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Standard Issue

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Editorial introduction to the standard issue

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The vast and interdisciplinary nature of media, communications, and cultural studies is fittingly captured in this standard issue of Networking Knowledge – Journal of the MeCCSA-PGN. Along with four papers, this issue also introduces the journal's new book reviews section.

In contrast to previous themed and conference-based issues of the journal, the papers in this standard issue are diverse in their exploration of themes and modes of enquiry. Their themes range from health communication to protest, and from queer narratives to search for home. Significantly, the papers engage with different forms, platforms, and means of mass media, communications, and culture, including community-based communication, forms of political communication, strategies of lobbying, and creative cultural resistance. At the same time, the research contexts of these authors are also varied, with case studies drawn from the EU, Israel, Kenya, and India. However, it is in the diverse nature of these papers that a unique standpoint is offered, bringing together global perspectives on culture, people, and organisations, and their complex interactions with and understandings of media and forms of communications.

This issue begins with the paper by Brieuc Lits which critically examines the phenomenon of astroturf lobbying in the EU. Controversies around the exploration of shale gas is the central case study. Conducting an emphasis framing analysis, the author tests the hypothesis that astroturf groups use different frames than genuine grassroots movements to meet private interests they represent. The findings point to the emergence of two coalitions: one that is opposed to the exploration of shale gas through the use of hydraulic fracturing, and comprising of environmental and health NGOs; and the other supporting the exploration of shale gas, and bringing together trade associations and sectional groups.

In the second paper, Mor Cohen explores the use of tactic in artistic and activist practices in Israel. Examining three case studies initiated by artists and activists, the author explores the relationship between the use of temporary and critical interventions, and their theme of return to or search for home. Considering the case studies within the broader societal power and economic structures and contexts, the author argues that the adoption of tactic within collaborative projects presents a double challenge, both to the neo-liberal economic model that encourages individual growth and accomplishment, and to the Israeli-Zionist hegemony and its notion of national identity and land ownerships.

Thereafter, the study by Faith Kisiangani (lead author), Reginah Gachari, and Leah Jerop Komen draws on qualitative data in examining challenges of communicating cervical cancer screening awareness and uptake in the Bungoma County in Kenya. The study identifies me-

dia, health education channels and radio shows as the key platforms for communication, while the primary challenges detailed by respondents include lack of proper terminology, inadequate information on the communication channels, and fear among women. One of the recommendations of the study is the need for education of media personalities and other key health informants on cervical cancer for increase in uptake of screening services.

The final paper in this issue by Sohini Chatterjee critically explores India's political attitude towards LGBTQ rights and concerns at the United Nations, and aims to understand what this says about its global political image in the 21st Century. The author argues that despite its anti-queerphobic narrative, India has indulged in 'political homophobia' at the international level, while also emphasising the significance of India's attempts at constructing an anti-phobic image by leveraging tactical rhetorical devices to its advantage are significant.

In addition to these papers, this issue also features two book reviews. In reviewing Amanda Lotz's Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television, Anne Sweet summarises how the text examines frameworks, methodologies, and actors involved in new media, focusing on the changing American business model of television, specifically the move towards non-linear distributions systems that provide unlimited access to content and revenues based on subscribers. The author notes that Lotz's work, although more hypothetical and theoretical than concrete, succeeds in continuing and shifting dialogue around new media industries and practices.

The review of Natalie Fenton's, *Digital, Political, Radical* by Chrysi Dagoula captures how the book challenges current debates on politics and democracy, offering a pragmatic perception of politics, and the need to frame these discussions within broader social, political, cultural, and economic contexts. The review also places emphasis on Fenton's approach of debates on politics and democracy from a critical theory point-of-view, and its wider challenge posed to media research, on the need for more discussion on how politics is experienced in a digital age and its wider implications on individual's ability to be political.

With a diverse collection of papers and book reviews, this standard issue invites rich discussion and debates, bringing to the forefront crucial areas for research in the field of media, communications, and culture.

Astroturf Lobbying in the EU: The Case of Shale Gas Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Interest groups have different options in their attempt to influence the decision-making process. One of them is to simulate citizen support for or against a public policy. This process has been coined astroturfing as it refers to the manufacturing of grassroots movements. Due to the concealed identity of the true sponsor of such movements, astroturfing represents a threat to democratic and pluralist values. In this paper, a comprehensive review of the literature on the phenomenon is presented before a method to detect such movements is suggested. This method relies on an emphasis framing analysis. The hypothesis is that astroturf groups use different frames than genuine grassroots movements in order to comply with the private interests they truly represent. The results of the case study on the shale gas exploration debate in the EU allowed to isolate an astroturf group as the frames they used is significantly different from genuine NGOs.

KEYWORDS

Astroturfing, Framing, Interest Groups, Lobbying, Shale Gas

Introduction

In recent years, an innovative lobbying strategy called astroturfing has penetrated the European public sphere. Astroturf lobbying consists of manufacturing a spontaneous support from citizens on an issue for political purposes. It can range from purchasing followers on Twitter to paying citizens to demonstrate in the street, or from signing a petition with false names to the setting-up of front groups and bogus NGOs. Whilst first traces of astroturf efforts can be found in the United States, this strategy is now emerging in Europe and is used by interest groups to lobby the European institutions or to sway public opinion.

Presenting itself as a grassroots movement, whilst in reality advocating for private interests, is problematic in democratic societies for various reasons. The first that comes to mind is the threat it represents to the democratic process. Indeed, in a pluralist system, the purpose of civil society organisations is to defend the interests of the citizens and to counterweight the influence of the corporate sector. The fact that citizens devote time and energy to a greater cause is one of the roots of their legitimacy. However, the financial and human resources of such organisations are often little compared to the resources of private companies and trade organisations. The fact that corporate interests simulate spontaneous citizens movement to

disseminate their messages is problematic as it challenges the voice of genuine grassroots movements. Those different voices are competing in the public sphere and the interests of real citizens movements might be obliterated by such practice. The first section of this paper offers a comprehensive review of the literature on astroturfing in order to define what the term really encompasses.

In attempting to look like a grassroots movement, private interests violate most of the normative theories of communication and political science, but also most codes of ethics of public relations and public affairs. The objective of this paper is thus to find a way to detect them. Despite the critics brought forward by several scholars regarding the use of the framing theory in social science, which are detailed in the second section of this paper, this concept offers an interesting lens to differentiate the astroturf from the grassroots movements. The hypothesis is based on an inherent dilemma for astroturfers. Astroturf groups represent private interests while appearing like a genuine grassroots movement. Will they use the frames from the interests they truly represent? Will they try to counter-frame the ones suggested by genuine grassroots movements? Or will they try to completely reframe the issue? The hypothesis developed in this paper is that by mapping the interest groups depending on their framing of the issue, it is possible to identify and isolate such groups.

The last section of this papers develops a case study on the debates that took place in Europe regarding the exploration of shale gas. In order to test the hypothesis that astroturf groups can be isolated from other grassroots movements based on their framing, the position papers of 34 interest groups were analysed with a quantitative text analysis method.

What is astroturfing and what is not?

It is only in 1986 that a US Senator from Texas, Lloyd Bentsen, coined the term astroturfing to describe a manufactured public relations campaign. His staff had received an unusually high number of letters from citizens who expressed their concerns about a new policy proposal aiming to regulate the liquor business. It appeared that these public letters actually originated from the liquor industry itself. The Senator tried to reassure its constituency by saying he was able to "tell the difference between grass roots and AstroTurf" (Walker 2014, 33). Bentsen thus cleverly qualified this fake grassroots movement as astroturfing in reference to the brand of synthetic grass AstroTurf. Originally, astroturfing refers to a communication campaign pretending to emanate spontaneously from concerned citizens while it is actually sponsored anonymously by corporate interests.

Even though such strategies are reminiscent of propaganda techniques and appeared long before the 60's, it is worth noting that the existing literature on the subject is still at an early stage and is very scattered. Most research on the subject has been conducted in North America, the cradle of astroturfing, but is now emerging in Europe as well. The first scholarly work about the astroturf phenomenon started to really emerge in the 90's under the impetus of John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton (1995) and Sharon Beder (1998). Even though they do not specifically use the term, they shed light on the damn lies that are

sometimes used by the public relations industry. Among them, the setting-up of front groups and the publication of scientific reports written by controversial expert groups are examples of imaginative strategies created to influence the outcome of public policies. From that time onwards, the fields from which scholars have conducted research on astroturfing were scattered, leading to some confusion about what the term really encompasses.

Early academic work putting an emphasis on astroturfing was led by Thomas Lyon and John Maxwell (2004) who strived to formalise the potential benefits that interest groups can reap from investing in astroturf efforts. Their economic modelling shows that astroturfing can theoretically be very attractive from a political but also from a business point of view. However, they did not take into account the potentially damaging effects on the reputation of a company getting caught in practicing such shady activities. Astroturfing is indeed a stealth tactic that implies to keep its true identity secret for as long as possible, which goes against the good practices in PR (Parsons 2008). The risk of being linked to such activities was later studied by James Mattingly (2006) who conducted a qualitative exploration of structures and processes of corporate political actions. He links the success of lobbying activities in shaping public policies with the necessity to have a good and lasting relationship with policymakers. Being accused of astroturfing would, therefore, complicate subsequent lobbying efforts for an organisation.

Interestingly, John McNutt and Katherine Boland (2007) suggested that environmental issues are more likely to be targeted by astroturfers. The research conducted by Charles Cho et al. (2011) supports this assumption. Based on a psychological experiment, their findings suggest that "astroturf organizations are effective in creating the sought uncertainty in the minds of people exposed to their message" (2011, 23). Along the same lines, the finding of a study conducted by Peter Bsumek and his colleagues (2014) demonstrated how the coal industry developed astroturf campaigns in the US in order to defend their interests. The findings show that the coal industry's strategy is to propose a multi-front corporate advocacy campaign, which includes the use of front groups. The authors define this strategy as corporate ventriloquism and explain how the industry has adapted its rhetoric in order to challenge and undermine the voice from genuine grassroots movements.

The evolution of information and communication technologies is at the centre of McNutt's work when he considered the implication of astroturfing for non-profit advocacy (2007) and the digital divide that it creates between advocacy organizations (2008). Indeed, the appropriation of the voice of civil society can also be done on the Internet and is often defined in the literature as sock puppetry. As Jerry Zhang and colleagues (2013) stress it, the internet appears to be a perfect platform for astroturf campaigns as it can easily provide a cloak of anonymity for its users. The idea behind sock puppetry is to create fake accounts, personas or bots in order to converse and to automatically relay the messages and ideas of their creators. Researchers from the field of computer science have strived to evaluate the influence of such campaigns and also to design tools to detect such murky activities (Ratkiewicz et al. 2011). Along those lines, it is worth mentioning the impetus of the Oxford Internet Institute who set up a research group focusing on the proliferation of fake news on

social media. For instance, they unearthed and explained the use of sock puppetry in the Brexit debates, where both sides created political bots to sway the public opinion on Twitter. Philip Howard and Bence Kollanyi showed that the "computational propaganda had a small but strategic role in the referendum conversations" (2016, 1).

Even though most research has been conducted in the United States so far, scholars from other countries also had a look at the phenomenon, possibly due to the growing number of detected cases in recent years. In Europe, Laurens (2015) has published a paper after following the setting-up of an astroturf group from the inside. He explained from a sociological perspective how the evolution of the European political structures and the need for the European institutions to regain trust from their citizens lead businesses to try and legitimate their actions through front groups to feed that need of institutional legitimacy.

As explained earlier, researchers from various fields have contributed to the current knowledge of astroturfing. However, it appears that the term itself is not always used to designate the same reality. Depending on the field of research or on the geographical and political context, different meanings coexist. It is in that context that Boulay (2012) strived to suggest a comprehensive definition in order to clarify and ease further research on the matter. She sees two conditions that must be fulfilled to characterize a communication process as astroturfing. Indeed, she defines it as "a communication strategy whose true source is hidden, and that pretends to emanate from a citizens' initiative" (2012, 61). From that definition, astroturfing can take many different forms. It can describe the fact of buying fake followers on Twitter, posting positive comments under a false identity on TripAdvisor, paying citizens to demonstrate in the street, creating fake grassroots organizations with misleading names, and the list goes on. Building on this definition and applying it to political settings, astroturf lobbying thus refers to the simulation of citizen support for political purposes.

