesting position of not being climate change art as seen in the inspiration videos made by MM and posted in the website. Neither is it networked activism although promoting some sort of action. Rather, the digital participatory art creates a communicative space that encourages creative conversations where affective routes to civic engagement can be cultivated.

The participants tended to measure the affective impact of the creative communicative space in a subtle way.

> Maybe something awakens inside people who watch this stuff and feels like they want to learn more about it. Something clicks. They think more about this. I don't know. *Svensson, 2019*

They did not place their own entries at the centre of having major structural effects on climate associated issues. Rather, they stated that their actions and entry could perhaps lead to collective civic reaction later on, but that they were hesitant to draw any conclusions. Limited reactions have been communicated to them about their entry, which could be a reason for them avoiding speculating about their own impact on a personal, civic and political level. This expressed lack of conversation between MM, the participants and its audience show again that the museum sets the context for exhibition, also putting them in charge for how networks and communication routes are designed. The individual experience of building civic confidence through creativity is a valuable finding, but as the participants spoke about a lack of collective, linkages between them could perhaps support this orientation even further.

The findings also showed that the entries have the ability to transcend themselves and the artists' intention, living their own life by possessing 'thing power'. The impact an entry has cannot be determined by the participants themselves due as the entries are not only *produced* but also *produce* meaning (Bennett, 2009). This correlates with how the participants own motivation and interpretation of their piece was not referred to as the 'true' explanation. As a result, the entries aimed for the viewers to ask questions rather than providing answers. Instead of expressing a control over the message broadcasted, the participant expressed that they wanted to create open opportunities for reflection, allowing the piece to speak for itself, having a different message depending on the viewer.

> The most important thing for me [is that] I leave a question mark with the person who is watching my stuff. You can interpret it in so many ways, and that's just interesting for me to hear. What did it mean to you? [rhetorical question]. My concept is this, this is the idea, but what do you see? *Svensson, 2019.*

This suggests an explanation to how art can be both reflexive and alive, and produced and producing at the same time. Svensson describes thing power as the power of artistic form that makes something "click" within the viewer (Svensson, 2019). This click was described in different ways but mentioned by all the interviewees as a strong motivator to generate personal engagement and civic action. Hillström too described the click as the experience that made you *feel* something you previously only *knew*. By placing the issue at the very front on the collective consciousness, there seems to be a need for a synthesising feeling and thought. Williams spoke about "thought as felt and feeling as thought" (Williams, 1977:133) as mentioned earlier. This click can happen to viewer as well as participant, and through the affective experience create a stronger civic confidence. As a result, the click becomes the moment of realization, where the affective understanding can encourage us to "think outside the box" (Hillström, 2019) on personal, civic and political climate change issues.

In this analysis, we have seen the participants as sense-making agents active in Acclimatize where they build civic confidence and practice cultural citizenship. The first key finding is therefore in regard to how civic identity can be constructed through creative processes. Acclimatize does not rely on knowledge to participate in the environmental discourse which is described by the participants as dominating elsewhere today. Instead, it attempts to create a communicative space that is based on affect, emotions and creativity. Hillström claims that through shared stories and myth making, sustainable, collective values can be constructed. By emphasising the inclusiveness of the project, the communicative space offered through Acclimatize has potential for further democratisation, despite the limitations of interaction between the participants. Simultaneously, the participants displayed an interest to use creativity as an alternative route to practice their civic identity, as the political, activist spectrum of climate change issues are described as at times being 'noisy' and being difficult to participate in if not using traditional political or activist tools. As a result, creative practices can build civic "confidence" (Kristiansson, 2019) and provide a forum for developing cultural citizenship.

Conclusion

This thesis examines the creative practices of civic identity through conducting a case study of MM's exhibition Acclimatize by using a curator interview, participant interviews and a visual analysis. Through the multi-method approach, rich findings emerged that would not have surfaced if done via a different methodological route. The thesis explores cultural dimensions of climate change as well the experience of curating and taking part in digital, participatory art, to contribute to the academic discussions as well museum curation. The baseline for the theoretical findings comes from Peter Dahlgren's investigation of citizenship, here focusing on the cultural dimensions of democracy with emphasis on identity. This approach resulted in critical insights on how creative practices can "offer a much wider sense of the (hidden) resources for citizenship, as well as help to understand how these hidden resources are […] beneficial" (Dahlgren & Hermes, 2006:262). Affect and creativity are described as routes to move beyond personal restrictions associated with climate change issues, for example not being comfortable with networked activism or joining a political party; creative practices cultivate civic confidence to join the conversation.

The concluding chapter will review the findings in relation to the research questions presented in the opening of this thesis:

1a. How does Acclimatize and Moderna Museet invite citizens to participate in the digital exhibition?

The invitation to participate was researched through the interviews with curator Ylva Hillström and the four participants. Hillström's statements were primarily centred around the institutional mechanisms at stake as well as on what her and MM's curatorial ambitions were. The participants rather reflected on the level of accessibility made possible by a creative, digital and participatory project. By placing these findings together, we can draw conclusions about the institutional elements and personal motivations of the invitation and how these were perceived by the participants.

First, a recurring connection emerged between creative practice, accessibility and democracy in the climate change discourse, pointing towards Acclimatize as a breeding ground for cultural citizenship through civic culture. This is a key

finding for this research as the cultural aspects of 'doing democracy' have been overlooked not only in the academic climate change discourse but also more generally, as Hermes and Dahlgren states that "citizens have not been treated kindly by academics" due to them being treated as 'consumers' of democracy rather than agents (2006, p:262). Therefore, a key finding for this thesis is that the cultural citizen plays a vital part in climate change issues as its cause and consequences run through not only political and social levels of society, but also the cultural and personal. By raising citizens' voices, we can "bring a sense of realism back […] for the environment and sustainability" (Sörlin, 2012:789). Through organising new creative routes to interact with and think about climate change, Hillström hopes that lock-ins, systemic and personal, can be challenged because of art and creativity's ability to prompt "thinking outside the box" (Hillström, 2019), which indicates the importance of individual, artistic voices as an addition to civic and political experiences. This reflects an often unmet need to diversify the ways and contexts in which climate change is discussed, which in turn can confront the representational challenges associated with climate change, by Nixon called the dangers 'slow violence' (2013). He champions "[those] who have deployed their imaginative agility and worldly ardour to help amplify the media-marginalised causes of the environmentally dispossessed" (Nixon, 2013:5), justifying the importance of digital, participatory art forms in the climate change discourse. Not only does the creative narrative open new routes of thinking about complex issues for the individuals themselves, but it also triggers more diverse representations of what it means to be a citizen in the Anthropocene.

As a result, Acclimatize is designed to be a platform where diverse creative entries are encouraged and displayed, making the exhibition an inclusive space where "everyone has a corner" and feels confident to express themselves (Kristiansson, 2019). This attempt to democratise the invitation to discuss climate change demonstrates the importance of cultural inclusivity expressed by scholars such as Nurmis (2016) and other environmental humanities scholars (Evans, 2014; Miles, 2014). By not focusing on mobilisation through macro-activism and politics as many other climate change conversations does, the invitation takes the perspective of the individual citizen. By extending a personal invitation, the personal experiences and struggles are allowed to come forward, showing climate change from a different perspective than usually seen in news media. A different set of practices are accepted than those associated with climate change conversations, such as political debate and networked activism. The emphasis on

accessibility through creative inclusivity makes Acclimatize a communicative space where individuals can participate through choosing their own artistic medium. This way, they can cultivate their own civic identity and reflect on what ought to be done to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

Despite these potential advantages of participatory projects, "Participation does not automatically equal either production or power" (Jönsson & Örnebring in Kidd, 2014:59). The invitation to Acclimatize is set by Hillström and MM, and even though the participants generally expressed being pleased with the design, the executive decisions affect the way in which the participants interpreted and interacted with the project. This resulted in a lack of affordance for the participants to communicate with each other through Acclimatize's website as they were referred to other social media platforms by the website's design. Kristiansson picked up on struggle of hierarchy between Acclimatize and on-site exhibitions at MM, based on the assumption that some find digital, participatory art "less serious" (Kristiansson, 2019). It can be argued then that participatory art promises more in terms of democratic change than it delivers. This is expressed by Bishop who critiques participatory art as such for being centred around the creative process instead of the artwork itself, often resulting in a struggle between "quality and equality" (Bishop, 2012:3). However, this thesis would argue that it is the prioritization of the creative process over artistic quality that strengthens Acclimatize as a project. By inviting the participants to use whatever creative form they "have in their corner" (Kristiansson, 2019), the individual can use their cultural citizenship to build civic confidence in the climate change issue.

1b. In what ways do citizens participate through the digital exhibition on climate change issues?

We have in the first question identified Acclimatize as providing an opportunity to build civic confidence by providing a communicative, digital space where the design emphasises accessibility and inclusivity in the climate change discourse. In order to understand how the invitation was responded to, a visual analysis was conducted and indicated similarities to how the exhibition was interacted with in terms of form, which in turn is backed by the curatorial and participant interviews.

In conclusion, three important themes emerged from the visual analysis that differentiate Acclimatize from more common routes to engagement in the climate change discourse: First, it is through silence and stillness. Nurmis describes the climate change conversation as sensationalist, and the entries displayed at Acclimatize show narratives that are alternative to the 'noise' that the participants associate with the climate change discourse (Nurmis, 2016). The call is not for action but rather described as a whisper, becoming a manifestation of how 'silence speaks louder than words' for some individuals, creating an alternative to the spectacle as described by Debord (2005). Second, the use of symbols alludes to the shared myths of contemporary society. Myths in this sense is what takes a social construction and turns it into a truth, making it "a statement of facts" (Barthes, 1972:143). These taken-for-granted beliefs are hard to diagnose and therefore question, but Ida Alsterhed does so when scrutinising the myths of Mother Earth in her piece, and by Olof Kolte as he humours the myth of individual car transportation as a natural way to live. The creative practice can, from a myth-focused perspective, challenge and create new myths. This power of the creative practice was raised as an important aspect in the design of Acclimatize by Hillström, saying that "I believe […] that we need common stories in order to understand our place in the world" (Hillström, 2019).

Third, citizens participate through affective reactions and responses. Affective reactions and routes to engagement were spoken about as the motivator to participate in Acclimatize by the participants but was also mentioned as a route to challenge the ways in which people normally engage with climate change issues, not as a tool for political mobilisation on the macro scale, but for deeper impact on individuals, creating an experience that "clicks" (Fanny Svensson, 2019). This click allows the participant to practice the civic confidence needed to prompt macro political and civic participation at a later stage, which leads to the conclusion that affective expressions must be acknowledged as part of cultivating cultural citizenship in climate change issues.

