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Author's index

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This letter presents a new mathematical index (Author's index; A_{index}) for comparison of authors/scholars. The index was a medal winner in ISEBA 2017; an annual international exhibition and competition for social sciences innovation in Malaysia.

Comparison of scholars is a need for performance appraisal in scientific communities. However, only a small number of indexes have been introduced by the scientific communities themselves. Almost all the introduced indexes (e.g., SCI, Hirsch's or h-index, Egghe's g-index, M-Quotient, Zhang's e-index, etc.) consider only citation impact of the authors' works. Very few indices consider the productivity of the authors. The A_{index} is among the first authorship metrics that attempts to measure citation impact of the author's publications together with his/her productivity. The A_{index} minimize the disadvantages of currently available indexes; therefore, making it a fairer tool for comparison of scholars.

As shown in equation 1, the A_{index} is based on the number of citations that an author received for his/her publications. Considering fairness and ethics of citation, the value of self-citation in this formula is lower. Different rank/level of journals is also considered in the formula, as the Q level of the journal in criteria in the A_{index}. Q could be based on current calculation of Scopus or Thomson Reuters (ISI) or any other indexing services. If a journal is among the first top quarter of the journals in the same field of publication, the Q will be the highest, 4. For the second quartered journal and the third quartered journals, Q will be 3 and 2 respectively. Finally, if the journal is in the last quarter, the Q can be 1. Mostly the quality ranking of the journal will be published the year following publication; for example, if you publish in 2016, the quality ranking of the journal for 2016 will be calculated in 2017. The better quality the ranking, the higher the Q – a factor that shows higher productivity for an author. Number of authors in a paper is another criterion for evaluating the productivity of the scholar. The fewer named team members on a paper, the higher the productivity of a scholar. Last, but not least, comes the period of publishing and academic working. A scholar with more publications in a shorter period of time is more productive.

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$$A_{index} = \int_{Y_0}^{Y_N} \frac{\left((\sum_N C - \frac{\sum_N SC}{2}) \times \sum_N Q\right)}{\frac{\sum_N A}{N}} Y \; dY \qquad (1)$$

Where:
Y: duration of calculation
Y_0: Starting year of the duration of calculation: for example, academic activity, or year of the first publication
Y_N: Ending year of the duration of calculation: for example, academic activity, or year of the last publication
C: citation
SC: Self citation
A: number of authors
N: Total number of publication
Q: Quality mark of the journal

The validity of the new index was examined by peers of the ISEBA 2017. Formula 2 is the modified A_{index} with considering the comments from fellow researchers participating in ISEBA 2017. The introduced modification considers the academic seniority of the authors; as publication output expectations are higher for senior authors. Now the index could be suggested to the scientific society, as a feasible, valid, and fair tool capable of quantifying authors'/scholars' performance.

$$A_{index} = \int_{Y_0}^{Y_N} \sqrt{\frac{\left((\sum_N C - \frac{\sum_N SC}{2}) \times \sum_N Q\right)}{\frac{\sum_N A}{N}} Y} \; dY \qquad (2)$$

Original Article

Digital Realism: a Dialectic Approach to Understanding Digital Media's Social Functions in View of Ethnic-Identity Related Online Activism

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Abstract: Apart from the evident attributes and tendencies of digital media that justify the social and politico-economic criticism of understanding their structure and relevant mechanisms, under certain circumstances they indeed show traits of effective online mobilisation for (sub)political participation. Two case studies are given to demonstrate the mobilisation potential within digital media in the context of ethnic identity-related (sub)political engagement, and to juxtapose such qualities with other patterns conditioned by large-scale politico-economic and international power-related structures and agendas. Such findings that confirm the understanding of digital media as platforms and applications for organic and uncompromised online participation and networking can support reclaiming digital media's optimist aspirations to be a public sphere. Herein a *via media* is proposed between digital optimism and digital pessimism in support of earlier nuanced approaches to the social functions of digital media, which indeed correctly recognised the limits of online environment as a hypothetical public sphere, thus can be referred to as digital realist.

Keywords: digital media; public sphere; internet; public sphere; social participation

Introduction

The debate around the social implications of digital media has become polarised between contradicting notions. Accordingly, digital media has recently been interpreted in the context of certain universalist digital optimistic visions anchored by a form of a hypothetical electronic agora: what is seen as a platform for communities of practice; (Shirky 2009) and/or a forum of unlimited self-expression (Ghoneim 2012) and/or a new public sphere (Benkler 2006; Castells 2009; Wellman 2011) due to its allegedly interactive, emancipatory, democratizing and empowering capacities. On the other hand, opposing views of digital pessimism hold that as digital media intersects other social, political, and economic factors, it becomes compromised as tendencies of information control and surveillance (i.e., Robins –

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Webster 1998) censorship and propaganda (Morozov 2011) and/or the politics/economy of digital capitalism (Schiller 1999; Aouragh 2012) can clearly be observed. The first approach, either out of naivety or negligence and/or other reasons, ignores various kinds of power realities Whilst the latter either falls in the trap of an academic paranoia or out of an excessive skepticism, underestimates their capacities for supporting certain grassroots movements, that later, in fact, turn out to be, or seem to be successful without serving, in essence, any “hidden agenda.”

Ever since my first forays into the contemporary discourses of digital media (Iványi 2015), I have considered these corresponding, antagonistic arguments reductive vis-à-vis the complex reality of digital media’s social implications. On the other hand, digital pessimistic and optimistic views otherwise seem to be valid to a certain degree, as both offer partial truth that needs to be captured and integrated.As this will be shown, a remarkable part of the surrounding discussion is articulated around whether or not digital media constitutes a/the new public sphere. I support balanced approaches (e.g., Habermas 2006; Neuman 2010; Papacharissi 2010; van Dijck 2012; Fuchs 2014), which I hereinafter call ‘digital realist’ *tout court*, in their efforts to examine and validate optimistic digital arguments about the hypothetical causal relationship between the cyberspace and community engagement. In this context, nothing more and nothing less is at stake, than an alternative public sphere (cf. Habermas, 1962), and this particular model of digital realism owes a great deal to the mentioned, nuanced and complex approaches for setting up an inspirational environment. In this spirit, I seek to identify the objective foundations or ultimate grounds of the social mobilising potential within digital media by focusing on two independent case studies and assessing whether such practices correspond to the existing views mentioned above. This paper at hand thus examines what I believe to be fundamental in understanding social dynamics of digital media, namely group activities without any direct links to politics/economics, such as the online dimension of a movement (practically: an online group on a social networking site) that aims to achieve the goal of bilingual language use in public areas of Southern Slovakia, and another group that intended to boycott a transnational brewing company. Both activities have become important online social fora in Hungary and its neighboring countries so certain conclusions can be drawn about the topic at hand. I specifically chose to tackle action that is expressly related to ethnic identity-related civic participation which constitutes political action in a way but is generally independent of large-scale politico-economic and international power-related structures and agendas. For the idea of focusing on online (sub)political action seems to me to offer the best hope of vindicating the mobilisation potential within digital media without overlooking the general validity of social and/or politico-economic criticism when discussing relevant social functions. Such identified potential can arguably challenge the existing cultural, social, and political realms of status quo by movements untied to power formations identified by digital pessimism (i.a. Morozov 2011; Aouragh 2012; Schiller 2014).

My thesis considers hereinafter the main existing models of digital optimism and digital pessimism and finds them wanting in view of recent experiences, at the same time develops and defends a novel ’digital realist’ model as an intellectual middle road. Thus, in view of its pursuit of balance, the present paper follows the intellectual traditions of earlier nuanced approaches, however, it provides a significantly different point of view and field of analysis. Some of these standpoints although draw important conclusions concerning the social functions of digital media, mostly do not attach explicit importance to the component of ethnic identity in their fields of vision.

In this spirit, this paper argues for recognizing digital media as being a viable tool for the expression of self-categorization-based (Tajfel & Turner 1986; McGuire 1988) ethnic identity (cf. McKinley et al., 2014) without being necessarily understood as cyberbalkanization (cf. Sunstein 2009) and for (sub-)political engagement without being subjected to political factors described by current rather pessimistic or sceptic discourses of censorship, oppression (Morozov 2011), digital capitalism (Schiller 1999) or ICT-imperialism and geopolitics (Aouragh 2012). All in all, this digital realist model at hand interprets digital media as a *limited public sphere* or public spherical (Neuman 2011; Cunningham 2001) and encourages further research whilst offers a *via media* between digital pessimism and optimism.

Nature of digital media and reminiscences of a new public sphere

Advocates of digital media tend to acknowledge these applications and services in question as a new surface, nay, a *condito sine qua non* for an alternative public sphere envisaged by Jürgen Habermas (1962). The intellectual source of such ideas springs from the *opus magnum* of Jürgen Habermas, namely the *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, even though the author himself could hardly have based his thesis on a back then "infant-aged" internet when introducing his thesis in question. Still, the normative notion deployed by Habermas that interprets the public sphere as "a society engaged in critical public debate" (1962: 52) has been projected onto the internet ever since.[1]

Digital optimism

Accordingly, all too often has it been assumed in this "post-Habermasian" tradition that internet *per se* liberates discussion and thus paves the way for egalitarianism and democracy (cf. Fuchs 2014: 57).

[1] Arguably a reconstructed vision of the original universalist Habermasian (1962) concept determines among other factors the intellectual environment in which digital positivism emerged. As a consequence, the social implications of digital media have been idealistically interpreted although Habermas himself later on discussed the nexus of the public sphere and deliberative politics in a nuanced way, while also pointing out that there are certain critical conditions for the applicability of the communication model of deliberative politics (Habermas, 2006). The original ideas elaborated by Jürgen Habermas and their reconstructed digital optimist heritage evoked significant criticism ever since for being unsatisfactory in terms of recognizing social inequality and being exclusive (Fraser, 1990; Calhoun, 1992; Warner, 2002). This paper does not aim to discover such supposed limits of the Habermasian public sphere. Rather, it focuses on the question in what terms can digital media be understood as the public sphere when at the same time, validity of some digital pessimist arguments also seems to be well-founded.

Parallel to post-Habermasian digital optimistic tendencies, social criticism gave rise to opposite views. Reinterpreting French postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault's (1979: 290) model of a panoptic (Bentham), sophisticated social surveillance (i.e., the power or ability of the state élite "to surveil, to invade the citizens' privacy, gives the state the power to confuse, coerce and control citizens") coauthors Kevin Robins and Frank Webster (1998) suggest that new communication and information technologies (i.e., digital media) give a new meaning to dissemination of power and control.

For instance, American media theorist Douglas Rushkoff (2002: 26–28) celebrated the online sphere's "ability to network human beings" which "is its very life's blood. It fosters communication, collaboration, sharing, helpfulness, and community… The ideas, information, and applications now launching on Web sites around the world capitalize on the transparency, usability, and accessibility that the internet was born to deliver."

Information technology of law professor Yochai Benkler (2006: 272) claims network "allows all citizens to change their relationship to the public sphere. They no longer need be consumers and passive spectators. They can become creators and primary subjects. It is in this sense that the Internet democratizes." Apparently, Benkler (2006: 213) juxtaposes such hypothetical qualities with the horizon of an already idealized public sphere: "the easy possibility of communicating effectively into the public sphere allows individuals to reorient themselves from passive readers and listeners to potential speakers and participants in a conversation."

American writer, consultant, and lecturer on the social and economic effects of Internet technologies Clay Shirky (2009: 190) follows this intellectual path when discussing digital media: "by lowering transaction costs, social tools provide a platform for communities of practice...Communities of practice are inherently cooperative, and are beautifully supported by social tools, because that is exactly the kind of community whose members can recruit one another or allow themselves to be found by interested searchers."

Spanish sociologist and information society expert Manuel Castells (2009: 229) goes one step further, and proclaims "networked movements of our time are largely based on the Internet," and Egyptian author Wael Ghonim (2012) applauded Facebook for having become a "means to express […] opinions, ambitions and dreams, without pressure from anyone" vis-a-vis the experience of the January 25 Revolution in Egypt.

A "doyen" of digital optimism, Canadian-American sociologist Barry Wellman (2011) also claims that use of "multiple means of communication […] affords "a more flexible, less bounded life for many." He goes on to claim "the internet revolution" as he refers to such a complex phenomenon, "has created communication capacities that have dwarfed those of the past [*namely that of traditional media*] […] The proliferation of the internet has facilitated the move to even more networked modes of connectivity." Connectivity insists public discussion, moreover deliberation, which supposed to provide a free vent for political participation.

Christian Fuchs (2014: 57) correctly states, what also can be our synopsis of digital optimism for now, that although different, what such contributions have in common is that they are philosophically idealistic interpretations or revisions of the Habermasian public sphere concept.

While this paper considers certain digital optimist arguments to be valid at the same time, it also should not overlook realities of geopolitical and/or sociopolitical factors (cf. Morozov, 2011, Aouragh, 2012), i.e., patterns of surveillance, censorship, and a self-congratulatory agenda of digital capitalism to be touched upon below.

Digital pessimism

A critical stance towards digital optimism is based on notions and allegations of cyber-sectarianism (Sunstein, 2002) which is the most important for our current thesis, but also intertwinement of corporate complaisance (Aouragh, 2012) and traits of censorship (Nashif, 2017), panopticity, i.e., mass surveillance and geopolitical implications (Morozov, 2011, Robins and Webster, 1998) have been observed. The commodification of the Internet (Schiller, 1999) and transnational collaboration between the state and major companies

(Iványi, 2017) and other various negative or unknown socio-psychological impacts and implications are assumed.

Extensive analysis of such fields of thought is beyond the scope of this paper, so the upcoming part is rather a schematic catalog of the main dispositions of relevant ideas.

It is necessary to stress that some of the relevant authors do not necessarily or exclusively draw pessimistic conclusions. Morozov and Aouragh, while they indeed consider several contextual variabilities and follow nuances approaches, in fact, focus predominantly on the “dark side” of the Internet and “ICT-imperialism” respectively.

Echo chambers and group polarization

American legal scholar Cass Sunstein attributes to digital media a potential to promote “cyber cascades” of like-minded opinions that create “information cocoons” and can even foster or enflame hate groups. The author describes (2009: 94) the phenomenon when users live “in echo chambers of their own design.” Such media enclaves scarcely interact. Thus group polarization results in the decay of democracy and the absence of deliberative mechanisms.

Although socio-psychological causes of such tendencies (i.e., group polarization) might be relevant when discussing member attitudes within later introduced experiences of Facebook groups, in our cases the consequences significantly differ: as neither ‘Let’s boycott the products of Heineken’ / Forbidden beer from Csík’ [Bojkottáljuk a Heinekent termékeket/Tiltott Csíki sör] nor ‘Bilingual South Slovakia’ [Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia] groups’ members have been inclined towards hate speech or chauvinistic stances etc.

The Panopticon: mass surveillance and censorship

Belorussian-American author and researcher Evgeny Morozov (2011) expressed skepticism about digital optimism and Internet-centrism and pointed out the Internet is a tool that both revolutionaries and authoritarian governments can use. As a consequence, certain regimes remain stable and repressive as ever. Digital media sites have been used in these places to entrench dictators and threaten dissent opinion, making it more difficult to promote democracy.

Morozov, while he does not deny positive effects of digital media, is no doubt focused on a negative phenomenon arising, which he calls the “dark side of internet freedom,” which might resolve in an overall judgment reflecting a rather mistrustful attitude towards digital media and its capacities.

Insisting that Robins and Webster’s (1998) post-Foucauldian dystopia of a Panopticon might be based partly on reality, Facebook’s official *Global Government Requests Report* published on 27 April 2017 revealed that it’s receiving more government information requests than ever before. Although USA government removal requests were on a decline, requests for user account data, on the other hand, rose significantly.

ICT-imperialism, digital capitalism, and commodification

Such corporate complaisance is one facet of the political economy of digital media which has different implications. Information and communications historian Dan Schiller published his thesis as early as in 1999 stating networks that comprise cyberspace were originally created at the behest of government agencies, military contractors, and allied educational institutions. Recently, however, a growing number of these networks have begun to serve predominantly corporate objectives. Under the sway of an expansionary market logic, the Internet began a political-economic transition toward what Dan Schiller calls digital capitalism.

Moroccan-Dutch anthropologist Miriyam Aouragh (2012) investigated how the social, political, and cultural realms of capitalism (superstructure) are both conditioned by and react upon the political-economic base. Here it is necessary to add that although Aouragh (2012) while interpreting the political economy of the information and communications technology within the wider context of Marxist theory claims that the point of her critique was "not to deny the social and political usefulness of new media, but to examine the pros and cons of the internet," she intensely stresses that arguments (or rather assertions) in the context of debates about the power of new media are echoes of earlier suggestions related to peculiar fetishizations of ICT in general and social media in particular. Aouragh also holds that fetishization of digital media and techno-clichés such as "Facebook-revolutions" can well originate in self-congratulatory poses of digital media interests. At the same time, no matter how valid most of her arguments are and how thought-provoking for the general and academic debate over the functions of digital media, she underestimates capacities of the latter to boost civic engagement under specific conditions.

Van Dijck examines the socioeconomic structures that shape social media. While exploring the relevant ownership, governance, and business models, he also points to "economic infrastructures and legal-political governance" (2013: 26) that determine the evolution of networks as *conditiones sine quibus non*.

A dialectic approach to understanding digital media

Online activism indeed can be explained by reference to some form of a political and economic agenda and other social factors, as has already been shown via digital pessimism. Under special circumstances, however, as this also will be demonstrated through the prism of online activism of two separate cases, digital media indeed provides a playground for social mobilization without inevitably serving politics-economy-related or geopolitical agendas.

In light of the prevalence of digital optimistic tendencies of exalting Web 2.0 and Co. in a way that reminisces a Murti-Bing (Witkiewicz, 1930) "hypnosis," and late shift to a digital pessimistic antithesis that deals with computer-mediated technologies almost exclusively on the foundations of social and/or politico-economic criticism, the discourse has been reductive.

I do believe new digital media can have an effect on social processes. What I doubt is whether experiences can *exclusively* be understood as either positive and negative. A number of authors who could well be referred to as digital realists have managed to approach the subject in a balanced way.

Authors, such as *inter alia* Papacharissi (2010); Neuman (2011); van Dijck (2012); Fuchs (2014) conceptualize digital media in a more prudent way than digital optimism as we shall see below. According to Zizi Papacharissi (2010: 167) "new technologies provide opportunities for individuals to engage in social activities, expand the scope of social networks and enable communication." Thus, the combined effect of the social, political, and economic and technological context "affords the autonomy, control, and expressive capabilities of that enable dissent, it effectively reconciles the personal with the political in a way that enables connection with like-minded individuals." Although this approach reflects moderate optimism, the author elsewhere (2002: 9-10) expresses obvious doubts about the 'revolutionizing' effects of technologies on the political sphere suggesting they will rather be adapted to the current status quo. In addition, she points out that Internet-based technologies frequently fragmentize political discourse. Christian Fuchs (2014: 89) also finds that today's digital media landscape is "shaped by three antagonism: a) the economic antagonism between a) users' data and social media corporations' profit interests, b) the political antagonism between users' privacy and the surveillance-industrial complex as well as citizens' desire for accountability of the powerful and the secrecy of power, c) the civil society antagonism between the creation of public spheres and the corporate and state colonisation of these spheres."

When discussing the afterlife of the Habermasian argument, it is important to mention José van Dijck's (2012) research, also reflecting a nuanced approach, insofar as it suggests "social media platforms neither warrant a recalibration of Habermas' public sphere, nor a conscious blending of spheres." She also advocates a different understanding which understands social media platforms as a "contested space where private, public and corporate interests compete to produce new norms of sociality and connectivity." With regard to such a contested space in question, I hereby anticipate that certain fora on social networking sites (SNSs) in their own way practically allow activism and mobilisation for a given cause. These mentioned nuanced approaches, which objectively criticize the public sphere, without falling into the utopian trap, highlight the conceptual framework of digital realism in my view.

Some of the following statements of an editorial article of the New York Times highlighting the geopolitical aspects of digital media use constitute an approach which can arguably called digital realist in essence: "Because social media businesses have become such a fixture in modern life, many people might think of them as the digital equivalent of the public square where opinions can be freely shared. But […] as much as free speech advocates would like Facebook and other Internet companies to uphold liberal values, these companies are unlikely to do so if that means sacrificing lucrative business opportunities." Here, panoptic features meet ICT-interests, uniting some of the above-listed categories, and the corporate complaisance dimension becomes evident once again. But again, the prevalence of such factors does not mean, that grassroots online engagement would be completely made impossible. Experience of such online engagement, in fact, does presuppose a form of a limited public sphere, or in other words, public sphericules (cf. Cunningham 2001)

Validity of an alternative public sphere

W. Russel Neuman et al. (2011: 27-30) while following a "moderate" digital optimistic approach, that is a lot more cautious than the "mainstream" of above-quoted tendencies, provides a useful set of criteria, that can be regarded as some kind of a touchstone for understanding digital media as a successful online public sphere:

1) *the inclusion of a broad array of citizens in rational deliberation;*
2) *the capacity to influence the agenda of public discussion;*
3) *whether, once the attention is evident, the online environment facilitates rational critical discussion and the capacity for collective will formation;*
4) *discursive equality and reciprocal respect – the capacity in collective deliberation to evaluate arguments by their sincerity and persuasive strength rather than the status of the speaker;*
5) *the absence of a coercive external constraint on open discussion;*
6) *the absence of systematic distraction from political deliberation.*

Although I doubt the revolutionary ethos that Neuman et al. generally attribute to the internet, I accept the relevance and constructivity of such standards as a basis for evaluating the online environment. In this spirit, I will consistently use it when discussing experiences of digital media use hereinafter.

In this spirit, recent evidence reflecting traits of a mobilization and arguably, even emancipatory potential of digital media will be demonstrated below with an intention to objectively and realistically evaluate cases in the light of Neuman et al. (2011)'s set of criteria.

Another standard that seems to be useful is Danah Boyd (2008)'s analysis which centers on how social network sites can be understood as *networked publics. Accordingly, the latter* is simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice. Consequently, networked publics support many of the same practices as unmediated publics, but their structural differences often inflect practices in unique ways. Four properties—*persistence, searchability, replicability*, and *scalability*—and three dynamics—*invisible audiences collapsed contexts,* and *the blurring of public and private need to be taken into consideration accordingly.* Experiences of "public sphericules" where communities' identity is formed through a sense of belonging via self-popularized media (cf. Cunningham, 2001) and social polarization tendencies of internet users to separate into groups with other people who share the same beliefs, i.e., "echo chambers" or audience fragmentation (Sunstein, 2009; Lynch, 2015) are well-known social psychological and public life phenomena enough to argue that digital media and online social networking sites (SNSs) in particular, where people also interact with others and express same beliefs, and content, might show similar characteristics.

However, Sunstein's (2009) rather digital pessimistic vision of cyberbalkanization which is predominantly based on his findings on partisan Weblogs that have become significant political forces has seemed to me logical, yet, disputable as groups not necessarily define *against* but also *for* something.

People indeed define their identity by what they are not. Distinctiveness theory holds that people define themselves by what makes them different from others in a particular context: "one perceives oneself in terms of characteristics that distinguish oneself from other humans, especially from people in one's usual social milieu" (McGuire, 1988).

Social identity theory posits that a portion of one's self-concept is dependent on the importance and relevance placed on the group membership(s) to which an individual belongs (Turner and Oakes, 1986). The theory suggests that individuals' drive for positive identity and esteem influences the social comparisons they make (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). In particular, group/category comparisons that accentuate group distinctiveness in favor of one's in-group over a relevant outgroup are privileged. As a result, when a particular group becomes salient, the features associated with that group guide one's attitudes and behaviors (McKinley et al., 2014).

My research described below intends to indicate that given some particular cases in the context of self-categorization via digital media, the optimistic notion of the public sphere or public sphericules might be closer to reality than the pessimistic vision of echo chambers.
In support of this hypothesis, a content analysis of relevant posts and page feedback, relevant statistics on the induced reaction were carried out as well as the findings of an anonymous survey of 11 questions were also evaluated.