Debates on the application of framing theory in social science

As from the 70's and onwards, the concept of framing has been widely used and defined by an ever-growing number of scholars from various research traditions. Two major schools of thoughts have emerged over the years: the sociology-rooted and the psychology-rooted traditions. Both perceive framing effects differently, both theoretically and empirically. In this section, the distinction between the two strands of research is made in order to explain the theoretical and empirical choices on how the research design for the case study has been built.

References to framing in the sociological tradition can be best tracked to Gregory Bateson and Erving Goffman. In his book Frame Analysis, An Essay on the Organization of Experience (1974), Goffman considers "framing as a means of understanding how people construct meanings and make sense of the everyday world" (Ferree et al. 2002). Goffman uses the word frames to label "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their time and world-space at large" (1974, 21). Applied to social groups, Goffman explains that the primary frameworks are the central

elements of their culture. Members of a same social group thus share same frameworks that they rely on to understand and respond to events. In sum, framing involves a social construction of a social phenomenon.

William Gamson and colleagues furthered research on framing with a constructionist approach and applied it to media discourse and public opinion, and how the former offers different interpretative packages to the latter for constructing meaning on an issue like nuclear power (Gamson & Modigliani 1989). What is especially relevant in their analyses is that, by deconstructing the old-fashioned way of measuring public opinion, that is with surveys containing pre-coded responses, they have demonstrated the "extent to which different media packages have become part of the public's toolkit in making sense of the world of public affairs" (1989, 36). The authors carefully stress that changes in media discourses do not necessarily cause changes in public opinion, but that changes in discourse provide an essential context for interpreting issues and events.

It is along the same lines that Bernard Cohen claimed that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (1963), which is helpful in understanding the difference between agenda-setting and framing. Whilst the effects of agenda-setting increase the salience of a specific issue, different frames are competing and offer alternative interpretative packages of the issue at hand. In essence, agenda-setting research investigates an indirect media effect (what to think about) rather than a direct media effect (what to think) as framing research does.

Research on framing has grown exponentially following the piece written by Robert Entman in 1993. In this article, he tries to clarify what he qualified a fractured paradigm and strives to disambiguate the term and pave the way for operationalizing framing analyses in the field of social sciences. Building on Todd Gitlin's work notably, he explains that framing "essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (1993, 52). As explained earlier, framing in the sociological tradition is based on salience. Further on, Entman defines salience as "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (1993, 53). Building on Entman's work, research deriving from this salience-based definition is thus qualified as emphasis framing.

Subsequently, scholars from psychology and behavioural economics conducted experiments on how individuals respond to pieces of information and how the manipulation of this information – or how the information is framed - could influence their choices and judgments. Since the experiments focused on the variation of presentation of logically equivalent information, we use the label equivalence framing to refer to this school of thought.

The seminal experiment on the topic was conducted by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman in 1981. Participants who took part in the experiments were informed about the spread of a rare Asian disease that threatened to kill 600 people. Different sets of alternatives were suggested to the participants. Some were framed in terms of gains, others in terms of losses. Even though the propositions were logically equivalent in terms of lives saved or lost, Tversky and Kahneman demonstrated that people who were exposed to an option framed in terms of lives saved were more risk-averse but were conversely risk-seeking when the information was framed in terms of lives lost.

Results showed that human choices are influenced by the framing of the problem rather than the utility of the solution. In order to illustrate the difference with the sociology-rooted tradition, Michael Cacciatore and colleagues note that "psychology-rooted framing refers to variations in how a given piece of information is presented to audiences, rather than differences in what is being communicated" (2016, 10).

Put simply, on the one hand, the sociology-rooted tradition sees framing as a theoretical model closer to agenda-setting and priming because of its salience-based definition. There is a framing effect because the emphasis of certain aspects of an issue renders these bits of information more easily memorable and accessible to the audience in taking decisions. On the other hand, the psychology-rooted tradition argues that framing operates based on applicability, that is that the frames used to present a piece of information determine the schema called upon to process that information. This second school of thought advocates for changes in how communication scholars approach and conduct research on framing. First, they urge researchers to clearly differentiate emphasis from equivalent framing and not use the word framing as a catchall term to describe media effects. Second, they lobby for a return to a more rigid and narrow equivalency-based definition of framing.

Research Design

In this paper, this is an emphasis framing analysis that is conducted. As explained earlier, there is a dilemma for astroturfers in terms of frames selection. Recent research has shown that the frames used by interest groups can be explained by different factors: the logic of influence and the logic of membership (Schmitter & Streeck 1999, Klüver & Mahoney 2015). The former means that interest groups behave in accordance with the target of their lobbying campaign. The same frames will not work as efficiently when trying to influence the DG Trade of the European Commission or the Environment Committee of the European Parliament for instance. The latter requires the interest groups to mobilize frames in accordance with the members they represent. For example, corporate lobby groups would rely more on economic frames and citizen groups on public frames such as the environment or public health.

However, astroturf groups represent private interests whilst appearing like a genuine grassroots movement. The idea is thus to look at the frames that are emphasized by the astroturf movement and to compare them with the other interest groups. The emphasis

framing approach is thus more suitable for this kind of analysis. Indeed, as Heike Klüver and colleagues suggest, "framing plays an important role in public policy. Interest groups strategically highlight some aspects of a policy proposal while ignoring others in order to gain an advantage in the policy debate" (Klüver, Mahoney & Opper 2015, 481). The affiliation to Entman's definition is patent as framing is based here on the selection of certain aspects of an issue in order to increase its salience.

Research analysing the frames of texts emitted by organizations from the political or media arenas has been conducted in a wide range of fields of research. In the field of interest group studies, the use of emphasis framing to measure interest groups positions has been replicated to different political contexts and different issues (Baumgartner & Mahoney 2008, Baumgartner 2009, Bernhagen et al. 2015, Borang et al. 2014, Klüver 2009, 2013, 2015). Recently, Heike Klüver and Christine Mahoney (2015) developed an innovative methodology for framing analysis based on quantitative text analysis. Whereas previous methods were usually based on manual hand-coding, the quantitative approach offers an automated method allowing to analyse large numbers of documents.

In this paper, the position papers of 34 interest groups (21 trade associations, 12 NGOs, and 1 astroturf group) were analysed with KH Coder, an open source software for quantitative text analysis. First, a cluster analysis was performed in order to see what words and sequences of words were the most used by interest groups. That led to the emergences of different frames. Second, a correspondence analysis was performed in order to map on a two-dimension scale the different interest groups based on the framing that they used. This mapping allows seeing the coalitions forming about an issue as well as the position of individual interest groups depending on their group type (trade association or NGO).

Case study: Responsible Energy Citizens Coalition

Shale gas refers to unconventional fossil fuel that can be found in various reservoirs across Europe. It is considered unconventional as the location of the reservoirs differs from where oil and gas are usually produced and because the techniques to extract the gas require unusual and complicated techniques. In most cases, the extraction of shale gas necessitates hydraulic fracturing, or more commonly called fracking, which consists in fracturing rock with a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and chemicals that allows natural gas and petroleum to flow more freely.

The controversy surrounding the exploration of shale gas is mostly linked with the potentially damaging impact it can have on the environment such as air emissions, climate change, water contamination, high water consumption, risks of earthquakes and the list goes on. Even though the exploration of shale gas can represent a big potential for some EU countries, the environmental concerns lead the EU institutions to evaluate the risks and to possibly vote legislation regarding the exploration of this energy.

Though the European Commission has a near monopoly for initiating new pieces of legislation, the European Parliament decided to use its right of initiative to discuss and debate on the issue of shale gas. On Wednesday 21 November 2012, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were asked to vote in a plenary session in Strasbourg on two different reports on shale gas. The first one aimed to evaluate the impact of shale gas and shale oil extraction activities. The second one aimed to explore the industrial and energy aspects of shale gas.

Lobbying campaigns targeting MEPs have taken place during the weeks and months preceding the vote. Interest groups from various sectors of the society took positions and informed the MEPs about the potential impacts that a new legislation on shale gas could have on their sectors. It is interesting to outline the remarks expressed by various MEPs during the vote and which are available on the website of the European Parliament. Many expressed their concerns about the intense lobbying from interest groups as well as the suspicion of citizen groups being guided by corporate interests. This issue is thus interesting to test the hypothesis as it is expected to find an astroturf movement amongst the interest groups.

For this study, 36 position papers from interest groups active in the debate have been analysed in order to identify the frames that were emphasised. Figure 1 shows the position of the interest groups studied depending on the words and clusters of words that they are using.

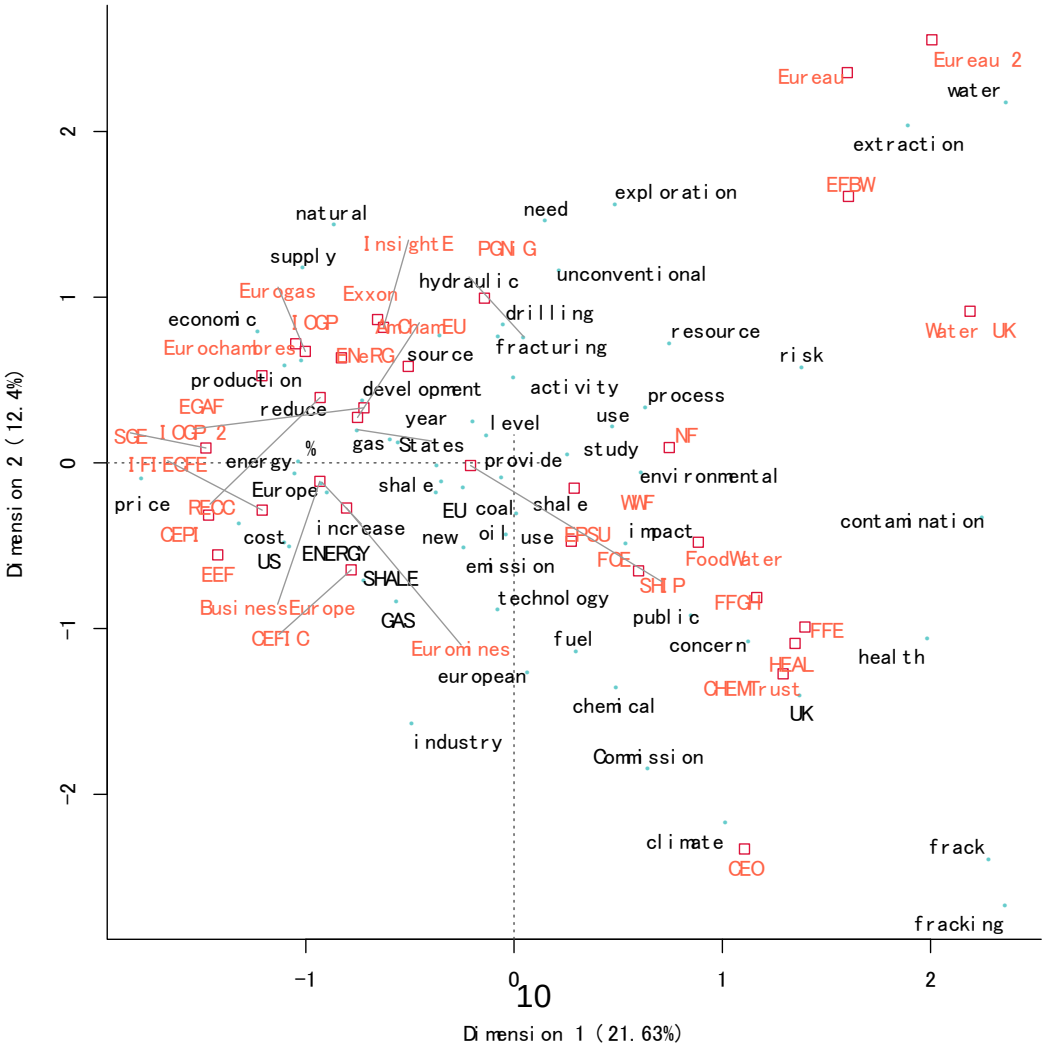

Figure 1 Position of the interest groups based on their framing

From this mapping, it appeared that two coalitions have emerged during the policy debates as visible in Figure 2.