The click also demonstrates an important aspect of creative and artistic storytelling: 'thing power' (Bennett, 2009). This research shows that objects, whether material or digital, can say a lot about social context, individual experience and political climate (2009). For this thesis, by analysing the thing power seen in the Acclimatize entries, we have discovered that digital, participatory art opens up opportunities to join the conversation in a creative,

more accessible way than otherwise associated with climate change discourse. Due to its invitation and openness, the entries strive to make us *feel* what we previously only *knew,* which could potentially bridge the gap between knowing about and doing something about climate change. This shift shows that the creative practice is both reflexive and alive. This open interpretation of creative narratives shows what Williams's calls: "not feeling against thought; but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelated continuity" (Williams, 1977:133).

2. What role can the participatory museum exhibition Acclimatize play in practicing civic identities on climate change issues?

After researching the role and potential of Acclimatize through the interviews and visual analysis, this thesis identifies the exhibition as providing a space for practicing civic identity on climate change issues as a core finding. The exhibition has been theorised through Dahlgren's circuit of civic cultures, and the dimensions that primarily stand out as contributing to cultural citizenship are space, practice and identity. Of these three, Dahlgren emphasises identity as "the most compelling link between civic cultures and the sense of agency that engages people and can help turn them into political participants" (Dahlgren, 2009:123). The participants spoke about constructing their civic identity through creative practices in many ways. Ida Alsterhed declared that she finally had a platform for discussing climate change in a communicative form that she felt comfortable with, alluding to Dahlgren's ideas on the democratising function of communicative space. Kristiansson exemplifies the democratising function by stating that "I believe that everyone has creativity within themselves in different ways on so many different levels. If your political engagement only consisted of writing speeches, then you need to have a certain level of language and knowledge to achieve something. For art, everyone has a corner where they can produce something" (Kristiansson, 2019).

Simultaneously, it is not only the creative forms of storytelling that makes Acclimatize stand out as a platform for practicing civic identity. The exhibition is participatory and digital in its design, which according to MM and the participants increases the accessibility to the project when it comes to geographical location, cultural literacy and creative experience. However, it is not a straight line between participation and accessibility as pointed out by Runnel and Pruulmann-

Vengerfeldt as the mechanisms are still set by the institution. Though the participants did not consider the platform restrictions as limiting as such, the lack of affordances to communicate amongst the participants led to narrow communication and recollection of other entries submitted, resulting in a lack of communication between the participants. According to Dahlgren, the communicative space is determining the opportunities to democratic conversation to a great extent (Dahlgren, 2009) and the findings suggest that a lack of internal communication amongst the participants has negative impact on how the civic identity is practiced. Hillström argues for the importance of "creat[ing] a sense of that we're in this together" (Hillström, 2019), and when the participants are not provided with the designated place to dialogue with each other about their experiences, the sense of being part of collective is lessened.

Most importantly, the findings indicate the democratising potentials of projects such as Acclimatize. Nurmis state the importance of participatory art on climate change issues as it leads to mobilising interventions and action (2016), but action it not necessary always the end goal. Practical interventions are certainly crucial to adapt to and mitigate climate change for the sake of humanity's survival, but the importance of individually practicing civic identity must be increasingly emphasised. What this research suggests is that art and creative practices can, when given a digital, participatory platform, construct an interspace between the political, personal and social in which the individual can explore what it means to be a cultural citizen. In the climate change discourse, these platforms can provide a space for reflections on the cultural and personal experiences of climate change, which in turn can contribute to the civic "confidence" needed to go from personal reflection to civic and political action (Kristiansson, 2019).

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'Til Death Do Us part

Representations of men in the Italian mainstream press coverage of femicide

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Introduction

Femicide is a social and criminal phenomenon widespread across the world. The research and advocacy organization *Femicide Watch* reported a datum from a BBC Monitoring investigation: 47 women where killed each day in 2018[13] around the world because they were female. This concerning trend confirms what the United Nations wrote in the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* in 1993: "the historically unequal power relations between men and women", which imply a system of male dominance from the public to the private sphere.

This thesis project embarks from a position that mainstream media play a significant role in making an impact on a societal issue such as the femicide: in comparison with alternative media which might have a different and stronger position on what a femicide socially embodies, the mainstream ones have a bigger public resonance and hence a bigger normative power to critically address the problem and advocate for an effective task-force. The present research design will investigate the Italian context. During the year 2018, 93 women were murdered by an intimate partner, a family member, a male friend: in a timeframe, every 72 hours, a femicide took place.

Therefore, this work wants to contribute to an ongoing conversation on how mainstream news deal with a sensitive topic like femicide by looking through CDA how the male perpetrator is represented within three Italian newspapers.

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[13] Research accessed on 25 January 2019 at the following link: http://femicide-watch.org/products/47-women-killed-one-day-around-world-because-their-gender-bbc-news.

Aims and objectives

The first main objective of this study is to analyse how the mainstream press represents men who commited femicide in Italy. Bearing in mind that femicide is a worldwide phenomenon, the aim is to supply contextual knowledge which can contribute to the broader research field of media, masculinity and gender studies. In tackling issues such as media representations, news coverage and crime, another objective is to critically reflect on journalism ethics, on its values and rules of conduct in order to contribute to the ongoing discussion on how to talk about femicide. On the methodological front, this project will provide an alternative approach advocating that the focus on male individuals can function as a fruitful getaway for deconstructing the hegemonic discourses on femicide and for shedding light on how its crime reporting can improve.

Research questions

The data collected will answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways are the men who committed femicide in Italy represented in the mainstream national press?

2. What kind of masculinities emerge in the mediated identification of the perpetrators of femicide?

3. How do representations of men and masculinities in the news coverage of femicide reflect the dominant discourses on gender relations in Italy?

The first two questions were thought to drive the conversation into the core of the research topic: the man and the masculinity are approached as social categories, therefore going from a descriptive to a more analytical level of analysis. The third question wants to dive deep into the Italian context by looking at the discursive practices emerging in the news media analysis and mirroring the gender relations in Italy.

The sociocultural context: God, family and media in Italy

The purpose of this section is to set the sociocultural context in order to provide a critical eye to gender relations in Italy.

God

A highly important role in the men-women relation is played by the Catholic Church, whose state, Vatican, is in Rome. The political, cultural, and even economic ties between Vatican and the Italian institutions remain strong. The feminist movements in the 60s and the 70s fought the conservative roles women had to stick with and stood up for eliminating discriminatory laws affecting women's lives, such as the reparatory marriage- which imposed the women victim of rape to marry their rapist to erase the shame from their family (Caffaro et al., 2014). Women activists demanded and succeeded in changing laws, like the legalization of abortion and the regulation of the divorce by the Italian state, previously strictly forbidden by the Catholic Church. However, the Church managed to be always be influential especially through the Christian Democratic party, who had been leading the governmental institutions after the World War II.

Despite the fall of this party, the Church still represents a solid stakeholder when it comes to legislation over sensitive issues for women, from abortion to divorce. Indeed, in 2018 pro-life campaigns were visible in the major Italian cities and were welcomed by some Italian local councils. The Catholic values are embraced by political institutions to formulate decisions which hinder women's right to free choice and the next section will better clarify this aspect.

A family-centric law proposal

The presence of a strong stakeholder like the Catholic Church has lately reached a peak with a new family-centric law proposal. Simon Pillon is a pro-family and pro-life supporter. He is a senator of the Northern League, one of the ruling parties in 2018. Pillon proposed a draft law aimed at revolutionising the actual

divorce procedure. His idea consists of privatising the divorce procedure by giving to a private attorney the power of deciding over the issue. This legislative proposal is aimed at- using Pillon's own words- "putting again the family at the centre" of the social and juridical policies (Di Meo, 2018).

The harshest critique deriving from this proposal is that there is an attempt to privatise the domestic violence. Indeed, a private attorney by law cannot report cases of abuses within the household to the public authorities. Related to this last aspect, this draft law wants to sanction the parents who try to alienate the children from the other parent, which can be a powerful tool into the hands of abusive men who can claim that their former partners tried to keep the children away from them.

In Italy there is still a persistent culture wherein marriage is the biggest aspiration and achievement for a woman. As Elisabetta Ruspini (2009) observed, the education system still produces and reproduces stereotypes of what is masculine and what is feminine: for instance, disciplines in the field of natural sciences are seemed more suitable to men, whereas the humanistic ones are seen appropriate for "the sensitive" women. A conservative and family-centric context constructed throughout decades has built gendered stereotypes hard to break and change in the discursive and social practices.

The Italian mainstream media

Seeing Italy as a country, where conservatism is a mixture of religion and fixed gender roles, it comes with no wonder that the national mass media reflect a similar scenario. In 2009, a documentary elaborated by Lorella Zanardo, Cesare Cantù and Marco Malfi Chindemi showed examples of TV (both public and private) daily programmes wherein women are represented as a sexual object, obedient to the male host or silent, in the background. The documentary titled *Women's Body* demonstrates another side of the patronizing and patriarchal practices within the Italian society.

In the #metoo era, the Italian media published texts, where stories of sexual and psychological harassments were put into doubt. The victim-blaming practices were justified under the slogan of the freedom of expression under the guise of promoting Italian democracy. The current public digital sphere dominated by right-wing and populist political (male) actors are making the tones harsher

against who is against them, especially against women to whom certain politicians wished to rape (Marchio, 2019) or compared to monkeys or floating dolls (Eduati, 2016).

In the aims and objectives of this project, I clarified the intentions of supplying knowledge about both the discursive representations of men and the reflections of the ongoing gender relations in Italy through the news outlets covering femicide. The discussion on the Italian context provides those social and cultural dimensions constructing the Italian realm and its mainstream media sphere which are going to be critically analysed in this study. In the following, I review the literature and present my theoretical framework.

Literature review

The first part will look at media studies and the necessity of a stronger approach to news coverage of femicide, with a focus on what was done academically in Italy and the second part will offer a reflection on the gap emerging from these studies. The last ones will be a critical reflection on media power and its agency towards femicide coverage in crime news.

Feminist media studies: a critical approach towards news media

One of the researches inspiring the present project is *News Coverage of Violence against Women: Engendering Blame* by Marian Meyers (1997). She used a Black feminist framework combined with a critical discourse analysis to investigate how news broadcasting in the city of Atlanta represented physical attacks against women. What I found significant in Meyers' work is that she addresses the violence against women as a social and institutional issue and she criticised the media crime narratives as filled with predominant male supremacy, patriarchy and misogyny discourses (1997: 6-8). Despite my research design implies the investigation of only one medium -newspapers- rather than other media like TV news broadcasts, Meyers' work provides an enriching contribution to reflect on the theoretical and methodological framework(s) functional to explore the gender representations in the media. Moreover, Meyers considered both micro- level (i.e. content) and macro- level (i.e. structural) aspects of problems associated to mediated representations which furnish a complete reading of social and criminal

phenomenon, like femicide. Together with the work by Meyer, the handbook *Gender and the Media by* Rosalind Gill (2007) was a source of reflections and inspirations on how to critically study the gender representations in the media as well as on the feminist and masculinity theories developed in the academia. Gill defines news- a key-term of my thesis "a cultural product that reflects dominant cultural assumptions about who and what is important [...]. It is not surprising, then, that most news is designed for, about and by men" (2007: 114). This definition is empirically sustained by her research data collected in research investigations on TV news broadcast channels and other media genres which are analysed with textual and visual methods. For instance, the use of psychological discourse and post-feminist discourse in news reportages of rapes aimed to represent crime as "not real" or as a "false allegation" (Ibid, 2007:140-146).