“Success stories” of online engagement

Bilingual South Slovakia [Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia] and online features of ethnicity

Founded in 2011, Bilingual Slovakia [*Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia – hereinafter: KDSz*]*’s* mission is to urge for action to promote bilingual public names. This paper focuses on the online dimension of KDSz and to evaluate relevant experiences.

In accordance with a development which was also covered by mainstream media, railway station names in Dunaszerdahely [Dunajská Streda] and Révkomárom [Komárno], both located in ethnic Hungarian majority inhabited southern Slovakia, will not only be able to be read in the Slovak language but also in the minority Hungarian language. “Transport and Construction Minister Árpád Érsek and deputy speaker of parliament Béla Bugár (both members of the Most-Híd Party) officially unveiled the bilingual signs in the towns on April 21. Thus the station in Dunajská Streda bears also the name Dunaszerdahely and the station in Komárno also Komárom” (Spectator, 2017).

The bilingual boards will be set up only at railway stations in towns where at least 20 percent of the population belongs to a national minority.

In line with a government regulation, as many as 55 bilingual boards - 54 in Hungarian and one in the Rusyn language - will be placed at stations located in Slovak towns and cities with considerable non-Slovak populations. All the signs will be installed by the end of September.

These developments above are exactly of the KDSz movement, which is also has been present on the social networking site Facebook.

In an interview, a KDSz-activist expressed his conviction that this issue could not have been at the center of the Hungarian interest representation in Slovakia had the civil sphere – not just the KDSZ – not raised it and if the concerned parties would not feel that it needs to be addressed as a synergy (Maszol, 2017).

In this spirit, KDSz introduces the movement, its goals, its principles and tools, objectives, and relations to politics at its Facebook-page as follows respectively:
Information about the initiative: “We are civil activists who are concerned that the Hungarian language is becoming more and more distraught in southern Slovakia, although we have the right to written and oral use of our mother tongue.”

Their objective is to promote the “visibility” of Hungarian language and minority living in Slovakia and raising awareness *tout court.* Explicitly, as described “Above all, we want the elimination of the visual discrimination of the Hungarian language, and thus, a more confident Hungarian community in Slovakia […] aim is not to exacerbate the pointless ethnic conflicts, but our intention is to make our community aware of its rights

Their principles are respect for human dignity and nonviolence and tools are civil advocacy by raising the issue of bilingualism.

They also claim to be free of politics as “the issue of preserving the Hungarian language is independent of any [political] party.” Their call for support includes some specific examples “Our goal cannot be achieved without widespread civic engagement. […] You already help a lot if next time when you go shopping you express disapproval of the lack of Hungarian signs or demand the book of complaints. […] You may also want to follow our Facebook page where you can contribute to the cause of bilingualism by sharing our content. If you engage in dispute, feel free to use the bilingual guide.”

Referred to as “Milestones,” the Facebook page lists a number of achievements, predominantly “offline” precedents: 12 February 2012 “The Párkány project II”: On board of the AVALA international express train passing through the town of Érsekújvár [Nové

Zámky] and Párkány [Štúrovo] civilians informed passengers apart from Slovakian language, also in Hungarian, for the first time in history.

- On 14 January 2012, in the framework of The Nameless Villages Project: KDSz-activists registered 77 missing signs in the minority language in 34 settlements.
- On 16 October 2011, in the context of The Dunaszerdahely Project, activists place the first bilingual traffic sign ever.
- On 4 September 2011, as implementing "The Párkány [Štúrovo] project I," civilians greeted passengers at the railway station for the first time in a number of decades in Hungarian and English languages.
- On 1 August 2011, KDSz-activists placed bilingual stickers in a number of settlements.
- On 30 May, the Facebook group counted 14,941 followers.

In this case, although the listed developments rather reflect self-conscious references for digital representation than direct mobilizing functions *per se*, combined with other traits of digital activism described below, they indicate a lively interaction between the "offline" and "online" spheres. This hypothetically fulfills Neuman et al. (2011)'s following criteria: 1) the inclusion of a broad array of citizens in rational deliberation; 2) the capacity to influence the agenda of public discussion; 3) whether, once the attention is evident, the online environment facilitates rational critical discussion and the capacity for collective will formation; 4) discursive equality and reciprocal respect – the capacity in collective deliberation to evaluate arguments by their sincerity and persuasive strength rather than the status of the speaker; 5) the absence of a coercive external constraint on open discussion; 6) the absence of systematic distraction from political deliberation.

My research found that recently, in correspondence with successful public law developments, the content shared attracted 208 reactions and 4 supportive comments on average per post, which were re-shared by follower approximately 12 times.

Biggest feedback attracted was a post of 27 April in which 465 followers reacted to a photo of a bilingual sign at the railway station of Rimaszombat [Rimavská Sobota], with the caption: "Historical moment: first time ever since 1945, the railway station bears a Hungarian name!"

Content regularly attracts significant attention of members, who insert positive "emoticons," comment supportively, set out further goals and discuss them generally sharing a feeling of solidarity (cf. Neuman et al.'s criteria 1 and 3-4) and without coercive external constraints on open discussion (cf. Neuman et al.'s criterion 5)

The repetitive slogan used by the group and its FB-page has been: "It's time to do more [than before]."

Occasionally popular culture and Internet meme-based communication has appeared on the page, such as: "If there is no money for Hungarian signs, then why Hungarians have to pay taxes?" or "Making fun of my accent?" "I'm bilingual," answers a laughing Di Caprio figure. Word games regularly caricature chauvinistic stance: Slovensko Slovákom Komárno Komárom.

The page shares call for certain petitions in line with the profile of the page. Posts cover relevant issues of Hungarian language use from other parts of the Carpathian Basin, for example, comparing the status of Hungarian labels in stores of the Transylvania region of present-day Romania with that in Southern Slovakia. In addition, the page regularly advertises institutions and events connected to Hungarian ethnic identities, such as the PMSZK Hungarian College in Bratislava and its calls for application for admission. The page also interacts with Hungarian language news organs, such as Parameter.sk, which latter categorizes itself as "the most visited Hungarian news portal in Slovakia" (cf. Neuman et al.'s criterion 2).

Content reflected consistent bilingualism in the context of describing the group's profile and the majority of shared posts. The latter has been characterized by both a supranational and a regional outlook as "best practices" of other EU-Member States (Swedish-speaking population in Finland, Alto Adige, etc.) are often regarded as standards for evaluating developments, and Transylvania is also regularly considered a reference point for the movement

However, such manifestations of ethnocentrism do not necessarily mean that the group is exclusive or aims to confront on the grounds of ethnic identity. Accordingly, the FM-page of KDSz emphasizes in a bilingual statement that there is no problem with the use of the Slovak language, nor do they intend to undermine the rights of those who use the Slovak language in any way. Rather, what they want to achieve is the full bilingualism. Even the name itself "Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia – Dvojjazyčné Južné Slovensko" and other page profile descriptions are consequently bilingual (cf. Neuman et al.'s criterion 6).

Thus, the page has managed to convey an ethos and a sense of mission that contributes to the maintenance of social identity of followers and to the preservation of the commitment of group members, and also to increase the number of followers. According to the findings of an anonymous survey based on 11 questions[2] among internet users, from whom 90.6% are ethnic Hungarians from Southern Slovakia. Most followers of the page visit

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[2] Questions and results of the survey in detail: 1. How regularly do you follow the FB-page of Bilingual South Slovakia and its shared contents? a) on a daily basis (13,2%); b) not on a daily basis, but rather often (49.9%) c) occasionally, when notified (31,5%); d) other (5.4%) 2. How important is that Hungarian language in used publicly in Southern Slovakia? a) it has a special significance (83,8%); b) is rather important (16,2%); 3. Does the Hungarian identity matter to you personally? a) it has a special significance (83,8%); b) is rather important (16,2%); c) non-impiortant (0%). 4. Which tools can be the most viable in favour of promoting bilingualism in Southern Slovakia? a) Previous tools used by KDSz, such as placing stickers, giving information in Hungarian on public transport, etc. (48,6%); (b) combining peaceful online and offline forms of protest (40,5%); c) civil disobedience (2,6%); (d) other (8,3%), including: political steps (4,1%), more radical steps (such as the destruction of Slovak labels, open confrontation with persons or institutions who violate the law) (0 %); using Hungarian language even on Facebook (4,1%) 5. What tools of those being at the disposable of the KDSz can contribute the most to ensuring bilingualism? a) organising demonstrations, flashmobs (57,1%); b) compilation of online petitions (2,7%); c) raising awareness with legitimate online guerrilla methods (e.g. placing links on other sites) (37,1%); d) other (3,1%); 6. Do you plan to be present at events related to the site's goals in the future? a) Of course, since it is a key issue for me (5,1%); b) Yes, if I have the opportunity (35,9%); c) No, online support for this site is sufficient (35,9%); d) No (23,1%) 7. Do you speak the Slovak language? a) Yes (84,4%); b) I can get myself understood and read (6,2%); c) I speak, but I do not use it on principle (0%); d) No (9,4%). 8. Does the attitude of the Slovak state toward the use of Hungarian language disturb you? a) yes, absolutely (34,4%); b) I have been experiencing improvement lately, but it still irritates me (43,8%); c) Does not bother that much, as one can understand also their position in this regard (15,6%); d) does not bother (6,2%). 9. What is your relationship with Slovakia, the Slovak people and culture? a) hostile, after all they are "dumb tót" and "I am older than Slovakia to begin with" (5,1%); b) I do not like them because of historical trauma and a hostile state behavior (10,1%); c) I have no problem with them as "they are also human beings", however, some state policies indeed disturb me (78,1%); d) I like them because of their similar historic trajectory and mentality and understand their state's attitude (6,7%). 10. Do you get informed about the status of ethnic Hungarian people and language in Southern Slovakia? a) only through news and also conveyed by KDSz (6,3%); b) apart from KDSz, also from other Hungarian language news sites (25%); c) both from Hungarian and Slovakian news sources (53,1%); d) I don't get informed (15,6%). 11. Where do you come from? a) From the Hungarian parts of Upper Hungary, in current-day Southern Slovakia (90,6%); b) from Hungary proper (9,4%); c) Other (0%).

the KDSz-page rather often; consider the public use of Hungarian language to be of crucial importance; attribute to Hungarian identity special significance; consider previous tools used by KDSz (such as placing stickers, giving information in Hungarian on public transport, etc.) and combining peaceful online and offline forms of protest viable in favor of promoting bilingualism in Southern Slovakia. The majority believes that organizing demonstrations, flash mobs, and compiling online petitions can contribute to achieving the goal of bilingualism; plan to be present at “offline” events if have the opportunity and/or consider online tools in this regard enough; have no problem with Slovakia, Slovakian people and language as “they are also human beings,” however, find some state policies indeed disturbing. Apart from KDSz, they also tend to get informed about the status of ethnic Hungarian people and language in Southern Slovakia by other Hungarian and Slovakian language news sites.

Apparently, ethnic identity, with a sense of belonging that is inscribed in the institutional and political, as well as everyday life beyond the online sphere, is a determining factor for the KDSz-group. The experience of KDSz suggests that even if “homogeneous” content circulates within an online group (cf. Sunstein’s vision of the echo chambers), this does not necessarily imply isolation or hostile attitude toward others. Neither does it mean that the group tolerates or *ad absurdum* encourages such behavior among its members. The concept of cyber-balkanization, or at least the term *per se,* suggests separatism and/or prejudice against or hostility toward outsiders or rival groups as the term coins the combination of cyberspace with Balkans, a political region in southeastern Europe with a history of partitioned cultures, languages, and religion, and even more importantly, ethnically-based conflicts and wars in the early ’90s. This does not seem to be the case here.

Consequently, online activities of KDSz can well be understood as political participation based on a pure sense of belonging (i.e., self-categorization within a group; cf: Turner et al. 1987) rather than being an echo chamber (Sunstein, 2009) or merely a movement promoted in line with self-congratulatory poses of ICT-imperialism (Aouragh, 2012). In addition, findings confirm *de facto* political engagement untied to political factors used for oppression (Morozov 2011), and lastly, online activities have constantly been compatible with Neuman et al. (2011)’s criteria (*findings are shown in Table 1*).

In fact it seems evident that in particular Neuman et al.’s following criteria were met: 1) the inclusion of a broad array of citizens in rational deliberation; and 2) the capacity to influence the agenda of public discussion; were met without any 5) coercive external constraints on open discussion or 6) systematic distraction from political deliberation.

All this suggests that a public sphericule has been formed where the common identity has been reproduced in the online sphere, by a digital media social networking site without necessarily turning into an echo chamber (cf. Sunstein, 2009).

The Igazi Csíki Sör case – Szekler identity and transnational politico-economic interests

Although links to a form of political economy cannot be excluded, especially that the topic has recently reached state-level and political agendas, one can also draw important lessons from social engagement patterns of another “regional” case, namely digital media activities surrounding a beer producer rivalry in Transylvania (current-day Romania). This paper predominantly focuses on the social mobilization dimension of the series of events and results related to (self-)categorization (McKinley et al., 2014; Turner et al., 1987) driven digital media use in light of documented online activity.

In the course of its business-related rivalry and conflict, and the accompanying legal action initiated on the grounds of alleged infringement of intellectual property, unfair competition and trade violations, Dutch multinational corporation Heineken has publicly questioned the geographic and cultural existence of Székely Land (or Szeklerland, a historic and ethnographic area in Romania, inhabited by an ethnic Hungarian majority).

On 20 January 2015, a Facebook group entitled 'Let's boycott Heineken products' [*Bojkottáljuk a Heineken termékeket*] was launched.

By the end of July 2015, the number of people joining the group reached more than 11 thousand. They called for boycotting Heineken's products as "[Heineken] not only desires to have the factory "Igazi Csíki Sör" closed down, but what's more, recently the Hungarophobe Heineken also questions the existence of Székely Land. This comes close to extremely chauvinist Noua Dreapta's communication who refer to it as "Asa-zis Tinutul Secuiesc."

Although the group's page has not been available since 2015, it offers some lessons both for digital media experts and scholars, especially together with another page with overlapping supposed motivations and patterns of digital media use as will be seen below. Not necessarily spontaneous or grassroots, as an online collective action aimed to explicitly demonstrate solidarity with a beer manufacturer in its rivalry vis-a-vis Heineken portraying in this regard as an "underdog" or "David against the multinational Goliath," another Facebook-page, entitled "Forbidden Beer from Csík" [Tiltott Csíki Sör], was launched somewhat earlier before (11 December 2014) than the online call for a boycott. At the time of finishing this paper [on 29 September], it counts 76,412 followers.

Again, partly similarly to the case of the KDSz-page, content analysis of relevant posts and page feedback was carried out, accompanied by an evaluation of relevant statistics on the induced reaction. My research found that in the early days (more precisely: between 11 December 2014 until 26 December 2014), its posts provoked limited feedback and collected an average of 63 likes, 2 comments and less than 19 shares per content.

Later on (i.e., between 15 May and 28 May 2017) feedback figures numbered an average of 721 reactions, 15 comments and 77 re-shares per content.

The following shared post is an epitome of the conveyed narrative: "The struggle of a beer manufacturer from Csíkszentsimon [Sânsimion] with MNC Heineken: shall the multi-billionaire capital be victorious?"

The second ("Forbidden beer from Csík") page uses a motto attributed to Frank Zappa on several occasions: "you can't be a real country unless you have a beer and an airline. It helps if you have some kind of a football team or some nuclear weapons, but at the very least you need a beer."

Regardless of evident political and arguably politico-economic aspects and corresponding marketing-related activities, the group managed to raise constant awareness including that of mainstream (traditional) media outlets (cf. Neuman et al.'s criterion 2).

Regionally widespread news outlets such as Maszol.ro (Transylvania/Romania) and Mandiner.hu (Hungary) also covered the issue and mentioned the online activism in some articles with catchy titles such as "The Székelys have declared war on Heineken" and "Here's an everyday beer, what a pity it's not available at home [Hungary]" on 21 January 2017 and 12 May 2015, respectively.

While playing on social identification driven (cf. McKinley, 2014; Turner et al., 1987) psychological stimuli, namely the Szekler identity and self-esteem, the group posted nearly on a daily basis stereotypical content related to internet memes, "Székely jokes" and initiates international campaigns of representing the disadvantaged brand Tiltott Csíki Sör.

Shared content although biased to a certain extent and provocative, has remained open for discussion (cf. Neuman 2011 et al.'s criteria 1, 3-4). Arguably, the online engagement was utilized by and/or met a business interest in the overlapping objective of promoting a Székely Land-based brand identity and at the same time to negatively affect Heineken beer giant's business as an answer. Consequently, while business interests were served in terms of ventilating a brand identity, group affiliation of members has also been strengthened. Although from a different perspective based on a different case, these patterns again indicate similarly to KDSz that although in a way group polarization can be manifested in online social networking platforms, this neither necessarily induces echo chambers or hate speech (cf. Sunstein, 2009).

Summarized and evaluated on the basis of Neuman et al. (2011) criteria, the Let's Boycott Heineken page thus allowed the 1) inclusion of a broad array of citizens in rational deliberation, although somewhat biased vis-a-vis Heineken, and to a lesser extent, also gave room to 2) capacities to influence the agenda of public discussion. In this case, the online environment arguably, although not necessarily 3) facilitated rational critical discussion and the capacity for collective will formation, where at least in theory, 4) discursive equality and reciprocal respect was also provided although echo-chamber effects (cf. Sunstein, 2002) might have made content one-sided. 5) The absence of a coercive external constraint on open discussion and 6) the absence of systematic distraction from political deliberation undoubtedly characterized the mechanisms (*findings are shown in Table 1 on page34*).

Eventually on 27 March 2017, HEINEKEN announced officially that Romania and Lixid Project SRL intend to settle their ongoing dispute

As published on its official website, HEINEKEN Romania, and S.C. Lixid Project SRL are pleased to announce that following ongoing and constructive conversations they both intend to settle their dispute about the Csiki Sor brand-name.

As part of the settlement, HEINEKEN Romania gives consent to Lixid Project SRL for the coexistence of the Ciuc and Csiki brand names and agrees that Lixid Project SRL market the Csiki Sör beer. As a result of this agreement, both parties will abandon all legal activities related to the commercial dispute.

The settlement involves compromises on both sides, and it allows both companies to continue building their relationship with their consumers, employees, business partners and the local community. Both companies now look forward to leaving their past differences behind them and focusing on what they do best and enjoy most: brewing beer (Heineken, 2017).

Table 1: Assessment of experiences

Criteria for a successful online public sphere (***based on Habermas 1962 / Neuman et al. 2011***)	**“Let’s boycott Heineken products” [*Bojkottáljuk a Heineken termékeket*] / “Forbidden Beer from Csík” [Tiltott Csíki Sör]**	**Bilingual South Slovakia [KDSz]**
1) *the inclusion of a broad array of citizens in rational deliberation;*	yes	yes
2) *the capacity to influence the agenda of public discussion;*	yes	yes
3) *the online environment facilitates rational critical discussion and the capacity for collective will formation;*	not necessarily	not necessarily
4) *discursive equality and reciprocal respect – the capacity in collective deliberation to evaluate arguments by their sincerity and persuasive strength rather than the status of the speaker;*	not necessarily	not necessarily
5) *the absence of a coercive external constraint on open discussion;*	yes	yes
6) *the absence of systematic distraction from political deliberation.*	yes	yes

Synopsis

Taken into consideration that hegemonic optimistic and pessimistic models have arguably always led to the reductive interpretation of the complex reality of digital media’s social functions, I sought to identify the objective foundations or ultimate grounds of the social mobilizing potential within digital media thus advocating a balanced view in line with earlier research (e.g., Habermas, 2006; Boyd, 2008; Papacharissi, 2010; Neuman, 2011; van Dijck, 2012; Fuchs, 2014).

Such a dialectic approach which I venture to name digital realism does not deny that politico-economics, (geo)politics-based and social criticism and the corresponding pessimistic arguments are relevant when discussing digital media, rather it collides them with optimistic digital premises in order to realize this claimed nuanced approach at hand. Thus, my hypothesis has been that under certain conditions, digital media does indeed form sociopolitical frameworks where the Neuman et al. (2011) criteria of understanding an alternative public sphere could also be arguably met, while realities of large-scale politico-economic and international power-related structures and agendas are also present, that limit this alternative public sphere in its scope.

Such anchored postulates determine a balanced view that led me to distinguish between different environments.

I have found the idea of focusing on online activities of small local or regional, ethnic identity-based online movements which either involve political action aimed at citizenship (KDSz) or express solidarity (Let's Boycott Heineken) when evaluating digital optimism and pessimism profoundly appealing as my intention has been to avoid falling into the trap of approaching these means exclusively in an either optimistic or pessimistic manner.

This idea seemed logical toed in terms of supporting claims of mobilization potential within digital media while also acknowledging of course that in some sense politico-economic (Aouragh, 2012) and/or social criticism is indeed needed when discussing their social functions.

Moreover, it has seemed to provide a way of making sense of the essentially valid points of digital optimism's premises of a public sphere while taking the context of social variables with regard to dynamic politics/economy-related and other aspects seriously, which altogether allowed to consistently remain on digital realist grounds.

In other words, the question that arises is not whether digital media can serve as a tool for political participation, but rather, 1) whether such existing qualities of these services and applications can counterbalance those already identified (cf. i.e., Morozov, 2011; Aouragh, 2012; Nashif, 2017) and 2) whether such online activism constitutes or paves the way for audience fragmentation and isolation (Sunstein, 2009).

Experiences of KDSz and "Let's boycott Heineken's products!"/ "Forbidden Beer from Csík" give an insight into the fine nuances of the use of digital media. These events and facts could not only serve the public sphere debate where arguably Neuman et al. (2011) standards can be a useful benchmark from which to evaluate them, but also show interesting aspects of self-categorization-related ethnic identity of communities and the corresponding emergence of public sphericules which are in this case online rather than popular media-based (cf. Cunningham, 2001) and not necessarily to be considered echo chambers (cf. Sunstein, 2009) Thus, as for the questions above, this paper refutes the premise of the second one; however, the first remains still open for the future to tell.

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Religious Messages and the Media Code - Inherent features of the media language code and the transmission of religious messages[1]

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine whether the media language code is suitable for transmitting religious messages. In religious media communication one observes a tendency not to respect the classical *news values*, and in fact tends to limit them. This approach makes religious media communication fail at the start. Using textual analysis and qualitative research techniques, e.g., *focus groups* and *Delphi,* we investigate some *news values* relate (positively or negatively) to the religious messages. Here we present three most expressive of them: conflict, scandalousness and story. If messages are formed by *news values*, then religious messages are formed by means of values that we named the *gospel values,* and can be identified with traditional Catholic Church virtues. Finding possible connections between the *news values* and the *gospel values* seems to be one of the basic solutions for the religious message media coding.

Keywords: Media; religion; language; code; news values; gospel values

Introduction

Can media language carry religious content? This fundamental question has been the subject of our wide research inspired by previous projects carried out at the Department focusing on the coverage of religious topics in the media. Previous projects have pointed to an interesting fact that the news coverage of identical topics by the religious media has sharply contrasted with that of secular media, even to the extent that an almost "intersection-free" set of the underlying facts communicated by the media could be observed. The products of such coverage fall into two extremes: the non-journalistically covered and, from the recipient's perspective, almost indigestible reviews of religious events brought by religious media – and handy and journalistically covered, however completely without the true essence of the event by secular media. For instance, the religious media covered the news about the Pope's visit to a foreign country through reviews of the Pope's homilies and addresses while secular

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media focused on pilgrims, hotel managers, gift shop sellers, construction of the viewing stands, and a variety of specific issues only partially related to the visit such as Church scandals and controversies, especially sex scandals, relations with Jews or other Christian denominations, financing and disestablishment.

This observation has prompted the question as to whether the causes of such differences were objective or subjective in their nature, i.e. whether they are inevitable, or if a kind of systemic flaw resides therein. Since this study focuses specifically on the problem of communication code in media transmission of religious messages, the question subject to examination is how the inherent qualities of a media communication code affect the transmission of religious messages, on one hand, and how do such religious messages cope with the inherent qualities of media communication codes when transmitted through these communication channels.