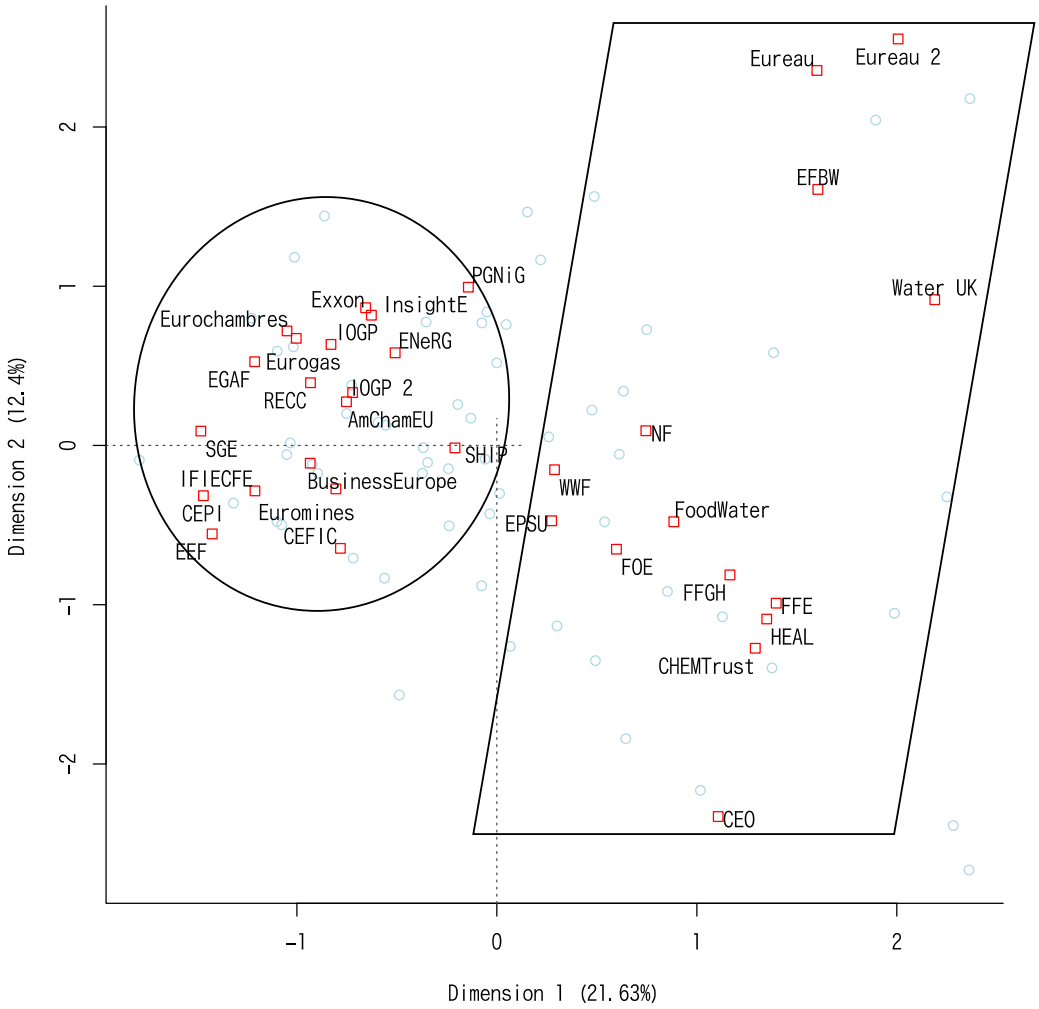

Figure 2 Coalitions of interest groups sharing the same frames

The first coalition, on the right-hand side of Figure 2, comprises interest groups advocating for strict legislation and a ban on the exploration of shale gas. The nature of these groups is mainly non-governmental and non-profit, or cause groups, to use John Stewart's terms (1958). Following a logic of membership (Schmitter & Streeck 1999), it is not surprising that they mainly rely on public frames, that is the risks of hydraulic fracturing on the environment and on public health. This framing is evidenced by the use of words such as fracking, health, risk, water, or chemicals.

A deeper analysis of the position papers from interest groups from this coalition confirms this interpretation:

> "Shale gas and other unconventional oil and gas pose a serious threat to the climate, the environment and local communities. The extraction of these fuels, like shale gas, leads to ground-water contamination, serious health impacts, and significantly higher carbon emissions than other fossil fuels." (Friends of the Earth 2012)

> "We, a coalition of environment and health NGOs, have great concerns about hydraulic fracturing (fracking) of shale gas […] in Europe. In particular, because of its impacts in the following areas: climate, energy, water pollution, water use, air pollution, soil pollution, land use, noise, seismic activity, cumulative and combined health and environmental impacts on communities and workers in the unconventional gas industry." (FFGH Coalition 2012)

On the left-hand side of Figure 2, sectional groups such as oil and gas companies are advocating against more regulation in order to stay competitive, to keep jobs in Europe, and to secure energy supply at an affordable price. The recent success of shale gas exploration for the US economy is often taken as an example. They rely mainly on what Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified as an economic consequences frame with the use of terms such as growth, jobs, economic, market, or power supply.

Here are some excerpts illustrating the economic framing:

> "Europe holds significant shale gas potential. Even without development of the scale that has transformed the US economy, European shale gas could contribute a wide range of benefits including:
> 1. More jobs: as many as 1.1 million by 2050 – in addition to those created by other sectors. Greater energy independence, cutting imports to as little as 62% down from an otherwise predicted 89% of demand in 2035
> 2. More growth: adding as much as 3.8 trillion euros to the collective EU economy between 2020 and 2050
> 3. More Secure energy: shale gas could reduce the EU energy dependence by as low as 62% from an otherwise predicted 89% in 2035
> That is why it is worth exploring for European shale gas." (IOGP 2012)

> "Eurogas members' view that policy towards shale gas should be determined by what is best for our consumers' welfare. As always, this means that economics and security of supply should be in the driving seat." (Eurogas 2012)

Interestingly, Figure 3 shows the mapping of the interest groups depending on their type (trade association or NGOs). What is interesting to see is that the two coalitions bring together interest groups from a single type except for one exception: Responsible Energy Citizen Coalition (RECC). The name suggests indeed that it is a grassroots movement, however, their framing is highly similar to the one of trade associations.

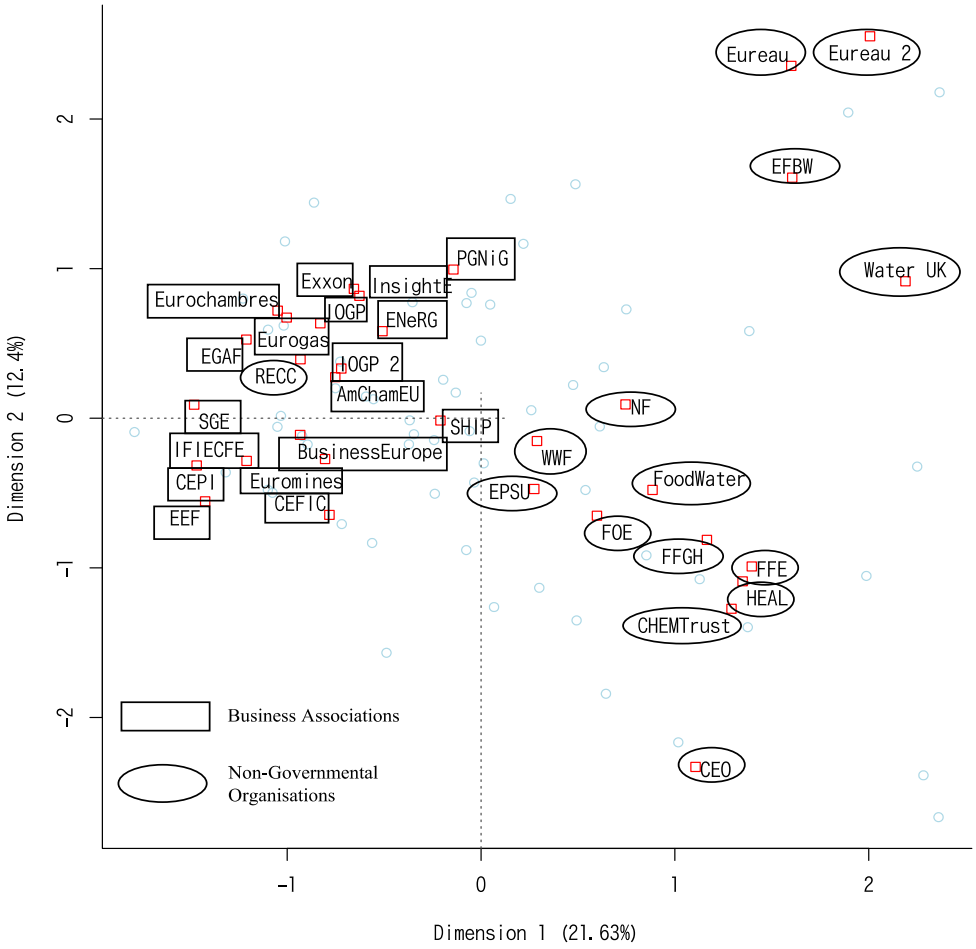

Figure 3 Mapping of interest groups by type

A closer look at the communication material from that organisation shows that the most salient aspect of the shale gas issue that is emphasized is the reassurance of the use of the hydraulic fracturing technology. The use of a technical language, which is reminiscent of the framing used by trade associations, is a constant in the communication of this group:

> "The experience and assumption from the already executed exploration works in Poland unambiguously prove that the unconditional observance of the provisions of the obligatory law along with technological regime practically eliminates any influence of executed works upon the natural environment". (RECC 2012)

A letter sent to all MEPs the day before the vote to ask them not to vote in favour of the ban of shale gas also confirms that the most salient aspect of their argumentation is the safety of the technology, but RECC also mobilizes the same economic consequences frames as the energy companies do publicly, such as the preservation of jobs in Europe and the security of energy supply at an affordable price in Europe.

This letter was part of a broader lobbying strategy that was intense. Indeed, the day before the vote saw the setting-up of an event inside the premises of the European Parliament entitled How Shale Gas Will Transform Europe. The conference was sponsored by three conservative MEPs who gave the authorization to RECC to hold the event inside the Parliament, in the hallway in front of the plenary room. According to their website, this organisation presents

itself as an association of "natural persons, representatives of self-governments and local authorities as well as social organizations". Their objective was to convene different speakers in order to inform MEPs about the implications of shale gas exploration in Europe.

However, the organisation of this event raised many concerns amongst MEPs about the genuine organisers who were behind this communication campaign as the arguments presented were clearly in favour of shale gas exploration, which was unusual from an NGO in this debate so far. Indeed, the Responsible Energy Citizen Coalition was not registered in the European Transparency Register and, despite their status as a citizens group, they organized a conference with professional public relations tools such as flat screens, impressive sceneries, posters, and interactive games, and followed by a fancy cocktail reception.

The political party The Greens decided to investigate to see who was behind this so-called citizen coalition as the information on their website was vague about their funding. They found out that this movement was actually funded by PGNiG, KGHM, and LOTOS, three companies active in the exploration of shale gas in Poland and in Lithuania, two countries presenting high potential of natural gas resources. Given the anonymity with which the three companies created this campaign and the fact that it presented itself as a citizen movement, RECC presents the attributes of an astroturf group.

The framing analysis highlights the dilemma that astroturfers have to face. On the one hand, they defend private interests, and on the other, they aspire to appear as a grassroots movement. By conducting an emphasis framing analysis with a quantitative text analysis software, it was possible to map all interest groups depending on their framing and to isolate an astroturf group who clearly denoted from other genuine movements.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to see whether astroturf groups could be isolated and detected by comparing the frames they use to the ones from other interest groups. In the case of the shale gas debate, two coalitions emerged. The first one is opposed to the exploitation of shale gas by using hydraulic fracturing and mainly comprises environmental and health NGOs. They rely on public frames and emphasize the risks of fracking whilst at the same time ignore all the economic aspects of the issue. On the other hand, the coalition supporting the exploration of shale gas brings together trade associations and sectional groups. Their most salient argument is the economic benefits of hydraulic fracturing. The analysis shows that the astroturf group also used an economic consequences frame and used a technical language. The most salient aspect of the issue they decided to emphasise was to reassure about the safety of hydraulic fracturing. In that perspective, the aim of using an astroturf group was to reassure MEPs about the risks of hydraulic fracturing and to influence them on voting against a possible ban.