In broader studies on violence against women and media, gender is analysed together with other variables. Class, ethnicity and race were examined to highlight the dominance of white Western subjects within the news coverage. These studies dealt specifically with the representations of a particular targeted group in the mainstream media: Meyers dedicates multiple studies on case of Black women and men in the Atlanta news coverage (1994; 1997).

My research investigates a Western context similar to the one investigated by Meyers, yet without looking at a particular target group: I will analyse the news concerning any woman, regardless of their race, ethnicity or class, killed by an intimate person.

News coverage of femicide: Studies made in Italy

My study on the Italian context and its mainstream press is not the first of its kind. Cristina Karadole (2012) analysed the main news agency and two popular newspapers in their news coverage of femicide in Italy during 2006. The quantitative purposes captured the demographic data about the individuals involved in the crime and statistics on the most frequent geographic area wherein the crime took place. However, in the concluding remarks, she urged the media not to diminish the problems of this crime. What Karadole means is that media tend to rely on merely stereotypical expressions without raising any public debate about the structural dimensions of femicide.

In 2010, Elisa Giomi reviewed the saturation of the news coverage of two particular intimate homicides and the double-standards applied in representing

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foreigner and national victims and offenders. Differently from Karadole, Giomi reflected upon how the media are effective in mobilising the public debate and galvanize the state action when the female victim is Italian, and the murderer is a foreigner/ migrant man.

In 2014, Chiara Gius and Pina Lalli explored the thematic framework used by the mainstream press to report femicide. They ran a critical textual and discourse analysis of articles published in 2012 and demonstrated how Italian newspapers played the 'romantic love' myth to represent and implicitly justify the femicide. The methodological design of both Giomi's and Gius and Lalli's studies will help me to support my findings and my reflections on the relation between dominant discourses and media representations.

Comparing my study on the Italian media to the ones listed above, my research focus is more narrowed down. Indeed, their research interests are in the femicide as act itself combined with ethnographic and political discourses within the news media. Instead, my contribution to the research on media and gender studies is to scrutinise how dominant discourses construct representations of men in the Italian news coverage of femicide with an original combination of radical feminism and theories around masculinity.

Addressing the gap in the academic conversation on news media and femicide

In the introductory part of this study, the aims and two of the research questions clarified the intention of developing a critical inquiry on the mediated representations of men. This research focus was decided after having noticed that no prior study had devoted a full exploration of the male perpetrators and the embodied social category of dominant masculinity. By employing a theoretical approach entirely centred on the deconstruction of hegemonic masculinities within society, the present project will address this gap.

A review of the literature revealed that studies on the perpetrators of violence against women within the media coverage were conducted by scholars like Meyers (1997) and Gillespie with her colleagues (2013) by using broad and open methodological approaches- from framework to discourse analysis with the aim of comparing those representations of female victims. For instance, Gillespie and her team (ibid.) adopt a framework analysis of news articles concerning femicide

and suicide cases with the objective of uncovering frequent stylistic and linguistic patterns and reporting rules in the coverage of femicide. Pamela Scully (2009, in Cuklanz & Moorti, 2009) also conducts a research on the media constructions of ethnicized masculinity in South Africa during a trial for sexual assault to show how media play the traditional masculinity and the victim-blaming discourses to justify the crime committed by a popular politician.

Despite these general studies, one should note that research projects completely dedicated to examine the men within the news coverage of femicide are rather rare, because studies like the ones mentioned in the previous sections primarily focus on the representations of women, or on the statistical data of the femicide. Wendy Kozol rightly observes in her comparative analysis of news coverage and popular media genres on domestic violence: "Focus on women's guilt or victimization displaces attention from male abusers and the patriarchal system that supports these" (1995:657). It is exactly the patriarchal system embodied by the men committing femicide that this project wants to inquire. Thus, I place the men as the subject of this research and explore the extreme case of violence, and their mediation. The next paragraph will briefly examine the studies on this academic interest.

Representations of men in extreme cases
Focusing on the mediated construction of race and ethnicity of the abuser and the abused shows how being part of a dominant group (i.e. White, middle-upper class in Meyer's work; part of the South-African political leadership in Scully's investigation) can impact on the representations of the male subjects, making them undeserving of the accusation (Meyer, 1997; Scully, 2007). Issues of racialized representations of men in the media are scrutinized also in the investigations around other extreme cases, such as school shootings or terror attacks.

In a framework analysis of the major US newspapers coverage of the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, Park and his colleagues (2012) measured quantitatively, the frequency of words pertaining to the race of the perpetrator as key feature of his criminal profile. They argued that racialized representations occurred when the responsible is an immigrant or part of the Afro-American population, whereas when the shooters are white, their mediated identification is centred around youth alienation or depression. Same double standards return in the mediated

representation of terrorist attacks. Emad A. Alghamdi (2015) used CDA to shed a light on the initial media coverage of the 2011 Norway terrorist attacks. By looking at the manipulation and westernization of the language, he noticed how in media outlets, Western journalists tend to immediately associate the terror attacks to Muslim men or some Islamic groups as responsible, later disconfirmed by the capture of the 'White' Breivik.

Nonetheless, the focus on race and ethnicity of the perpetrator take away the issue of the dominance of men over women, notably their hegemonic and toxic masculinities, which I will return later. The academic examples presented in this section provide brief insights into the research field around men and news media coverage of extreme cases. My research will contribute to this area of study by exploring through CDA an extreme case- femicide- and discussing the discursive practices constructing the crime news and their social implications.

Media power: can news media stop femicide happening?

This study argues that femicide is the most extreme form of the male power over a woman, the worst outcome of the patriarchal system. Therefore, an investigation of the media representations of men is loaded with further relevance because it offers another reflective window on media power.

John Corner is one of the most eminent scholars who theorises and analyses media power academically. He argues that it is imperative to not dissociate the cultural power embodied by media from the economic and political power. This is important because it is through the media products- in the present study, news coverage of femicide- that the political and economic forms of power find a public shape and are presented to the citizens (2011:14). Another important point made by Corner is that we need to understand media power as a productive force, a concept derived from Michel Foucault's analysis of power. Media power has an active agency in producing and sharing knowledge with the scope of setting the basis of a public debate (ibid:17-18). Following this logic, the inter-relations amongst forms of power result in the organization and creation of audio, visual, and written media forms that either unpack an issue or reduce its damaging capacity.

Arguing that femicide cannot be taken out from its societal dimensions, this present study looks at the normative power held by journalism in educating the

public sphere and in advocating for a collective awareness on the structural causes of the phenomenon. John Corner (2011:135) again comes in help with his reflections over whether media represent a good or bad power. In the femicide narrative, a good media power is seen as the circulation of accurate information and reflections about the political, social, and cultural dimensions hiding behind a crime expressively targeting women.

In line with Corner's words, Richards and her team fellows (2014) pointed out that the good normative role of media must be put in practice into their responsibility of guiding the public through the understanding of facts. Nonetheless, media can be the channel of distorted representations of such crime, silencing its root causes. Indeed, a bad media power is seen as "the uncritical reflection of established realities as acceptable and even natural, or [...] the strategic reproduction of dominant assumptions and ideas in ways which exclude others". (Corner, 2011:23). Italian media have something to say about the phenomenon of femicide- but in which modalities? What kind of discourses have they been entangling? Are their news outlets stimulating an active response from the state against femicide? How can a crime news tell that there is something wrong going on in a society? These questions spontaneously arise across this study, and this is why CDA was chosen as a method and applied on the news material.

Discourse is an important component of media power as media representations can potentially raise consciousness about a particular public or private management of an issue and about the overall social order (ibid:32-35; Fairclough, 1995:17). The power of discourse lies exactly in its status of constant and unavoidable appearance in the media space, constructing visions of the world imbued with political and socio-cultural shades (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999:17).

In his book on media and morality, Roger Silverstone dedicates a significant space to media studies. More specifically, he looks at the media rhetoric, representations of events and people and therefore to convey particular political, sociocultural messages (2007:61-64). Contextualizing Silverstone's reflections in this study, the relevance of media power is in reporting episodes of femicide by providing emotional and reflective tools about the crime. These tools can involve the audience with such a level of empathy that people are brought to include femicide into the public debate. Seeing media power as a productive and reproductive force of a certain moral education, it leads to critical inspection of media representations

as a site of political, social, cultural discourses. Going beyond the textuality is what studies like the present one is heading to with the aim of understanding the media power by researching news on femicide.

Femicide news as crime news

When illustrating the representations of men guilty of femicide, the analysis looks at a specific media genre: crime news. This news media genre was the first one to appear in the first English newspapers in the 1830s, feeding since then the appetite of the audience. Peter Dahlgren (1989) refers to the fascination of the mundane which crime news deliver with their accounts of the relationship between the victim and the offender, the details of the crime damage (i.e. robbery, death), the news source, and all the predictable repertoires of the crime news template.

If the moral and critical judgements are not always visible, what is a recurring feature of crime news is the use of sensational tones and an emphasis on details offering dramatic visual moments of the crime (Katz, 1987; Sacco; 1995). This choice replies to two stakeholders: The first is the media industry and its capitalist hunger to sell copies by offering sensational pieces. The second one is the audience to whom journalists want to give an empathic shock by creating news charged with every small detail about the background, the motivation and the dynamics of a crime (Katz, 1987). Femicide news are not exempt from sensationalism and eye-catching headlines- especially when the victim is young, or the dynamics of the murder are particularly worth the public attention for their cruelty.

Finally, crime news has the power to question the social order by publishing similar stories of the same crime (ibid). This aspect belongs to the normative and cultural role news media are invested with, yet Sacco (1995) urges a careful look at the news framing of a problem and the prospective solutions. In fact, the adoption of a specific frame might marginalize root causes of a crime and-consequently- the key to tackle them. Mia Consalvo (2003) agrees with Sacco by arguing that news media must give a fair reflection of a crime and the context wherein the crime occurred. What stands out from Consalvo's article is the tendency of journalists to dehumanise the criminal, especially if the subject is an outcast in the community. This choice implies the avoidance of critical engagement with the societal roots by focusing only on the crime as an isolated

fact rather than an action- despicable- imbued with cultural, economic, political dynamics.

Despite the research focus is on the mediation of the male responsible for femicide, this study wants to contribute to the ongoing conversation on crime news, arguing that changes in the ethics and style must be applied to the specific coverage of gender crimes.