In our examination of the capacity of media language code to transmit religious[2] messages, we will focus on the communication process, or, the communication process of mass media in particular. The generally accepted scheme transmitter – code – channel – noise – recipient is present in each communication process. As part of our research of the media code, which forms the basis of our further investigation, we have focused on the transmission part of the scheme, i. e. the code – channel – noise, in particular, and here, we have arrived at several key findings about the code, which are presented below.

This study deals with concepts such as religious message, religious media, or secular media, in particular. The term ‘religious message’ refers to a piece of communication originating in the church environment, which a communicator seeks to spread using a medium. The concept of religious media is broader than the church media – it not only includes media owned by the church, but also private media which position themselves as religious. The term ‘secular media’ refers to other media which do not position themselves as religious.

State of the art

Institutional Framework

More comprehensive research studies of the relation between religion and media date back to the 1980s. A relatively small circle of scholars who explored the subject have managed to establish several specialised institutes devoted to scholarly research and public debate on these issues – among others the *Centre for Religion and Media* at *New York University*, *Centre for Religion and Society* at *University of Amsterdam*, or *Centre for Media, Religion and Culture* at *University of Colorado*.

The academic debate on this subject is also taking place in printed journals such as *Journal of Media and Religion* or *Journal of Culture and Religion*.

A thoughtful discussion on the subject takes place during the *International Conferences of Media, Religion and Culture* (ICMRC) held in various parts of the world since 1994. The first conference was held in Uppsala, Sweden, and the 7th session was held in 2010 in Toronto, Canada. Last year the participants to the conference have established a common scientific association led by Stewart M. Hoover from *University of Colorado*, who is also the director of the *Center for Media, Religion and Culture* established in 2006 at the *School of Journalism and Mass Communication* at *University of Colorado* in Boulder, the organising entity of the conferences.

Three interesting collective works have been published so far from the conferences: *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture* (eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby, 1997), *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media* (eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark, 1997) and *Mediating Religion: Studies in Media, Religion, and Culture* (eds. Jolyon Mitchell and Sophia Marriage, 2003).

Classification

In 2008, the editors of *Journal of Media and Religion* identified the following three key areas of research into religion and media:

1. proliferation of mediated religion (media create multiple places of worship beyond the physical walls of traditional congregations),
2. religious audiences as interpretive communities (shared interpretations of popular media content are increasingly important in understanding religious groups),
3. media criticism (critiquing media genres and texts). (Stout and Buddenbaum, 2008, p. 226)

This classification can be accepted, however, for the purpose of our research, it needs to be extended as follows:

1) mediated religion
   a) religious impact of media
   b) religion as media
2) media criticism
   a) relation between sacred and profane
   b) anti-religious prejudice in media
   c) media approach to new religious movements
3) religious media audience.

Religious Impact of Media

Khojaste and Kalantari (2009) dealt with the philosophical account of the relation between religion and media and distinguished two opposite media approaches: instrumentalist approach (positive: media can be used) and essentialist approach (negative: there is an abyss between media and religion). The integrated approach can be regarded as a compromise between the above two positions (complementary functions of traditional and modern media to attain religious objectives) as developed by Bahonar (2009).

Stolow (2005) insists that it is the media, which provide a platform for new forms of religious publicity in non-religious dominant public spheres, such as religious counter-public (an alternative regardless of the state and civil systems) and split-public (dialogical symbiosis of societies with different cultural backgrounds). The editors of the collection of essays *Religion, Media and the Public Sphere* Meyer a Moors (2006) present the idea of the so-called mediated religion, which constructs new forms of civil discussion and public discourse.

Several scholars examined the problem of media in the hands of religious fundamentalists. The rise of fundamentalism enhanced by media was proved by Murdock (1997). Thomas (2008) analysed the communication strategies of Christian fundamentalists in India and emphasised the political economy of religion..

Religion as Media

The idea of identifying religion with the media instead of examining parallel functions of religion as a distinct phenomenon from media is strongly supported Stolow (2005). Stolow supports the idea of sensuous religious presence (religion materialised through human senses). In 2008, this was subject of a special edition of *Material Religion*. Meyer (2008), the editor of the journal, concludes that religion builds bridges between man and transcendence, whereby man overcomes the distance between those two. In that process religion makes the image of transcendence complete and shapes it. Analogically, media give a material form to the transcendence.

Common media functions of religion and mass media were also examined by De la Cruz (2009) who points out that in certain situations religion and media even change their roles or strengthen their positions conjunctively by means of two processes: mediation and substitution.

Sacrum and Profanum

The myth that media are agents of secularisation is denied by most scholars. Stolow (2005) insists that scholars should seek a deeper and more profound understanding of the relation between religion and media. De la Cruz (2009) provides an alternative in the theory of 'convergent media' – binary categories of secular and religious, which drive contemporary ethnography and social theory,".

In his content analysis Silk (1995) states the following two key arguments: (1) the hypothesis of secularisation role of the media was not proved and (2) there exist socially constructed moral categories, which are also accepted by journalists. He calls them *conventionalised story types* and identifies them with the *topoi* taken from classical rhetorical theory. For religious topics, these story types express certain moral attitudes. Silk outlines seven story types: *good works*, *tolerance*, *hypocrisy*, *false prophecy*, *inclusion*, *supernatural belief*, *declension*. The ancient Greek *topoi,* as a category of commonly shared ideas, is examined by González Gaitano (2009) and Rončáková (2010) as part of their research into religion and media.

Hoover and Venturelli (1996) both suggest that scholars should refrain from trying to draw a demarcation line between secular and religious, and that they should see media as fundamentally 'religious'. Here, secularism is perceived as any other ritualised system of imaging and these two authors attempt to unearth its fundamental religiosity.

Media Bias Against Religion

The view that journalists approach religious topics with a bias is supported by Zasępa (2003). He provides several reasons for preconceptions on the part of journalists against religion: pseudo-liberalism, cynicism, consumerism, control and complexity. A chasm of misunderstanding and ignorance separates journalists and church leaders, as concluded by Dart and Allen (1993). According to these two scholars however the tension between religion leaders and the press is more the result of ignorance about how to handle religion stories than any antagonism toward religion per se. Other scholars find news values the cause of the lack of media interest in religious activities of Christians. For instance, Winston (2007) argues that social activities of Christian leftists are regarded as natural, continuous and not newsworthy. Absence of specialised religious editors is regarded one of the main drawbacks of secular media in their approach to religious topics (Shupe, 1994; Wright, 1997, p. 106).

Shupe (1997) argues that media 'framing' of religious organisations provides an index of acculturation and control over valuable resources, such as the access to news production that shapes the organisation's public image. Contreras (2007) also identifies some general beliefs related to *topoi* behind individual *frames* related to the way the secular press informs about the Catholic Church. Gazda (2009) specialises in media framing of the events in Vatican, and compares their coverage of secular and religious periodicals. He blames secular media for inconsistent verification of information, superficiality, tabloidisation and promotion of negativity. For Gazda, religious media are susceptible to buck-passing, lack of professionalism and inferior-quality output marked by inconsistencies, positive bias and focus on message.

New Religious Movements

Wright (1997, p. 104), the editor of a special edition of *Review of Religious Research* on this topic, confirms the presence of media bias against minority religions and provides six related factors: (1) journalists' knowledge or familiarity with subject matter, (2) the degree of cultural accommodation of the targeted religious group, (3) economic resources available to journalists, (4) time constraints of journalists, (5) journalists' sources of information, (6) the front-end/back-end disproportionality of reporting. Wright arrives at the key conclusion that media are allies of anti-cult organisations. Richardson and van Driel (1997) uses a rather offensive rhetoric and blames media for favouring ideologically dominant *status quo* and discrediting of differentiated groups. Hill, Hickman and McLendon (2001) argue that media are much more critical of NRM than the established churches (Catholic, Protestant), they overemphasise their (often putative) violent nature, whereby they, to some extent and almost prophetically, impose such an image on these groups.

Defense of journalists based on natural attributes of journalism as a profession can be found in Silk (1997), Dart (1997) or Buddenbaum (1998).

Hoover and Clark (1997) suggest that media treatment of controversial religions is not simply a uniform conduit for the status quo, but a public forum for the playing out of a social drama as a group challenges a socially accepted norm to bring about change. (Wright, 1997, p. 110)

Religious Media Audience

The authors of *Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations*, edited by Stout and Buddenbaum (1996) are regarded as pioneers of research into media content audience. Four empirical studies on the comparative use of media across Christian traditions explain how audience members respond to and then practice their religious directives. The authors conclude that regardless of institutional directives, media plays a very important role in the everyday lives of religious audiences.

Khojaste and Kalantari (2009) ask one of the key questions of the research into relation between religion and media: How can religious matters be addressed in the public media, so as to be able to involve a passive audience that is supposedly not the addressee of the message, and turn him or her into an active audience? They suggest that the answer can be found in the so-called religious media rituals.

Methodology

The main question of our research was whether the religious messages are transportable by media, or, stated differently, whether the media language is suitable for the transmission of religious messages.

The answer to this question rests on the application of the method of quantitative content analysis (Gunter, 2000, p. 55-70), qualitative audience research methods based on *focus groups* (Hornig Priest, 1996, p. 109-113) and the *Delphi* method (De Blasio et al., 2007, p. 122). An analysis of the content will be conducted by the method of monitoring the *frames*[3] (Contreras, 2007) and *topoi* (González Gaitano, 2008) on a sample of selected Slovak and Italian media. A part of the research is in development, and its aim is to identify which groups of topics (*frames*), or commonly shared ideas (*topoi*) that are used in covering religious events in the individual types of media, and what the media is seeking to appeal to in the recipient's mind, and also, what can be learned to carry religious content through media more efficiently. The focus groups were composed of both lay recipients and media experts within various groups across Slovakia. Results are based on how the respondents perceived the coverage of religious content in church and secular media, what they found missing or disturbing, where they saw a potential for improvement, and what causes they could identify.

The above addresses the very basic structure of the research: the analysis of the mediated religious message and the system of transmission, i.e. the media communication itself. As per classical media theories, media communication comprises the source, channel, code, external input and the recipient.

The following passage presents the conclusions of the research of the communication code based on qualitative audience research using Delphi and focus group methods. According to M. Sorice (De Blasio et al., 2007, p. 122), *Delphi* method was originally developed for technological and military purposes in the 1950s by Olaf Helmer and Norman Dalkey. Apart from the preliminary analyses, the originally planned area of application, this method was also used in other fields. As a result, several variants of this method have evolved. In general, this method is regarded as a tool, which can effectively contribute to finding solutions to complex problems. At the core of this method is the effort to initiate fruitful discussion within a group of experts, and, at the same time, eliminate potential interference among the individual members of the group.

Focus groups represent a favorite qualitative research method. As pointed by B. Gunter, its proponents argue that this method has "higher ecological validity" than quantitative questionnaire or experiment-based methods (Gunter, 2000, p. 46). However, in our research, laypersons were given less room than experts since our main goal was to identify how the internal processes actually work and what are the causes behind them, rather than to gather information about the prevailing opinions of consumers. Thus, when setting up the focus groups, we focused on consumers representing that part of the *continuum*[4], which corresponded to an active audience prepared to critically reflect upon the issues raised, or even actively contribute to the respective media content.

The focus groups were set up to include both experts and lay consumers. Since our primary goal was to enhance the "depth" of discussions, the total number of discussion groups was relatively small. As part of our research, we created ten discussion groups, most of them composed of experts (seven). As a complement, a smaller number of discussion groups (three) were formed from ordinary consumers

When setting up focus groups we targeted recipients of media content familiarized with both secular and church media, especially those interested in religious messages. Therefore, we were looking for candidates from among the group of believers interested in current developments in media, during the topically-oriented public events we organized in two Slovak towns, Nitra and Ružomberok, in February and March 2009. Young people formed a majority in two research groups, and the third group was mixed. The number of people in the groups ranged from three to fifteen.

The *Delphi* technique was applied to seven discussion groups of experts. The discussions were conducted from May 2008 to May 2009 in Slovakia (Bratislava, Ružomberok, Nitra), but also in the Czech Republic (Prague) and Italy (Rome). There were two research meetings held both in Nitra and Prague**,** with the attendance of journalists from various secular and church media engaged in the religious topics, academics active in journalism from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Russia, and from other European countries, employees of the Catholic academic journalistic institutions from Europe, Asia, USA and Africa, experienced media experts cooperating with the Department of Journalism of the Philosophical Faculty at the Catholic University in Ružomberok, and those interested in the church media developments. The number of attendants of the discussion groups ranged from eight to twenty.

An identical set of questions was asked in both focus and expert groups – ordered and developed based on specific circumstances and context. The key question was as to whether the media language is suitable for the transmission of religious messages. Other related questions were as follows:

- What is the relation of secular media towards religious topics? What is the determining factor of their relation?
- What are the aims of journalism and religion?
- What instruments can be employed to attain such aims in journalism and religion?
- What values are at stake within journalism and religion?
- Is there a match between religious values and *news values*?
- Is this a question of professionalism?
- Is an evangelization medium a journalistic institution?
- Is it possible to reasonably inform the public about religious topics (and under what conditions)?
- Is a full-scope evangelization through media possible?
- How successful are evangelization media?
- What are the weaknesses of secular media in relation to religious messages?
- What are the weaknesses of the church media in relation to professional journalism?
- Is a shift in this area possible, and if yes, what are its limits?

The discussions were conducted in accordance with the rules applicable to individual methods. There were audio recordings and written records made during the discussions. The information obtained was subsequently made subject to interpretation. As part of the reduction of the obtained information we applied the method of summarization of meaning and the method of categorization (De Blasio et al. 2007, p. 92-93). This means that we synthesized the key thoughts contained in the answers of the interviewed persons, and subsequently categorized them into specific topical areas. Then we looked for certain similarities or affinities within the individual areas, which could then be aggregated into distinct categories. We identified 34 such categories, which combined the individual features of the system of media communication in relation to the transmission of religious messages. These categories were then organized into several groups based on whether they pertained to the media language code, media communication code, or external inputs. Thus, we arrived at 12 categories related to the language code, 9 categories related to the transmission channel, and 13 categories related to external inputs.

Table 1: Categories identified

	Code	Channel	External inputs
1.	*News values*	Function of journalism	Prejudice
2.	Conflict	Commerciality	Faith
3.	Scandal	Internal motivation	Communicators
4.	Entertainment, leisure	Technical conditions	Journalists' professionalism
5.	Fragmented and flashy nature	Democratic nature, public	Investment in people
6.	Stereotypes	*Agenda setting*	Strategy
7.	Story	Capacity to change people	Church control
8.	Generalisation and simplification	Promotion	Independence
9.	Transmission of essence	Church media specifics	Truth and dialogue
10.	Quality vs superficial		Authority
11.	Language		Stance
12.	Awareness about audience		Journalists' profile
13.			Inputs expected from the church

Each of the research method used is qualitative in its nature, which means that the research procedure does not follow the traditional quantitative pattern: the formulation of hypotheses, verification of the hypotheses, description of status, and confirmation / falsification of the hypotheses. Our approach follows a different pattern: perception and understanding, description of status, and formulation of hypotheses (De Blasio et al., 2007, p. 49). Therefore, a substantial difference can be observed between these two approaches: while the quantitative research leads to confirmation or falsification of the hypotheses, and, as a consequence, includes rather normative and self-confident conclusions, the qualitative research on the other hand arrives at the point where the quantitative research has begun, i. e. the formulation of the hypotheses. Thus, the conclusions of the qualitative research attempt to contribute to finding a solution to a given subject and they are formulated with much greater caution and responsiveness to new findings and impulses.

At the heart of our research was the endeavor to obtain the most authentic understanding or insight into the system of media communication of religious messages, or, stated differently, to conduct an ethnographic observation. The material presented herein represents the outcomes of this observation related to the media code.

Results

News values and gospel values

Classical news values may be regarded as the first and most important feature of media code. This is what makes a piece of news worth its name. In a broader sense, this is what makes a journalistic material worth its name. To put it bluntly, that is what allows a piece of information to enter the process of selection, coverage and disclosure of news.

As clear from *Delphi* expert groups, the answer to the question about the presumptions journalists have before they decide to cover a religious topic is surprisingly simple: it is the very same presumption they have in respect of other topics, including a sieve

of news values. Thus, the deeply rooted understanding of the existence of prejudice is put in question. This topic would also deserve a more detailed examination, however, obviously, it cannot be discussed as part of inherent features of the media code.
There is a tendency to anticipate journalists' prejudice against religious topics, however, the lack of interest might have different causes, for example, a limited offer of journalistically unattractive topics.

And this does not pertain only to religious topics. "Politicians, big companies, public administration, all of them feel discontented," said František Múčka, editor of Trend, an economic weekly. The problem also stems from the fact that external communicators, including those within the church mistakenly identify their own view of attractiveness and significance of a topic with that of the public. Or, at the opposite extreme, they completely underestimate the importance of attractiveness and significance of a topic, and try to draw attention to an institution, person, etc. by means of a news message, which, however, may contain little or no information value. Despite public relations represent an important source of information for journalists (Hejlová, 2015, p. 106), church spokespersons are often unable to provide information in attractive form for media. And thus journalists receive news of a pilgrimage, for instance, which details names of preachers or organizers, and provides extensive accounts of the weather, but which, at the same time, lacks any single important thought from the homily, or some basic information such as the number of participants, history of the covered event, not to speak about the focus of this year's event. If a journalist lacks personal involvement and good will to publish important pieces of information, and does not make a phone call to the respective parish to obtain the missing piece of information, such a news message cannot end up anywhere else than in the dustbin.

Thus, news values are 'rules of the profession', the understanding and acceptance of which cannot be avoided. Does a religious message also contain these values? This is a key question when examining the capacity of media language to transmit religious messages.

News value is what makes a journalistic material worth its name. Religious message can only be though of as religious messages, if they incorporate values based on the aim and mission of Christian religion as such – i .e to preach God's love of man and encourage people to answer to God's calling and form a personal relation with God. This is the aim of the church attained mainly through personal testimonies (personal proclamation of one's experience with God and the unfolding of personal relation with God). To preserve the very essence of a religious message, the news message must contain something of this experience with God and His love and his presence in human life, which, then, translates into values we may call gospel values, and which can be identified with classical Christian virtues (love, justice, faith, solidarity, forgiveness, etc.)[5].

Are *gospel values completely* different than *news values* – or can intersections be found? Our research suggests that intersections *can* be found, however, it is far more difficult to find them in information based on *gospel news values* than in mere *news values* lying on the surface of conflicts, scandals, deviations, or some extravagant pieces of the elite. To present fidelity or forgiveness attractively requires more effort and a more intense and deeper immersion in the topic. "It takes more professionalism," concludes Diego Contreras, consulted as part of our research, Dean at the Faculty of Social Institutional Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. "It is easier to appeal to instincts and instinctual drives, it is easier to descend than ascend. Therefore, a Christian journalist must be better."[6] The Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Claudio Maria Celli, has provided his insight during the conference about today's challenges faced by journalists organized by the Council: "To be a Catholic journalist is far more demanding than to be a common journalist, as this requires a greater responsibility,"[7]. He has also specified three things that make a responsible Catholic journalist: to achieve high technical quality, mediate the Teaching of the Church, and be able to engage in a true dialogue with the world. According to C. M. Celli, the capacity to enter in a true dialogue with the world requires openness to all parties, respect to partners, ability to sustain dialogue with oneself, and internal integrity.

This has also been the source of mutually negative experience of religious and journalistic communicators: if, on one hand, there is little or no motivation to pursue higher professional goals, and put in more effort (by those who provide the source information for journalists – i. e. those in charge of selection and processing in secular journalists, and in religious journalists working in church media responsible for wrapping religious messages into journalistic garments), then religious messages rarely drop through the sieve of news values, which then appears as-if too dense, irregularly woven, etc. Laziness coupled with lack of professionalism on both sides results in two extremes: journalists either give up *gospel value,* and, subsequently, superficial news values deprive the information of its content and meaning (a typical example can be a piece of news with an account of secondary phenomena such as the Pope's menu, health condition, and the Pope's tailor, when covering an important pastoral visit of the Pope, i. .e a piece of news which completely ignores the main idea). Or, on the other hand, journalists often give up *news values*, and thus leave journalistic style completely, which makes the news difficult to accept or digest by the audience.

Thus, in an effort to pull out a religious message from its natural environment and encode it medially, the understanding and acceptance of news values appears to be one of the key preconditions of success. "It is kind of a tax we pay to the journalistic environment," said Antonín Randa, chief editor of the Czech *Katolícky týdeník*. According to Randa, this process sometimes requires even resignation on the essence of a piece of information (message).

Here, we will examine in more detail some of the news values, which can be associated with religious messages. During our research, the following news values were identified as crucial: (1) conflict first and foremost, then (2) scandalousness, (3) entertainment, (4) fragmentation, (5) incompleteness, (6) stereotypes, and (7) story. For the sake of brevity, the following passage provides an account of news values, where religious and media communication intersect most vividly: (1) conflict, (2) scandalousness and (3) story.

Conflict

As clear from the aforementioned, the single most important news value is conflict. This can be supported by the fact that as part of the textual analysis and subsequent critical journalistic coverage, some authors limit themselves to the conflict itself, and regard conflict as the primary key for selection and coverage of topics by a professional journalist. By examining religious news coverage (especially the news about papal pastoral journeys) by secular media, Imrich Gazda arrived at a conclusion that journalists try to find a conflict in each topic, and for those topics where no conflict exists, they "elaborate" it (i. e. artificially re-create it, and thus, manipulate the news). (Gazda, 2009).

As demonstrated by our focus group research, common recipients see the emphasis of media on conflict almost negatively – they find it exaggerated and unnatural. The more critical part of the audience is usually able to identify that pervasive conflict does not correspond to reality. The use of conflict almost everywhere makes them feel manipulated and scornful about it. It is felt that journalists in their quest for conflict often over-interpret facts and behave arrogantly. With respect to media transmission of religious messages, members of our focus groups questioned whether we necessarily need conflict, and whether we need to see it in everything. Some have pointed to the fact that when anything served in a conflict-free manner fails to induce any thought or attention on the part of the recipient, then, the problem does not lie with journalists, but with somebody else – a reader with his or her mind reformatted to conflict. And, quite naturally with those who effect, sustain, and promote such a mindset, i. e. the journalists. Thus, the aversion to conflict identified in recipients points to the artificial nature on one hand, but it also hints to a call for an alternative, especially in relation to religious messages in the media.

Such calls for an alternative are positive. However, it should be noted that a conflict-free world cannot become the basis of the output of religious communicators, since that would bring us to the opposite – not less negative – extreme. Such an approach poses a risk of abandoning the media language completely since this would deprive the media language of one of its key characteristics. For any critical recipient, a conflict-free approach to covering religious topics stinks of a false calm, suppression of facts, creation of 'smoke screens', distrust in the recipient's preparedness to hear the truth. "The church should not see itself as a monolith," said one of the participants of our research discussions in response to the idea to provide more room for opinion for more stakeholders in relation to religious topics. A conflict-free approach exaggerated to the extreme also hampers the efficiency of the transmitted message and is just as implausible as emphasizing conflict at any cost.

But why does the church avoid conflict when spreading its messages through the media? Opinions voiced during our research point towards two main reasons: caution and lack of freedom.

According to Jozef Kováčik, spokesperson of the Slovak Bishops' Conference, public statements (made by priests) on social issues should be guided by the principle of wisdom and prudence. According to Kováčik, the Papal Nuncio's Office in Slovakia has recommended talking about principles, and refraining from mentioning specific persons – not even dictators such as Hitler or Chávez (Kováčik, 2009). The church is inerrant and cannot afford to discredit herself by the flaw of 'personalizing' the negatives, since every person develops and the history teaches us that providing a certificate of veracity – or doing the opposite – is often uncertain and deceptive. "It is a problem to stand behind someone – you never know what may come out of that person," explains Juraj Gradoš, a Greek-Catholic priest. This pertains not only to political parties, presidential candidates, but also political and social problems in broadest sense. The response of those recipients who find specific political and social tensions or struggles important, was disapproving, especially in relation to the trade-off of morality and key values preserved and presented mainly by the church. They usually understand silence of the church (and its media) as a clear expression of cowardice, sterility and submission to external pressures on the part of the church representatives.