The existence of astroturf lobbying in political arenas presents a threat to a pluralist society such as the European Union. There are concerns regarding the distance between citizens and the EU institutions and astroturfing risk to even further this gap. As astroturfers rely on keeping their identity secrets, they operate discreetly in the public sphere. This discretion also complicates the work of scholars who have to cope with limited data and methods. The findings of this study show that conducting emphasis framing analyses could prove useful in detecting such groups, and therefore facilitate further research on the subject.

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Biography

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Wall and Tower: Notes on Tactics and Tactical Experiments in Israeli Culture and Politics[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the use of tactic in artistic and activist practices in Israel. The notion of tactic in this article is based on an architectural form of settlement developed by Jews living in British-Mandate Palestine during the nineteen-thirties called Wall and Tower. This architectural style can be understood as a strategy employed to take over space, as well as a tactic that intervenes and disrupts power structures. By analysing three case studies from the last decade initiated by artists and activists – Israeli-Jews, Israeli-Palestinians, and Bedouin – this article explores the relationship between the use of temporary and critical interventions and their theme of return to or search for home. The theoretical framework is multi-disciplinary and explores processes of globalisation and de-globalisation within Israeli society, as well as art theory that emphasises the socio-political engagement within art practices, such as tactical media, performance, and site-specific.

KEYWORDS

Art, Activism, Israel, Palestine, Tactic

Introduction

During the nineteen-thirties an architectural form was developed by Jews living in British-Mandate Palestine called Wall and Tower (Homa Umigdal in Hebrew). It was used for building new Kibbutzim – a form of Jewish settlement with a socialist, communal, and agricultural orientation. These settlements were erected without permission from authorities. However, a law from the Ottoman empire that was adopted by the British-Mandate prevented illegal constructions from being demolished if the roof had been completed (Rotbard 2003). Wall and Tower can be understood as a tactic – a temporary act of resistance that is characterised by the lack of space in which it can made permanent (De Certeau 1988). Wall and Tower is based on haste building methods – erecting a wooden wall with a guarding tower, which could be built

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overnight. It was initiated, at that time, by a minority group who struggled to reclaim a land from what was perceived by them as an exterior occupier who enforced restrictions on Jewish immigration and settlements in Palestine. It was also a direct response to the Arab uprising of 1936-1939 which was the biggest reaction against the British-Mandate and the Zionist project. Wall and Tower is an example of a tactic developed into a future strategy – a defined space which determines power relations (Ibid). Around fifty Wall and Tower Kibbutzim were set up during the Arab uprising. They successfully created a chain of Jewish settlements that had an impact on where the borders of the future state of Israel were drawn in 1967 (Rotbard 2003).

Building the Kibbutz Sha'ar HaGolan using Wall and Tower construction method, 1937. Source: PikiWiki – Israel free image collection project

The transformation of Israel from being a society of communities to a territorial nation-state led the Israeli state to adopt both strategic and tactic positions (Kemp 2000). It has became part of the Israeli mainstream narrative that is largely based on a victimhood discourse, and of a collective state of mind of "civil militarism," which perceives the state as being in a constant war as the "natural way of things" (Newman Smulders 2013; Kimmerling 1993, 129).[2] Wall and Tower is an example of the way the pre-state tactic has continued to influence the language and actions of the state of Israel as strategy. It is mostly dominant in the West Bank area in which Jewish settlements manage to secure as much as land as possible (Weizman 2007). There is thus a conceptual continuity between Wall and Tower settlements constructed under British-Mandate

[2] For example, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee in 2015: "I'm asked if we will forever live by the sword – yes" (Ravid, 2015).

and current Israeli settlements, justified with nationalist, security and religious arguments.[3] The new settlers from the last thirty years perceive themselves as the followers of the pioneering Zionist settlers, enjoying official and unofficial support from the government, and parts of the Israeli public, despite their disregard of state and international laws (Ibid).

This article uses the concept of Wall and Tower to examine it both as a strategy for expanding and defining space, as well as a tactic that intervenes and disrupts it. To examine this relationship, I will focus on three practices from the last decade that correspond to the strategy of Wall and Tower in a tactical way. The first is the commune in the village of Iqrit in northern Israel. It was established on August 2012 by young Palestinians, descendants of the Iqrit villagers who during the 1948 Israeli-Arab war were removed from their home and then forbidden to return home. It is an act of civil disobedience where the group renewed parts of the village by building facilities and moving there without permission. The second is The Convoy, a project by the art collective Empty House from summer 2013. The Convoy was an intervention into Jerusalem, which involved them moving around the city's neighbourhoods as a group of nomads using mobile DIY facilities. The last project is Eternal Sukkah by the art group Sala-Manca with the collaboration of Al-Kurshan family and the artists Yeshaiau Rabinowitz and Itamar Mendes-Flohr. It is consisted of a Sukkah, a temporary structure used during the Jewish holiday Sukkot, in which for seven days the feasting occurred in the Sukkah. The Sukkah – made out of tin and wooden plates – was originally used as the house of Al-Kurshan family and was purchased from them by Sala-Manca. The family is part of the Jahalin Bedouin tribe, which has been displaced for several times since 1948 by the Israeli government, and at the moment live in Judea desert area in south of Israel.

The projects differ in their activist or/and artistic intentions. However, the theme of return to or search for home that is present in all of the projects expand the notion of tactic that is associated with the lack of defined and definite space (De Certeau 1988). They also challenge main Zionist axioms that are defined by means of return – to the land, to the sources, to history (Raz-Krakotzkin 2013). Together they make an interesting case in relation to tactic as well as artistic engagement with socio-political issues in Israel.

The art of tactic – a theoretical framework

The art/activism junction in which the case studies are located calls for a multi-disciplinary approach to understand the nature of these practices, the way they operate as tactics, and the way they challenge Israeli-Zionist narrative. This section explores the theoretical framework that is

[3] For example, current minister of education, Nafatli Bennet, said in interview for Al-Jazeera on February 2017: "If you want to say that our land does not belong to us, I suggest you go change the bible first, come back and then show me a new bible that says that the land of Israel doesn't belong to Jews" (Al Jazeera English, 2017).

derived from art theory, with emphasis on tactical media, site-specific, and performance, as well as social and political theories focusing on processes of globalisation and de-globalisation.
Since the 1990's there has been an emergence of artistic interventions, such as public art, artivism, and tactical media. These practices adopt the language of tactic as a way to correspond to globalisation, as well as the autonomous status of artwork that is supposedly separated from social and political life (Bradley & Esche 2007). On the surface, both globalisation and art practices are characterised through the concepts of acceleration, fluidity and mobility. However the latter use these characteristics in order to expose globalisation power sources, the people who benefit from it, and the ones who are excluded. As critical art practices, they intervene and disrupt the dominant semiotic regime, creating temporary situations "in which signs, message, and narrative are set play" (Raley 2009, 6). Similar to de Certeau's notion of tactic, these practices emphasise modes of operation that hold a subversive potential by using products in a different way from their original purpose – a shift from being a consumer to a producer (De Certeau 1988; Raley 2009). In relation to the article, it is not only a matter of using products but using language as well. The question, therefore, is how the case studies use language to undermine concepts that are central to the Israeli-Zionist narrative.

In the last three decades Israel has moved towards being a neo-liberal economy, resulting in the deterioration of the welfare state model (Adva Centre 2016). One of the recent and significant counter-reaction for this shift was the protest for social justice during the summer of 2011. In comparison to other protests around the world at that time this one focused on the housing shortage (Livio & Katriel 2014).[4] The use of protest camps already have a long legacy in different socio-political struggle as "a tactic of political contention" (Feigenbaum et al. 2013, 1). As a tactic that was globally adopted during the insurrections of 2011, it transforms the public space into a "global street" - a space that brings into the surface the problematic relationship between powerlessness and empowerment, but also provides with the opportunity for the powerless to make history and politics (Monterescu and Shaindlinger 2013, 229). Within a local context, the use of tents in protests resonates with the first decade in Israel, where a great number of Jewish immigrants lived under harsh conditions in transition camps (Ma'abarot in Hebrew). The protest, therefore, uses the temporary characteristics of the tent to express the sense of financial insecurity that moved foreword to the third generation (Misgav 2013).

The sense of insecurity is not only the result of accelerating globalisation processes in Israel. When it comes to other citizens or residents, such as Palestinians and Bedouins, restrictions on movement and construction are also enforced on them. That happens during times of supporting building in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, as well as promoting towns within Israeli territories that are exclusive for Israeli-Jews. These actions are justified by security and

[4] The massive distribution of the protest that has started as a protect camp in Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv to other places around Israel led to the expansion of other issues that were effected by the socio-political situation in Israel. For example, education, pensions, workers and single mothers rights, and struggle of other minority groups, such as the LGBTQ community, Israeli-Palestinians, and asylum-seekers.

nationalist reasons of fighting against terror or maintaining the Jewish majority in Israel (DeMalach 2009; Weizman 2007). This article shows two examples of these de-globalised processes: the Iqrit village and the Jahalin Bedouin tribe.

Iqrit is a unique case in the history of the displacement of Palestinians.[5] During the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the Israeli army entered and asked its residents to vacate their homes for a period of two weeks. When the village residents asked to return, their request was denied and Iqrit was declared a restricted military area. Although the Israel High Court of Justice passed a judgement in 1951 allowing the villagers' return, the ruling is yet to be implemented. Since then the villagers and their descendent have continued their juridical struggle to return to Iqrit, alongside acts of civil disobedience such as demonstrations, tours, and a youth summer camp (Iqrit Community Association 2013).

The case of the Jahalin tribe is different since its status of nomads/refugee is something that is both part of the traditional way of life and something that was forced on the tribe as a result of constantly moving to areas that do not meet their needs. They first became refugees in 1948 after they were deported from the Negev desert in south of Israel. They moved to Judea desert and the Palestinian towns Abu-Dis and Al-Eizariya. Both towns are located in area B that is under a Palestinian civilian control and Israeli security control. During the 1990s, as a result of building the Jewish settlement Ma'ale Adumin, they were forced to move again. Today, many of the Jahalin tribe live in Arab al-Jahalin, a semi-urban village close to the Abu-Dis garbage dump in area C, an area that is under full Israeli control. The new place is recognised by the Israeli state, but it doesn't allow its resident to maintain their traditional ways of living, such as keeping live stock (Bimkom 2013).

Connecting issues of home, ownership and displacement, this articles explores the relationship between home and space. In relation to tactic, it analyses the meaning of tactic and other temporary interventions in cases where the feeling of temporariness and instability are ordinary feelings and a concrete reality. Since the case studies are initiated by different actors within Israeli society – Jews, Palestinians and Bedouin – several interpretation for the relationship between tactic and strategy are necessary.

To examine further relationships between time and space is important to understand the case studies as site-specifics as well. While earlier texts on site-specific during the 1960s and 1970s perceived site as a physical space, highlighting its materialistic qualities, current theories on site-specific have expanded the site to the cultural and social context that constructs it. Site-specific

[5] In her analyse of the commune in Iqrit, Daphna Ben-Shaul refers them as "internally displaced" - meaning, Palestinians who have an Israeli citizenship and live within Israeli territories, but are unable to return to their original homes and villages. They often have been occupied or replaced by new Jewish residents or have become historic sites and part of the nature reserves (Ben-Shaul, 2016: 36)

has become a discourse, an anti-visual and immaterial experience built on information, text, gestures and performance (Kwon 2002). This interpretation coincides with the ways the case studies reproduce new meanings to the sites they occur in. In order to examine the relationship between the projects' site and the historical concepts or events they refer to, I will borrow the term 'performative return' coined by Ben-Shaul. It is a form of a site-specific performance "which bring about a re-conceptualization of reality" through aesthetic means (Ben-Shaul 2016, 31-32). Similar to tactics, it is both temporary and manipulative. It responds to socio-political events or crises, however it does not wish to offer a solution to them. By doing that, a performative return aims to change the conception on the event and to re-conceptualise reality (Ibid).

Tactical experimentations in Israel

The case studies correspond to the way Wall and Tower was canonised in Israeli history in two main ways. The first is by appropriating the tactic of Wall and Tower within the language and experience of non-Jewish minorities in Israel. The second is by neglecting its conceptual meaning of home and shelter by adopting a nomadic approach towards the Israeli space.