Theoretical frameworks

The relevance of this study responds to the theoretical frameworks which will guide the data analysis. The choice falls into the radical feminism and masculinity studies, two approaches which embark in critical reflections over power within gender relations. In the last section, an analysis of the dialectic between journalism ethics and feminist ethics will bridge the theories and the data analysis.

Defining femicide

A close review of the literature reveals the debate amongst activists and researchers to give a common shared and agreed definition of femicide. This can be seen in a publication of contributions made by the participants to an international conference held in Washington D.C. in 2008 and focused on femicide. According to Diana Russell (2001 in Widyono, 2008:7), femicide is a term defining broadly "the murder of females because they are females". Yet, this definition is not suitable for the research focus because it is too generalist and too reductive as it does not frame a more precise spectrum of who committed the crime. Therefore, this study will employ a more specific definition of femicide pointing out both intimate ties and sociocultural patterns. It was constructed through the years by Karen Stout (1991 in Widyono, 2008:8) as "the killing of women by male intimate partners" and by Myrna Dawson and Rosemary Gartner (1998 in Widyono, 2008:8) who specify that these intimate partners are "current or former legal spouses, common-law partners or boyfriends".

The "personal is political": a radical feminist framework

The strong advocacy for the abolishment of patriarchy places radical feminism within the second wave of feminism. It includes the Women's Liberation Movement (WML) of the 60s and 70s, when "women [were] defending their own interests in the face of male supremacy" (Thompson, 2001:2). One of the exponents of this approach, Catherine MacKinnon, defines feminism as a "discipline of a hostile reality" (1990:5). Seeing feminism as a continuous action of resistance and raising consciousness implies that every issue is a woman's issue. Under the slogan "the personal is political" they advocate for collective campaigns against whatever reinforces male domination (Chambers, 2005). The radical battle against male dominance does not imply the abolishment of state power. Rather, as Denise Thompson points out (2001:10), the restrictive power exercised by the police can put an end to any episodes of violence against women.

What is at stake in this approach is all the discursive and non-discursive practices of the patriarchal power. Following this argumentation, Jane Caputi investigates sexual murders, which are, in her own words, "the ultimate expression of sexuality as a form of power" (1989:439). This reflection further enriches the previous discussion around what femicide is and highlights how the specific elements of radical feminism towards violence against women and sexuality allow major attention to the structure of the patriarchal communication embedded in the social practices of storytelling and reporting of male abuses. Following this trend, media depicts men guilty of sexual crimes as some mythological monsters who are not part of the society. This is what Caputi (1989) goes against, by asserting that men who committed such crimes represent the dominant masculine part of society who dispose of women as they wish.

Radical feminism is not exempt from critiques. Lisa Heise (1995) agrees with the radical feminists when they stand against the objectification and oppression of women, yet she criticises the pessimistic view embraced towards sex relations which ends up in a demonization of men and male sexuality. However, as Denise Thompson asserts (2001:8), radical feminism is not a crusade against men as human beings, rather against the male domination system which casts women and men in meanings, values, practices and institutions legitimizing an unequal share of power. An early radical feminist, Ellen Willis (1984), urges radical feminism to extend its focus on the other social and cultural dominant features of the social

system which help to contribute women's discrimination and male dominance. "An antisexist politics abstracted from a critique of familialism, a commitment to sexual liberation, and race and class struggle cannot sustain itself as a radical force" Willis claimed (1984:117).

Transposing this argumentation into a media-related studies, like this present project, Van Zoonen (1994) observes how there are few radical feminist studies focused on media. They are mainly on pornography with a strong claim that it is an apparent sexual objectification of the female body, an abuse as much as prostitution (MacKinnon, 1990). However, this study argues that the feminist politics embodied by radical feminists can strongly contribute for critically shedding a light on how the mainstream media might be failing women as citizens in the discursive modalities employed as they cover femicide. Indeed, Denise Thompson (2001:25) highlights that feminism is also a look at how male dominance creates those myths Meyers (1997), Gius and Lalli (2014) illustrate in their research works on media and violence against women.

Radical feminism seeks an active role of the media by demanding them a radical change in the way a female issue is reported. Therefore, the adoption of radical feminism is motivated by its strong commitment to unpack the patriarchal system through several angles of analysis, although the news media field is a bit neglected. This study wants to be a spin to radical feminist scholars to dive deeper into this research focus not only through the tools of the protest and sit-in, but also through their academic work. The urgency to have a more exhaustive theoretical understanding of men and male power requests to include another theoretical framework which together with radical feminism will enrich the academic dialogue in this project.

Analysing the man: hegemony, toxic masculinity, and violence

Van Zoonen (1994) urges the media scholars to dedicate more attention to how masculinities are constructed within the media, and to thoroughly question whether their absence as research focus might be a way to keep the dominant discourses about men unchallenged. Masculinity studies are useful in unveiling the discourses on boys and men, especially for this project. Mimi Schippers (2007) defines masculinity as a set of practices and characteristics shaping what it is masculine in opposition to what is feminine. She also addresses the relevance of

the sociocultural and economic changes and their impact on the construction of the symbolic meaning of being masculine and feminine. Nonetheless, she warns that these changes do not affect at all the power relations which remain in favour of the men.

Raewyn Connell sets a benchmark in the masculinity studies when she introduced the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" (2005:77). She illustrates with this theorisation that not all masculinities are equal and there are some, such as hegemonic masculinities that dominates others, e.g. the homosexual masculinity or the one clustering low-class men. Always according to Connell (2003), in the contemporary neo-liberal order, the hegemonic masculinity model is the businessman, the successful male running political institutions and enterprises.

Also, Robert Hanke gives his own definition of hegemonic masculinity as "a social ascendancy of a particular version or model of masculinity that, operating on the terrain of the 'common sense' and conventional morality, defines what it means to be a man" (1990:232). The two presented definitions on hegemonic masculinity do not exclude each other, rather they complete each other. They provide a critical stance to the social, institutional and cultural elements legitimising men as the hegemonic social category through a consensus-based approach. Following this critical stance, the hegemonic masculinity is developed in a community wherein both men and women accept this through regular social practices and models of masculinity (and femininity).

From a critical stance, Jeff Hearn (2004; 2012) argues that rather than debating on an agreed conceptualization of what hegemonic masculinity is, the focus should be on the hegemony of men, reflecting on all the social and economic dynamics favouring the legitimization of the dominant positions of heterosexual men over women. Following this reflection, Hearn (2012) urges critical masculinity studies to open a more in depth- conversation on violence of men against intimate female partners, a research focus which has been for too long poorly addressed favouring more general studies on the masculinity and violence in sports or during wartime. Seeing intimate physical violence as the extreme exercise of the hegemony of men in gender relations, this research project replies to Hearn's invitation by employing masculinity studies to investigate how men's power might be problematised or not by the media when it comes to report male abuses against women.

In another recent contribution to the masculinity theoretical framework, Banet-Weiser and Miltner discuss toxic masculinity, "a (heterosexual) masculinity that is threatened by anything associated with femininity (whether that is pink yogurt or emotions)" (2016:171). The interpretation of toxic masculinity recalls the 'old' one of hegemonic masculinity in problematizing its refusal of acknowledging that men and women are equal human beings with the same feelings, the same tastes and practices, and its pulling on the apotheosis of the "macho/ alfa man" reaffirming his emotional and physical superiority.

Overall, most of the masculinity studies dedicated attention to men by adopting various methodological designs with a particular eye to either the "White strong man" or the homosexual masculinities in the popular media genres. Talking about masculinity with/in the media, Robert Hanke (1990) scrutinises the role of the media in the reproduction and reinforcement of the ordinariness element of the male violence within the popular genres and he observes how media- especially the mainstream ones- are imbued with patriarchal features which grant constant updated profiles of dominance. In a more straightforward approach, Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016) criticise the popular mass media to have spread popular misogyny with the normalization of the rape culture or the perpetuations of mediatic scenarios wherein women are evidently objectified and vilified by men.

What else lacks in the masculinity studies within media is a major attention to the news coverage of the ordinary man who commits an act of violence against an intimate female partner. This study claims that the examination of mainstream news coverage of femicide and its construction of the murderer will benefit the masculinity studies in understanding which discursive pieces put together the identification of a man, making him deserving or undeserving the empathy despite the crime committed. Also, this study intends to contribute to address the gap in the masculinity and media field by supplying analytical and empirical knowledge on the importance of embracing critical masculinity studies- and not only feminist approaches- when it comes to scrutinise violence against women and its perpetrators.

Towards the analysis of the news coverage of femicide: journalism ethics versus feminist ethics

Since the data analysed are coming from journalistic pieces, it is imperative to dedicate a last theoretical reflection to the debate around ethics. Journalism ethics calls for the responsibility to inform people about what is happening in the world. Journalists appeal to values of objectivity and neutrality when they operate on the field. Yet, when it comes to news such as the coverage of an act of violence against women, are neutrality and objectivity still applicable? In the analysis of the main strands of journalism approaches, Ward points out exactly that the civic engagement with sensitive issues struggles with the rules of sticking to the objective reality. The result is that "today, many journalists see themselves as some combination of informer, interpreter and advocate" (2009:299).

Feminist ethics refuses the traditional journalism ethics taught since the birth of this profession. From radical to post-colonialist activists, they all agree that values like objectivity, rationality, neutrality are used by the male dominant group to hold their power in the political, social and cultural institutions to whom media belong to. Tong and Williams (2009) call this ethics 'a status-oriented feminist approach' as these different feminist groups strive for equality among the individuals. By applying a radical feminist perspective in the media, what we expect in a news article about a violent act against a woman is an ethics of engagement with the story. This means to go beyond the mere news reporting and the statistics about crimes in a city, to propose ethical ways of acting to solve the issue, to care about what is written (Ward, 2009). Following this logic, a feminist journalism ethics rejects claims of truths because of the embeddedness of the reporters within institutions which reinforce, justify and normalise cultural frameworks privileging men over women (McManus & Dorfman, 2005). However, Michael Ryan (2009) argues that journalists have to pursue objectivity in their job because it is the only way not to be manipulated by the powerful and therefore to present an absolutely transparent coverage of a certain event or issue. On one hand, Ryan's observations are valid, as a lack of objectivity might distort the perception of reality; on the other hand, the objectivity proposed by this scholar is more an ideal type than a real practice: journalists are individuals in a sociocultural context which they might support or resist. Hence, Ward (2008) urges journalists to pursue an ethical conduct in reporting, to consider the

historical roots wherein an issue is inserted and, more importantly, to be culturally aware of the discursive nuances of the text produced.

The present thesis will take a critical feminist ethical imperative to examine the textual and discursive elements present in the Italian mainstream press, bearing in mind the dialectic with the traditional journalism ethics and the feminist one as parameters for analysing the material.

The methodological design

In presenting the methodological design, this section will look at the philosophy and the shortcomings behind CDA as the chosen methodology of this project, followed up by a digression on material collection, sampling, and methods tools.