With respect to conflict as the key news value, it should be noted that the church puts herself in the role of an external observer. Respondents pointed to the fact that the church's typical reaction is no reaction, i. e. she expresses her attitude by remaining silent. „ Such a reaction does not give the respective topic any importance," explains J. Kováčik (2009). Thereby the church wisely reacts to the so-called *agenda setting*, where media themselves try to define what will be 'talked about'. They first create a virtual reality and then project the importance of a specific topic in the eyes of the recipients, often artificially, in contradiction with the real value of that topic. The church does not wish to use her authority to promote, draw attention, or give credit to such topics. Thus, however, it falls into the trap of non-intervention. There is one more example of this. In the turbulent years around 2000, there was a real battle going on for support of the weekly between the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), a party involved in bloody scandals, the extreme nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS), and Christian Democratic Movement avowing also Christian values. The former chief editor of the Slovak national weekly *Katolícke noviny (Catholic Newspaper),* Marián Gavenda, stated on behalf of the attitude of the weekly that "in the newspaper, we would rather keep the line of a slight sterility, than assume the risk of being labeled as a supporter of a certain political representation" (Gavenda, 2005).

Such an approach, however, leads to embargos on certain topics and people in the broadcasting time conquered – so to speak – by the church within the media space (either by creating own media or by obtaining broadcasting time in public media). As part of our research discussions, a number of journalists complained about embargo imposed on certain people and topics. Oddly enough, topics and people potentially creating conflicts or introducing inadequate opinions are simply not welcome. However, this approach might lead to a situation where correct views are not apparent enough for recipients, who, in turn, might end up confused. As noted by J. Kováčik, broadcasting time is very precious, and it is not a good idea to waste it by presenting different opinions; it should be used to present our own view. Admittedly, this approach aims only at those who are already convinced. But the unconvinced (or those convinced about the opposite) need confrontation so they can make their own decision as to where they stand. „The aim is not to win new Catholics, but deepen the faith of believers, which should happen in a conflict-free manner," confirms the (subconscious) intention of the authors M. Raučinová, editor of *Katolícke noviny*.

Based on the results of our research, the second reason of avoiding conflict as mentioned above is lack of independence of the church or her representatives. This was repeatedly voiced by participants of our focus groups, especially in connection with the need of a more active social (hence political) engagement of the church. Within the groups, participants presented a strong view that public engagement of the church is very unlikely – even unthinkable – because bishops (not only Catholic) tend to collaborate with power, and 'get along well' with anybody. The underlying idea is not to anger the state, i. e. the government currently in power, because the church depends on state finances. According to the participants of our research, the disestablishment of the church and state might offer a potential solution to this problem.

Scandal

Common media recipients are more ready to mention 'scandal' in connection with media coverage, than 'conflict'. This was confirmed by our focus group discussions. Scandal seems to be the most striking of all news values. Scandals were among the first things mentioned by members of our research discussions in respect of religious topics. In addition, participants have also touched on the problem of the incomplete coverage of scandals. Recipients with deeper understanding of the problem have identified a lack of interest on the part of media to address all open questions related to the news, and their reluctance to clear the names of those injured, when the particular case eventually ends in favor of suspected persons. This, however, is a problem that goes beyond the relation of media and religious topics. It is a serious ethical problem addressed by established journalistic ethic codes by introducing the right to a supplementary announcement[8].

Nevertheless, scandal still belongs to the basic news values. Media cannot be blamed for this, although, quite naturally, the church representatives may feel that information about the church only enters the media on the condition of the existence of a scandal. "Media try to maintain their secular profile and focus exclusively on information, but only until a scandal comes up. From that moment, media are eager to cover religious topics," explains Juraj Gradoš, chief editor of *Slovo,* a Greek-Catholic bi-weekly.

In this respect, two questions have emerged during our research: (1) Is sensitivity of media to religious topics primarily sensation-driven, i. e. negativistic? If yes, this would point to a prejudice against religious topics, which should be examined separately. And, (2) Is the reaction of the church to scandals brought by media well controlled and well managed? The question pertains to the problem of intra-church dialogue, which is also a topic for a separate paper. Here, we will limit ourselves to present several preliminary considerations.

The expression *scandal* originally means offence, in the first place. Scandal relates to offence – it is based on something, which contradicts the declared, expected, or required integrity of the scandalized person. In the case of church topics, the focus is on the contradiction between behavior and Christian moral principles, which the person upholds and declares. In that respect, media scandals can also be viewed positively as they may point to mistakes, and can be viewed as an opportunity to defend and strengthen the position of the church.

As stated by N. González Gaitano, in principle, media messages are based on the so-called *topoi*, i. e. a set of generally shared ideas. These are some principles – whether natural or cultural – which are not subject to public discussion, and which are accepted and taken as given. According to N. González Gaitano (2009) many *topoi* have roots in the gospel. However, media often build false structures and based thereupon they present internally contradictory and misleading conclusions (e. g. homosexuals refer to equality, but, in fact, what they ask for is social acceptance, not equality). For the church, this is a chance to uncover contradictions, touch upon the human mind and soul by drawing on this generally shared idea, and pursue a solid argumentation line on that basis. According to Gaitano's research, this was the case during the Pope Benedict XVI's visit to USA in April 2008. The Pope has managed to use direct personal contact to change predominantly negative views of media prior to the visit. In particular, this has become apparent in connection with sexual misconduct by priests, which was hotly debated in the USA at that time. By being frank and consistent, even in answering questions about the sexual abuse within the church during the visit, the Pope has managed to purify the image of the church in the eyes of the public. Thus, the scandal was positively used in favor of the church.

During our research discussions, the recipients have called for clear statements by the church on essential topics – including topics that scandalize the church. The church wishes to do so wisely, and, in Slovakia, she prefers excluding the public (hence the media) from a dialogue and solution of problems. The church is afraid of the immaturity of recipients, and refrains from disclosing her best arguments to avoid misuse. Here, the church relies on its timeless existence and stability, which is, so to speak, confirmed by centuries. However, it should be noted that the task of the church is to approach those who live today. Therefore the church needs to build bridges of trust with the living. And that can only happen if she preserves her moral authority. "From 1989, the church has not been regarded as a moral authority ", says Rado Pavlík, editor of SITA agency with a specialty in religious topics during one of our meetings with media experts. According to Pavlík, the reason behind this is the church's reluctance to interpret current news and events. On the other hand, continuous scandalizing of the church points to the fact that the institution is still regarded as a carrier of certain moral values, which should be upheld by the church herself. In that light, media scandals are, to a certain extent, a thrown gauntlet, which should be picked up by an able communicator to show that the church accepts guilt on members of the church, resolutely resolves incidents, makes clear statements, takes effective measures, and, if appropriate, provides inconvertible proof of innocence, in a word, the church must communicate and face the problem.

Story

From the beginning of journalism until today, story has always been one of the most important carriers of information. As stated by D. Klimeš (2009), today, it is imperative to insert stories where ten years ago, a description would do. In practice, this means that when a journalist attempts to inform about introducing fees at the doctor's, a story of a homeless is woven into the news, thus, plain news is hinged onto a story with strong social connotations.

The story, as a significant news value and part of the journalistic language code, is highly correlated with traditional instruments used in spreading religious messages, especially testimonies. Testimony is one of the key instruments of the church which can be employed to pursue her evangelization efforts. According to Catechism of the Catholic Church, the name catechesis was given to "the totality of the Church's efforts to make disciples, to help men believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ. (CCC 4). (Rončáková, 2009)

A story in the form of a testimony appears to share common ground in respect of both the *news values* and *gospel values*, hence, it is one of the most efficient ways of encoding religious messages into media language. This was also substantiated by members of our research discussions, who agreed that stories can successfully carry religious messages. "If we are to evangelize 'between the lines', presenting stories of our readers is a very effective way to do that," explains M. Raučinová, editor of *Katolícke novniny*. And the chief editor of *Slovo*, a Greek-Catholic bi-weekly adds that the news about God becomes journalistically attractive, if it contains what Jesus has done on earth: "the blind see, the lame walk, and the deaf hear... And that's gospel."

To reject to include a story is to reject the essence of media communication code and media language as such. On the other hand, to regard story as a significant means of expression leads to efficient media communication. "My job is not to produce messages about harmful effects of contraception or the evil of artificial abortion on a daily basis, but provide the audience with stories of ordinary people," says Radoslav Igaz to describe his job within the journalistic team of the most popular commercial television in Slovakia, *Markíza* (Igaz, 2009). If he decided to smuggle his own position in the news item at any cost, he would quickly close the door for any religious message. Bringing light stories of people in the street might seem less creative or serious, and less prestigious journalism. However, Igaz, with a healthy dose of modesty, regards such stories as an effective tool to present spiritual or even religious values. As he puts it, even for him personally, covering these stories is encouraging, and therefore he seeks to encourage viewers.

To encourage people, to give them hope, to reveal the origins of God's intentions contained in Revelation and religion in front of people's eyes is, after all, the very aim of the church seeking to spread the good news. This was also the point made by Alžbeta Mráková, chief editor of *Família,* a Catholic family weekly. She sees "difficult stories of families – their stumbles, their victories, and their quests for a new meaning of life" as one of the key pillars of the content of the magazine" (Mráková, 2009).

Discussion

This paper investigates the inherent features of media language code and attempts to examine them in the light of the spreading of religious messages through media. It was shown that in several aspects which are crucial for media code, the journalistic encoding of messages and the religious encoding diverge. However, such a disproportion is not inevitable. On the contrary, the inherent features of media communication code also facilitate an efficient transmission of religious messages.

Our key thesis was based on a premise that one of the pillars of the media language code is the structure of news values. Without embracing these values a journalist cannot exercise the profession and work effectively within its communication framework. *News values* are ‘values’ which make the information ‘worth’ attention of both the journalist and recipient. On the other hand, *gospel values* are values which make the religious message worth its name. If the journalistic encoding of a religious message is to be successful, intersection between journalistic and religious values needs to be found. Does such intersection exist? We may conclude that such intersection exists, but this can only be achieved at the cost of investing more effort and placing higher demands on journalists, which are required to be prepared to look for news values under the surface of instincts and instinctual drives. *News values* can be viewed as certain ‘rules of profession’; without them, the output transmitted through the media space cannot be regarded as media product. This means that in principle, it is possible to produce journalistic materials containing religious messages.

When individual *news values* are put under scrutiny, a set of values which help to spread religious messages becomes more evident. As part of our research we have focused on three of them: conflict, scandal and story.

For the church, conflict is a quite naturally part of her public presence. “Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division,“ said Jesus Christ (Luke 12,51). Anyone who remains faithful and clings onto the ‘uncomfortable’ Christian mission eventually runs into conflict with the environment. A correct understanding and comprehension of the essence and power of conflict as the most important news value represents a huge potential for religious messages in media environment. However, our research has also revealed fears of a conflict on the part of religious communicators, as well as a tendency to avoid such conflict. We have identified two main causes of such a fear: first, caution (as an extreme expression of discretion) and second, internal dependence (material dependence on the power of state). Exploiting the potential of conflict by the church requires very able religious communicators. Lack of such communicators appears to be one of the main reasons behind the failure in this field. The ability to enter this arena requires courage. Indeed, calls for courage were often voiced by participants of our research discussions, who also identified a significant gap in the understanding of the social teaching of the church. “If the church consistently stood on the side of the oppressed and the weak, it would inevitably run into conflicts,“ concluded one of the respondents. Common recipients participating in our focus groups have pointed to the lack of topics such as economic crisis, layoffs, management ethics, inadequate profits, or ethnic conflicts, in the coverage of the church media. This finding also points to the fact which has continued to reemerge in our research discussions: media recipients regard explication of social and political events in the light of the teaching of the church as one of the most significant challenges the church faces today.

Scandal is an expression, which also bears the meaning of an offence. However, any offence is based on a generally accepted idea with roots in nature or culture (*topos*). Even though in its negative extreme, scandals presented in media are often sensation-driven, in principle, it can also be employed to spread religious message, or cement the authority and credibility of the church. This can be done by correct treatment of *topos* and skillful communication based thereupon. This may also comprise reactions of religious communicators to existing scandals, or active incitement of public uproar over a contemptible action and the motivation of such an action.

Story is a carrier with the biggest potential to communicate religious messages through media. It can be identified with testimony, which is the single most powerful tool, which may help the church in spreading the news about God and His presence in the life of people on earth. Personal testimony of God at work is very powerful, and, at the same time, it is not artificial and works 'between the lines'. It is inappropriate to look at communicators of religious messages who use stories as 'lower-style' journalists who seek escape from serious journalism.

As for other characteristics inherently contained in the essence of the media language code, we have identified qualities such as fragmentation, 'flashiness', generalization and simplification, limited ability to transmit the essence of things, superficial character, disinterest about quality, certain language-related specifics and audience awareness. For the sake of brevity, we cannot deal with them in more detail. In general, the communication code of media communication in connection with the religious message can be regarded as an inhibitor, which – if employed correctly – may become a catalyst. We have pointed to some specific problems and their solutions, the employment of which may contribute to professionalism of both communicators, i. e. the journalists, and persons authorized to communicate on behalf of the church.

Notes

[2] This study was based on Catholic research sample, and the cultural context of this study is also Catholic.
[3] R. Entman defines *framing* as "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (Entman, 2004). According to him, frames have four functions. They define the terms of a problem, offer a causal interpretation, encapsulate a moral opinion on it and promise a solution, remedy or line of action (Entman, 1993).
[4] *Continuum* is a media audience research concept by David Morley or Abercrombie and Longhurst. It represents a series of different types of audience depending on their passivity/activity – from the most passive consumers accepting anything that is brought up – likened to a sack of potatoes sitting in a sofa in front of a TV – to more selective and critical types of audience with stronger technical background, to the so-called *petty producers,* i.e. recipients who interactively enter the arena of media communication, and are able and willing to produce authentic media content (Sorice, 2007).
[5] An attempt to provide a complete list of all virtues was made by Hildegard of Bingen in the 12th century, and includes 35 virtues matched to respective vices. The listed virtues include discipline, chastity, mercifulness, patience, moderation, generosity, truthfulness, peace, humility, obedience, justice, courage and perseverance (Rajčan Zaviš, 2007, p. 108).
[6] Consultation with D. Contreras conducted as part of the research.
[7] Presented at the international conference *Identità e Missione di una Facoltà di Comunizacione di una Università Cattolica* (Identity and Mission of the Faculty of Communication at the Catholic University), organized at the instigation of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on 22 – 24 May 2008 in Rome.
[8] The right to a supplementary announcement is the right of a person mentioned in the media in connection with a suspected criminal activity to be provided with a room to present a piece of information about the outcome of the case, if the original suspicion is proven false.

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Digital Visuality and Social Representation. Research Notes on the Visual Construction of meaning

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Abstract: Images are tools in the social construction of reality. The meaning of images, however, is not a feature of the image itself but the outcome of a communicative process that involves a negotiation between social actors with a stake, interests and resources to participate in the process. The theory of social representation provides a useful conceptual framework to capture this process and to look at the ideological influences that affects the visual construction of meaning in the digital age. From this perspective, I challenge the belief that digital visuality is a form of communication with emancipative power for the mere fact that it facilitates non-institutional and amateur production and circulation of images. I claim instead that the emancipative potential of this as other forms of visuality depends on their effects on the process through which images are given meaning – supporting or undermining openness, diversity, etc. – and on the nature of the meanings that can – or cannot – find expression in this process. Applying the theory of social representation to the analysis of the social construction of meaning for the images of 9/11, Abu-Ghraib and the Arab Spring, I argue that the influence of hegemonic ideology has been decisive in the repression of interpretations of these images with subversive or emancipative potential.

Keywords: digital visuality, social representation, 9/11, Abu-Ghraib, Arab Spring, visual communication

The social construction of visual meaning and the role of digital visuality

In a previous discussion (Stocchetti, 2014), I argued that the idea that digital visuality can have emancipative, political functions is based on problematic beliefs concerning the relation of visuality with truth, community and the construction of the real. These beliefs are associated with the use of images in accordance with at least three main logics or "principles" which I described as follows:

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1. the "reality principle", or the idea that images can "show" or otherwise provide some important or truthful piece of information and that vision is associated with authoritative knowledge ("what you see is what you get");
2. the "pleasure principle", or the idea that what really matters is not the information an image provides and the relation between the image and what it shows, but rather the ritualistic use of the image in the constitution of a community of meaning and ultimately the relationship between individuals united by the fact of giving the same meaning to the same image;
3. the "hyper-reality principle", or the idea that an image, instead of providing information or performing a ritual can be a simulacra: a communicative tool used to actually "hide" rather than "showing" relevant aspects of reality.

Implicit in these logics is a notion of meaning which contains at least two important features. First, the meaning of images is not a permanent feature of the image itself but an impermanent outcome of a communicative process: the social construction of visual meaning. This process can be usefully looked at as a political process in which some participants are more influential than others and issues of meanings are always associated with issues of power. Second, if relations of power and relations of meaning are mutually constitutive – each one depends on the other – the interpretation of the political role of visual communication has to face a fundamental problem of indeterminacy: relations of meaning cannot be determined independently from relations of power and vice versa.

In this paper I will continue my discussion on the political role of digital visuality starting from the last general hypothesis which may be useful to recall here:

> If digital visuality cannot credibly reduce the indeterminacy of visual communication in its conventional functions of political propaganda and community building, one may still claim that, compared e.g. to conventional photography, digital visuality affects the social construction of reality in at least three ways. First, it opens up the practice of visual communication to large parts of the populations, blurring the distinction between producer, distributor and consumer of visual objects (…). Second, it enhances the productive capacity of visual technology beyond reality itself, into the hyper-real e.g. enabling the production of images that transcend the human perspective (…). Third, it performs as a logic for the representation of reality that have pedagogical implications and enhances the social value of visual communication in the social construction of reality (…) independently from reality itself. The combined effects of these three changes introduced by digital visuality, one may suggest, are "emancipative" on political grounds to the extent that their role is "subversive" of the social construction of reality. Political emancipation, in other words, is associated to the dissolution of the relations of power legitimized by notions of truth and reality that are effectively challenged by the logic of digital visuality, the hyperrealism of its representations, and the widespread access to both. To change the world, one should first change the way we look at it. Digital visuality can help in looking the world not as it is but as it could be (utopia/dystopia). (2014)

In the pages that follow, I look a bit deeper into the social construction of visual meaning to understand the conditions which may foster or undermine the emancipative potential of digital visuality in the social construction of visual meaning.

To look at these conditions, I will apply the Theory of Social Representation to the analysis of the social construction of visual meaning associated with the attacks of 9/11 and the events that followed - the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the abuses committed on Iraqi war prisoners at Abu Ghraib and the rebellions of the "Arab Spring". The nature, meanings and socio-political implications of the images associated to these events have inspired many important analyses (Blaagaard, Mortensen, & Neumayer, 2017).

Compared to previous ones, the main coordinates of my exploration cover methodological and more substantial grounds. In terms of method, there are excellent analyses that have discussed the political role of the visual representation of violence in terms of visual discourse (for example, Shepherd, 2008). Here, however, I suggest that the Theory of Social Representation, when applied as originally formulated by Serge Moscovici, is a distinctively productive approach when the problem is that of disambiguating the meaning of images and assess the actual impact of visuality on relations of power (what here I call "relevant social meaning"). This problem is important especially in aesthetic approaches to political analysis in which "the inevitable difference between the represented and its representation is the very location of politics" (Bleiker, 2001, p. 510). In relation to the representation of violence, this "difference" is constitutive of the politics of aesthetics and what Jacques Rancière has described as, "the distribution of the sensible" or the activity that "establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts" (Ranciére, 2004 (200), p. 12). In this perspective, and in line with Judith Butler, "interpretation is not to be conceived restrictively as a subjective act" and, as I shall argue in a moment, "the photograph itself becomes a structuring scene of interpretation" (Butler, 2009, p. 67). This role is fundamentally political or, one may argue, even constitutive of the political itself, since, for example, it is at the origin of the performative power that Ariella Azoulay called "the civil contract of photography" (Azoulay, 2008)

In relation to the political affordances of visual communication, however, my analysis reveals at least two grounds for scepticism concerning its subversive or even "revolutionary" power. First, powerful ideological elements in the social construction of visual meaning are influential in dissolving the indeterminacy of digital visuality to the detriment of the emancipative encouragement of digital visuality. Second, the same discussion also discloses the capacity of hegemonic representations to enforce selective usage of available visual technology: while the "radical potential" of digital visuality is thwarted, its instrumentality in support of hegemony if fully exploited.

Social representation

In its original formulation by Serge Moscovici - his study on the impact of psychoanalysis on the French society of the late 50s and, in particular, on the social identities of Catholics and Communists (Moscovici, 1961) (Moscovici, 2008) - this approach addresses questions of meanings associated to the assimilation of scientific knowledge in society. Among the most relevant of these questions is social change, the communicative construction of meaning and the adaptation of social identities to changes introduced by scientific knowledge in the perception of the world. For our purpose, this approach contains at least two significant tenets. The first is that meaning is created in communicative practices. The second is that these communicative practices involve social identities in the double role of cause and effects: sources of change and passible of changes themselves.

Empirical research on social representation focuses mostly on written and oral communication. Interest on visual communication has been scarce in the past but is now growing and the idea that images participate in important ways to the social representation of relevant phenomena has gained widespread currency (Howart, 2011) (De Rosa & Farr, 2001) (Sen & Wagner, 2005).

In applying the theory of social representation to the political role of digital visuality I am not claiming that images are empirical proofs concerning the nature of social representation of phenomena. Rather I suggest that the process of social representation is influential in the attribution of socially relevant meaning to both images and phenomena. Furthermore, this approach helps the analysts to grasp the hermeneutic circle of visual meaning: the fact that, in the practices of visual communication, *the phenomenon gives social meaning to the image as much as the image gives social meaning to the phenomenon.*

In this paper I cannot discuss exhaustively all the articulations, concepts and tenets that animate the contemporary debate on social representation. What I would like to do, instead, is to provide the reader with few, basic conceptual coordinates to grasp the heuristic opportunities offered by this approach to the study of visual communication[1]. Simplified to the extreme, the basic conceptual framework for the approach of social representation should include at least the following concepts: event, themata, objectification, naturalization and anchoring.

The Event

The process of social representation is in essence a communicative process for the production of meaning that is triggered by an *event*. This is a more or less dramatic occurrence, a phenomenon or an object that forces a re-definition of social identities by activating deeply seated ideas or beliefs called *themata* (see below). The event, in this perspective, is not a mere occurrence but something that a social community experiences as a fundamental challenge: something that cannot be ignored and that requires a response in terms of re-adjustment. The important idea here is that the social construction of meaning is triggered by the traumatic or semi-traumatic implications of the event for the community experiencing it. Moscovici himself is quite explicit about the importance of this idea when he notes that “a social representation emerges when there is a threat to the collective identity and when the communication of knowledge submerges the rules society has set itself” (Moscovici, 2008, p. 104).

For Wagner et al:

> Without an object being salient and relevant for a social group and hence entailing a public discourse and symbolic elaboration of the object, there is not much sense in looking for a shared representation (Wagner et al 1996, 347)

Sakki notes that not the scientific but the social relevance of the object or phenomenon is the condition that leads to social representation

[1] For this purpose, and to avoid burdening this preliminary discussion, I will refer to the recent publication by Finnish social psychologist, Inari Sakki on the social representation of European identity in school textbook (Sakki, 2010). This work is, to my knowledge, the most recent and accurate description of the concepts and theoretical debates pertaining to the theory of social representations in its current state.

> The SRT [social representation theory, NdA] studies specific kinds of representations: those that have become the subject of public concern. They are thought about, discussed and they may cause tensions and provoke actions. Therefore, the object of study must be socially meaningful and necessitate communication (Sakki, 2010, p. 76)

The fundamental idea at the roots of social representation (in the singular as a process) is that a problem generates communication about the meaning of the problem itself. Social representations (in the plural) are communicative objects emerging from the identity threats associated to the activation of themata by an event which have a traumatic impact on the community – e.g. war, revolutions etc. As we shall see in a moment, the exercise of organized violence is a special type of event that requires elaboration because of the ambivalent nature of this violence: both a problem and a solution for the integrity of the community.