In order to transform Al-Kursahn family's house into an artwork Sala-Mance paid them 6,000 NIS, out of the 10,000 NIS artists' budget provided by the Jerusalem Development Authority. The artists drove to the Judea desert and dismantled their house. Al-Kurshan's family then built an improved house using the money given to them. Similar to the Wall and Tower, the whole process of dismantling and building had to happen overnight to avoid officers from the Israel Civil Administration spotting the construction of an unauthorised structure. The dismantled house was transferred to Jerusalem, and rebuilt in Hensen Centre for Art and Technology in Jerusalem where Sala-Manca works (Rotman 2017).

The new structure contains both qualities of a Bedouin House, rebuilt exactly as it was, and a Kosher – as it is built according to Jewish law – Sukkah. For the last purpose, Sala-Manca added a palm tree branches as the roof and festive decorations. It has thus become, as similar to the other case studies, a hybrid space that contains different histories and narratives in which their intersection produces new identities (Bhabha 1994). It has adopted the tactic of Wall and Tower for the opposite purpose. The original model was used as a shelter, separating the settlements from outside – the local landscape and its inhabitants (Rotbard 2003). The Eterenal Sukkah model used the discreet characteristics of Wall and Tower in order tear down these walls by suggesting an inclusive structure and a collaboration with non-Jewish residents living in Israel.

Sala-Manca, Eternal Sukkah, Hansen House, Jerusalem, 2014. Credit: Diego Rotman.

A similar thing happens in The Convoy on a conceptual level. Empty House was formed in one of last demonstrations of the 2011. The main motivation was providing artistic solutions for the housing shortage by occupying abandoned houses and transforming them to alternative artistic spaces. Their acts were always tactical, and in contrast to the original Wall and Tower, the group never had intentions of taking ownership of the space they have entered. After every event they left the space with the infrastructure they have created for other people to use. The non-sovereign approach that stood behind Empty House's projects has taken on an explicit meaning during The Convoy. During this project, the "invaded" space was Jerusalem. Dozens of participants responded to Empty House's open call and assisted with the preparations for the journey, such as building mobile infrastructures for electricity and water, as well as different types of DIY vehicles that were used as a kitchen, library, hair salon, cinema, and book printing. The journey itself lasted for a period of fifteen days (Empty House 2013a).

The Convoy is a nomadic experience that asks questions about home, safety and comfort zones. In the project's website, Empty House describes The Convoy as "the art of the Matzah" (Empty House 2013b). According to the book of Exodus, the Matzah was the bread that did not have time to prove and rise before the people of Israel left Egypt. This description has much in common with Kwon's definition for a discursive site-specific that is less of a structured space or model and more of a "itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist" (Kwon 2002, 29). The Convoy navigates between the physical space of Jerusalem and textual, visual and dematerialised sites. During the preparation and the journey, Empty House's website has become

an interactive space where its participants shared their ideas for the project. It also included a journey diary, interactive google map, and a live chat and forum (Empty House, 2013a). The Convoy emphasises the action and its unknown consequences. It is highlighted through one of the interactive documentation on their website called The Nomadic Code. It contains meditations, open questions and quotations written by the participants during the journey, mostly regarding issues of authorship, ownership and power, and the place of the nomad(s) in relation to them. Most of these insights are characterised with an open, fragmented and unfinished tone (Empty House 2013b). The notion of tactic is highly dominant here, as The Convoy refuses to delimit itself to an organised and defined set of theories and principles, despite its rich philosophical and cultural sources of inspiration.

Empty House, The Convoy, Jerusalem, 2013. Credit: Dana Goshen.

Such is the case with Eternal Sukkah. Although the site is more defined than that of The Convoy – a Sukkah located in an art centre – it is anchored by textual, oral, photographic, and cinematic sources that both document the project as well as construct its meaning. During the holiday of Sukkot, Eternal Sukkah, has become a space where different practitioners, such as Al-Kurshan family, artists, activists, academics and religious figures, were invited to share different experiences of nomadism, homelessness and refugeeness (Roman 2017).

In relation to discourse and the notion of 'performative return', both The Convoy and Eternal Sukkah perform the act of return to Jewish sources. The nomadic and temporary meanings are influenced by the story of Exodus that both Sukkot and Passover are related to. They both highlight elements of temporariness that come with a moral responsibility that is drawn from them being an enslaved minority in Egypt. Sukkot commemorates the structures which the people of Israel were living in during the Exodus, as well as the temporary structures which

farmers used for sleeping during harvest time. The Kabbalah and Jewish philosophy scholar Rachel Elior argues that the holiday reminds the settlers that they are temporary residents. It is therefore, an annual practice for the memory of being a refugee and a foreigner (Rotman 2016).

The mix of tactic with aspects of Jewish tradition that highlight issues of temporality, nomadism, and refugeeness becomes a critical reaction to Zionist ideology. The Zionist ideology can be read as negating the concept of exile and diaspora in favour of sovereignty in the land of Israel (Raz-Krakotzkin 2013). The non-sovereign or non-exclusive approach towards the state challenges both Zionist interpretations and religious right movements, that choose to highlight the act of occupying the land as the beginning of salvation and the coming of the messiah.[6] This approach expands the context of site-specific. Kwon highlights the problematic transformation of site-specific from being a critical practice to a nomadic practice that was embraced by mobilised capitalist economy (Kwon 2002). The cases of Eternal Sukkah and The Convoy however contradict this logic. They both use the temporary space to halt time in order to imagine other life forms that are more communal and socio-politically aware. It is not an act of escapism or a business or luxurious journey, but one that is motivated by a sense of responsibility and the need to change the political vocabulary that shapes the social, political and economic reality in Israel.
The use of traditionalist languages within a contemporary and critical practices are common amongst artists and activist who come from communities who experienced the exclusion and erasure of their traditions (Burns 2006). In an interview with Walaa Sbait, one of the members of the Iqrit commune, he argues that the commune is inspired by different models of struggles: the framers struggle in Mexico and Brazil; the Tuareg in the Sahara desert and Mali; as well as Kibbutzim, Israeli settlements and outposts (Matar 2013). The varied sources of influence show how different struggles in a global world have become networked. It also highlights the importance of appropriating the language of local strategy in this case, that of the Israeli-Zionist hegemony, in order to challenge it.[7]

Adopting the language of Wall and Tower within the context of the Palestinian struggle for national and territorial recognition, confronts the Israeli double standards regarding the expansion of settlements in the West Bank, as well as the lack of support and resources for Palestinian construction (Grinbaum & Ziv 2016). Since the Iqrit commune or "settlement" is not erected on an arbitrary spot but on the grounds of Iqrit village, it raises the question of the

[6] This reading exclude ultra-orthodox Jews who reject the idea of a secular Jewish state. There are also alternative approaches within Zionist-Orthodoxy which are more flexible regarding the idea of sovereignty. For example: the former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who ruled that the sanctity of life is more important than the sanctity of land, thus in case of the risk of losing life it is possible to give up on territories; the "Land of Peace" movement who promotes dialogue and co-existence between Jewish settlers and Palestinians through the common of both Judaism and Islam being Abrahamic religions.

[7] For similar acts see: the erection of a camp in the demolished Palestinian village Birim in 2014 by the art collective Insiyab; the camp protest Bab Al Shams ("Gate of the Sun" in Arabic) that appropriates the 2011 Israeli protests for social justice tents; the video art of Yael Bartana, *Summer Camp*, from 2007 documents the rebuilding of a house demolished in the West Bank village Anata by Israeli authorities. The rebuilding was made by Palestinians, Israelis, and international volunteers of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

Palestinian return. Allowing the villagers of Iqrit to return to their village might create a precedent for the Palestinians' demands of return – a demand that has never been recognised by the Israeli public and government throughout the years (Ben-Shaul 2016). This further exposes the Israeli double standards regarding the right to return that is automatically granted for every Jew who wishes to immigrate to Israel, even if they or their family were not born in Israel.

The concept of Wall and Tower or the act of settlement can be partially applied to the case of Iqrit. It does not only appropriate strategic language to interfere its space, but it uses the language of return, claiming a place that once belonged to them. The performative element of this return is manifested through the restoration of the destroyed village and the utilisation of the past within both a daily and aesthetic means (Ben-Shaul 2016). It is interesting to compare Iqrit's performative and disobedient act to the history of Palestinian art since 1948. According to art historian Gannit Ankori Palestinian art deals with the experience of displacement and exile, the loss of the nation and the land quite often with a tragic and pessimistic tone (Ankori 2006). While the experience of displacement is what motivated the actions of Iqrit's villagers, it is the use of humour, creativity, and productivity that define the commune. By adopting humoristic tone the commune in Iqrit not only manges to expose the different treatment it receives from Israeli authorities, but it also manages to maintain a more constructive way of dealing with the struggle of displacement. Its members do not adopt a nostalgic look at the past, but adapt it to their life. It can be seen from the mixture of playing football, producing oil, having tours with the elders who teach them about the place, installing solar systems and recycling facilities, or just watching TV, smoking and drinking, and learning the Dabke (a Palestinian traditional dance) (Ben-Shaul 2016).

Members of the Iqrit commune during lunchtime, 2013. Credit: Oren Ziv / Activestills.

The last issue is the relation between the tactical meaning of the projects to the space they respond to. The case studies provide a complex idea on tactic that moves between the decision of not being tied to a certain space, and the aim of claiming a space. It has to do with questions of privilege; who initiates the action, in which space, and what types of relations they hold with the authorities.

In the cases of Eternal Sukkah and The Convoy, the artistic context provides a protection to acts that in other contexts are labelled illegal. The "invasions" of Empty House were not disturbed by the police. That can be explained by the lack of a political agenda such as the one initiated in Iqrit. It also has to do with their their artistic success. Since their first project in 2011, Empty House has received media attention and attracted many visitors to their projects – all located in Jerusalem. The alternative tone the members have brought to the city art scene, has contributed to the artistic image the city tries to promote.[8] It is not surprising, therefore, that the latest Empty House project, "HaMiffal" ("the factory" in English), was funded by Eden – a commercial company that promotes projects to regenerate and renewal the city centre of Jerusalem.

However, it would be incomplete to see the relationship between authorities and art practice only from the perspective of exploitation and the observation of tactic by strategy. While art often is used as a cosmetic tool to mask social inequality by authorities, it can be also be used for the

[8] Jerusalem city hall promotes projects for urban renewal, to fight against the demographic decline in young people leaving the city for political and economic reasons. See: The Jerusalem Development Authority; Eisenbud 2016.

opposite reason (Khan 2015). That was the case with Eternal Sukkah that was described by Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat as a terrible financial decision but a brilliant tactic through the transformation of a house into a piece of art to avoid paying taxes. Sala-Manca used their privilege as Israeli-Jewish artists to "legalise" certain actions as well as to bring to the front other actors within Israeli society that lack that privilege. Later on, Eternal Sukkah was purchased by the Israeli Museum increasing its value by a tenfold. Half of the revenuews were sent to Al-Kurshan's family.

While the projects of Empty House and Sala-Manca were intended to be temporary, the commune in Iqrit is a case where a tactic aims to reclaim a space. This shift is explained by Ariel Handel in an essay on the use of uncertainty as 'technology of control' in the West Bank. Handel argues that since strategy – the state of Israel and its different agents taking part in the occupation – uses the language of chaos, confusion, and uncertainty, the way to resist it will be by developing patterns of rationality, routine, and consistency (Handel 2007). For that reason, since its establishment the commune in Iqrit was under constant surveilance and some of its new facilities have been demolished by officers of the Israel Land Administration and Special Patrol Unit (Matar 2013). The commune in Iqrit is not only an act of a performative return but of a civil disobedience. It aims to break the symbolic gesture and promote justice in a concrete way of bringing back the villagers to their original homes. The use of tactics – similar to the historical Wall and Tower – is meant to have a long-term strategic goals. That is something that cannot be observed or tolerated by the current strategy that dismantled the commune.