Text, Discourse, Social Practice: CDA as a mirror

CDA proposes itself to be an "explanatory critique" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999:33) of the power dynamics occurring in the communicative events. This is obtained by enlightening how a text can contribute to sustain or challenge existing social arrangements by prioritizing certain discourses over others, wrapping them in, what Fairclough called, 'order of discourse' (1995:55). The need to be critical departs from the awareness that powerful groups deploy certain discourses and exclude alternatives based on the truth claims they want to convey (Fairclough, 1995:54-56). In applying its critical stance towards a text, CDA sustains its validity claims with bringing into dialogue a variety of theories coming from several academic fields (ibid:17) which contribute to conceptually explain the empirical textual findings. In short, this study precisely undertakes to explain the power relations favouring a prevailing mediated framework wherein the Italian public sphere should cast the perpetrators of femicide.

 Fairclough asks in his book (1995:137): "Do the [media] constitute a substantive democratization, or do they primarily have a legitimizing role in respect of existing power relations?" This project unpacks the mediated representations of the perpetrators of femicide and discusses how these discursive frameworks may distort the social problematic of femicide, yet at the same time be the mirror of gender relations in Italy.

Framing the qualitative analysis: mainstream newspapers, material collection, sampling and methods

In this part of the methodological design, a description of newspapers under investigation, material collection, rationale of the sampling and qualitative methods will be discussed.

The Italian mainstream press: a look at the newspapers under investigation

The introductory chapter already mentioned the purpose of investigating the mainstream press coverage of femicide. The rationale behind the selection was based upon the data provided by the ADS (Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa), an organization which quantifies how many copies a newspaper sold and how many times it was read in both the digital and paper format in 2018[14]. The top-five most read newspapers are: *Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica, IlSole24Ore, La Gazzetta Dello Sport* and *La Stampa*. Among these top five most read journals, I have chosen *Corriere Della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, and *La Stampa* as daily general-interest newspapers covering what occurs in Italy as well as in the world. As *Il Sole24Ore*, (third most read) focuses primarily on financial, political-economics news, and *La Gazzetta Dello Sport* (fourth most read) writes and comments sport, without dedicating a proper section to crime news, I have left them out of my sample. Seeing CDA draws attention to the power dynamics behind the text production (Fairclough, 1995:20), it is important to clarify the ownership and the mission statement of each examined newspaper.

Corriere della Sera: the current ownership belongs to the RCS MediaGroup S.p.a., an international publishing multimedia group listed in the Italian Stock Exchange[15]. The newspaper's slogan is "the freedom of ideas" which is practised by giving voice to every social actor in the national and international scene and by reporting events following the traditional journalism ethics (BBC Monitoring, 2006). *Corriere Della Sera* created also a section called *La27esima Ora* ('*the 27th Hour*') wherein articles, columns, photo-reportages about violent against women and gender-related issues are clustered.

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[14] The ADS data have been consulted on the website: www.primaonline.it

[15] For further investigation on this business company, please review the content of its website: http://www.rcsmediagroup.it/en/.

La Repubblica: the current owner is the Italian media conglomerate GEDI Gruppo Editoriale S.p.A[16]. Since its foundation, *La Repubblica* is considered a leftist newspaper (ibid.), although it is getting more moderate compared to how it was in the beginning. Whereas *Corriere Della Sera* offered a more neutral stance at the socio-political issues, *La Repubblica* took stronger positions against actors such as Silvio Berlusconi or the Catholic Church or in favour of debated campaigns like the legalization of euthanasia or the abortion. Speaking about violence against women, this second newspaper has a thematic section entitled "Femicide" devoted to gather articles about this issue.

La Stampa: the current owner is the same as *La Repubblica*'s. After an agreement with the FIAT owners, the Agnelli family has been the head of the editing group for decades. Its historical roots and its ties with the entrepreneurial world make the tone of the news more neutral and centrist (ibid.), compliant with the journalism ethics previously discussed. Despite being a national daily newspaper, *La Stampa* devotes particular attention to what occurs in Turin and its region Piemonte, especially in the coverage of crime news.

Their news coverage of femicide as object of analysis will be an opportunity to compare the three newspapers and observe whether they adopt a similar or a different style in reporting this crime.

Data collection and sampling

To obtain the analytical sample, this project proceeded with the following steps:

1. I conducted a search for the amount of femicides in Italy in 2018, which gave 93 in total. The reasons why the 2018 was chosen as the sole year of investigation is because it marked the fifth anniversary of the law 119/2013 listing femicide as a crime in Italy and because it marked the beginning of the current government who is promoting the reform of the divorce and parental custody mentioned in the Italian context section. The list of the victims' names was extracted from the *Corriere Della Sera*'s section dedicated to the meticulous report of data, news, statistics about violence against women in the Italian context. The name of this section is called *La27esimaOra* (translated: *the 27th hour*) and it is run by

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[16] For further investigation on this business company, please review the content of its website: http://www.gedispa.it/it/nc.html.

journalists. A part of this section is called: *Oltre la violenza- la strage delle donne* (translated: Beyond the violence- the slaughter of the women) and it is here where the list of the women killed from 2012 to 2019 is located.

2. To countercheck the quantitative accuracy of this list, I checked the statistics provided by the research institute EURES[17], whose focus is centred around social and economic themes, but also around data about the types of homicides occurring in Italy. According to the data released in December 2018, around 120 women were murdered, of whom the 79.2% occurs in the familiar/intimate context at the centre of this current research project. Hence, the list provided by the *Corriere Della Sera*'s section resulted fairly in line with the statistics published by EURES.

3. Two sources were deployed to collect the 2018 news coverage of the 93 femicides: The first refers to the newspapers' digital archives which were accessed by opening the search browser present at the top corners of the newspapers' homepage. Due to the limitation of the articles number accessible (unless paying a weekly fee) in the case of *Corriere della Sera*'s archive and partially in the case of *La Stampa*'s as well, the software LexisNexis is another source for the data collection. This database enabled a full access to articles published both online and on the paper format, although it did contain very few articles by *La Repubblica,* which has a complete archive of both digital and paper articles within its website.

4. To search crime news concerning femicide, the following words were typed in the search engine: the victim's full name, the perpetrator's full name followed up by the word "omicidio = homicide" and the city/town wherein the crime occurred. Also, articles around the same femicide were suggested via hyperlink or put at the bottom of the articles under the voice "articles you might be interested in". Therefore, they were collected as part of the research material.

5. Throughout the year of 2018, 330 articles were written in total by the three newspapers under analysis. The collected material was listed in a new database elaborated for this specific project. The articles were

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[17] Accessed indirectly on March 15th, 2019, at the following link: https://tg24.sky.it/cronaca/photogallery/2018/11/23/violenza-sulle-donne-dati.html.

clustered under the month of publication- from January to December 2018-, newspaper, and under the victim's name with the intention of obtaining a clear order in time, space, and subject. Furthermore, each article was highlighted with a different colour in accordance to the genre of crime news it represented: editorial, follow-up, opinion column, report.

6. As this project is interested in comparing how three mainstream newspapers represented the perpetrators of femicide, I manually excluded femicide cases which were not covered by the three news outlets. To further narrow down the sample, the femicide cases which got a significant amount of coverage (a total amount varying between 8-18 articles across the three newspapers) were chosen as material for the empirical analysis. Six femicide cases were selected from a timeframe going from January to June; the rationale behind the choice of this timeframe was that this period registered the peak of femicide cases in Italy (54 out of the 93 in total).

7. This sampling process brought a total of 80 articles consisting of reports, opinions, follow-up pieces. The choice of deconstructing different genres whose purposes are different (informing, diving deep into the crime's background and aftermaths, opinion forming) is to have a holistic view of the representations of men responsible of femicide, as well as to compare eventual changes in the representations among genres.

The analytical tools

This project selected a group of analytical tools which have the function of 'let the text talk' and its representations of perpetrators of femicide be interpreted. Fairclough (1992) puts particular emphasis on the linguistic analysis as part of the discourse analysis departing from the assumption that language is itself socially constructed and grounded in a determined context. Hence, the present textual analysis will look at: *words*, *figures of speech*, *syntax;* the whole assembling conveys a specific storytelling line about a subject topic (Richardson, 2007:46-48).

Following that, another analytical step is the intertextual analysis which interprets the merging of genres, voices (texts) and discourses in a communicative event, a hybridization typical of news products in daily general-interest newspapers (Fairclough, 1992). Seeing CDA as an interpretative and a constructionist

approach, one of its shortcomings is to understand the identification processes (ibid:103-105). Embarking in the unveiling of the representations of men in an extreme context like femicide, this project looks at how the journalists and the voices reported in the articles identify these subjects.

The other analytical tool this project makes use of, is thematic coding. The choice of adopting a second qualitative method is aimed at strengthening the validity of the CDA findings through making a comparison with the results achieved during the coding. Pat Bazeley provides guidelines (2013, 125-134, 190-195) for the coding process to obtain the themes connected to the representation of men, which will be then analysed with the support of the linguistic and semantic analysis. First, I read the 80 articles and from them I extracted descriptive codes as I was working on the text during the CDA, highlighting words and sentences concerning the man responsible of femicide. Following up, analytical codes were individualised which- combined with a reading of the aims and objectives and a confrontation with the CDA of the sample, conducted to a list of recurrent themes throughout the news articles.

In addition, the aims of this analysis are also to compare the three newspapers producing the content and to scrutinize similarities and/or differences in the journalism reporting. The rationale behind this comparison is to sharpen the observations around the research topic and to keep questioning the data (ibid.:255) about the mediation of men within a femicide context.

Analysis of the findings

The qualitative analysis on the 80 articles designated for investigating the mediated representations of men provided valuable findings.

The first one emerges from the comparison among the three newspapers object of this study. The news coverage of femicide realised by *Corriere Della Sera, La Repubblica* and *La Stampa* revealed similar linguistic and discursive notes in their constructing and storytelling of the male perpetrators' profile. Indeed, the CDA showed that all the articles under scrutinization prevailed the combination of informative, sensationalist and also technical language to convey representations within the crime news.

Further, the joint use of CDA and coding process resulted in the frame of three main themes characterising how the mainstream Italian press represent the perpetrators of femicide: *"Meet the man"*, *"His drawing of death"*, and *"I would never hurt you"*. Each of them is going to be examined in the next paragraphs.

"Meet the man"

A due task of writing about a crime is to identify the subjects involved in the narrated event. All three newspapers invested sentences as well as detailed paragraphs to inform about who the man behind the femicide was. *"Meet the man"* is the first theme emerging from the qualitative analysis. It refers to all the standard information about his persona. The different accounts given about each man deserve a better description and framing. This is the reason why they have been clustered in the following descriptive categories: *"the man in the mirror", "he had a resume of all respect", "he and she".*

"The man in the mirror"
The introduction of the man before turning into a killer takes the traditional journalism path in the mainstream coverage of femicide: full name, age, birth-town and sometimes nationality if the person is not Italian, as in the case of Abdelmjid El Biti, portrayed as

> "a 50-years old man who has Moroccan origins" (*La Repubblica*, 9.06.18)[18].