Digital visuality can play a fundamental role in the visual construction of the event. This is probably the single most important "point of entry" for the emancipative role of DV. But also the most jealously guarded prerogative of media organizations: to be first on the spot, to go "live", etc. The visual construction of the event is a crucial stake in the competition for the control over the social construction of reality. Digital visuality facilitates the participation of individuals but organizational, cultural and legal factors still support the influence of institutional media – individual images about a certain event become relevant if and when appropriated by media organizations. This re-appropriation is a form of usage that erodes or suppresses the radical potential of images by simply complying with the conventions, "styles", legal provisions etc. that regulate media work (e.g. not showing dead bodies of "our" soldier nor bodies of "their" dead children in war coverage)

Themata

According to Inari Sakki:

> Themata are those ideas around which representations are constituted and which engender them. Therefore, they have a normative and generative power in the formation of social representations. Themata are shared knowledge or beliefs of which people implicitly or explicitly think and talk about, and which often are taken for granted. They are rooted in collective memory of a group. They may not be expressed aloud in communication but they underlie socially shared knowledge. They are a kind of a deep structure or representation and not always open to direct observation (Sakki, 2010, p. 61)

Sakki notes that these themata are "deep" and difficult to observe presumably because they are either hidden also to those who share them (themata are semiconscious) or they are difficult to express (themata are irreducible to texts) or even sensitive aspects of people identity (themata are kept "secret" to avoid direct challenges to one's identity). My suggestion here is that, if themata are both "social and deep", relevant traces or signs of them should be found at cultural level or even – as I would argue in relation to the cases in exam here – at the level of institutionalized ideas e.g. in political theory or other forms of authoritative knowledge which can be associated to the object of representation.

The emancipative/subversive potential of digital visuality depends on its capacity to activate emancipative/subversive themata. The problem here is to see if and when such things as "emancipative themata" actually exist. In social representation theory, the notions of "emancipated" and "polemic" representations designate representations shared by small groups or subgroups still compatible or in opposition to the "hegemonic" representations shared in some measure by all and constituting the „core" of the social identity (Ben-Asher, 2003, pp. 6.3-6.4). One can probably find interpretations of themata with subversive implications e.g. re-interpretation, re-contextualization, etc. Ultimately it is all about subverting relations of meanings to subvert the relations of power based on them. The theory of social representation (supported by cultural and historical knowledge) helps identifying these themata and understanding their communicative values in the processes of social representation and in the social construction of visual meaning.

Objectification & Naturalization

"Social representations – wrote Serge Moscovici – take shape according to two basic processes: *objectification* and *anchoring*" (Moscovici, 2008, p. 54) (Italics in the original). In the description of Sakki, "objectification is a process where something abstract is transformed into something almost physical and concrete. It means translating something that exists in our thoughts into something that exists in reality" (Sakki, 2010, p. 53). An especially interesting aspect of this process is its connection with visuality. As Sakki notes, "objectifying is to discover the iconic aspect of an ill-defined idea or being, that is, to match a concept with an image" (Sakki, 2010, p. 55). The idea behind this description is that images do in fact perform an important function of mediation between the world of ideas and the world of material object, transforming ideas (e.g. war) into objects (e.g. the images of war). For communicative purposes, concepts perform a rather similar function but objectification into an image seems to increase the intelligibility of a concept and therefore to facilitate its assimilation and divulgation, albeit in the simplified form of a visual image (De Rosa & Farr, 2001, pp. 6-7). This "simplification" or the transformation of a concept into an image is the temporary result of a negotiation over the conceptual meaning of images and it is in principle passible of further transformation as result of dissemination and further negotiation.

The idea expressed in the notion of naturalization or "...when something abstract becomes real", and "an object become part of the social reality" (Sakki, 2010, pp. 55-56) points in my view, to the elements of continuity in the transformation of a concept into an image. In other words, it looks at the stage of the construction of meaning in which meanings are agreed upon and, to an extent, considered as "given" for further communication. In this communication, what is objectified/naturalized in a given image or set of images, can be denaturalized if and when there are agents with enough interest and resources to effectively do that. In this sense, objectification and naturalization should not be considered static results of communicative process but communicative processes themselves through which the unfamiliar become familiar.

The notions of objectification/naturalization assume but do not (yet) articulate the influence of visuality in concept formation and, or for our discussion, the influence of digital visuality in the autonomous formation of concepts by individuals and groups. What this notion suggests, in other words, is that the political role of digital visuality should be seen as mediated by (rather than alternative to) the role of concepts. In this perspective, the visual construction of concepts seems a fundamental process in the competition for the control over the social construction of reality. This process - the visual formation of concepts - is ultimately where the power of advertisement and propaganda rests: establishing representations of reality based on images/concepts that organize information according to implicit hierarchies of values (e.g. the concept of citizenship based on the enmification of the non-citizens as in nationalistic propaganda) (see e.g. Roland Barthes *Mythologies* (Barthes, 1972) and Andrew Wernick, *Promotional Culture* (Wernick, 1991).

Anchoring

Anchoring is the “second major process” of social representation (Moscovici, 2008, p. 104) whose main function is to make the unfamiliar familiar or, more precisely “to anchor strange ideas to reduce them to ordinary categories and images, to set them in a familiar context… which draws something foreign and disturbing that intrigues us into our particular system of categories…” (Moscovici, 1984, p. 29).

More recently, Sakki describes anchoring as a process through which:

> New or strange phenomena-object, experiences, relations and practices are attached to everyday categories and worldviews and offered a familiar reference point. Anchoring integrates the emerging representation into a network of significance, marked by social values, generating a system of interpretation (Sakki, 2010, p. 50).

As a further connotation, the notion of emotional anchoring seems particularly useful. Emotional anchoring and objectification are described as

> …communicative processes by which a new phenomenon is attached to well-known positive or negative emotions, for example fear or hope. In this way the unknown becomes recognizable as, for example, a threat, a danger, or as something nice and pleasurable (Höijer, 2010, p. 719)

Anchoring seems a crucial moment in the social construction of visual meaning. This is where disambiguation takes its final turn and, for example, the images of war or abuses are construed as images of victory or defeat, pleasure or pain, from the point of view of the victimizer or the victim, etc. However, since the meaning of the image is not a feature of the image but the outcome of the use of the image, images can be re-appropriated and given very different meanings in alternative anchoring.

Digital visuality and the politics of meaning: from 9/11 to the “Arab spring”

In *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Baudrillard argues that, after the “stagnation of the 1990s…with the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, we might even be said to have before us the absolute event, the ‘mother’ of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place” (Baudrillard, 2003 (2002), pp. 3-4). Interpreted in its symbolical dimension as a “humiliation” (Baudrillard, 2003 (2002), p. 100) those attacks posed a serious threat to the credibility of beliefs concerning fundamental aspects of US collective identity (e.g. exceptionalism, invulnerability, moral supremacy, etc.) and therefore to the integrity of that identity. It was this event and this threat that generated the social representation as a communicative and defensive response to that threat.

In the terms of the theory of social representation, therefore, 9/11 is the *event* that generates social representations and activates at least one fundamental *themata* that pre-existed the event itself: the relationship between West/US capitalism and Islam construed in terms of a competition between societies based on incompatible hierarchies of values.

The visual imagery used in the news coverage of that event - the images of the Twin Towers, violated, burning and collapsing associated to the images of Arab people celebrating the attacks as a victory – participated to the construction of the event itself as a trauma. It established the fundamental ambivalence that accompanies the hetero-referential visual representation of competitive in-group vs. out-group relationship (Sen & Wagner, 2005): the suffering of one is the pleasure of the other.

In this traumatic event, images participate to the social construction of meaning. They do so, in all their functions: performing truth claims following the "reality principle", community building in the logic of the "pleasure principle" or even as simulacra, hiding to Ego important aspects concerning Alter. In this process, images play a fundamental role in constituting an influential context for the experiencing of other events (the US led invasion of Iraq, the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the "Arab spring") and the interpretation of the relative imagery.

The nature of this context, and the role of digital visuality, pertain to the distinctive features of the way in which 9/11 was constructed as a visual event. First, the multiplication of the point of views of the visual coverage of the attacks. Second, the enforcement and institutionalization of a "global" gaze unified by available technology and by the global value of the event - itself a function of the symbolic values of the place (New York as the cultural capital of a certain idea of "West") and the glamour of the feat (two airplanes in two skyscrapers in a few minutes!). Third, simultaneity or the global enforcement of the event "real time". Fourth, juxtaposition or the visual coverage of the event through the images of the effects of the attacks in association with the celebrations in the Arab world, making the celebrations part of the event itself.

Themata

To my knowledge, the only subversive idea associated to 9/11 was formulated by Baudrillard when, commenting in the aftermath of that event, he wrote:

> The fact that we have dreamt of this event, that everyone without exception has dreamt of it – because no one can avoid dreaming of the destruction of any power that has become hegemonic to this degree – is unacceptable. Yet it is a fact, and one which can indeed be measured by the motive of violence of all that has been said and written in the effort to dispel it. At a pinch, we can say that they did it, but we wished for it. If this is not taken into account, the event loses any symbolic dimension.… This goes far beyond hatred for the dominant world power among the disinherited and the exploited, among those who have ended up on the wrong side of the global order. Even those who share in the advantages of that order have this malicious desire in their hearts. Allergy to any definitive order, to any definitive power, is – happily – universal, and the two towers of the World Trade Center were perfect embodiments, in their very twinness, of that order. (Baudrillard, 2003 (2002), p. 6)

The themata associated to this idea is that of revenge or justice for humiliations inflicted upon others in the history of globalization and before - ideas that are too complex to be suitable for the reduction into “live” coverage and too painful to be handled by a community facing the agony of awakening to its own vulnerability.

The other and more acceptable – from the perspective of the US society - themata is that of the “*clash of civilizations”* (Huntington, 1998). Activated by 9/11, this themata accompanies the interpretation of the US led invasion of Iraq but also, although in different forms, the abuses of Abu Ghraib and the Arab Spring. In this latter case, the ideas expressed by Francis Fukuyama in its formulation of “the end of history” (Fukuyama, 2006) add to the idea of contraposition between West/US capitalism and Islam the idea of intrinsic superiority of the former. In the light of this themata the images of the Arab spring can be interpreted as a reassuring “sign” of victory for a representation of the West/US construed around the core values of corporate capitalism and representative democracy at a moment when these values are challenged within the West itself (McKinley, 2007) – most visibly by the “Occupy wall street” movement in the very same days of the early revolts in those Arab countries

A further themata with deep roots in US political culture is the role of US power in world affair and the competition between the main ideologies in US foreign policy *internationalism vs. nationalism* (Shurman, 1974). In the aftermath of 9/11, this themata has been influential in the re-definition of US collective identity, e.g. anchoring the visual coverage of the invasion of Iraq in terms of “repressed revenge” as a response to the different normative imperatives which followed from different ideological interpretation of 9/11: Serving the “international community”, performing as the policeman of the new world order eliminating a common threat vs. serving national interest and restoring the national self-image by revenging the attacks on 9/11.

Finally, the *feminization of the enemy* is a themata that in both cases of the invasion of Iraq and Abu Ghraib, opens up interpretative avenues that I have discussed elsewhere in relation to the WAR is LOVE metaphor (Stocchetti, 2009). Put briefly, metaphoric associations tend to be bidirectional, and the roles of source and target domain interchangeable – which in practice means that if WAR IS LOVE then LOVE IS WAR. Looked at in terms of themata, this idea performs the legitimization of violence and the actions of the victimizer on the victim in terms of intentions of the former – as in the belief that a certain degree of violence is inherent in passionate relationships expressed in the Latin sentence “vis grata puella”. Rooted in deep structures of meaning associated to patriarchal conservatism and reactionary ideologies, this idea expresses its generative power in all three the cases in exam: in the visual coverage of the invasion of Iraq, with the moralization of violence and military technology, in the images of abuses at Abu Ghraib and the feminization of war prisoners, and in the celebration of civil strife in the visual representation of the Arab Spring.

Objectifications

The visual coverage of the attacks of 9/11, the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the Arab Spring *objectifies/naturalizes those events in terms of acts of visual display*. The concept of visual display in the media, discussed by Anne Koski (2011), describes the performativity of visual coverage as a form of a speech act that, when performed in public by an official representative of the state, “can be interpreted as a purposeful signal” which is “simultaneously intentional and conventional" (Koski, 2011, pp. 93-95). The act of visual display therefore can be seen as a political act whose intelligibility depends on ritual functions based on existing structures of meaning but that, in the achievement of specific communicative goals (e.g. signaling American military supremacy) is not constrained by ritualistic meaning. Furthermore, acts of visual display are associated to the symbolic expression of power, inviting participation from a particular point of view associated to implicit hierarchies of values in the effort of influencing the social construction of socially relevant meanings. These hierarchies and the point of view itself can be endorsed or rejected but cannot be ignored because embedded in the visual object and the empirical reality of the viewer. Objectification in terms of an act of visual display establishes a common experiential background for very different opinions about the event themselves. The experience of violence is reduced to visual participation, from a particular point of view, for both those who enjoy it and those who don't. In the coverage of Iraq wars visual participation enforced the point of view of the US and its allies. For the abuses at Abu Ghraib the point of view was that of the victimizer. For the Arab Spring the point of view was, ambivalently, that of the demonstrators as endorsed by Western (mostly BBC and CNN) media.

In the war coverage of the US led invasion of Iraq in BBC World and CNN International, as presumably in other broadcasting, war was objectified in a form of visual communication where the goal was not primarily that of providing information but rather that of inducing involvement on one of the sides – the one who could safely "embed" journalist and cameraman i.e. the one who could control the visual communication about the war itself. This form of coverage was part of the war itself: the visual experience of the phenomenon, part of the phenomenon and it can be interpreted as an act of visual violence. Watching the agony of Iraqi military from the camera of an incoming missile, or in the green light of Allied night vision devices are forms of communicative behavior based on applications of digital visuality that enforce on the viewer the point of view of the victimizer. If we think that Iraqi people saw on BBC and CNN the same images of the "sweaty watcher" described by Nicholas Mirzoeff in his *Watching Babylon* (Mirzoeff, 2005, pp. 1-2), we can understand how this type of broadcasting can perform as an act of visual violence in which the victim can see the consummation of her fate with the eyes of the victimizer – a bit like the young woman that in the movie "Strange Days" is forced to see her rape "live" with the eyes of her rapist. This form of objectification – the reduction of war to its visual experience – preserves the ambivalence intrinsic to visual communication. In fact, the nature of this involvement is also ambivalent, contingent on conditions independent from the nature of the visual text - joyful participation for those who shared the need for revenge - like the sweaty watcher in Mirzoeff description - a sort of revulsion for those who did not - like Baudrillard in *War Porn* (Baudrillard, 2006) and Mirzoeff himself - and presumably anything in between. Once the experience of war is objectified/naturalized in terms of an act of visual display, the paradoxical logic of the "society of spectacle" kicks in irresistibly (Debord, 2002 (1967)): "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images… it is a world vision which has become objectified" (Debord, 2002 (1967)). Once the collective experience of war is successfully objectified/naturalized in terms of an act of visual display not much can be done against the possibility that war itself could be experienced in the terms of visual pleasure - as Mirzoeff bitterly observes – or to inhibit the social construing of visual war coverage as "real" entertainment compared to the "fictional" entertainment of war movies and war games.

The images of the abuses committed on Iraqi war prisoners at Abu Ghraib were privately produced and therefore hardly imputable or interpretable in terms of a more or less deliberate act of psychological warfare. The objectification/naturalization of those images in term of an act of visual display should be interpreted on the double track of overt and latent meaning. Overtly they were a proof that abuses were committed. Latently, they were a proof of the repressed desire of revenge that instigated the war. If the institutional war coverage managed to construe the war as an exercise of organized violence based on "precise weapons", inspired by the security of the "international community" and implemented professionally and almost deprived of hatred (*sine ira et sine studio*), the images of Abu Ghraib were a window on the private dimension of the war. The act of visual display itself was a negation of the institutional interpretation – proving it false – and a reaffirmation of the hatred and the desires of revenge that institutional war coverage tried to hide. In continuity with the war coverage, however, those images enforce participation from the point of view of the victimizer(s): we are shown what the photographer saw, a selection of his/her field of visible reality based on his/her emotional engagement with the events. Also in continuity with the psychological dimension of warfare, those images performed the "feminization of the enemy" which was an extension of a narrative logic of the ideological justification for the invasion of Iraq (Stocchetti 2009).

The visual coverage of the Arab Spring, at least in its initial phases, is an act of visual display in which, like in the invasion of Iraq and the abuses of Abu Ghraib, Western audiences are shown the ongoing events from the point of view or the "gaze" that are closer to the in-group/identity defined in terms of West/US capitalism. Like in the case of Abu Ghraib, circulating images are for the most part privately produced by local participants. Unlike Abu Ghraib and in a fashion closer to the uses of images in the invasion of Iraq, the institutional appropriation of private images performs ideological functions, re-construing the event in relation to the themata (e.g. clash of civilizations) activated by 9/11. At least as experienced in Western media the visual coverage of the Arab Spring construes and celebrates digital visuality as a technology of freedom which allows both the political exposure of authoritarian regimes (reality principle and truth claim of images) and the mobilization against them (pleasure principle and community building). Digital technology/visuality are represented as "democratic" and digital camera as democratic "weapons" against undemocratic regimes (BBC, 2011a) (BBC, 2011b). It can be argued that while the democratic nature of digital technology is disputed by digital surveillance in US, China, Iran etc., the idea that digital camera can be effective "weapons" against undemocratic regimes is a dangerous metaphor that recognizes the instrumental value of visual communication but misconstrues the conditions of its efficacy: it gives power not to unorganized masses but to the agents or the political actors that can make a politically effective use of images. We see pictures taken by the people directly experiencing those events on BBC or CNN because those images have been appropriated by these organizations and because the regimes affected by the "Arab Spring" do not yet have the capacity neither to control the circulation of digital images nor to mount an effective counter-campaign. In this sense one may indeed claim that these regimes surely underestimated the communicative potential of digital visuality. Quite obviously, this is something else than claiming that digital cameras are the weapons of democracy: digital images and technology are "weaponized", only if and when used by influential actors in coordinated visual strategy.

Anchoring

The coverage of the US led invasion of Iraq in BBC World and CNN International participated to the socio-institutional effort of constructing the war as an act of justice which repressed a more fundamental need of revenge. Institutional discourse anchored the experience of 9/11 as an act of war, a humiliation and ultimately a trauma for American national identity comparable to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941: a shock whose detrimental effects on the collective identity could be overcome or healed only with the total defeat and humiliation of the offender[2]. Although the anchoring of the US led invasion of Iraq war in terms of revenge seems plausible, my suggestion is that, at least in the institutional forms of BBC World and CNN International war coverage, the visual representation of the invasion was inspired by the need of repressing, rather than expressing, the revenge motives. I am using the term "repressing" and not "concealing" here because "denial" seems a more plausible term than "lying" when discussing the responses to traumas threatening collective identities. Not only a war of revenge would have undermined the politics of war, but "justice" is preferable to "revenge" as a motive in the self-representation and legitimation of US as a "policeman".

The images of Abu Ghraib are an ambivalent proof of the abuses *and* of the repressed desires of revenge. They can be enjoyed or rejected as a continuation of the "visual pleasure" from the war, but also enjoyed or rejected as the unveiling of the repression at work in the visual construction of the war – disturbing because it showed the "true nature" of US intervention: not bringing justice in the name of the "international community" but satisfying the frustrated need of revenge for the humiliation inflicted by the attacks of 9/11. The anchoring process itself takes different connotations depending on the social functions one attributes to visual communication. As proof of the abuses, those images can be interpreted and used for their truth claim based on the "reality principle": the idea that digital images can show events more directly and efficiently than other forms or representation. As proof of repressed desires of revenge, however, those images are associated to the "pleasure principle" and the idea that the correspondence between the images and the reality is less important than the relationship created among individuals that give those images a particular meaning. In this perspective, as visual representations of repressed desires of revenge – along ethnic, cultural, political and even gender lines - the images of Abu Ghraib perform community building functions. They did so as empirical objects whose relevant social meaning is construed through oppositional anchoring: one either enjoys the sight of humiliation *or* feels humiliated. Looked through the lenses of the "war on terror" and the polarization of political identities ("with us or against us"), the images of Abu Ghraib provided the opportunity to engage the constitution of social identities on hetero-referential (Sen & Wagner, 2005) and emotional grounds (Höijer, 2010): *If you enjoy the sight you are with us; If you feel humiliated you are against us*.

From a political point of view, however, the constitution of identity on emotional grounds creates more problems than it solves, especially if the goal is to overcome the traumatic effects of 9/11 on US/Western and possibly Islamic identities. By enforcing

[2] The campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan probably did not offer a victory comparable to that on Japan and Iraq become a suitable scapegoat. Not by chance, as the peace treaty with Japan in 1945 was signed on the USS Missouri, Bush delivered is "victory speech" from the USS Abraham Lincoln 2003.

emotional anchoring on social categorization (the distinction between in-group and out-group), and coupling or "tying up" feelings with loyalties, the possibility opens up for (in)voluntary violations of the in-group/out-group divides. In practice, some of "us" may indeed feel humiliated and may decide to actually leave the "in-group" as construed in the oppositional representation of the West/US capitalism vs. Islam. The cleavage those images created within the "US/West" collective identity is an important one and its political implications should not be underestimated. Politicians can tell people what to think and be more or less successful in their propaganda efforts. But when it comes to the problem of how to feel the task seems more complicated and indeterminacy more influential.

The images of Abu Ghraib where also re-appropriated. Cultural re-appropriation can be considered as a form of communicative behavior symptomatic of a collective need to come to terms with the visual evidence of an event that undermines the in-group cohesion and the representation of collective identity possibly more than the event itself. In one of such instances of re-appropriation, Columbian artist Fernando Botero offers a visualization of the abuses to produce an explicit association with Picasso's *Guernica* based on the conceptualization of art as "permanent accusation"[3] In another instance, the re-appropriation of the images of Abu Ghraib in the form of fetishist practices is a form of ambivalent anchoring that subverts the relationship between the victim and the victimizer from one of "abuse" to one of "complicity". Also in this case the pleasure principle is at work and the relation of meaning among the members of the in-group is prioritized over the relationship between the image and the event it portrays (reality principle). I should add that both these instances of cultural re-appropriation of the images of Abu Ghraib are also acts of visual displays whose intelligibility depends on the images of abuses that institutionalizes the normative function of art, in one instance, and the subversion of the victim-victimizer relationship in terms of mutual pleasure in the other. While the former performs conventional or "modern" esthetic functions (e.g. the hypostatization of the abuses in a work of art), the latter is more compatible with the consumerist styles that Frederic Jameson attributes to the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson, 1991): the decoupling of the signifiers (photo of abuses) from the signified (the abuses) and the repositioning of the latter in the domain of fetishism as a private and rightful enjoyment.

The anchoring in terms of revenge applies equally well to the relevant social meaning of those images in *expressing* repressed desires but also in *feeding* more or less conscious desires of revenge, especially in communities whose identity is associated to the image of abused Iraqi soldiers. The images of Abu Ghraib are traumatic *also* for Arab identity. While the nature of this trauma can be looked at in both its cultural and gender connotations, it would be interesting to look deeper into how those images and the event they refer to generates social representation as a defensive response for example through the visualization of revenge (Filkins, 2004).[4]

If 9/11 is considered an event that triggers a collective representational need (which I discuss here in terms of the social construction of visual meaning), the concept of

[3] See Fernando Botero at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fernando_Botero (last visited 22.02.2012

[4] The idea of revenge, like the themata of the 'clash of civilizations' is quite influential and relevant also in the discussion about the cultural roots of Islamic terrorism, a most interesting topic addressed by scholars such as Fawaz Gerges, Gilles Kepel and Louise Richardson, among others, but one that I cannot discuss here. See, for example (Gergez, 2005, pp. 251-277), (Kepel, 2008, p. 33), (Richardson, 2006, p. 71 & ff)

revenge opens up some interesting interpretative avenues also in the case of the images the Arab "spring". Those of us old enough to remember the Prague Spring during the Cold War, must have wondered what was the ground for the naming of the rebellions in some Arab countries as "Arab Spring". The Prague Spring was an effort to reform soviet communism which ended in the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet Union in 1968. The Arab Spring is a sequence of insurrections against more or less authoritarian regimes in some Arab countries which at least in two cases – Libya and Syria – so far, has led to civil war and foreign invasions. If on historical grounds, the differences may not be as relevant as the similarities, on ideological grounds, however, the association is actually quite plausible. The idea of revenge is here construed on the ideological dimension of a competition that during the Cold War was between the capitalist West against the communist East but that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some believe is between the West/US capitalism and Islam.