Model of possibilities

The ways in which the projects were ended indicate the "fate" of tactic. They either disappeared or were co-opted by the system they tried to oppose. However, current technological, artistic, political, and economic factors have re-conceptualised the use of tactics. Rather than being a "science of singularity" as suggested by De Certeau (De Certeau 1988, ix), tactic becomes a collective effort by those who feel excluded from society. Despite the physical disappearance of tactic, many of these efforts leave traces through the documentation and the distribution of the tactical act in different artistic and activist networks. The singular tactics are contextualised within alternative narratives and histories of civil disobedience and social change. By doing that they prevent a complete absorption of tactic by the strategic spaces, such as the art institutions or the mainstream media which either neutralise or criminalised the acts.

These case studies enrich the context and terrains in which tactical practices correspond to. They operate within a system that maintains its power structure by both pushing to a neo-liberal economy that destabilise the financial security of its residents, and using constrains to restrict freedom of expression, movement, and residency on others. The adoption of tactic within collaborative projects thus posits a double challenge: to the neo-liberal model that encourages the

individual's growth and accomplishments, and to Israeli-Zionist hegemony and its notion on national identity and land ownership. These case studies transform Wall and Tower, that was motivated by the need to be safe and protected, to a tactic that resists the current language of separation and exclusiveness based on ethnic and nationalist identity. They take advantage of the privilege that art holds. This is not to avoid a direct political action or a long-term campaign, but to highlight other "battle fields" that take part in the construction of narratives and identities.

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Biography

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Challenges of Communicating Cervical Cancer Screening Awareness and Uptake in Bungoma County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

There have been ongoing cervical cancer campaigns in Kenya, targeting cervical cancer awareness and the need to go for cervical cancer screening (National Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, 2012). However, data depicts that there is a low level of screening and uptake among the rural population (ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer, 2014). This study adopted a descriptive research design, taking on qualitative data methods of focus groups discussions and in depth interviews, with a purpose of finding out the communication challenges of cervical cancer screening awareness and uptake among rural women in Bungoma County, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to: find out the communication channels used during the campaigns; and to understand the challenges of communicating cervical cancer screening messages to rural women in Bungoma County. A total of 40 women were interviewed from the Mt. Elgon Constituency in Bungoman County. The data was analysed by using QSR-Nvivo. The findings of the research showed that the main communication channels of cervical cancer were media, health education, and road shows. The main communication challenges of cervical cancer screening and uptake were: lack of cervical cancer terminology; inadequate information on the communication channels; and fear among women. There were low levels of cervical cancer awareness and uptake among the participants. One of the recommendations was the need for educating media personalities and other key health informants on cervical cancer for increase in uptake of screening services.

KEYWORDS

Cervical cancer, Cervical cancer screening, Human Papillomavirus (HPV), Communication, Communication channels, key health informants

Introduction / Background

Cervical cancer accounts for 275,000 deaths globally every year, out of which at least 87% deaths occur in developing countries (World Health Organization 2014). Sibiya (2012) observed that most deaths caused by cervical cancer in developing countries, especially in the

Sub-Saharan Africa, are as a result of lack of screening that permits precancerous detection and prevention at an early stage. The lack of early cervical cancer screening is usually as a result of low levels of knowledge and awareness on the disease (Nyambane, Mberia, and Ndati 2015).

Although the media is considered as the most reliable source of communicating cervical cancer information, research shows that there are still some communication challenges during the process of disseminating information through the media (Parhizkar et al. 2012). During the communication process of cervical cancer, for instance, various challenges may arise such as, low levels of awareness, myths and misconceptions, fear, stigma, and language barriers (Kutto 2014).

In Kenya, almost 2,451 out of 4,802 women diagnosed with cervical cancer die annually (WHO 2014). The percentage of women who attend cervical cancer screening from the rural areas in the country is lower compared to those in the urban areas (ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer 2014). Several communication platforms have therefore been adopted for cervical cancer screening awareness in the country (Nyambane et al. 2015). However, research depicts that the cervical cancer awareness level is still low among the general population in the country despite the on-going awareness and campaigns programmes (Gichangi et al. 2003; Nyambane et al. 2015).

There is a low level of cervical cancer screening among the rural population as compared to the urban population. Data depicts that 2.6% of women from the rural areas in Kenya are screened for cervical cancer compared to 4.0% of urban women after every 3 years (ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer 2014). This study therefore sought to establish the communication challenges during cervical cancer screening awareness and uptake among rural women.

The research question

This research sought to find out what challenges exist in using communication health campaigns to promote the awareness and uptake of cervical screening among rural women in Kenya with specific focus on the women of Bungoma County.

Research objectives

This research was guided by the following three research objectives: -

1. To map out communication channels used for cervical cancer campaigns that rural women (18-50 years of age) in Bungoma County were exposed to
2. To establish the communication challenges that women in rural areas (18-50 years of age) face with regard to cervical cancer screening health campaigns
3. To critically examine the levels of awareness of cervical cancer among rural women (18-50 years of age) in Bungoma County

Theoretical framework: Theory of reasoned action and health belief mode

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) suggests that the strength of a person's intention to perform certain behaviour determines his/her behavioural performance (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). There are two kinds of beliefs under this theory: the normative beliefs; and the behavioural beliefs. The normative beliefs influence subjective norms and occur when an individual places other people's approval on the behaviour he wishes to perform (Schiavo, 2007) and his motivation to comply with the approvals and ideas from them. The behavioural belief, on the other hand, is the attitude of an individual towards certain behaviour on the consequences of performing such behaviour. Communication is crucial in the theory of reasoned action because it aids in the process of supporting behavioural intentions and changing subjective norms, and therefore, increasing its likelihood to become the actual behaviours on the targeted individuals (Schiavo, 2007). Women who have obtained relevant and adequate communication on the importance on cervical cancer screening may change their attitude and practice to curb their susceptibility to the disease.

Schiavo (2007) also argued that this theory is useful during the process of analysing and identifying the messages and actions which need to be adopted to change the targeted group attitudes because it is a good tool in profiling primary and secondary audiences. When communicating cervical cancer screening, there is a need for messages to be tailored to the baseline knowledge, perceptions, culture, and attitudes unique to the target population so that it can change their behavioural perception towards the disease.

The Health belief model HBM suggests that the likelihood of a person to engage in a specific health behaviour is a function of several beliefs: the extent to which one believes that they are susceptible to a particular illness; ones' perception of the severity of the illness' consequences; perceived barriers/costs of adopting a health behaviour; and the perceived benefits of adopting the targeted health behaviour. According to Schiavo (2007), the major contribution of HBM to health communication is its emphasis on the importance of knowledge as a necessary step to change. The knowledge about cervical cancer screening is a strong determinant of screening behaviour (Eggleston, Coker, Das, Cordray, and Luchok 2007). Perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers and cues to action, all rely on the level of awareness and knowledge about cervical cancer. For example, if a woman has adequate knowledge on cervical cancer, she will be able to know the severity of the disease, the barriers, the benefits of carrying out cervical cancer screening and the susceptibility of the disease. Knowledge is brought to target audiences through an educational approach that primarily focuses on messages, communication channels and spokespeople (Schiavo 2007).

Methodology

This research was descriptive in nature. Six focus group discussions and three in-depth interviews were conducted based on the research question and objectives of the study. The target population for the study included women in Bungoma County who were aged between

18 to 50 years because they are at risk of contracting cervical cancer (Eggert 2012). The total number of women involved in the focus group discussions (FGDs) were 40. The health nurse and other community key health informants were also targeted because they are the main source of health information to the community members (National Cervical Cancer Prevention Program 2012).

Sampling procedure

The researcher carried out the research in Mt. Elgon Constituency of Bungoma County using purposive sampling selection because there were various health reproductive programmes being carried out in the area, including cervical cancer screening programmes (AMPATH Research Program Office 2013; Fleischman 2011; Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2012; & UNFPA Kenya Annual Report 2013). Two wards from Mt. Elgon Constituency were targeted because they had cervical cancer screening facilities. The two sub-locations selected were Elgon and Kaptama Wards.

A sample size of 40 women participated in the FGDs and an additional three key health informants of the community participated in the in-depth interviews. The women were identified by using convenient sampling to represent the whole population, based on the ease of access as explained by Kothari (2004). The inclusive criteria were the women who had visited the mother child clinic department of the Mt. Elgon hospital. Participants from a women's group in the community also participated in the FGDs in order to reach the targeted population. The selected health key informants interviewed were engaged in communicating messages on cervical cancer as a health issue to the community members and they included the district public health nurse and community health worker. The community radio journalist was also interviewed as a major key informant in the community.

The participants in FGDs were only women between the ages of 18 to 50 years, and were residents of the selected study population because they were at risk of being infected by cervical cancer. The focus group discussions were therefore drawn from anyone who fitted within the age bracket deemed to be sexually active and prone to cervical cancer but also residents of Bungoma County. The overall number of FDGs conducted was 6, with at least two groups conducted daily and each taking approximately 40 minutes. Richie and Lewis (2003) stated that a focus group discussion needs to have around 6 to 8 participants so that all the participants will have a chance to participate in the discussions. Richie and Lewis (2003) further noted that the optimum size of the group depends on a number of things, including the complexity and sensitivity of an issue. An issue that is complex and sensitive is better tackled in smaller groups. The researcher therefore carried out focus group discussions involving 6 to 7 participants in each group. The groups were facilitated by the researcher.

The interviews and focus group questions were constructed in English, and were then translated to Kiswahili to break the language barrier during the interview sessions. The researcher used audio to record what the participants were discussing for easy analysis of data because according to Bryman and Bell (2011), focus group discussions need to be recorded

and transcribed. The researcher used QSR Nvivo for the data analysis. QSR Nvivo is mainly used in qualitative analysis. The themes were derived from the codes and nodes from the QSR-Nvivo programme.

Data collection methods

Data was collected using focus group discussions and in depth interviews. The questions for the FGDs dealt with the aspects of: whether or not the participants knew of the cervical campaigns; where they got the information from; what conversations ensued with their spouses, for those married, about the need to go for cervical cancer screening; and any challenges they might have or still did experience in making decisions to go for cervical cancer screening. Other questions dwelled on their choice of channels for communication of cervical cancer screening and what cultural beliefs supported or challenged the need to go for cervical cancer screening.

Research findings, analysis and interpretations

1. Awareness level of cervical cancer

In order to understand why women either go or don't go for cervical cancer screening, it was necessary to understand their basic knowledge about cervical cancer disease. Information from the focus group discussions indicated that the participants had low levels of knowledge of the disease and or screening uptake among them.

When the respondents were asked whether they had heard of cervical cancer screening, only 17 out of the 40 participants admitted to have heard of it. The few that heard only heard that it was a serious disease affecting women. This was in agreement with one of the tenets of health belief model, which states that unless one perceives that they are susceptible they may not seek help.

Most of the participants, especially those who claimed they had heard from the radio, said it did not concern them so much as they associated cervical cancer with promiscuous life and other misconceptions. For instance, some believed that the disease was transmitted from a combination of sexually transmitted viruses, being unhygienic, using strong or perfumed bathing soaps and sprays, sharing inner clothing, using condoms, or being intimate with an individual who is suffering from gonorrhoea.

> Question: How is cervical cancer transmitted?
> G2 R2*: Mtu anapata hizi virusi zikiwa combined. Yaani syphilis, gonorrhea na uchafu pia*
> (A person gets it when the viruses are combined. That is syphilis, gonorrhea and also from dirt). For those who they think they have been faithful, they would not see themselves as capable in the least of having cervical cancer. They totally have no cues to action as it is stipulated in the HBM, and because they do not see themselves at risk, they will not need to change behaviour at all.

> G6 R1: *Inapatikana ukihave sexual intercourse with a lot of different men. Chenye*
> *inacourse tena ni kutumia hizi vitu kama sprays, sabuni mbaya mbaya na pia ukishare for example panties*
> (The disease is transmitted when you have sexual intercourse with different men. It is also caused from things like sprays, soaps that are bad and also sharing panties). Again in this respondents' mind, it is not only one cause but convergence of several things, such as, soaps, sprays, and multiple partners, and if they do not see themselves as using any of these, then they do not see the urgency or even the need for screening.

There were participants who admitted to having heard of cervical cancer disease but they did not understand how it was transmitted. One of the participants heard of it and was tested, but she did not fully understand what she was being tested for. There are participants who mentioned that cervical cancer is a disease that affects the uterus and/or the breasts. In such instances, yes they heard over the radio, but they did not understand. It is therefore difficult to change behaviour based on a linear approach to matters of health. The participants could not tell for sure what it is that they heard except the term, cervical cancer, which again, was strange as some would admit.