Such data represent a sort of ethnographic map of the man, useful for demographic studies like the one conducted by Karadole (2012) on femicide in Italy in 2006. Indeed, it gives to the readers a standardised identity card of the killer, a proof of his existence in this world before entering the news feed. The basic information about the man as a persona are enriched with details about his personality and his everydayness expressed throughout evaluative comments, like the one *Corriere della Sera* wrote on Alessandro Garlaschi:

> "Shy character, his social profiles tell about a man at the constant search for money through business proposals of few euros, infinite sequences of online announces to

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[18] Original version: "un cinquantenne di origini marocchine"

sell bicycles, motorbike helmets, cheap jewels, mobile phones, and also short sub-letting of the house" (*Corriere della Sera,* 8.02.2018).[19]

This first sub-theme plays around the representation of the man as a human being, framed by his most essential identifying features. This is part of what Norman Fairclough calls "conversationalization" (1995:89), which is the modulation of the crime news discourse around private domain practices attributed to the news subject. Therefore, the result is to deliver a normalised and normalising profile of the man as part of an ordinary context (Hearn, 2004) wherein readers can mirror themselves.

"A resume of all respect"

The representation of the male perpetrators of femicide continues with a focus on their professional life. The report of the employment status came often in the media coverage of male criminals, as already illustrated by Carol Stabile (2004), to give another aspect of the killer's masculinity through the most common pattern 'man = worker'. The three newspapers use the man's job title to open their articles with sensationalist headlines, such as

"The live confession of the policeman" (*La Stampa.* 2.03.2018)[20].

A recurrent representation of the killer is to refer to his working life. For instance, Alessandro Garlaschi was identified in several articles of the three newspapers as "il tramviere = the tram driver". The reliance on the professional aspect of the killer is part of what Raewyn Connell (2003) and Mia Consalvo (2003) casted as an affirmation of a masculinity which becomes hegemonic through the work as process of socialization. It is that legitimization of the man's dominance through the economic benefit and the social admiration received in highlighting the man's successful story. This is apparent in the portrayal of Fausto Filippone, the manager who killed his wife and daughter, before he killed himself. *La Repubblica* outlined that

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[19] Original version: "Personaggio schivo, i suoi profili social raccontano di un uomo alla continua ricerca di soldi con proposte di affari da pochi euro, sequenze infinite di annunci online per la vendita di biciclette, caschi da moto, bigiotteria, telefonini, e anche brevi subaffitti della casa"

[20] Original version: La confessione in diretta del carabiniere.

> (He) had a resume of all respect, and he graduated at the Ca' Foscari University in Venice. He was also member of a charity association (*La Repubblica*, 21.05.2018)[21].

whereas *Corriere Della Sera* referred at him as "manager of the Brioni firm"[22] (23.05.2018) throughout the news coverage of this femicide and suicide case. It is the mediated affirmation of the male breadwinner in Italian family illustrated by the study of Menniti and Demurtas (2012). Although the man is responsible for the assassination of an intimate person, he is presented in his socio-economic contingency (Chambers, 2005) clustered in his successes at work.

This kind of representational tool is functional to present the man as part of a society, as a person contributing to the economy of the country, but also as a man with struggles every reader can imagine, perhaps even relate to.

"He and She"

The concluding part of the first theme rotates around the relationship between the subjects who are part of a femicide: the perpetrator and the victim(s). It is revealed that across the investigated articles the perpetrators are identified as "father", "friend", "boyfriend", "husband", "ex-husband". Whereas the other two sections played on the everyday and partially on the economic discourse, the identification of the man in relation of their victim was played around the relational discourse with a combination of emotional and informative language.

For instance, in describing the relationship between Manuel Buzzini and her girlfriend Sara Luciani, *Corriere Della Sera* said that

> [they] built a love relationship turned almost into a shell to protect Sara from her fragilities (*Corriere Della Sera*, 11.06.2018)[23].

Chiara Gius and Pina Lalli (2014) already analysed in depth the love as the framework in the news coverage of femicide in Italy, however here the affective

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[21] Original version: Aveva un curriculum di tutto rispetto, e si era laureato all'università Ca' Foscari di Venezia. Era anche volontario del Banco alimentare.

[22] Original version: manager della Brioni.

[23] Original version: costruito un rapporto d'amore diventato quasi un guscio per proteggere Sara dalle sue fragilità.

sphere was functional to representing the man as a social agent in an intimate relation. The male subject who perceives that his ties to the partner are still intact- as in the case mentioned above- or crumbling down due to an incoming separation which needs just to be formalised. In the reportage about how Luigi Capasso killed the two daughters and almost killed the wife, *La Stampa* reported in the form of a direct quote what he said to the wife from whom he was about to get divorced:

> "Give me the chance to get close to the girls [referring to the two daughters]" (*La Stampa*, 1.03.2018)[24].

This mediated representation plays around what Schippers (2007) already observed: a negotiation of the man and his idea of dominant position within the powerful shifts in the familiar or intimate dynamics which require a reconstruction of his power through the exercise of violence, as the next theme will in detail demonstrate.

"His drawing of death"

The next thematic section sheds a light on the man into the femicide dynamics respecting the accuracy requested by the traditional journalism ethics (Ward, 2009). In reporting a crime such as the one here presented, the news outlets embark in reconstructing the time-space frame wherein it occurred, the subjects involved, the extreme outcomes. The emergence and sometimes even indulgence on the destructive masculinity is apparent in all the investigated news crime accounts which insisted on a storytelling with a particular care of the violent behaviour of the man.

In this thematic section, the analysis will be split into three sub-themes: *"It was known to be an aggressive man", "He gave her a kiss and threw her off the bridge", "I made a trouble: I have a dead girl at home"*.

"It was known to be an aggressive man"
In the section about the representation of the man in relation to the victim-to-be was discussed in the domain of the emotional but also intimate discourse. This present section bridges the identification of the man as "father/partner/friend"

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[24] Original version: "Dammi la possibilità di avvicinarmi alle bambine"

with the one of the aggressive men towards the murdered women-to-be. The portrayal of previous episodes of aggressivity gives the context wherein the murder is developed, an aspect Richards and her fellow colleagues (2013) encourage the media to pursue in framing femicide-suicide cases.

Every account concerning the pre-femicide violent behaviours were expressed via indirect or direct quotes of statements made by man's or victim's relatives or friends. Their language is descriptive, colloquial, but also loaded with immediate reactions and comments, performing that immediacy and liveness important to the news media (Gill, 2007:133).

For instance, *La Stampa* gave voice to the lawyer of a woman whose daughters were killed by her husband and father of the two victims, Luigi Capasso:

> "A father-boss. [...] he controlled the wife as if she was his property" (*La Stampa*, 2.03.2018)[25].

From a masculinities studies perspective, this is an example of toxic masculinity illustrated by Banet-Weiser and Miltner (2016): the man turning aggressive in the exact moment he does not dominate over the household, embracing that culture of possession contingent to the patriarchal structure radical feminism vehemently stands against (Mackinnon, 1989:149). Also, journalists commented the violence pre-femicide, loosening up the standards of neutrality and objective reporting. For instance, *La Stampa* described Luigi Capasso by outlining his refusal to lose power over his family:

> Luigi could not accept to be outside the house, to not have the control anymore (*La Stampa,*1.03.2018)[26].

However, in the newspapers there is never a mention of how the violence embraced by men derives from the Italian patriarchal structure which normalises the male exercise of any sort of violent tools to prevail in the private and the public scene (Connell, 2005). In sum, in the news outlets analysed, but especially in the follow-up articles, the attention to the crime's background-imbued with

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[25] Original version: <<Un padre-padrone. [...] sorvegliava la moglie come se fosse una sua proprietà>>.

[26] Original version: Luigi non riusciva ad accettare di essere fuori casa, di non avere più il controllo.

denounces of stalking, witnessing of physical mistreatments and psychological humiliations- were described. The purpose is to somehow prepare the public with what comes next, but also of communicating a sort of expectations of an extreme conclusion in the case of violent relationships.

"He kissed her and then he threw her off the bridge"[27]

In the previous section, the man was portrayed in his non-mortal aggressivity against the woman, here the man is identified as the killer in action, accomplishing his destructive plan. At a first glance, the reconstruction of the femicide dynamics and the discourse analysis revealed what Marian Meyers calls "over-completeness" (1994:52), which means the presence of irrelevant details in the mediated illustration of the man's agency.

An example is given by the news coverage done by the three newspapers on Fausto Filippone who first killed his wife and then their daughter, throwing her away off a bridge, before killing himself. *Corriere Della Sera* wrote:

> [he] killed himself on the highway bridge, after having thrown down few hours earlier Ludovica as well, the 10-old daughter whom the father had been holding her hand along the highway, then into his arms, sit on the edge of the guard-rail. (*Corriere Della Sera*, 22.05.2018)[28].

and *La Stampa* said that

> the father sets her [the daughter] free in the emptiness (*La Stampa*, 23.05.2018)[29].

Was it necessary to indulge on the 'fatherly behaviour' the killer assumed before brutally killing the daughter? Furthermore, the usage of the verb "liberare qualcuno nel vuoto = set someone free in the emptiness" makes think about a positive action, a liberating act, rather than an action framed in a femicide context. The image emerging from these two quotes is a negotiation between the fatherly

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[27] Original version: "Le ha dato un bacio e l'ha lanciata dal ponte" (*Corriere della Sera*, 24.05.2018).

[28] Original version: si è suicidato dal viadotto Alento sull'A 14, dopo aver lanciato nel vuoto poche ore prima anche Ludovica, la figlia di 10 anni che il papà aveva tenuto mano nella mano sul ciglio dell'autostrada e poi in braccio, seduto sul guard-rail.

[29] Original version: il padre la libera nel vuoto

figure and the killer one, which gives a confusing representation of his responsibilities.

A second element of this over-completeness is given by what Cynthia Carter (1998, in: Carter et al., 1998) conceptualises as a more explicit and lurid language in illustrating how the man committed the homicide, concentrating on how many stabs or shots were necessary to kill his victim(s), which part of the victim's body he punched, how he moved along the crime scene.

It can be concluded for this part of the analysis that in the news repertoire of reconstructing the man's mortal actions, two points emerge: the first one is a negotiation between the man maintaining intimate gestures and the man as a ferocious killer. The second one is a long insistence on his homicidal agency, relying also on the official discourse on the femicide dynamics.

"I made a trouble: I have a dead girl at home"

The final part of this theme identifies the man in the aftermath of his drawing of death. In the femicide cases analysed, four out of the six perpetrators committed suicide, whereas the (alive) rest of them is under arrest with the accusation of 'omicidio volontario = voluntary homicide'. The news articles gave voice to all of them, reporting in direct quotes their declarations in front of the judges, like Alessadro Garlaschi's words mentioned by *La Stampa*:

> [...] but I "turned the knife", which she had in her hand, against her "and I hit her at the stomach" (*La Stampa*, 9.02.2018)[30].