In this line of interpretation, the images of the Arab "spring" are an act of visual display that celebrate the power of the West/US capitalism in both its technological (digital cameras that circumvent regimes censorship) and ideological (the advancement of democracy) dimensions. In this act, visual communication in general and digital visuality in particular, are construed as the tools that allow access to "truth", circumventing the control of local regimes but also offering the technological infrastructure for Western media (e.g. BBC International) to re-appropriate those images. In this process of re-appropriation the notion of revenge seems a plausible interpretative key in terms of both the truth claim and the community building functions associated to the usage of (digital) imagery (Stocchetti 2014). In relation to their truth claim or the "reality principle", those images are anchored in the idea that (Western) democracy is advancing in those countries. Equipped with digital cameras and other communicative tools provided by available (Western) technology, the people of those countries are portrayed in the process of "becoming like us" which is itself a sign of the hegemonization of American identity threatened by 9/11 and re-defined by the "war on terror". In this perspective the cultural re-appropriation by Western media supports the idea of the inevitable advance of (Western) democracy, famously discussed by Francis Fukuyama in the aftermath of the Cold War[5]. In relation to the community building function or the "pleasure principle", those images are anchored in the idea that the advancement of democracy - and the transformation of "they" into "us" is actually a victory of the West in the clash of civilizations prophesized by Samuel P. Huntington at the turn of the century. In the cultural re-appropriation of those images from this standpoint, the visual saga of the Gadhafi resistance, escape and eventual assassination is an element of particular significance for the anchoring in revenge and one that connects the Arab Spring with the invasion of Iraq (the images of dead Saddam and his sons) and the "war on terror" (the images of dead Osama Bin Laden). In this anchoring, the representation of suffering and the victimization of local population by their rulers are appropriated by both the West/US and the Islamists. But if for the West/US the victims of the regimes are the proof of the regime's illegitimacy, for local Arab audiences the illegitimacy of the regime does not requires proof and its victims are martyrs for Islam. If this would be true, and the social construction of visual suffering in the Arab Spring does indeed follow very different anchoring in the West/US compared

[5] As a note one can only note the difference in the institutional re-appropriation of the imagery associated to the Occupy Wall Street movement that in the very same days of the early Arab Spring, was demonstrating against the distortions introduced in the US democracy by financial capitalism. My impression is that while the latter is construed as a democratic rebellion the former is construed as a civic disturbance.

to local audiences, the anchoring in term of revenge and the cultural re-appropriation in the terms of "necessary" or "enforced" advancement of democracy by Western media would have performed at least one important (dis)function of propaganda: blinding domestic publics to the fact that the insurrections of the Arab Spring paved the way for the advance of Islamist organizations.

The main points of my discussion and some questions concerning the role of digital visuality are tentatively summarized below[6].

[6] A special thanks to Inari Sakki for her comments and help in the compilation of this chart.

<table>
<tr><td>EVENT</td><td colspan="3">9/11</td><td rowspan="3">What is the role of digital visuality (DV) in the visual construction of the event?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Main THEMATA</td><td colspan="3">WEST/US CAPITALISM vs. ISLAM</td></tr>
<tr><td>other themata</td><td colspan="3">GOOD vs. EVIL, DEMOCRACY vs. TERROR/DICTATORSHIP, HUMAN vs. ANIMAL, MASCULINE vs. FEMININE</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Can DV activate alternative/emancipative/subversive Themata?</td></tr>
<tr><td>CONTEXTS</td><td>Iraq 2003</td><td></td><td>Abu Ghraib</td><td>Arab Spring</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>(themata US-Islam)</td><td></td><td>(themata human-animal)</td><td>(themata democracy-dictatorship)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">masculine-feminine</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Institutional DV</td><td></td><td>Informal/private DV</td><td>Informal/private DV re-appropriated by media orgs.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Can DV resists institutional re-appropriation?</td></tr>
<tr><td>OBJECTIFICATIONS</td><td>war/violence</td><td></td><td>torture, abuses</td><td>demonstrations</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">(most common visualizations)</td><td>Saddam/Bin Laden</td><td></td><td>American soldier</td><td>twitter, digital camera etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Arab victims</td><td>Gadhafi</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">DV is itself a representation of the West/US capitalism/freedom</td></tr>
<tr><td>ANCHORS</td><td>act of war</td><td></td><td>enjoyment/disgust (emotional anchoring)</td><td>Prague Spring (naming)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>trauma/pearl harbour
fear (emotional anchoring)</td><td></td><td>pleasure, humiliation</td><td>victory of capitalism/democracy, superiority of the West</td></tr>
<tr><td>Common anchoring for all cases:</td><td colspan="4">Revenge</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Can DV influence anchoring?</td></tr>
<tr><td>IDENTITY FUNCTIONS</td><td>re-definition to overcome the 9/11 trauma</td><td></td><td>Revenge vs. justice</td><td>Reassurance about West/US capitalism</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">polarization/polemic of American identities (in- and out-groups)</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1. Social representations and visual communication: a provisional conceptual framework

Conclusions

On a general note, I am indeed tempted to agree with Brian Winston when, in open contrast with Marshall McLuhan, he suggested that available technology is not a cause but an effect of social order and the "law of the suppression of radical potential" is decisive in making sure that technological innovation cannot produce non incremental change or "revolution" in the former (Winston, 1986) [see also (Traber, 1986)].

Digital visuality is a form of visual technology with emancipative or even subversive potentials to the extent it facilitates the participation of more and more diverse social identities, interests and hierarchies of values to the social construction of visual meaning.
The actual expression of this potential however is far from granted.

Visual communication has distinctive aspects of indeterminacy that in particular circumstances (e.g. redefinition of traumatized social identities) creates opportunities for emancipation. Hegemonic ideology, however, is productive: it responds actively to challenges and can inhibit emancipative potentialities if and when they emerge. The "pure and random play of signifiers" (Jameson, 1991, p. 96) which digital visuality seems so decisive in bringing about is not a weakness but the very strength of the cultural logic of late capitalism, and the very reason of its resistance.

If every signifier were always autonomous from every signified, communication and understanding would be simply impossible. In practice, communication and understanding happen all the time but, if we are interested in relations of power, we may usefully notice that some understandings are more influential than others. To enforce the emancipative potential of digital visuality – as well as other forms of communication - we have to gain a better grasp on the conditions of this autonomy since, taken in its absolute form, this autonomy reflects an epistemological standpoint that undermines the emancipative potential of digital visuality because it erodes the ideological impact of diversity in the visual construction of reality but not the effects of the hegemonic influences it describes.

If suggesting that "resistance is futile" may perform as a self-fulfilling prophecy, the influence of ideological elements in repressing the radical potential of digital visuality should not be underestimated. In fact, the autonomy of the signifier, and the commodification of culture associated to it, cannot be associated to semantic chaos but rather the hegemonic control on the social construction of meaning. While every individual is in principle capable of giving meaning - and a given image can be given as many different meanings as there are individuals using it - in my discussion I prefer to use the notion of relevant social meaning to describe the impermanent outcome of the social construction of visual meaning and to capture the influence of ideology in this process. For our discussion, this notion suggests at least two important points. First that the meaning of images is constructed not independently from, but functionally connected to, the purposes, interests, values, histories, etc. of the most influential among the agents participating in the process. Second, that even if the meaning of images is ambiguous, disambiguation is possible because the viewers never see images in a vacuum. The context of the uses of images contains situational clues that perform like interpretative keys for the decoding of the image and disambiguation. This process of disambiguation is relevant for the visual construction of reality: the process in which images and visual communication are used in the representation of relevant social issues.

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Recall and Recognition on Minimalism.

A Replication of the Case Study on the Apple Logo

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Abstract: The present research aims to better understand the impact of brand exposure and brand perception on logo recall and recognition. Building off of prior work that has examined surprising impairments in visual memory for the Apple logo (Blake, Nazarian and Castel, 2015), a comparative analysis is developed by comparing computer science and social science becoming specialists. The Apple logo is used as a case study due to its minimalism. The data reveal that only a small amount of the subjects can recall and recognize the Apple logo correctly. The recognition phase, in comparison with the recalling one, seems to be an easier task for the subjects. However, although the stylized features of the logo are often overlooked, each subject manages to recognize a large amount of details of the logo. Contrary to expectations, regardless of being a man or a woman, owning an Apple device, or developing a very positive emotional attachment to the brand are not significant variables that can determine a higher level of recall and recognition. Nevertheless, having a strong background in the technological domain can increase the probability of paying much attention to the details of a technical brand.

Keywords: logo recall; logo recognition; Apple; brand exposure; brand perception; minimalism.

1. Background

In a world characterized by an inflation of visual inputs, creating and using a minimalist symbol for a brand might be an efficient ingredient in marketing. One might claim that the more minimalistic an element is, the more recalled and recognized it becomes. This paper presents a comparative study between social and computer science students, aiming to assess the level of recall and recognition of Apple logo, one of the simplest brand symbols. This study is a replication of the study conducted in 2015 by Adam B. Blake, Meenely Nazarian, and Alan D. Castel, namely *The Apple of the Mind's Eye: Everyday Attention, Metamemory, and Reconstructive Memory for the Apple Logo*, published in The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology. The original research has as starting point the puzzle based on which some scholars are saying that multiple exposure to a certain stimulus can induce an accurate recall, while other are arguing the contrary (Blake, Nazarian, Castel, 2015). In this particular

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sense, the stimulus is the Apple logo, an extremely simple, memorable, and recognizable visual information (Farnham, 2013 in Blake, Nazarian, Castel, 2015). Thus, it is expected that this logo can be remembered in detail.

Considering that the original study underlines the inability to draw and recognize the minimalistic Apple logo, and thus emphasizing a considerable memory issue, a replication with a new sample, in a dissimilar country – Romania aims to provide insights into the robustness of effects of the used variables. The replication can show whether there are significant similarities between perceptions, regardless of the economical, social, and technological context.

Although developed economies (United Nations, 2017), Romania and the United States of America (USA), the latter being the location of the original experiment, differ. Considering the topic of the present paper, a relevant dissimilarity between the two countries is related to income. While the USA is considered to be a high income country, Romania is an upper middle income one (United Nations, 2017). In addition, the purchasing power parity (PPP) is of 18.56 trillion dollars for the USA and 441 billion dollars for Romania (GFP, 2017). The gross domestic product (GDP) is another indicator that differentiates the two countries; measured in US dollars, the American GDP is 17.348.072 million, while the Romanian one is 199.045 million (United Nations, 2016). Whereas the mobile-cellular subscriptions index per 100 inhabitants is 105.9 units in Romania in comparison with 98.4 units in the USA, the individuals using Internet amount up to 54.1% in Romania and 87.4% in the USA (United Nations, 2016). Strongly related to the case study in this paper, one significant information estimates that iPhone sales to end users, in 2016, are 62.9 million in the USA and 34.6 million in Europe (Dunn, 2017)[1]. Based on the above comparative data, a possible assumption could be that the recall and recognition on a technological high-end brand, such as Apple, would be lower in the case of Romania.

In contrast with the original study, the present research adds two new variables to the existing ones, namely the sex of the subjects and the specialization. Thus, the paper compares men and women, and the social and computer science becoming specialists. On the one hand, after studying gender differences, Maccoby and Jacklin claim that there are distinctions between the abilities of men and women. While men tend to excel in visual-spatial and mathematical abilities, women tend to perform better at verbal abilities (Herlitz, Nilsson, Bäckman, 1997: 801). On the other hand, Cattaneo, Postma and Vecchi (2006: 905) stress that "gender differences apply only to selective dimensions of spatial functioning." In addition, there are studies that underline that women have a better spatial and object identity memory (Voyer *et al*., 2007) and have a greater ability for tasks, among others, as recall of pictures, word recognition, object location etc. (Herlitz, Nilsson, Bäckman 1997: 808). Regarding the specialization comparison, to our knowledge, there are no research studying the relationship between technical or social expertise and memory recall and recognition. The choice of computer science and social science becoming specialists relies on the aim to study two opposite groups in terms of background. However, future research can enlarge the number of specializations.

Since it is still believed that 70% of all the purchase decision are made in store (Van Grinsven, Das, 2016), using a recognizable logo might become an important visual element in marketing. Thus, simple logos, that take little time and little brain capacity to be recognized, are preferred (Van Grinsven, Das, 2016). As simplicity is considered one of the most important principles in design, it involves the process of removing any unnecessary element (Eytam, Tractinsky, Lowengart, 2017).

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[1] Official data related to iPhone or any other Apple devices sales in Romania are not available.

Logos are considered an important visual variable which connects the consumer to the brand and to the emotional perceptions (Park, Eisingerich, Pol, Park, 2013). In a market context in which the number of logos increases, the individuals' attention toward brands decreases (Rotfeld, 2006 in Sääksjärvi et al., 2015). In this respect, researchers studying logo design emphasize the importance of its simplicity and minimalism in order to create a higher level of recall and recognition (Pimentel and Heckler 2003 in Sharma, Varki, 2017). The literature assumes that simple elements are easier to be remembered due to their low level of attention required and less processing capacity (Van Grinsven, Das, 2016). By studying the specific of logo design on brand recognition, Henderson and Cote (1998 in Van Grinsven, Das, 2016) claim that, for a higher rate of recognition, a logo should have a natural and harmonious design. Logos are associated with familiarity, identity, meaning, and likeability (Pimentel and Heckler 2003 in Sharma, Varki, 2017), and are responsible for cognitive and affective coding processes in linking the somatic markers to the brand (Sharma, Varki, 2017). Starting from the concept of *polarizing brands* (Monahan, Espinosa, Ortinau, 2017), Apple can be considered a brand that is either hated or loved.

Prior exposure to a stimulus, a logo for instance, predisposes an individual to that stimulus at a later time (Janiszewski and Meyvis, 2001). The processing fluency/attribution model claims that repeated exposure to a stimulus leads to a representation of the stimulus in the memory. Thus, at a later time, the memory will facilitate the encoding process and will make it more fluent, effortless, and unconscious (in Janiszewski and Meyvis, 2001: 19).

Considering the large amount of messages to which a consumer is exposed every day, all the received information is impossible to be consciously processed. Thus, attention becomes an expensive and limited resource (Milosavljevic, Cerf, 2008; Teixeira, 2014). Murray *et al.* (2013) claim that "attention, when directed to items already encoded in memory, improves the probability of their recall but does not increase the precision with which they are represented." In this respect, the Apple logo can be considered minimalistic and easy to be remembered and recognized.

Referring to the concept of mental effort, Kahneman (2011) believes that, in most cases, it can be considered non-comfortable. Therefore, individuals prefer to rely on intuition, attaching a high degree of trust to it. One of the most well-known experiments is the bat-and-ball puzzle. Shane Frederick, together with Kahneman (2011), has conducted an experiment in which the subjects have to solve a very simple math problem. As expected, more than 50% tend to give an intuitive incorrect answer. One of the explanation refers to the fact that people choose intuition over rationality, mainly because the task seems to be too simple (Kahneman, 2011). The same context can hold up in the case of the Apple logo, which is perceived as one of the simplest logos. In the same respect, increased exposure can lead to an increased level of recognition (Van Grinsven, Das, 2016). While talking about the preference for simplicity, the level of involvement of the individual should be brought into discussion. A person owning an Apple product, or wishing for one, is perhaps more likely to pay more attention to a detail regarding the brand logo.

Based on the above literature, the present paper begins from the following hypotheses:

H1, H2: *Males, in comparison with females (H1), and computer science, in comparison with social science becoming specialists (H2), are more likely to develop a better recall and recognition of the Apple logo.*

As stated above, there is a puzzle in the literature regarding whether recall and recognition abilities can be better performed by men or women. Thus, assuming that men are more interested in technology and are more visually oriented, we claim that men will better recall and recognize the stimulus.

In the same respect, considering the everyday context, computer science students are believed to pay much more attention to technology and to its details. By being interested in state-of-the-art technology, it is assumed that computer science students own Apple devices to a higher degree than social science ones or are more keen on them. Thus, by being in contact with an Apple device more often, computer science becoming specialists might recall the logo more accurately.

H3, H4: *Individuals owning an Apple device (H3) and individuals loving the Apple brand (H4) are more likely to remember (recall and recognition) the logo of the brand correctly.*

In this case, we expect that by being exposed to the Apple logo more often than non-users, the users will be more capable of drawing and recognizing the logo correctly. Moreover, by developing a positive emotional association with the brand, individuals are considered to pay much more attention to the details of the brand.

H5, H6: *The confidence level for the recall and recognition phases is higher in the case of Apple owners (H5) and of the lovers of the brand (H6).*

Owning an Apple device, thus being more connected with a logo, individuals are believed to be more self-confident when recalling and recognizing the Apple logo.

This study can be considered a preamble for further attempts to analyze the impact of brand exposure and brand perception on recall and recognition. At the same time, taking into account the case study of the minimalist Apple logo, further research can comparatively investigate a larger number of brands' logos, and can emphasize the importance of simplicity for creating business visual identity.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The experiment was conducted on a number of 198 subjects, out of which 78 are social science students from the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania (communication, public relations, advertising, and journalism) and 120 computer science students from the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Out of the total sample, 119 are female subjects. Age range is 18-27, *ME*=22.4. From the total number of respondents, 27.8% own an iPhone, 5.6% own a Mac, 2.5% own an iPad, and 2.5% own an iPod. Only 5 respondents are strictly Apple users, in the sense that they own both an iPhone and a Mac device.

2.2 Procedure

From a methodological standpoint, the present paper is a slight replication of the article entitled *The Apple of the Mind's Eye: Everyday Attention, Metamemory, and Reconstructive Memory for the Apple Logo* (Blake, Nazarian, Castel, 2015).

The original study employs two different experimental designs. The first experiment has the following steps: drawing the logo of the Apple brand on a blank sheet of paper, rating the confidence level of the accuracy of the drawing on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is low level of confidence and 10 high level of confidence), identifying the right Apple logo from a set of 8 figures, and rating the confidence level of the choice on a scale from 1 to 10 10 (where 1 is low level of confidence and 10 high level of confidence). The second experiment is similar to the first one, with the exception of asking the subjects to rate the confidence of being able to draw the logo before drawing it as well (Blake, Nazarian, Castel, 2015).

As the main above described steps have been followed in the present study, the main differences from the original paper are the following. First, a single experimental design is employed, one that implies the evaluation of the confidence level both before and after drawing the logo, and after the identification of the right logo from the given figures. The reason for choosing this design relies on the aim of analyzing in a more complex manner the metacognitive changes in the participants. Second, considering the task in which the subjects are asked to recognize the right logo from a given set of figures, there have been used 12 situations, instead of 8. Thus, the goal is that of creating an even more difficult context. Third, after the experiment, the subjects were asked to answer to a more enlarged set of questions for assessing the perception over the Apple brand. The main steps followed in the present experiment are described in more detail in the subsequent phases.

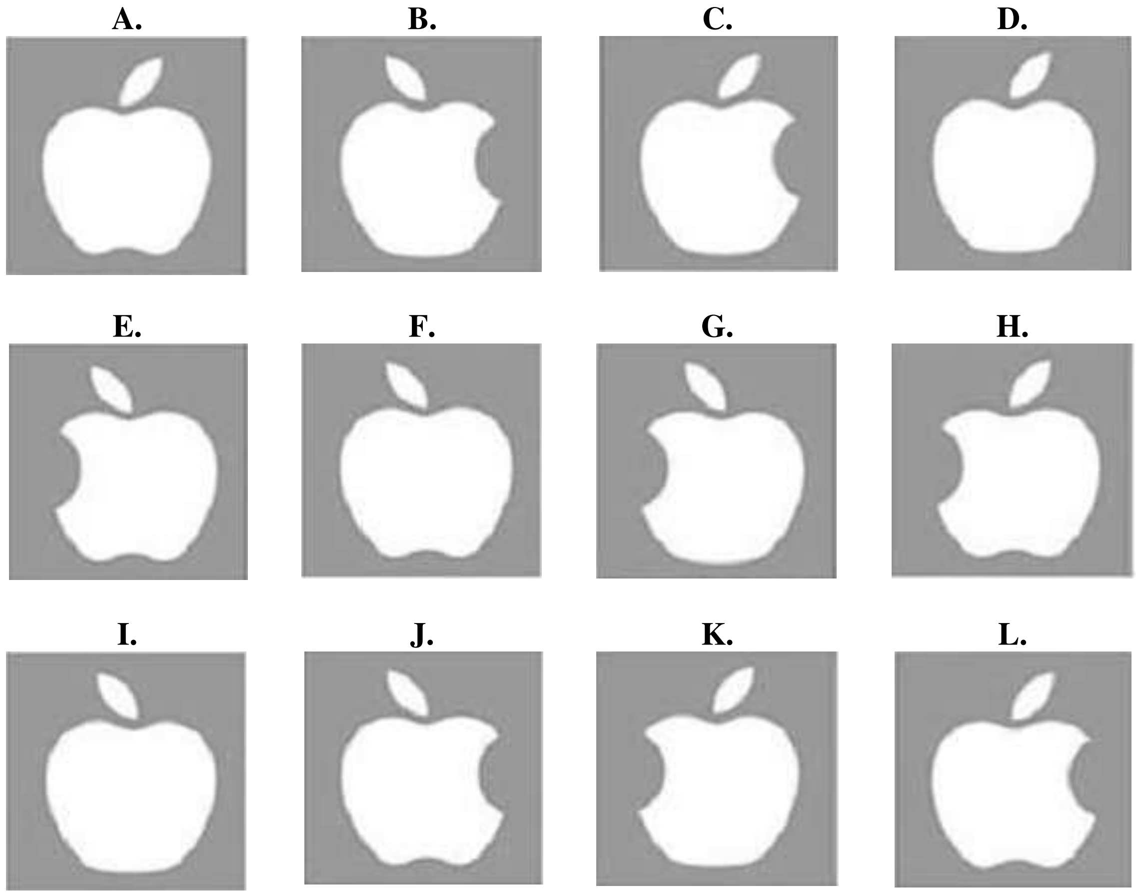
Recall phase

In this phase, the subjects were asked to solve three tasks. First, with no visual connection to any Apple device or other identification pattern, the subjects, faced with the imaginary situation of drawing the Apple logo, had to rate their level of confidence that they would draw it accurate. A scale from 1 to 10 was used (where 1 is low level of confidence and 10 high level of confidence) to this purpose. Second, without being exposed to the previous given rating, the subjects were asked to draw the shape of the Apple logo. Finally, they were asked to evaluate their level of confidence regarding the drawing on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is low level of confidence and 10 high level of confidence).

Recognition phase

In the second phase, the subjects were asked to choose the right Apple logo shape from a given set of 12 figures. One set of used figures is presented in the following table. Similarly to the original study, there were no logos around the experiment room, and the location of the correct logo in the given set of figures was different each time. After the recognition task, the subjects assessed the level of confidence for their choice on a scale from 1 to 10 (where 1 is low level of confidence and 10 high level of confidence).

Table 1. The variations of Apple logos used in the experiment (in this case, the last one is the right logo)



Use of the brand

The third phase of the experiment refers to the use of the Apple devices. Thus, the respondents were asked to name the brand of their phone and computer. At the same time, they were asked whether they own other Apple devices, such as iPad, iPod or Apple Watch. Another question refers to the situation in which the subject does not own an iPhone; they were asked if they ever owned an iPhone. The data show that there are only few subjects that own other Apple devices than the iPhone. Therefore, in the data analysis, the idea of owning an iPhone is much more considered that owning other Apple devices.