> Question. What does cervical cancer mean to you?
> G4 R1: *Tulikuwa tunajua vile inaitwa, hatujui ni nini exactly*
> (We only knew what it is called; we don't know what it is exactly).
> G4 R2: *Hatujapimwa, hata hatujui ni nini. Hatujui ni nini lakini tunajua venye inaitwa, na hiyo sasa inakujaje?*
> (We were never tested; even we don't know what it is. We do not know what it is but we know what it is called. How does that come about cervical cancer)?
> G4 R3: *Mi nishawai pimwa alafu nikaambiwa tuu sina. Niliambiwa tuu ni cancer, wakasema tuu ni cancer, cervical cancer. Lakini hatujaelezwa kabisa ni kitu gani inacause.*
> (I have been screened and I was just told that I am not infected. I was only told it is cancer, they only say it is cancer, cervical cancer. But we have not been told clearly how it is caused).
> G5 R1: *Nilisikia tuu ni ile ugonjwa inashika kina mama kwa nini ya uzazi*
> (I have only heard that it is that disease that affects mothers in that place of the uterus)
> G5 R2: *Wengine wanasema ni kwa matiti*
> (Other people say it is on the breast).
> These accounts indicate how most of the respondents did not know how cervical cancer comes about, what its symptoms, and what they should look out for. It also shows how cervical cancer is confused for breast cancer as G5 R2 confesses.

A number of the participants had never undergone cervical cancer screening. From the 40 participants, only 6 had been screened. However, a few participants had inaccurate knowledge of the disease because they incorrectly mentioned that cervical cancer is a sexually transmitted disease, saying it affects a woman's reproductive organ and that some of

the signs and symptoms include blood, puss discharge, and pains when walking or having sexual intercourse, wounds and itchiness. They were also misinformed of how the disease can be prevented.

> G1 R1: *Huwa inadhuru cervix*
> (It affects the cervix).
> G1R2: *Ile ugonjwa inadhuru cervix alafu inafanya mtu anatoa uzaa*
> (It is a disease that affects the cervix and leads to secretion of puss).
> Question: What are the signs and symptoms of cervical cancer?
> G2 R1: *Mtu akiover bleed, uchungu katikati ya sex*
> (When a person bleeds too much and feels pain during sex).
> G1 R1*: Saa zingine damu inatoka*
> (Sometimes it causes bleeding).
> G1 R2: *Ingine ni kua saa zingine ka unakojoa unasikia uchungu, kutembea ni shida*
> (Another one is sometimes you feel pain when urinating, even walking is a problem).
> G6 R1*: Nilikuwa naskia ati saa zingine ukitouch around that area unaskia kitu kako lump na nipainful*
> (I heard that if you touch around the area you feel something like a lump which is painful). This is also another piece of inaccurate information. No lumps are felt for cervical cancer yet the respondents associated it with lumps too.
> Question: Can cervical cancer be prevented?
> G1 R1: *Unaeza zuia kwa kupata matibabu na kuwa faithful kwa mtu mmoja*
> (You can prevent it by getting treatment and being faithful to one partner).

2. Cervical cancer communication channels

The findings of the study showed that communication channels play a role in promoting cervical cancer screening. There were respondents who had been screened because there were road-shows in the community communicating about free cervical cancer screening in the hospital. One participant was however screened since she had reproductive health complications.

> Question: Have you ever been involved in cervical cancer screening? How often? What triggered you to perform it?
> G4 R1: *Walitangaza Kapsokwony wakasema wamama wakuje kupima. Madaktari. Alafu wakapea nurse mmoja ndo alikuwa anafanya hiyo kazi, na tukapimwa…*
> (They advertised in Kapsokwon and they said women should get screened by the doctors. They gave one nurse the responsibility of doing that job, and we were screened).
> G5 R2: *Ata mimi nilipimwa last year wakiannounce twende tupimwe.*
> (I was also screened during that time that they were making announcements in the community about free cervical cancer screening services).

Respondents who had been screened and those who had heard of cervical cancer screening admitted that the district hospital advertised about screening services of the disease during the cancer week. The district public health nurse stated that there was an increase in the number of women performing cervical cancer screening during October, usually dubbed the cancer commemoration month as cancer campaigns and many screening are done during this particular month as compared to other times. Other respondents who had never been screened but had knowledge of cervical cancer also mentioned the media as the other source of information on cervical cancer.

> Question: Are there any communication channels (media, community health workers, health informants like doctors and nurses, health organizations etc.) that address cancer related issues or sexually transmitted disease in the region?
> G1 R1: *Kuna wakati kulikuwa na matangazo lakini sikujua ni nini. Ilikuwa kwa radio, radio jambo*.
> (I heard it from radio Jambo although I never understood what the disease was).
> G1 R2: *Niliwatch kwa Citizen TV alafu nikaskia kwa Mulembe FM*
> (I watched it on Citizen TV and also heard about it from Mulembe FM).
> G2 R1: *Niliskia kwa redio, tv na pia kwa mahospitali huwa wanatangaza. Pia waliweka notice*
> (I heard it from the radio, TV and also the hospital. They had notices).
> G6 R1: *College, kwa TV, internet, citizen TV, walikuwa wanaongelea causes, risk factors na vile wanataste cervical cancer*
> (College, citizen television, internet. They were discussing the risk factors, causes and how they test for cervical cancer).

From the responses, it is clear that most communication happen through the mass media such as radio and TV, and also posters, however, it appears not much was gained as participants only remember hearing about it, but not understanding. And of course this is the challenge of linear model or mass media communication that assume a passive audience. The hospital communication seemed to have yielded some level of understanding, as some mentioned having been informed further on how cervical cancer happens.

3. The communication challenges of cervical cancer screening and uptake

A number of respondents had heard of cervical cancer but had never been screened. When asked for the reason why they were never screened, they mentioned various factors such as inadequate information from the media or the hospital, fear of being stigmatized, fear of cervical cancer procedure during screening, financial constraints, lack of interest, and lack of enough medical personnel.

Inadequate information from the communication channels

The majority of the participants who had heard about cervical cancer but had never attended screening services stated that it was because of the inadequate information during the communication process.

> Question 2: Has there been any discussion on the media encouraging women to go for cervical cancer screening? If yes, did the message convince them to go for cervical cancer screening?
> G1 R1: 'Hawakukuwa wanaexplain in details cervical cancer ni nini.
> (They were not explaining in details what cervical cancer is).
> G4 R1: Tunaskianga tuu kwa redio lakini hatuambiwi pahali pa kuenda. Lakini hospitali ukiskia wanatangaza wanapita hata kwa njia wakisema wamama mkuje kwa screening ya cancer. Mtu ataamua aende au asiende.
> (We only hear about the disease from the radio but we are not told where to go. But when you hear it advertised from the hospital, they pass on the road saying women you should come for screening. A person will decide to go or not to go).

Some respondents even feared the possible consequences imagining people knowing they went for the cervical cancer screening and had to expose their private parts to some strange doctors, may be even male doctors. They feared being labelled as 'that woman who goes to expose her private parts to male doctors'. This fear of stigmatization and isolation kept some from not going for the screening even if they knew they fell in the category of most probability.

Lack of interest

There are other respondents who stated that they did not go for cervical cancer screening because they had no interest and were occupied with work when the screening was taking place.

> G6 R1: *Nilikuwa na interest ya kuenda kujipima after niskie kutoka kwa citizen. Sikuwahi pata nafasi*
>
> (I had the interest to go and be screened after I heard from Citizen TV but I never got the time).
> G2 R1: Nilikuwa committed
> (I was committed).
>
> G2 R2: *Sikuwa na haja kwa sababu sijawai kuona anayeugua*
> (I wasn't interested because I have never seen anyone suffering from it).

Health belief model singles out the susceptibility of severity as some of the determinants for changing behaviour. It is clear from the accounts above that the women who have never seen anyone suffer from cervical cancer did not have someone or something to relate to and so they did not see themselves as at risk even though they were sexually active and within the age bracket of 18-50 years.

Fear

The respondents also highlighted fear of having the disease as a reason of not performing cervical cancer screening, even after hearing about it. Fear of being judged by the community members and of getting the disease were other factors influencing their decision.

> G5 R1: Tuliogopa kwa sababu walikuwa wanatutisha kuwa ukieza patikana nayo utakuwa na stress. Kwa hivo niliogopa naeza kuwa nayo.
> (We feared because they used to make us think that if you are found with it you will be stressed. I thus feared that I may have it).

> G4 R2: Lakini pia kila wakati wakikuja, wanatishanga watu. Hata sisi tuliwai fanyiwa ya matiti. Unaenda hapo unapata wamekaa, unafanyiwa ya matiti. Hata mimi niliskia kitu hapa (pointing at one of her breast) nikaanza kuita, daktari kuna kitu, ona iko hapa. Alafu wakaita daktari wengine. Wakaangalia wakapata hakuna kitu..mama hakuna. Unajua kuna wasisiwasi tuu, ata ukiskia kitu iko na hakuna. Ndo maana sijaenda.
> (But also every time they come, they make people fear. We once had breast screening. You go there and find that they do breast screening. I even felt something here (on her breast) and started to call, doctor there is something, look, it is here. They then called other doctors and didn't find anything. You know there is anxiety, even when you feel there is something yet there is nothing. That's why I have not been screened).

Medical costs

During the focus group discussions, some of the participants pointed out that the reason they did not perform cervical cancer screening services was because of the cost of screening.

> G3 R1: Unaona unaeza kuwa unaumia na hauna kitu sasa kichwa inakukula na hauna kitu hasa ukikuja ni pesa. Walituambia ni free lakini sasa tumekuja wakatuitisha pesa na tumelipa
> (You see, you might be in pains and you don't have something and you are disturbed because when you come, they need money […]. They ask for money. They say it is free and when you come it is not free).

Lack of enough medical personnel

There was a participant who mentioned that she did not go for screening because there were not enough doctors in the district hospital.

> R1: Unajua sasa hapa Kapsokwony inatakikana daktari. Lakini sasa, unaeza enda upate hakuna daktari (Here in Kapsokwony, doctors are needed. So you may go to the hospital and find that there are no doctors).

In-depth interviews with key health informants

1. Inaccurate knowledge of cervical cancer

One of the communication challenges identified by the researcher from the interview session was from the community health worker who had inadequate information of the disease. When asked about the transmission, signs and symptoms of cervical cancer, she said that she did not

know any. She mentioned that she has been screened because of health related issues. She also admitted to never engaging the community on cervical cancer related issues.

The other respondent, who was a radio presenter in one of the local community FM radio stations, stated that the topic of cervical cancer came up on air during a discussion of the effects of chemicals on health. The invited guest in the media tackling the topic of cervical cancer was a traditional medicine man who had inadequate and inaccurate information about the disease.

> Interview respondent*:* But we never discussed the topic in-depth, as in how it is caused, whether it is through bacteria or virus. We did not air an in-depth discussion of the disease because the discussion was carried out by a traditional medicine man, not a professional doctor. Although he treats people with traditional medicine he is not educated so he never informed the viewers if cervical cancer is caused through HIV/AIDS or other diseases…
> The age bracket of 18-50 are deemed literate and so when a medicine man who has never been to school is asked to discuss such on radio, most are lost. Communication channels are also critical according to the TRA model if successful behaviour change is to occur. No wonder the journalist was quick to say there was no depth in discussions as to the causes, symptoms, treatment of cervical cancer.

2. Inaccurate information from the media

On the other hand, the radio presenter confirmed that the radio station aired cervical cancer discussions, although not regularly. The last period it was aired was in April 2016. According to the presenter, the radio station targets old people in the community who are living in the interior areas, but not women, youth and children, which is the reason they rarely hold such discussions. He said that cervical cancer had not received much attention in the general media like other sexually transmitted diseases because it is not affecting many people especially in Mt. Elgon Region.

3. Fear

The district public health nurse stated that although the hospital offers cervical cancer routine check-ups, women in the community can't access those services because they fear their husbands and the community at large.

> Interview respondent: They fear their husbands and traditional medicine men who discourage them to adopt family planning methods, because of a death of a woman who was believed to have been affected by family planning methods, which took place in the community some time back. It is therefore hard for them to be educated about cervical cancer or even to be screened for the disease.