Also the suicidal killer gained voice in the news outlets under examination, always in the name of what Marian Meyers calls "the professional imperatives" of reporting what occurred and its developments (1997:22), but also with the intention of keeping the reader's attention high on the criminal case by feeding him/her with insights into the criminal's mind (Katz, 1987).

For instance, the newspapers mentioned the goodbye notes that Pasquale Vitiello wrote before killing his wife Immacolata and committing suicide:

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[30] Original version: ma io "ho rigirato il coltello" che aveva in mano contro di lei "l'ho colpita allo stomaco".

And even his imaginary final dialogue with the daughter. "I am proud of you" he writes to her "I will look at you from the sky" (*Corriere Della Sera*, 21.03.2018)[31].

Again, the newspapers conveyed the dualistic image of the man devoting attention to his daughter, and the man who decides to reaffirm his own sense of justice by punishing with death his wife. This repetition reflects a continuous process of empathic humanization of the killer, imbued with emotional language to soften the man's status of criminal (Meyers, 1994). Hence, Pasquale Vitiello was surely a killer, but the mainstream press reminded that he held a conventional social role in quality of father, conveying a masculinity which is not problematised for its destructivity, rather was constructed around the traditional acceptable patriarchal roles (Kivel & Johnson, 2009).

Seeing the crime as an event which becomes of public domain through the mediation process, the scrutinised newspapers relied again on the official and public discourse with the purpose of drawing upon beliefs, evaluations, positioning of the femicide subjects within the context of reference (Fairclough, 1995:204). In commenting the femicide- suicide of Laura and her boyfriend Manuel, a neighbour of theirs said to *Corriere Della Sera*

"They have been together since the beginning of the year. They were very united, he could have never killed her" (*Corriere Della Sera*, 11.06.2018)[32].

whereas *La Repubblica* reported in direct quote what the autopsy documentation declared on this killer- suicidal man

The autopsy: "He is dead by hanging himself" (*La Repubblica*, 12.06.2018)[33].

As already emerged in the study on femicide-suicide in the media done by Richards and her colleagues (2013), the news outlets make broad use of the official and unofficial sources to, on one hand, spin the objective construction of the killer given by the official discourse with its "categorically modalised statements"

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[31] Original version: E pure un suo immaginario dialogo finale con la figlia. «Sono fiero di te», le scrive, «Ti guarderò dal cielo».

[32] Original version: «Stavano insieme da inizio anno. Erano molto uniti, non avrebbe mai potuto ucciderla».

[33] Original version: L'autopsia: "Lui è morto impiccato".

(Fairclough, 1995:162). On the other hand, the unofficial voices offer the possibility to give immediate and far-to-be neutral constructions of the man-either depicting him as an unlikely killer, either as a fully responsible for his crimes. The latter aspect brings to the surface what Katz (1987) elaborates on in the making of a crime news: the necessity to make sense of the criminal's behaviour, the search for the right words to describe an action which does not belong to the ordinary course of the daily life.

In sum, the representations emerging in this subsection reflect both the self-affirmation of the man as an active agent who explains his own actions in terms of deciding for his victim's and his own destiny and the public and/or official identification of the man: from free subject to under-arrest subject, from man in a love relationship to a man killing the women he said to love.

"I would never hurt you"

The last theme emerged from the connection of the CDA and the coding process is another negotiation of the man's identification construction. This time, the discursive practices within the crime news order rotate around the psychic, lucid and emotional system of knowledge. By doing so, the man is evaluated according to his capacity of killing consciously or unconsciously due to a mental or emotional problem. This is a traditional attempt in the news coverage of femicide in trying to explain why and how such an extreme conclusion of a friendship or intimate relation between a man and a woman occurred (Meyers, 1994; Gius & Lalli, 2014).

Like for the other themes, this one was divided into three sub-sections: *"A sudden explosion of madness", "He planned everything", "An emotional storm"*.

"A sudden explosion of madness"[34]

The qualitative analysis detected the recurrent use of the psychiatric discourse to label the femicide as 'follia = madness' of the man. The examined literature revealed how the mainstream media often go back to psychiatric concepts, i.e. alienation, OCD, pathological disturbs to portray the male perpetrators of extreme crimes (Park et al., 2012).

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[34] Original version: "Un'improvvisa esplosione di follia" (*Corriere Della Sera*, 22.05.2018).

La Repubblica used the official discourse to reinforce the representation of Luigi Capasso as a mentally unstable man:

> Vitigliano [provincial commander of the carabinieri] defined Capasso "in a status of strong agitation and not perfectly lucid in his reasoning in this moment" (*La Repubblica*, 28.02.2018)[35].

The use of the killer's mental health in the news coverage of femicide constitutes an explanation as well as an excuse for his action. As observed by Katz (1987), in representing the man as a pathological case, the media dehumanise the man, taking away his crime from the societal roots which are favouring the manifestation of femicide- the patriarchal system. In calling the killer a "mostro = monster" as Alessandro Garlaschi was addressed by his neighbours during his arrest (*La Stampa*, 8.02.2018), the result is a refusal to identify the killer as a man which with this ultimate extreme gesture imposed his control over the woman. A monster is something 'extraordinary', meaning that it is beyond our ordinary practices and our capacity of explaining what he did by framing the crime within our socio-cultural reality.

"He planned everything"

An interesting result from the analysis was the representation of the 'lucid man' who planned in detail the femicide and then tried to hide his tracks. This representation enters in apparent contradiction with the image of the 'mad man' acting against his victim due to his psychiatric pathologies. As emerged in the thematic section *"his drawing of death"*, the three newspapers framed the assessment of the man's lucidity- as well as of his insanity- through the official sources of the crime news.

La Repubblica quoted the document confirming the arrest of Abdelmjid El Biti, accused of femicide and corpse-vanishing. This official paper explained that:

> "The kid [daughter of the couple] told that in the evening the father warned her to be careful because the mother could go somewhere and leave them alone, thing

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[35] Original version: Vitagliano aveva definito Capasso "in stato di forte agitazione e non perfettamente limpido nel suo ragionare in questo momento".

which makes apparent how the crime was premeditated" (*La Repubblica*, 9.06.2018)[36].

The identification of the killer as a lucid actor in accomplishing his femicide plan recalls the definition that Jane Caputi (1989) makes on femicide, as the extreme exercise of the patriarchal power over the women. However, the media discourse on lucidity was not framed within a critique of the patriarchal system favouring the conditions for a man to decide whether his partner/daughter/friend has the right to live or to die. The lucid man was indeed negotiated with the 'mad man', expressing the message that although the killer had planned to commit a femicide, his mind was unstable during the execution of the plan.

For instance, in commenting the double femicide committed by the policemen Luigi Capasso, *Corriere Della Sera* opened a follow-up article said that

> a mix of premeditation and loss of his mind seems to have armed the hand of Luigi Capasso (*Corriere Della Sera*, 3.03.2018)[37].

This negotiation between the mad and the lucid killer is the result of the editorial choices to not expose themselves when it comes to the coverage of such extreme and at the same time delicate cases. Norman Fairclough (1995: 84) explains how these woven contrasting voices, ordered by the dominant media discourse, give the text heterogeneity but also a direction by prioritizing certain voices rather than others, as in the man's madness-lucidity argumentation. The newspapers' claim for objectivity returns in this section to communicate that yes, the man was both lucid and insane at the same time, because this is the only answer thinkable for such a crime.

"The emotional storm"

The previous two parts dealt with the man's psyche to identify him into the patterns of insanity-lucidity. This section investigates the representations of the man in the midst of his emotions. Interestingly, emotions are represented in what

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[36] Original version: "E la bambina quella sera ha riferito che il padre l'aveva avvertita di stare attenta perché la madre poteva andare da qualche parte e lasciarli a casa da soli, cosa che rende manifesto come il gesto sia stato premeditato".

[37] Original version: Un misto di premeditazione e perdita di senno sembra aver armato la mano di Luigi Capasso

the patriarchal system calls 'feminine -emotional behaviour'. In their hegemonic masculinity, emotions are dismantled to the physicality and control of the situation and replaced with a range of sentiments (Connell, 2005). Previously it emerged the manifestation of the toxic masculinity through its physical and aggressive expression of power over the woman, but here, the man is caught in his "emotional storm", to use the justification given by an Italian judge in a sentence on femicide (Pianingiani, 2019).

La Stampa said about Pasquale Vitiello's goodbye notes:

> The majority [of his goodbye notes] addresses the daughter for whom he has words of affection and dedication; other letters address the parents and a friend to whom he reveals his condition of rejected man. The rage and hatred against Imma took over. (*La Stampa*, 20.03.2018)[38].

There is the subtle yet visible idea behind these mediated representations of the killer under his emotional storm: a personalization and humanization of the crime. As previous studies on mainstream news and femicide acknowledged (Meyers, 1997; Gius & Lalli, 2014), the news media reduce a complex and socio-cultural issue like femicide within the storytelling of the man's personal feelings during the preparation and execution of femicide.

In sum, if Gius and Lalli (2014) identified love as the leading feeling framing the news coverage of femicide in Italy, the investigated sample of this study showed the perpetrators of femicide as enraged, jealous and even caring about his victims. Luigi Capasso said to one of her kids: "Non ti farei mai del male = I would never hurt you" (*Corriere Della Sera*, 2.03.2018). Alessandro Garlaschi wrote to Jessica: "Sei dentro il mio cuore = You are in my heart" (*Corriere Della Sera*, 10.02.2018). The representations of these men add more personal nuances to the femicide. What lacked from the media side was to do what Susanne Kappeler recommended (1990): position this personal at a political level to structure a critique of the patriarchal gender relations which normalise practices of male violence against women culminating with the misogynist belief that it is legit to kill a woman if she rejects his control masked by a sentiment.

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[38] Original version: La maggior parte è indirizzata alla figlia per la quale Vitiello spende parole di affetto e dedizione; altre lettere sono rivolte ai genitori e a un amico a cui sfoga la sua condizione di uomo respinto. La rabbia e l'odio nei confronti di Imma hanno avuto il sopravvento.

Discussion

By synthesizing these themes, it is now possible to conduct a critical reflection on the role of the Italian mainstream press in tackling femicide. Finally, these sections would like to propose how to improve the reporting quality of femicide with the aim of raising that awareness and that social responsibility Susanne Kappeler refers, when she talks about measures to deploy against the patriarchal order (1990).