Perception of the brand

The last phase completes the above information with the perception of the Apple brand in order to correlate it with brand recall and recognition. Thus, the main questions refer to the first word coming to mind when hearing the name of the Apple brand, to what degree they would like to own Apple devices (iPhone, Mac, iPad, iPod, and Apple Watch), to what degree they love the Apple brand, and how satisfactory they find several aspects related to Apple products (innovation, quality, security, affordability, technical support, size of the device, design of the device, technical performance, battery life, and connection – available posts).

2.3 Results and discussions

Within the ***recall phase***, there were initiated three tasks to be completed: self-evaluation of the level of confidence before drawing the logo, the logo drawing, and self-evaluation of the level of confidence after drawing the logo. The most important task is that of drawing the Apple logo, from memory, without any visual influence. In this respect, 18.8% (37 respondents) of the individuals manage to draw the logo perfectly[2]. The entire range of the drawing criteria are presented in the table below.

Table 2. Recall of the Apple logo for each drawing criteria

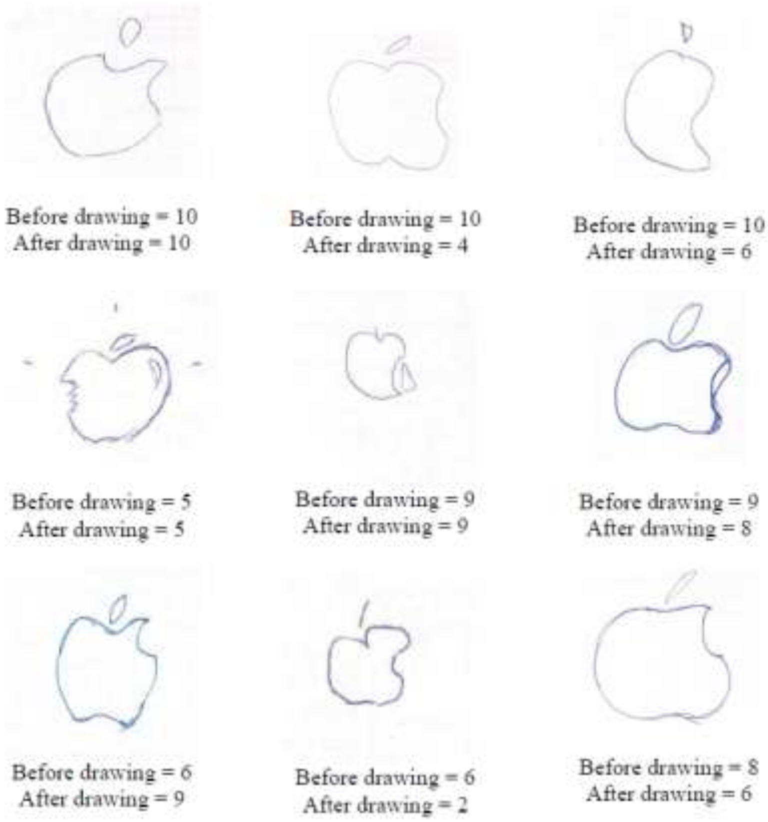
	General (%)	**Females** (% from the total females)	**Males** (% from the total males)	**Social science** (% from the total social science)	**Computer science** (% from the total computer science)
The drawing is correct	18.8	14.2	25.6	12.9	22.5
General shape					
Bottom not smooth	57.4	53.7	62.8	58.4	56.6
Top not smooth	91.9	91.5	92.3	89.6	93.3
A leaf present	99	99.1	98.7	100	98.3
No stem present	99	100	97.4	100	98.3
Stylized features					
Bite					
Bite present	96.4	96.6	96.1	92.2	99.1
Bite size	80.7	75.6	88.4	64.9	90.8
Bite on the right	83.2	82.3	84.6	74	89.1
Absence of teeth marks	97	95.7	98.7	93.5	99.1
Leaf					
Leaf shape	74.6	73.1	76.9	66.2	80
Leaf orientation	57.4	52.9	64.1	46.7	64.1
Absence of vein in leaf	99	98.3	100	98.7	99.1
Leaf floating	60.4	57.1	65.3	64.9	57.5

As the above data show, the respondents do remember separate details of the logo pretty clearly, but they do not manage to put all of them together. While almost all of the subjects remember that there is leaf and a bite present, and that the top of the logo is not smooth, only around half of them manage to represent a nonsmooth bottom. Regarding the bite, more than 80% remember the size of the bite and the fact that it is placed on the right side of the logo. Considering the leaf, while more than 70% manage to draw the leaf correctly, a little bit more than half remember the orientation and that fact that it is floating. Therefore, it can be said that although there are very few individuals that manage to remember the entire logo correctly, there is an unexpectedly high amount of respondents that remember many details.

The following table presents a sample of the drawings.

Table 3. Sample drawings from the recall phase and the level of confidence before and after the drawing

[2] When claiming that the logo was drawn perfectly, it means that all the components of the logo were correctly considered. In most of the cases, the logo does not totally overlap with the original shape, due to different drawing procedures or talents. However, all theses drawings were regarded as correct, because they meet all the established criteria.



As the table shows, the drawing features vary significantly. For all the subjects, it is clear that the logo of the Apple brand represents an apple. However, based on the individual talent and level of recall, the features are different. In addition, the above sample show the way the level of confidence evolves from the moment before the drawing to the moment after the drawing. There can be mentioned several situations: the level of confidence stagnates, the level of confidence increases or the level of confidence decreases. Nonetheless, it is interesting to observe how the level of confidence fluctuates, taking into account the way the logo is drawn. There are cases in which the logo is meaningfully biased, but the level of confidence is very high. In the same respect, there are cases in which the logo is almost perfectly drawn, but the level of confidence is very low or decreases.

Although there is indeed a higher percentage of men drawing the logo correctly, when it comes to details, the differences between the two sexes are minimal. Pretty significant differences can be observed only in the case of the smoothness of the bottom, of the bite size, of the leaf orientation, and of the leaf floating. Yet, this does not mean that the hypothesis is validated.

A pretty similar situation resides in the case of specialization. Although the expectation shows that a computer science background would lead to a better recall of the details of technological symbol, the differences between social and computer science are not significant. While computer scientists have better capacity to recall the bite size and location, the leaf shape and orientation, the social scientists better recall the idea of a floating leaf. It can be emphasized that computer science specialists might be more keen on visual identities belonging to technology. However, this hypothesis must be further tested.

In order to assess a broader overview on the data, the capacity of drawing the logo correctly is correlated with other variables as well. Thus, while correlated with the level of confidence before drawing the logo, only 4 individuals (10.8%) rate themselves with the grade 10, 8 individuals with 9 (21.6%), and 7 with 8 (18.9%). The majority of the people drawing the logo perfectly rate themselves with 7 (24.3%). However, a correlation between these two variables is not significant.

Starting from the premise that the level of confidence can grow after the drawing execution, the data show that, this time, the majority of respondents drawing the logo perfectly rate themselves with the grade 8 (27%). The ones graded with 10 are only 3 (8.1%), the ones graded with 9 are 6 (16.2%), similar with the case of grade 7 (Contingency Coefficient=.275, sig.=.064).

Out of the people that drew the logo perfectly, 81.1% chose the right logo among the given figures (Phi.=.402, sig.=.000). Interestingly, 43.2% out of those drawing a perfect logo rate themselves with the grade 10 for the level of confidence after choosing the logo. However, we cannot talk of a strong correlation between these two variables.

Regarding the brand of the phone they own, 27% from the ones that draw the logo perfectly own an iPhone, while 37.8% own a Samsung[3]. Thus, one cannot say that owning a device from a certain brand does necessarily imply remembering the details of the logo in all its details. In the same respect, the level of love for the brand has no significant correlation with the recall of the logo. More than half of the participants drawing the logo perfectly (56.7%) claim that they love the Apple brand only to a small degree or not at all.

Concluding, one cannot infer that there is a certain mix of variables that determine the capacity of recalling a simplistic logo perfectly. Moreover, while there is no emphasized detail, one cannot predict which details are going to be better remembered. The data also show that there is no relevant correlation between the recall and recognition of the logo and the level of satisfaction with the brand.

Considering the ***recognition phase***, from the total number of subjects, 39.9% manage to choose the right logo from the given alternatives. Comparing this percentage with the one reflecting the subjects drawing the logo correctly, one can notice a significant increase. Thus, it can be admitted that, while having a visual aid, although there is a wide range of incorrect alternatives, the choice is easier. Most probably, through existing visual comparison, the subjects do recall several features better.

Table 4. Recognition of the Apple logo

	General (%)	**Females** (% from the total females)	**Males** (% from the total males)	**Social science** (% from the total social science)	**Computer science** (% from the total computer science)
The choice is correct	39.9	42	36.7	40.2	40

When correlating the recognition phase with sex and specialization, the data show a similar situation as in the case of recall. However, a pretty important difference resides in the fact that women tend to better recognize the Apple logo. When it comes to specialization, almost the same percentage of social and computer scientists choose the right logo.

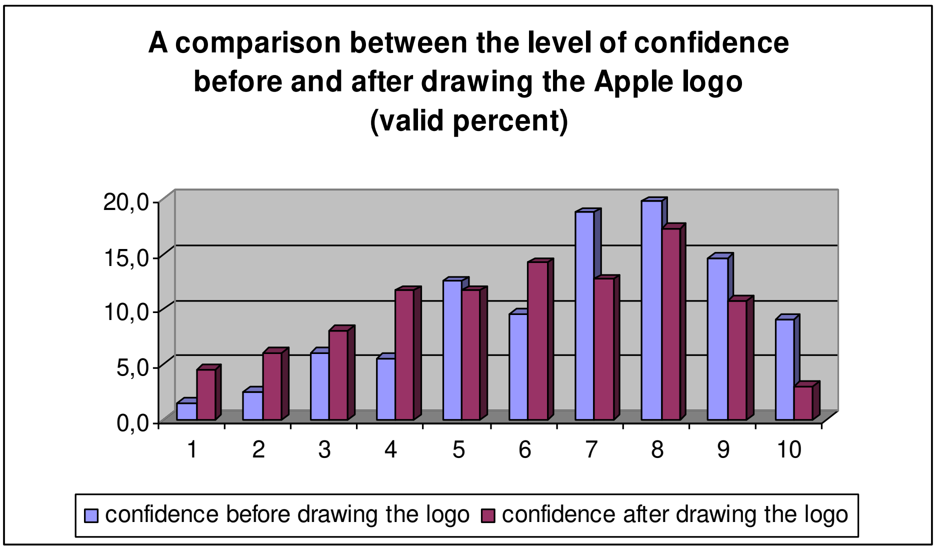
The capacity to recognize the correct logo is not significantly correlated with the level of love for the brand. It can only be said that 34 (17.17% from the total number of the subjects) from the ones choosing the right logo love the brand to a high and very high degree. In the same respect, although expecting a different result, owning an iPhone does not predict a better recognition capacity.

Comparing the logo recall and the logo recognition phases, the data show that out of the total number of subjects, 37 draw the correct logo and choose the right one at the same time. Moreover, 10 individuals recall the logo correctly, but do not recognize the right one.

[3] The rest of the specified brands do not have significant percentages. That is the reason why only Apple and Samsung are mentioned in the analysis.

Besides recall and recognition, the ***level of confidence*** is an important variable that can generate knowledge on human behavior. The level of confidence was tested in three different moments of the experimental approach: before drawing the Apple logo, after drawing the Apple logo and after choosing the Apple logo. The following figure shows, in a comparative manner, the fluctuation of the level of confidence in the recall phase.

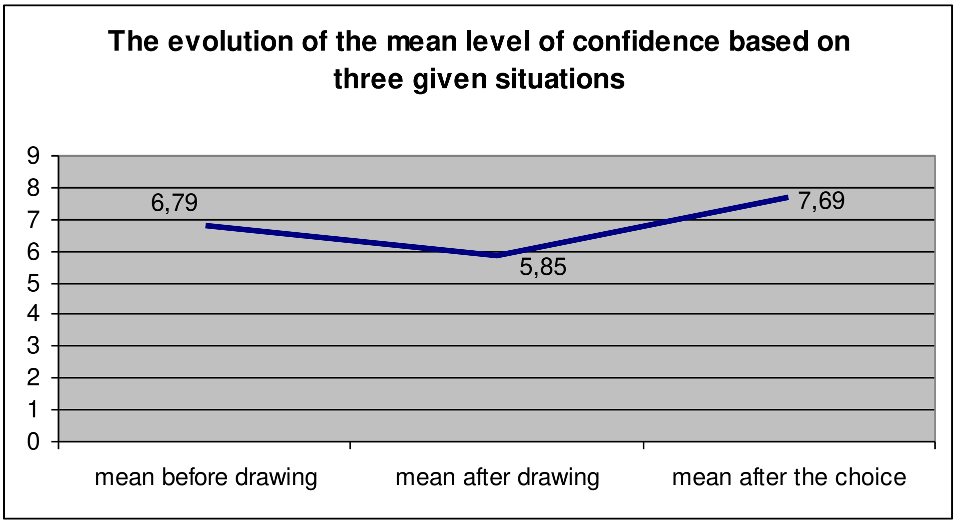
Figure 1. A comparison between the level of confidence in the recall phase (before drawing the logo and after drawing the logo)



There is a higher number of individuals that rate themselves within the top part of the confidence scale (grades between 7 and 10). In the case of the level of confidence before the drawing, the grades are, in general, higher than in the case of the level of confidence after drawing the logo. This situation can be explained through a higher level of desirable self trust before knowing that one is going to be asked to perform a task than after seeing the results of the task (the drawing *per se*).

In the case of the level of confidence in the recognition phase, the average grade is even higher than in the case of the recall phrase, as it can be seen in *Figure 2* (ME before drawing = 6.79, SD= 2.197; ME after drawing = 5.85, SD=2.388; ME after the choice = 7.69, SD=1.974).

Figure 2. A comparison between the average confidence grades for the recall and recognition phrases



The explanation might be at least dual. On the one hand, after passing the first task of drawing the logo, individuals might become self-trustier. On the other hand, being able to actually see the logo variations, although being exposed to eleven incorrect alternatives, the subjects might believe their choice is accurate, especially in comparison with other given logo alternatives.

The level of confidence before drawing the logo is positively and strongly correlated with the level of confidence after drawing the logo (Spearman=.742, sig.=.000). It implies that individuals tend to be consistent with the grades they have used for assessing the recall of the logo before and after drawing it. A similar situation seems to be present when it comes to correlating the recall levels of confidence with the recognition level of confidence. While the correlation between the level of confidence before drawing and the level of confidence after the choice has the coefficient Spearman of .614 (sig.=.000), the correlation between the level of confidence after drawing and the level of confidence after choosing has the coefficient Spearman of .556 (sig.=.000). The respondents do not seem to be significantly biased when being shown variations of the logo. They tend to assess themselves in the recognition situation in a similar manner as in the case of the recall situation.

When the "*love for the brand*" variable is introduced in the analysis, the data show that it is significant, but poorly correlated with the level of confidence before the drawing (Spearman=.184, sig.=.010) and after the choice (Spearman=.163, sig.=.022). Therefore, the cult for the brand does not necessarily imply a high level of confidence on recalling and recognition of the Apple brand.

Although the data show no significant correlation between owning an iPhone and the level of confidence before drawing the logo, one can emphasize that there are 72.7% iPhone owners with confidence levels higher than 7, by contrast to only 58% non-owners with the same confidence level. In this case, it might be said that, rarely, owning an Apple device gives a user the confidence that they recall the details of the logo properly.

However, regarding the level of confidence after drawing the logo, owning an Apple device does not make the difference. The same amount of individuals (43.6%) from each category (owners and non-owners) has a level of confidence higher that 7. Contrary to expectations, there are no significant correlations between the levels of confidence, before and after drawing the logo, and the sex and specialization of the respondents.

3. Conclusion

The original study finds that although there is a poor level of recall and recognition, the subjects seem to be confident in their performance, probably due to the simplistic perception of the Apple logo. Thus, usually, the individuals tend to think that they will perform better than they actually do (Blake, Nazarian, Castel, 2015). Although there has been introduced a wider range of variables (as sex or specialization), the present study comes to similar conclusions. There is a small amount of individuals that are able to correctly recall and recognize the logo of Apple brand. However, although there are very few individuals that manage to remember the entire logo accurately, there is an unexpectedly high amount of respondents that remember many features of the logo.

The level of recognition is higher than the level of recall. A possible explanation might be that, while visualizing a set of varieties of the same logo, although almost all incorrect, the probability to recall features of the original logo increases.

Another interesting result shows that the average level of confidence decreases in the first two moments of the experimental approach. Thus, on a scale from 1 to 10, it evolves from 6.79 before drawing to 5.85 after drawing. In this respect, after being asked to actually draw the Apple logo, and after seeing it is not an easy as expected task, it is likely that the subject will become more self-conscious. In the case of the recognition phase, the average level of confidence is even higher than initially (7.69), meaning again that, if the logos are visible, although incorrect, the self-trust is higher.

Although it was expected that men and computer scientists would perform better in both recall and recognition phases, the data show no significant correlation between these variables (H1 and H2 are invalidated). The same situation fits for the owners of Apple devices and lovers of the brand (H3 and H4 are invalidated). They do not seem to have better competencies in drawing and recognizing the Apple logo. However, there is a slight positive correlation between Apple owners and lovers and the level of confidence (H5 and H6 partially validated). This implies that by owning an iPhone for instance, the subjects develop a higher level of self-confidence related to the features of the owned brand.

If we were to extrapolate these specific conclusions, one might say that, in the case of a minimalist element, whether it is a marketing symbol or something else, the combination of variables that can lead to recalling and recognizing those elements should be further investigated in a wider range of contexts. The premise stating that the level of minimalism of an element is positively correlated with recall and recognition needs supplementary analysis. For instance, by increasing the number of analyzed logos, the relevance of minimalism in marketing, especially for marketing specialist and logo designers, can be more comprehensively assessed.

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Preprints: ethical hazard or academic liberation?

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Abstract

Preprints are one of publishing's hottest talking topics. Having seen a strengthening of investment by several entities and publishers in 2016, both 2016 and 2017 have witnessed a tsunami of new preprint servers, as well as chatter about a centralized preprint service. However, while all this buzz is taking place, few are focusing on the possible ethical aspects of preprints. In January of 2017, Jeffrey Beall's blog became extinct, and lists of journals and publishers that were harshly criticized for publishing poor research, not conducting peer review and for processing research instantly, formed part of what had been termed "predatory journals and publishers." During this period, there has been a boom in preprint servers. Preprints are raw findings and data sets that have not been peer reviewed, scientifically vetted, or verified for potential errors, flaws, and even fraud, but that are in general superficially selected by an advisory board and released to the public within as little as 24 hours. Will this boom in preprints and preprint servers serve as an outlet for poor science and unscholarly work to enter mainstream literature? In other words, could preprints be a form of predatory publishing? Since not all preprints will reach the mainstream literature following regular peer review, and may represent the final state of that document, there is a real risk, given that different preprint servers have different regulatory bodies, that academically unsound and/or scientifically invalid work may flood preprint servers that are emerging at an unprecedented rate. Although preprints should be celebrated for bringing research faster to the public, and while preprint proponents are lauding preprints as one solution to the replication crisis, what is not being discussed is whether preprints pose any ethical or academic risks.

Key words: arXiv; ASAPbio; bioRxiv; Center for Open Science; F1000Research; Gates Open Research; peer review; preprint server; quality control; Wellcome Open Research

The age of preprints: hot buzz

Biomedical science publishing has entered a highly transformative state. Facing threats of many fake elements, including fake data, fake authors, fake peer reviews (Teixeira da Silva, 2017a), and hit by a deluge of errata and retractions as a result of a replication crisis or poorly vetted literature caused by permeable peer review, the publishing industry is seeking rapid, innovative and robust methods to shore up trust, and to restore quality control to an image-

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damaged sector where trust in academic findings is starting to run thin. Preprints have been around since 1991, in the form of arXiv[1], and even though many academics have always informally shared unpublished documents among trusted colleagues to gain insight and to improve their papers prior to submission to a regular academic journal for peer review, preprints were never popular with biomedical scientists, who saw little value and, despite the delays, preferred to slog through the regular peer review process to see their intellectual work validated by peers prior to publication. arXiv even has a section Quantitative Biology that is dedicated to theoretical biology, but even that has not attracted much attention[2]. That lack of popularity is because work that is published in a preprint has not been academically validated by peers and should not be cited, except for exceptional cases, because citation of non-vetted material may corrupt the scholarly record (Teixeira da Silva, 2017b).

The biggest example of the failure of preprints, and to some extent open peer review, to capture the attention of biomedical scientists was the termination of *Nature Precedings* in April 2012[3]. The reason for the termination of this preprint server was "unsustainability", but no detailed explanations were ever provided by the publisher, Nature Publishing Group, i.e., if that unsustainability was academic or financial? However, ever since a replication crisis began to emerge in the past few years, preprints have been increasingly marketed as one solution to increase reproducibility (Berg et al., 2016), as well as a rapid solution to the slow process of traditional peer review and sometimes endless cycles of reject-and-resubmit (Teixeira da Silva and Dobránszki, 2015), causing a rise in trend in the number of preprints and preprint servers for the biological sciences (Callaway, 2017). By virtue of the fact that greater exposure of these "raw" documents that have not been formally academically vetted by professionals, i.e., preprints, will supposedly be screened by a wider public audience for errors, following resubmission to a valid peer reviewed academic journal for publication in a final state, proponents of preprints claim that the final published paper may have a higher degree of scientific confidence than papers that have passed through regular peer review only[4]. However, these proponents provide no data or evidence to suport this claim. Preprints have become a hot topic in biomedical publishing to a large extent because the replication crisis has become a hot topic in biomedical publishing (Kaiser, 2017), and not because they offer any more intrinsic academic value than they would have 5 or 10 years ago. Preprints have thus become marketed as a replication-fixing tool and a challenge to controversial findings (Kaiser, 2017). Annesley and Scott (2017), who interviewed core proponents of the preprint movement (Hilda Bastian, Vivian Fonseca, John P.A. Ioannidis, Michael A. Keller, and Jessica Polka), disclosed how so much still remains unknown about the future of preprints, and many lingering doubts and potential risks, including the possibility of introducing "junk science" into the literature, the possible usurpation of preprints by for-profit commercial publishers as a new model to generate authors and revenues, and a debate whether the vestigial document, i.e., the preprint, should be eliminated once the document becomes published in a final version. While some of the preprint proponents in that paper advocate that preprints should carry as much weighting as a meeting abstract on a CV, others such as Desjardins-Proulx et al. (2013) argue that for early career scientists, preprints should have much greater weighting. Little or no attention has been paid to possible unscholarly or unethical aspects of preprints. This is the focus of this commentary and opinion piece.

[1] https://arxiv.org/
[2] https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1411/1411.1955.pdf
[3] http://www.nature.com/content/npg/23909.html
[4] https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/the-end-of-an-error-peer-review/

Massive investments in preprints

A major historical point of inflection for the cementation of preprints was likely in February of 2016, at an ASAPbio meeting[5] with many attendees of major publishers and organizations related to the publishing industry and owners of preprint servers. ASAPbio is more than an initiative, it is a powerful, well-funded lobbying group pushing passionately for the use and implementation of preprints in academic publishing. Since that meeting, preprints have been increasingly promoted, including by many influential members of the academic and publishing communities, such as Berg et al. (2016). Competition and rivalries have also begun to emerge which the first author has dubbed "the preprint wars" because each preprint proponent is seeking to inject influence and guarantee their slice of the new and emerging preprint "market" (Teixeira da Silva, 2017c). Some key events include the approval by Crossref of the indexing of preprint digital object identifiers, or DOIs[6], the funding of preprint servers by philanthropic groups, such as bioRxiv by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative[7] or multiple new preprint servers by the Open Science Framework (Center for Open Science, or COS)[8], the development of preprint servers for exclusive use by researchers who are grantees, such as the Wellcome Open Research[9] or Gates Open Research[10] preprint servers, both of which rely on F1000Research functionality, or the increasing calls for an integrated and centralized preprint service[11]. Although these are not an exhaustive perspective of the changing world of preprints, and an evolving preprint market with increasingly specialized niches, it begins to show that in the space of less than two short years, how elements of the biomedical publishing community has been investing very heavily, in resources, finances and infrastructure, to prepare for a flood of papers that have not been fully academically vetted. These entities have hedged their bets that preprints will be widely embraced and used by the biomedical community. Generally, in the current preprint model, a preprint server receives documents from scientists that are initially screened by an advisory board, and may be placed online in public view within as little as 24 hours, making this a strong marketing ploy, as a positive pseudo-academic aspect, by preprint advocates. However, little attention is being paid to the academic and ethical consequences, or possibilities, which are explored in a bit more detail next. Now that there are a sufficient number of preprint servers to merit a centralized preprint search engine, discussion is underway about a centralized preprint server, similar to a platform like PubMed (Callaway, 2017), with a consortium of powerful and influential funders standing behind this massive push for such preprint centralization[12].

What academic or ethical risks can preprints pose?

Although voices of concern, skepticism or critique about preprints are mainly limited to blogs and Twitter, usually drowned out or shot down by pro-preprint advocates with clearly great invested interests, the first major organization to object to the use of preprints in grant applications as a collective voice of academics was The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). In a publicly displayed open letter directed to the National

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[5] http://asapbio.org/meeting-information
[6] https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-05/c-cta050416.php
[7] http://www.cshl.edu/news-and-features/cold-spring-harbor-laboratory-to-boost-sharing-of-global-scientific-research-in-collaboration-with-the-chan-zuckerberg-initiative.html
[8] https://osf.io/preprints/
[9] https://wellcomeopenresearch.org/
[10] https://gatesopenresearch.org/
[11] https://datascience.nih.gov/preprints/preprints_central_service
[12] https://wellcome.ac.uk/news/preprints-were-supporting-calls-central-service (The Wellcome Trust lists the following members of the pro-preprint central service consortium: Alfred P Sloan Foundation, Canadian Institutes for Health Research, Department of Biotechnology (India), European Research Council, Helmsley Trust, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, Medical Research Council, National Institutes of Health, Simons Foundation, Wellcome Trust)

Institutes of Health (NIH), the FASEB President, Hudson H. Freeze, argued that preprints would not only overburden an already overburdened peer pool, but would also have a "[n]egative effect on rigor and reproducibility of research."[13] Freeze's position, which claimed to represent "30 scientific societies, collectively representing 125,000 biological researchers and engineers", was immediately heavily criticized by many preprint proponents, including ASAPbio[14] and Lenny Teytelman, the CEO and cofounder of protocols.io[15], two leading proponents of preprints and preprint servers that have risen quickly in prominence since 2016.

All of these events were taking place, curiously, at the time when the Trump Administration was set to replace the Obama Administration, and when much movement was observed in the NIH, EPA and other US Government agencies related to science and science policy. Also, in January of 2017, a blog by Jeffrey Beall went blank. Without any prior notice, this blog, which listed journals and publishers with potentially unscholarly and non-academic practices, the most prominent being the publication of work and research that had not been properly and fully vetted by professionals and peers, referring to them as "predatory", shut down, and the owner, Beall, has yet to offer any suitable response or address the academic and ethical consequences of his blog's closure (Teixeira da Silva, 2017d). Most importantly, for this discussion on preprints, is that one of the core arguments made by pro-Beall anti-"predatory" journal/publisher proponents was that work published in those journals contained flaws, inaccuracies or possibly even fraudulent data or research, the "junk science" I allude to above, by virtue of the fact that no or little (superficial) peer review had been conducted. Even though those lists were highly flawed (Teixeira da Silva, 2017e), Shen and Björk (2015) used those flawed lists to estimate that 420,000 articles had been published until 2014 by 8000 "predatory" open access (OA) journals. In essence, Shen and Björk (2015) insinuated, based on a flawed set of lists (Beall's) and criteria, that 420,000 articles were "junk science", a judgement passed based on the publication venue (journal or publisher) and not on the intrinsic scientific or academic merit of each individual paper. Such a mass insinuation is unprecedented in the history of academic publishing. Despite this, the Shen and Björk (2015) paper is widely praised and cited.

In this paper, an analogy is drawn between "predatory" publishing, i.e., the publication of work in a "predatory" journal that does not conduct peer review or validate the content in a scholarly manner, and preprints. Analogous to such criticisms of these "predatory" OA journals, preprints, which are also OA, are also not vetted for scientific content or accuracy, they are usually approved for broad content and scope by a member of an advisory board, and they are released to the public within as little as 24 hours, and at most a week. Thus, the unverified state of such literature, which may also contain flaws, inaccuracies or possibly even fraudulent data or research, no different to unvetted material published in Beall-listed journals, raises valid concerns that preprints may be a high-tech – because their raw and academically unvetted nature is masqueraded by glitzy OA servers or platforms – version of "predatory" publishing. Another possibility is that, like several of the OA journals and publishers that Beall profiled, and which were – and continue to be – lauded as unscholarly by many of the current pro-preprint advocates, may be as unscholarly, "predatory" and risky, both to academics and society, as the Beall-critiqued OA journals and publishers. This risk of unsound information, brought both by poorly vetted "predatory" journals or by academically unvetted preprints, may have additional weighting in the medical sciences, such as clinical trials, where actual lives and human health is at stake (Loew, 2016; Maslove, 2017). The existence of OA data that has not been critically, scientifically or professionally vetted prior to release to the public may further

[13] http://www.faseb.org/Portals/2/PDFs/opa/2016/Interim%20Research%20Product%20RFI.pdf
[14] http://www.the-scientist.com/?articles.view/articleNo/48080/title/Scientists-Buck-Opposition-to-Preprints-in-NIH-Grant-Applications/
[15] https://www.protocols.io/groups/protocolsio/news/when-lobbying-against-preprints-and-OA-faseb

weaken or corrupt the OA scholarly platform, serving as a new threat to the author-pays OA publishing model (Al-Khatib and Teixeira da Silva, 2017). Few academics have discussed this potential threat.

This places journals that undergo valid peer review but that accept the submission of preprints for peer review in an academic quandary. Firstly, by making an exception to the 1969-created Ingelfinger Rule (see discussion by Relman, 1981), i.e., that no publication should appear twice in a published state, a core value of publication ethics is challenged. Even though COPE (Committee of Publication Ethics) and the ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors)[16], among other ethics bodies and several biomedical publishers, indicate that preprints are an exception to duplicate submission, the ethical and academic premise for this exception may now be seriously challenged. The biomedical community, ethics organizations and publishers now have to reach a consensus: is a duplicate publication now acceptable, whether we refer to it is as a Xerox copy, a modified or amended version, a preprint or a published paper in a final state? Until now, the volume of preprints relative to the volume of published articles has been tiny, but what happens when the volume of preprints reaches the tens or hundreds of thousands of papers, unvetted, with unclear quality and/or unscreened errors? Will reprints still be considered as an exception to the ICMJE-defined "duplicate submission" or "duplicate publication" rule that forms the bed-rock of publishing ethics, or will the concept of duplicate publication fall to the wayside, especially considering that many preprints represent the final published state of a paper or research results? The final state of a document as a preprint, and hence its rudimentary academic nature, was suggested by several of the preprint proponents in the Annesley and Scott (2017) paper. In other words, preprints pose an academic risk because they are being over-marketed as some sort of academic savior when in fact they present no real academic value whatsoever, except for a quick, cheap and easy mode of OA publication.

As indicated above, new and emerging preprint servers are starting to become increasingly specialized, at least in terms of themes, and thus target audiences, which I refer to in this paper as "preprint niches". For example, COS currently has 10 or more subject-based preprint servers (in my lexicon, subject = niche): architecture, arts and humanities, business, education, engineering, law, life sciences, medicine and health sciences, physical sciences and mathematics, social and behavioral sciences. Thus, the COS preprint server engXiv (which imitates the original style of Arxiv), as one example, serves the engineering niche. However, what will prevent other entities from establishing preprint servers such as engineeringXiv, i.e., with similar names, but covering the same subjects? Even worse, since preprints are currently academically unregulated, entities might establish sub-niches, such as chemengXiv for chemical engineering. In such cases, it is not difficult to envision a situation where a whole range of preprint servers will explode onto the preprint "market", some established by zealous or unscholarly entities, simply trying to complete with "valid" or established preprint servers. The second analogy here is with the "predatory" OA scholarly publishing market, where the efforts of potentially valid scholarly publishers became usurped by unscholarly entities who mimic journal titles, publishing platforms and models, to give the impression of a valid scholarly journal or publisher, but display "predatory" qualities, aimed exclusively at extracting article processing charges, or APCs.

Regarding APCs, there continues to be a notion that was partially inculcated by Beall that one of the predatory qualities of a "predatory" OA journal was that a journal's APCs are not publicly displayed, and that one of the main objectives of such journals, or publishers, was to extract profit from unsuspecting authors. However, the author of this commentary has published several papers in OA journals that had been listed by Beall as "predatory", between

[16] http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/publishing-and-editorial-issues/overlapping-publications.html (see criticisms about the ICMJE in Teixeira da Silva 2017h)

2015 and 2017, even though APCs had been clearly indicated on those journals' websites, peer review had been suitably conducted, and no APCs had been charged, paid or waivered. So, the notion that a new or academically weak OA journal that clearly displays APCs should almost automatically receive a "predatory" label needs to be carefully rethought. In fact, a study by Bolshete (2017) indicates that 12 out of 13 OA publishers, mainly from Beall's list, clearly displayed their APCs. Even though most preprint servers do not charge APCs to publish a preprint, at least not yet (Loew, 2016), there is now a real risk that the "preprint" market will explode with valid and also invalid preprint servers, some seeking to exploit the naivety of academics, including the potential exploitation of preprint-related APCs, similar to what happened during the past decade or so in OA publishing[17]. There is also increasingly a change in paradigm, namely that OA journals that charge low APCs might not deliver a stated service, such as peer review, or might only be providing superficial "peer" review, i.e., representing a lower stratum of quality, but being erroneously labelled as "predatory". In other words, there is a real risk that a low APC will now be automatically be associated with low academic quality, as was insinuated by Beall when he referred to the highly respectable SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) platform as a "publishing favela"[18], simply because its APCs were around 100 US$, and mainly from South American countries, some of which are still developing, such as Brazil. Academia thus risks stigmatizing academic OA journals as being of poor quality simply because they have no, or low, OA APCs. Similarly, preprints that publish any superficially vetted grey literature[19] also risk evolving a unique "predatory" preprint market simply because academics might be drawn to the fact that no APC is charged, and find it an easy way to sneak in poor science into the literature that can then be cited, either via Crossref (as a result of having a DOI), or via Google Scholar. Thus, a link between academic quality and APC might be emerging, even if false, since the concept that a low APC = low quality[20,21] may be conflagrated by no-APC preprints. Ultimately, it will be authors, and their institutes and funders, who will be increasingly carrying the burden of the gold OA author-pays publishing model (Al-Khatib and Teixeira da Silva, 2017) in which preprints may simply be serving as a "trap", marketed falsely as a "free" and rapid publishing venue, in an attempt to then channel papers to profitable OA journals of partner publishers (possible collusion?) where APCs will then be extracted.

Finally, a new academic threat in preprints has emerged: metrics. It is abundantly clear that journal-based metrics have failed the academic community since they have irreversibly corrupted the scholarly record. This has taken place by assigning a pseudo-academic value to a published paper based on its perceived "value" or "quality", assessed erroneously and simply by the level at which the journal in which it was published has been cited. The most obvious metric is the Clarivate Analytics journal impact factor, but Elsevier's CiteScore and other derivatives also serve as new corrupting factors, offering non-academic pseudo-quality value, using journal-based metrics, to extrapolate to author-based or article-based metrics (Teixeira da Silva, 2017f; Teixeira da Silva and Memon, 2017). This "impact" game, which has plagued traditional publishing, and which is often critiqued by preprint proponents, has now begin in preprints, initiated by Brian Nosek[22], the COS Executive Director[23].

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[17] https://poynder.blogspot.jp/2017/08/the-state-of-open-access-some-new.html
[18] http://blog.scielo.org/en/2015/08/01/the-fenced-off-nice-publication-neighbourhoods-of-jeffrey-beall/
[19] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grey_literature
[20] http://davidwojick.blogspot.jp/2016/09/predatory-versus-low-cost.html
[21] http://bjoern.brembs.net/2017/11/is-a-cost-neutral-transition-to-open-access-realistic/
[22] https://osf.io/pxr8c/wiki/home/?view
[23] https://www.projectimplicit.net/nosek/

Conclusions

Preprints for the biomedical sciences are increasing dramatically[24]. Following some major structural developments in 2016 and early 2017, several new preprint servers have emerged and a strong push is being made, strongly advocated by ASAPbio, to encourage biomedical scientists to first post their findings to preprint servers prior to submitting to a regular journal. The main reasons for promoting preprints, proponents will claim, is faster access to important findings, an additional step of journal-independent peer reviewer-free quality control, and a possible tool to increase reproducibility by serving as a platform to present contradictory data. What is not discussed that much, because exposing such risks would weaken the massive investments made thus far in preprints, is that preprints pose real academic and ethical risks. In order for current preprint servers to not become extinct like *Nature Precedings*, and to gain trust in biomedical researchers who would use their preprints to deposit their raw findings in a non-peer reviewed state, preprint proponents must show how they plan to deal with the "predatory" aspect of unscreened literature that may contain flaws, errors, factually false or fraudulent data or information, and which would clearly be harmful to both academia, and society. Preprint proponents like COS and ASAbio should also give public guarantees that preprints will not be gamed via their metricization. Unless these caveats are addressed openly, and discussed widely among academics, a crisis of trust in preprints may arise (Teixeira da Silva, 2017g). This is because preprints, by introducing potentially flawed data into the public domain, have the potential to harm OA as much as "predatory" OA journals (Eve and Priego, 2017), introducing new risk into green OA, namely a cancer (the "predatory" nature and the hijacking of the OA movement and the fairness of APCs by for-profit vanity publishers) that gold OA has already succumbed to.

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[24] http://www.nature.com/news/2016-in-news-the-science-events-that-shaped-the-year-1.21159

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Rhetorics of War in the Arts, A Century of War (1917-2017). Bucharest, Rhetorics of War in the Arts International Conference

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> "I wish I had known
> when beginning
> 'A' all that I had learned
> when I had finished
> 'Z'"[1]

Extending the limits of the political effects and diplomatic steps, the war is the final outcome of dialogues and discourses – that failed. Due to the transformation of the state, symbolic wars nationally are followed by international conflicts. The Rhetorics of War in the Arts Conference at the Romanian Academy discussed the visual outcomes and the diversity of interpretations of the attitudes.

Dr. Adrian-Silvan Ionescu is the director of the "G. Oprescu" Institute of Art History of the Romanian Academy and an Associate Professor at the National University of Arts in Bucharest. He received his Ph.D. in the history of Romanian photography and specialized in the history of civil and military costumes of the 19th century of fine arts and urban civilization. Ionescu lectured about the *Cartoons in Occupied Bucharest (1917-1918)* and the attention to local circumstances and characters. Discussed military events, such as satirizing profiteers, shortages of goods, forced leisure of activities, and even Romanian political characters that brought the country to its knees – at the occupied south of Romanian territories. The satirical drawings were supposed to cheer up the solders that experienced first hand the country that was destroyed by the Central Powers. World War I represents an important landmark in the development of the Romanian satirical drawing.

Adriana Dumitran analyzed two visual discourses that were used during the neutrality years of war between 1914-16. Including political figures of the moment and portraits of the leaders of belligerent armies and war scenes from the military conflict zones, which especially destroyed

[1] Pearce-Moses, Richard (2005): A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology. The Society of American Archivists, Chicago p. 27.

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key institutions and monuments. Adriana Dumitran's sensibility is shown by the subject matter that was chosen: the years of neutrality. The texts expressed the control and understatement imposed by military neutrality, and at the same time war was viewed through photographs and illustrations, which aimed and expressed in the press the reality of war through visual forms. Adriana Dumitran is the expert of the Romanian history of photography 1960-1919 and librarian at the National Library of Romania.

According to Ramona Caramelea children's publications maintained the culture of war aiming to sensitize young people to military values. Ramona Caramelea lectured about the *Images of War in Romanian Children's Magazines (1939-45)* highlighting the shocking fact that military actions during the 20thcentury are not limited to war confrontations. By mobilizing intellectual and material resources aiming to sensitize children to military values throughout stories that were seemingly unrelated to war. The illustrations of children's books and magazines conveyed the message of political iconography and ideology. The images supported the narrative that was supposed to promote the culture of war.

Steve Yates is an expert of history of early modern photography, the first and only Fulbright Scholar who received the prestigious award three times to the USSR, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus in 1991, and Russia in 1995 and 2007. Yates's keynote lecture *Inventing Modern Photomontage to Guernica: Artistic Actions from World Wars* contained a general approach to the aesthetics of war. "War is a catalyst to prototypes of modern innovation and invention in the arts." Yates' lecture embraced the anti-art and nontraditional forms that influenced transdisciplinary directions. Events beginning a century ago in World Wars also meant inventions and innovations in the arts in response, expressing another future with original styles that unfolded throughout the 20th century.

Celina Lunsford's lecture concerned the *Fashion Photography Reflecting Crisis and Hope. Louise Dahl-Wolfe and The Harper's Bazaar Years during WWII and the Beginning of Cold War.* As America's oldest fashion Magazine, Harper's Bazaar kept working during the crises of the Great Depression leading to World War II. Maintaining this public interest even during the economic crises and boom of the global expansion of American ideologies. Politics and developing world events continually influenced the choice of locations of the photographs. Lunsford gave great insight to the ambivalence of the crises and hopes that ruled common sense during WWII, from her aspects as Artistic Director and experience at the Fotografie Forum Frankfurt.

In his lecture *War Trauma and Book Market in Interwar Romania,* Bogdan Popa, a researcher of the "N. Iorga" Institute of History of the Romanian Academy, investigated the effects of exploring writing of the novel and publishing activities during WWI. Resulting in the diversity of military, political and social events during the war. This was still limited to war memorials and overshadowed by the Great War. Giving the opportunity to the small, yet growing public that read about the unprecedented and individual trauma, giving the obvious need to humans.

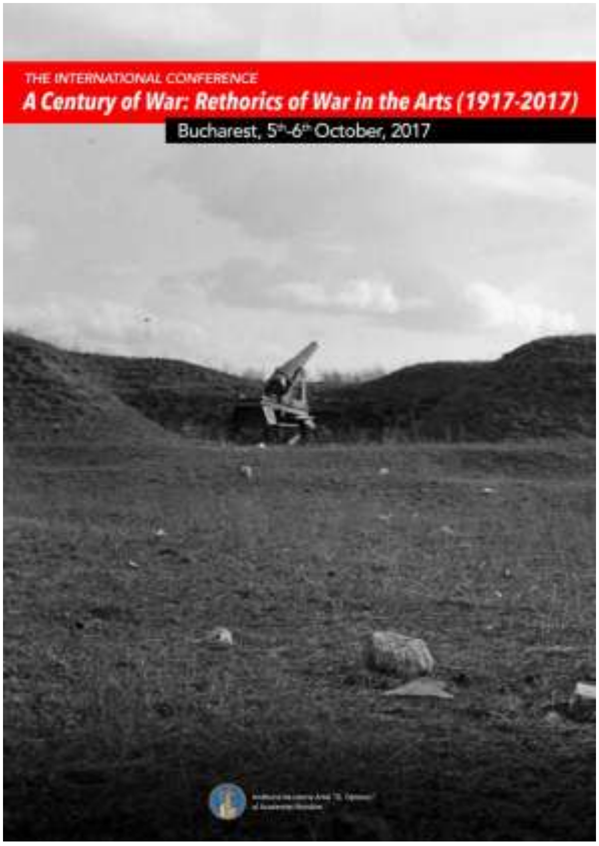
Musicologist at the "G. Oprescu" Institute of Art History of the Romanian Academy, Marian Lupaşcu, studies the Romanian, Armenian and Gypsy musical traditions that are connected to war and soldiering topics. The research focused on the rural folk music, rites and ceremonials, genres, repertoires, as well as the area of theoretical interest. Furthermore research includes the topic of methodology of musical structure like rhythm, pitch, architectonic systems and transcription, maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity in a foreign and, most of the time, in an unsympathetic environment.

Carmen Popa spoke about the *Deeply Impacting Echoes of the Two World Wars in Romanian Music*. The ethical and aesthetic survey involves the most impressive moments of Romanian history. Lofty sounds about the Romanian spirit, as they always fought defensively, wisely, safeguarding wholeheartedly their land, for their nation with faith, with bright minds and big hearts, even as a mixed choir and small orchestra.

Literary quality and historical truth presented by Romanian writers investigate both the personal and collective war experience. Yet this was rather limited to war memorials and overshadowed by the Great War. Giving the obvious need to a small, yet growing public that read about an unprecedented collective and individual trauma.

According to Virginia Barbu a strong personality of the interwar Romanian art was Ion Theodorescu-Sion (1882-1932). One of the exponents of the “national-style” in painting, remarkable for a sharp and clear outline and at the same time its sobriety of physiognomes. Elena-Christina Brăgea lectured about the fact that when Romania was in its active neutrality period, the diplomatic, military and social preparations were “made in order to enter the war in convenient conditions.” The neutrality and dynamics of the military actions were about to increase the sympathy towards the Allies and pushed forward all Romanians to a political unity and a feeling of a homogeneous country. Furnica included cartoons, verses, maxims, thoughts, and epigrams that were signed by Francis Sirato and some other talented cartoonists.

1. Illustration: Front cover design: A heavy gun, Fortepan Archive. Ciprian Ciuclea



The images of belligerent countries, the atmosphere of daily life in different places, were shaping the ideas of war. Last but not least, Elena-Christina Brăgea analyzed the relationship between the public and the magazine in order to identify the interdependencies between them – it's a territory of wisdom. Elena-Christina Brăgea approaches the field by the history of political science, pursuing Ph.D. studies at L'École Doctorale francophone en Sciences Sociales.

After 1945 the society was brainwashed, mostly by party propaganda patterns. Idealizing their interests, erasing some entire chapters of the recent past, and wishing to control better the present. However with this intention there was no trust any more in the newly installed power. According to the statement by Manuela Cernat for filmmakers were not allowed to speak all over the country about the unpleasant side of life. Quite a convincing thesis. There is a lot to learn from Manuela Cernat who served as a jury member for over 200 national and international film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Venice, San Sebastian, Bergamo, Valladolid, Bilbao, New Delhi and other cities globally.

The anti-war artists presented by Andrea Domesle dealt with the present. The Basel based theorist focused on relevant socio-political themes, highlighting differences between national narratives about the war and the cultures commemorating it. Part of the approach is to distinguish the private memory and the collective memory.

Petter Österland's lecture "In the Eyes of the War: A Collection of First World War Stereo Photos" included some after-battle pictures, and certainly the 'corps of the unknown' before they entered the great slaughter. "Less horror, less dead, less misery" was the intellectual aspect to the war. Men that, through the fine excellence and quality of the photographs, came so close in time and vision.

The years of neutrality of European war was also presented. Adrian Dumitran said "two visual discourses were used during the neutrality years with which the public was already accustomed: portraits of the leaders of the belligerent armies, political figures of the moment, and war scenes from all the military conflict zones, destroyed cities and monuments." Inaugurating the chemical weapons, tank battles and involving aerial bombardments, the victims discreetly disappeared, But some of the stories, especially the stories of the enemies, were passed on to their children and grandchildren. Overall the characteristics of the dominators were the same all over the world, not counting on the effects of their own children. From the rich photographic material left behind after conflicts, by those who made the details of war as documents, we can actually read the destiny of their entire family. Bogdan-Gheorghe Iorga lectured from an aspect that the Great War was the first war that was mapped by the photography.

There is an extended amount of images that reflected the impacts on life of a certain community. Silvana Rachieru Assistant Professor at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest is an expert of the Romanian-Ottoman Relations between 1878-1908. After nine years experience in cultural diplomacy and receiving her Ph.D. in the History considered, she is an acknowledged expert on social and diplomatic history of the Ottoman Empire and Romanian-Ottoman relations during the 19th century.

At the Romanian Academy speakers including historians, art historians and artists summarized an entire situation in one glance. The "Rhetoric of War in the Arts" Conference dealt with real events with plausible narrations and unpublished contributions.