The duty of informing

Roger Silverstone (2007) attributes to media the responsible role for reporting what is happening in the world so that people can get an exhaustive knowledge of the processes, institutions and people involved, reasons and logics behind an event. In the news coverage of the femicide in Italy, this exhaustive knowledge was translated by the mainstream press into a detailed description of how the man killed his victim(s), information accessed through the conventional sources of policemen, lawyers, common witnesses and acquaintances of the victim and the killer. However, those descriptions lose the critical and crucial focus on why femicide is an alarm of a deeper and broader phenomenon: violence against women.

This is the reason why this project is aligned with the criticisms addressing the principle of objectivity supported by the traditional journalism ethics. Further, the analysis pointed out bluntly that this call for an accurate reporting failed to play that normative role of addressing the Italian citizens and problematising those values and practices cultivating patriarchy and that hegemonic masculinity favouring logics of masculine violence and dominance. It lacked in this scrutinised news coverage what Sowards and Renegar call "a process wherein you become critically aware of your culture" (2004). Each femicide was treated as a single event, disconnected from the others and the national context, except in those 2-3 articles aimed at releasing quantitative data or statistics on the recurrence of this crime during the first trimester, or after six months of the year 2018.

This study asserts that news media can exercise a better normative role in saying more about the wider social and cultural context (Fairclough, 1995:50-52), criticising for instance the primary and secondary education system in Italy which

impose stereotypes both on men and women, i.e. the attribution of violence as a natural feature of the man. Turning this evaluation into practice, the suggestion to the mainstream press is to make more connections among the femicide occurring throughout the months, but not to hand in a number at the end of the year, which is something that other institutions can provide with. The press has the normative capacity of diffusing a more engaging message against the ongoing conservative Italian gender relations and that model of destructive masculinity, embraced by the current political leaders at the Italian government, constructing the perpetrator of femicide.

Call him by his name

Carol Stabile claims that journalism objectivity is androcentric (2004) based on the minimalistic representations that reporters gave to a male white-collar criminal in comparison to a more blaming-oriented coverage of a female criminal. In this study, the contrary was found. Representations of male perpetrators of femicide were full of details: from his professional and personal life until his killing modalities. Although the journalism ethics calls for a fair offer of 'both sides of the story', the broad attention given to the everydayness of the man does not add a critical value to the story. The employment status, the trips done with the family that where he is going to murder a few weeks later, the gifts given to the girl he is going to butcher, are meaningless elements if not included in a wider analysis of the Italian patriarchal institutions (i.e. family, workplace, school) and their capacity to construct power relations in favour of the man as social category (O'Neill, 2015).

Seeing news as a media product which is "made upon choices" (Fairclough, 1995:202), the studied sample followed a process of selecting what is important for the dominant patriarchal system in Italy. The mediated construction of the perpetrator's image urges a clearer identification process which passes through calling the man by his real name: a killer, an example of that hegemonic masculinity which imposes a destructive power via a criminal patriarchal act. By doing so, the text will assume less a conversational tone and more an active role in positioning the man within the social practice and meaning of femicide.

He is not depressed neither impulsive: explaining a patriarchal category

Arguing that crime news contributes to create what Grabe and her colleagues conceive as a playground for morality (2006), the illustrated sample delivered representations which nourish an already heard repertoire of explanatory reasons of why the man decided to commit a femicide.

By constructing the man as a subject acting out of his mind or in the midst of an emotional breakdown, the news media performed a simplification procedure: they arranged the identification process within stock characters which belong to the traditional crime news format (Meyers, 1997:19- 20). The simplification involves the use of the pathological imaginary reinforced by the voice of criminal psychology experts and investigators, as well as the use of the emotional discourse in the journalist's comments or in the interviews to who knew the femicide subjects. The Italian mainstream news media continued to reproduce powerful myths which serve to hide those social and cultural dimensions prompting men to feel legitimised to dominate women. In an attempt to feed the public sphere with immediate accounts of the crime, the scrutinised news media renounced to challenge the Italian system of conservative knowledge on its product of hegemonic and destructive masculinity.

The argumentation of this section is that news media need to be more consistent with the delicate topic they are treating: the findings illustrated how the intertextuality within each article circumnavigates the man's embodiment of the Italian patriarchal values and practices within their personal relations. By presenting different voices interwoven in single communicative events, the news media attempted to apply impartiality and objectivity in their products, but- de facto- they ended up in privileging options which do not attack the hegemonic social system they are part of (Fairclough, 1995:86).

Having said that, mainstream media can learn from this lack of focus by finding other texts to include in their gendered crime reporting. Gillespie and her colleagues (2013) suggest the usage of different sources in the femicide and/or femicide/suicide reporting to open a more realistic debate on such phenomenon. These sources include anti-violence centres spokespeople, domestic violence experts, feminist groups and scholars. Employing on regular basis their voices in the news coverage of femicide can be valuable contributions to raise a public

advocacy for putting back the femicide and the violence against women into the public agenda.

Concluding remarks

Norman Fairclough (1995:204) perceives news as a social action embedded within a sociocultural context. In this research journey, the scope was to unpack the discourses shaping the representations of the perpetrators of femicide with a retrospective on how these discourses reflect the current gender relations in Italy, and to reflect on how the mainstream press cope with such an extreme topic.

The decision of investigating the Italian top-three daily newspapers of general interest, rather than focusing on alternative media was motivated by the fact that they are the manifestation of the dominant system of knowledge and values. Therefore, this study contributes to reinforce the importance of examining mainstream journalism, focusing on questions of its mediated representations of men and its traditional ethics within the news coverage of femicide. In addressing these research points, a specific theoretical combination was chosen to analyse the male perpetrator of femicide. Indeed, the usage of both radical feminism and masculinity studies has never been experimented in the study field of media and journalism. The research focus on men within a femicide context demanded a theoretical approach which did not only expose the patriarchal nuances of reporting the crime, but also opened a more comprehensive analytical window on the mediation process of the man and the social category of hegemonic masculinity. Whether radical feminism gave strength to this project with its exhortation in making a woman's issue like femicide part of the political and social agenda, the critical theorizations around masculinity enhanced the importance of having an in-depth understanding of the social and cultural characteristics constructing the responsible of femicide and especially the discursive and fluid negotiations of his identification within the news media. The additional value of critical masculinity studies to this project is to recognise the man as part of a masculine category which must be the object of a mediated critical revision and representation. In connecting these two theories, the present project was able to set a conversation on the traditional journalism ethics, debating whether it necessitates an upgrade in terms of engagement and renounce the classic paradigms of professed neutrality.

In illustrating the research outcomes, the questions posed at the beginning of this study have been addressed to embark in a final discussion about how to approach critically the mainstream Italian press coverage of femicide. The first question looked for the representations of the men within the mainstream news coverage of femicide in Italy, whereas the second focused more analytically on the masculinity categories these representations embodied. The qualitative analysis of 80 articles across the three chosen newspapers conveyed precise answers. The first one is a construction of the perpetrator of femicide always negotiated among different identifications: the killer figure is combined with the fatherly figure; the aggressive and manipulative man is paired with the emotive man; the lucid planner goes together with the man acting under a psychiatric disease. By reflecting on these descriptive findings, the answer to the second question was given, which is based on hegemonic and toxic masculinity. These two correlated masculine categories emerged in the discursive practices insisting on the man's violent agency before and after the femicide as well as on his social position in quality of professional subject and his family role.

Bridging the first and second questions, the construction of the perpetrator of femicide failed to set a discussion about the man being part of the Italian hegemonic masculinity, supported by dominant patriarchal institutions and taught via primary and secondary process of socialization (Ruspini, 2009), which claims power through the use of discursive and non-discursive practices.

Through the examination of the Italian man responsible of femicide, this study also questioned how these representations shredded a light on certain dominant discourses reflecting the gender relations in Italy. The answers were found in the traditional family discourse developed in the news outlets to diffuse the male breadwinner practice or the '*pater familias*'[39] devoted to take care of every decision. Also, the psychological discourse absolved a role in the media outlets to convey the message that when the man shows rage and aggressive behaviours toward an intimate female person, he is going through some psychic issues or depression. Another dominant discourse is the public one used to reflect either the demonization and dehumanization of the violent man part of a relationship, either the belief that the man is still the white knight protecting and loving his woman.

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[39] This latin expression literally meaning 'father of a family' is used in the Italian language to express the authoritative figure embodied by the man within the family context.

The Italian mainstream media cannot continue to play the old cards of the 'happy family' and of the 'young tormented love'. They are called to treat each gender issue with giving salience to the past, present and future factors contributing to the reproduction of that issue. Only by contextualizing femicide within the social and political context, can the media exercise a democratic role in favouring a transparent dialogue on the phenomenon of femicide.

The apparent hypertextuality and multi-discursivity within the news sample led to finally think about the role of traditional journalism ethics in the crime news covering an extreme case such as femicide. This study highlighted how it is not enough to open news sections entirely focused on women's issues and femicide in order to take a normative stand against what lies behind the voluntary killing of intimate partners, daughters, girlfriends.

If media should be considered the lighthouse shedding a light on the problems going on in a country, it is crucial that they go over the impartial traditional role assumed so far in the coverage of femicide. After all, femicide is not a political issue until the public sphere- of whom media are big representatives and at the same time mobilizers- acknowledges it as such.

Therefore, this study wants to advocate for a more engaged journalism with the problematization of this criminal phenomenon, starting with a more engaging language. All three newspapers employed a vocabulary coming from official, colloquial, crime news texts which lacked concision and cohesion. The shortcoming of this intertextuality was a flat tone of the news coverage of femicide (Dahlgren, 1989): same repertoires, same lurid details, same sensationalism, same discursive practices in representing the event and its involved subjects. Based on these empirical observations, this project wants to suggest a more feminist vocabulary in tackling what is a result of patriarchy and its hegemonic destructive masculinity. By embarking in a more feminist elaboration of the Italian news coverage of femicide, it would be possible to convey less information about the femicide dynamics and more information about what in the society needs to change within institutions, laws, and education to combat the plague of violence against women and femicide.

Mainstream journalism cannot stop femicide from happening and this study does not ask for it. However, what it is requested from the mainstream newspapers is to be less afraid to "make more noise" when it comes to report this crime, to dare

to be truly objective and write that those men chose death to not lose their last element of power over their woman.

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Excellent MSc Dissertations 2019

This edited volume, Excellent MSc Dissertations 2019, is the forth in the series that brings a selection of five postgraduate dissertations, written by the students who undertook the MSc degree in Media and Communication at Lund University, in Sweden and graduated in June 2019. All five texts published in this edited volume were originally presented and evaluated as part of the final thesis exams in May 2019, in which they were awarded top grades. During the autumn of 2019, 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.

With this publication, we hope to inspire future students writing dissertations, and contribute to debates inside and outside of academia on media, communication and cultural studies. In particular, the work in this book asks us to critically reflect on media's role in challenging patriarchy and gender inequalities, as well as people's civic engagement and concern over democracy, political and environmental crises; and human's relationships with media, technology and AI. All of the issues brought up in this book make us think, question and understand ourselves within the socio-cultural, and mediated environment we live in.