4. Lack of an easily understood term for cervical cancer

The public health nurse also said that women in the community needed to have a term for cervical cancer which they can understand.

> Interview Respondent: The community is only aware that cervical cancer is a disease that affects the reproduction part of a woman (*Ugonjwa unaoadhiri wanawake katika sehemu ya uzazi)*.

Discussions, conclusions and recommendations

The research showed that there was a low level of cervical cancer screening and uptake among the rural women. 17 of 40 participants in the focus group discussions had heard of cervical cancer, with only 6 out of the 40 respondents screened for the disease.

This finding supports the data depicted by the WHO information centre on HPV in Kenya that shows that there is low level of uptake of cervical cancer screening among the rural population (WHO 2015).

When the respondents were asked about their knowledge of cervical cancer, less than half of them had heard of the disease. They had inadequate knowledge about the disease and that is why they never went to be screened. They did not understand their vulnerability of being exposed to the disease, the severity of the disease, the benefits of being screened and the importance of overcoming the barriers of being screened, like the cost. In HBM theory, knowledge about cervical cancer screening is a strong determinant of screening behaviour (Eggleston et al. 2007). Through knowledge of the disease, one will know the perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, and cues to action.

The 40 participants in the focus group discussion were women who were between 18 to 50 years. The researcher carried out the focus group discussions according to ages of the participants, for example, those between 18 to 35 years, and then 36 to 50 years. The research depicted that older women (36 to 50 years) had more knowledge of cervical cancer compared to the younger women (18 to 35 years). 11 out of 17 participants who were aware of cervical cancer disease were aged between 36 to 50. More so, the only 6 participants who had once been screened for cervical cancer were above 36 years.

The findings in this study support Vandeman (2005) who notes that women who are above 30 years have more knowledge on cervical cancer because they have experienced more communication on the disease compared to younger women. However, other researches contradict these findings, for example, according to Arguto (2005), women who were between the ages of 30 to 50 rarely went for cervical cancer screening because they didn't visit health facilities for health issues like family planning services, child services and maternal services routinely.

The attitude of some of the respondents towards cervical cancer procedures deterred them from getting cervical cancer screening. They had a fear of passing through the screening procedure. This finding supports Atuhaire (2013) and Kitchener, Castle, and Cox (2006) who

observed that woman complained that the cervical cancer screening procedure was uncomfortable and it hindered some of them from adapting to it. There is therefore the need for women to be educated for them to be less embarrassed during the procedure.

The study found out that there was insufficient information about cervical cancer from the media. Four respondents said that information from the media about cervical cancer was insufficient and that is the reason why they were never screened. They also said that they were not told where the screening activity is taking place. Also, one of the participants interviewed from the community FM radio station affirmed that discussions surrounding cervical cancer on the FM station were inadequate because they did not mention the cause, signs and symptoms.

This finding supports Calloway et al.'s (2006) research that found out the media coverage on issues relating to cervical cancer is still low. It also supports the findings of Davidson and Wallack (2014) who argued that the media coverage on sexually transmitted diseases is inadequate because it omits relevant information. The findings also support Raymond et al. (2014) who noted that inadequate information and lack of knowledge contributed to the low uptake of cervical cancer screening among the Somali migrants in their study.

Most women who were between 18 to 35 years stated that they preferred communication on cervical cancer to be aired on the media, mostly on radio and television, while women who were between 36 to 50 years mentioned that they prefer Barazas in the community, chiefs'/role models, women groups and churches, with support from the hospital and the media channels. This finding supports Vanderman (2005) who noted that media preferences on cervical cancer communication differs between younger and older women.

The study found out that some information aired on the media about cervical cancer were inaccurate and had misconceptions. The radio presenter who had been interviewed stated that a discussion on cervical cancer was aired during a programme on the effects of chemicals. The guest speaker on the radio handling the topic was a traditional medicine man who had inadequate knowledge of the disease.

The study supports Calloway et al. (2006) who not only noted that there was low media coverage on issues related to cervical cancer but also that some of its information was riddled with misconceptions. Misconceptions about cervical cancer may have a negative impact on cervical cancer screening and uptake, especially if it is coming from the media or key health informants. There is therefore the need for accurate information on cervical cancer.

The above findings also support Oranje et al. (2011) who also found out that the media in sub-Saharan African has shallow in-depth information when investigating health issues, and it lacks expertise and the right capacity to understand, interpret, and report research findings on sexual and reproductive health issues.

One of the respondents from the focus group discussions noted that she prefers information on cervical cancer to be communicated face to face because not everyone owns the radio or television, or even have the time to listen to them. She was supported by a participant who mentioned that instead of using the radio station or road shows, it is good to use people who will take time to help women understand about cervical cancer. This finding supports what Nyambane (2015) suggested that the media should engage with other sources of communication in order to increase the uptake of cervical cancer screening among women.

The research also found out that lack of cervical cancer terminology was a factor that contributed to low levels of cervical cancer screening and uptake, and also acted as a communication challenge. This finding supports Kutto and Mulwo (2015) who observed that one of the emerging themes of communication challenges among women in Elgeyo Marakwet was lack of cervical cancer terminology that could be understood by the research participants.

The research also supports Gatune and Nyamogo (2005) who observed that women's fear of getting a positive result prevented them from carrying out cervical cancer screening. The fear of being stigmatized by others that they are HIV positive also acted as a preventive reason for the participants not to be screened. Kutto and Mulwo (2015) also found out that the fear of being stigmatized prevented women in Elgeyo Marakwet from being screened.

Friedman et al.'s (2014) research in western Kenya showed that there were low levels of awareness of cervical cancer among health care givers. Rosser et al. (2015) also identified shortage in staffing and insufficient staff training to be the main contributors of the low rate of cervical cancer screening in Western Kenya. The above researchers are in line with the findings of this study that observed that there was a lack of sufficient knowledge on cervical cancer from the community health worker who was interviewed. However, the community health worker stated that she had never been trained on cervical cancer despite the fact that there used to be sporadic training sessions on the disease happening in the district hospital.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that few rural women are aware of cervical cancer screening and have undergone cervical cancer screening. The study also observed that the major communication channels of cervical cancer in the rural areas that were identified from the research are: the hospital and the media (both television and radio), especially the community channel radios.

The study also shows that the communication challenges of cervical cancer screening and uptake facing the rural populations are stigma, lack of cervical cancer terminology, fear of the disease, fear of the screening procedure, lack of adequate information from the media and other communication channels, lack of enough medical professionals, financial constraints, and misconception about the disease.

Culture and cultural beliefs also served as an impediment to seeking cervical cancer understanding and treatment. The women who felt they cannot go through the shameful process of exposing their private parts missed a great deal on the possible treatment and early diagnosis of the diseases if found.

Recommendations

The study proposes the following recommendations based on the findings of the research;

- Communication of cervical cancer should involve all channels for it to be effective, specifically channels that encourage interpersonal interactions as they will cushion many against embarrassment or stigma.
- Key informants in health issues, for example, the community health workers, media professionals, elders, and traditional medicine men, should be educated about cervical cancer and other health issues so that they can communicate adequately with the community. This is to avoid cases where they invite unqualified personality on their radio or TV shows who cannot respond to questions from audiences.
- Women need to be educated and be informed about the process of screening and the procedure so that they will be less uncomfortable or ashamed during that process.
- A term for cervical cancer should be identified that can be used among some of the rural population who do not understand English or Kiswahili. Communication campaigns of cervical cancer should adopt those terms during the campaigning process
- Before a woman is screened, she should be told what she is being screened for, how the disease is transmitted, how it can be prevented, and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
- Socio-cultural factors must be incorporated in the trainings of all stakeholders, such as, media personnel, health practitioners, community elders, opinion leaders, and personnel of social institutions, for there to be mutual understanding on what cervical cancer is and how it can be prevented and treated. It needs a concerted effort to fight cervical cancer. Certain misconceptions and myths will die off once proper care has been taken in the training
- Campaign strategies need to go beyond the mass mediated ones to also incorporate community communication channels, such as through opinion leaders, and through community leadership structures, such as working with the leader of women folk. This will make the communication about something sensitive yet crucial such as cervical cancer easy to discuss and also gain acceptance by all.
- Should the media such as radio choose to invite a traditional medicine man, they should also invite a scientist to be able to help audience.

Areas of further studies

The study was carried out in the rural population and there is need for a similar research to be carried out in the urban population. Research that will aid in understanding the overall communication challenges of reproductive diseases and related issues for example family planning among the rural population is also necessary.

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Anti-phobic in Words, Phobic in Deeds: Queering India's Human Rights Politics at the United Nations

SOHINI CHATTERJEE

ABSTRACT

India's international approach towards LGBTQ rights has been largely antagonistic. It has refrained from partaking in developments initiated at and by the United Nations to fight human rights violations suffered by queer people across the globe. However, it has lent its support to advocates of cultural sovereignty who have traditionally opposed LGBTQ rights on the ground that it violates their religio-cultural values. It has also been alleged by them that attempts to universalize human rights at the international level is steered by powerful states in the West that are unwilling to recognize cultural sensibilities of traditional societies in the Global South. India has allied forces with advocates of cultural sovereignty on more than one occasion to counter hegemonic queer politics practiced by states in the West but has done it without an explicit anti-queer rhetoric. This paper attempts to make sense of India's political attitude towards LGBTQ rights and concerns at the United Nations and seeks to understand what it says about its global political image in the 21^{s} century.

KEYWORDS:

Queer Politics, International Relations, International Orgnaization, LGBT Rights

Introduction

Just as queer activism in India was "shaped by transnational circulations of people and agendas" (Dave 2012, 10), transnational networks are found interacting in significant ways and have greatly influenced queer and anti-queer politics at the international level. Some of these networks have been successful in articulating rights violations of LGBTQ people as a global governance concern, whereas, other webs of influence have proved to be detrimental to LGBTQ causes in the global political sphere. Allegiance to hostile networks is indicative of states' unwillingness to accommodate LGBTQ rights into their respective human rights agendas—such disinclination and dismissal making their rights politics intelligible. Focusing its critical attention on India, this paper takes into cognizance the state's political reticence or politics of reticence towards LGBTQ rights at the United Nations and attempts to understand India's international approach on LGBTQ rights as is revealed by the human rights politics it is involved in at the international level. In this process, it creates possibilities for statist claims about India's actions and inactions to be questioned and challenged. This effort is of particular importance because India's global position on LGBTQ rights and concerns not

only conveys its stance on the rights of sexual subalterns but, in 21st century's involuted global political landscape, it also reveals India's attempts to construct an image that can resist being characterized as pre-modern or insufficiently modern.

Networks, of both support and opposition, have impelled India's bearing on queer rights at the international level. However, its (in)actions suggest that it is the latter that India finds more agreeable. Its disposition has been accurately articulated in deeds than it has been in words. However, the dominant narrative it has tried to establish attempts to becloud judgment on its international actions on rights politics. Official narrative(s) propagated by the state insist that India is not obstinately and prejudicially positioned against the LGBTQ. India has argued on many occasions—primarily through its support for groups advocating for cultural sovereignty in the global political sphere—that efforts to expand the definition of human rights to include LGBTQ rights within its ambit appear politically fraught because of who its advocates are and what they appear to be aiming to achieve in opposition to what their real but hidden agenda and motivation is. Hence, the extent of states' support or opposition to LGBTQ rights cannot be surmised perfunctorily in absolute terms. Operation of states in the international political sphere being embedded in relations of power emanating from a hierarchy where each state has its own power location, questions of domination and subordination cast a shadow on rights politics and their "progressive" outcomes and possibilities. India's support for certain networks over others is in tandem with its politics of skepticism, declaredly laced with misgivings about the political significations of queer rights politics at the UN. As a result, it has not been obsequious to norms and standards of doing human rights that it deems quintessentially Western. However, it is due to the existence of various networks of persuasion that India's rights politics can be analyzed as well as its claims contextualized and critiqued.

The discussion begins with the introduction of resolutions that, directly or indirectly, reveal India's political stance on LGBTQ issues at the UN. Despite the growing academic attention that is being paid to LGBTQ rights politics at the United Nations, India's role has not merited the scholarly attention that it rightfully commands. Given that the Indian state has not been able to rid itself of Sec 377—a colonial inheritance criminalizing sexual activity between consenting adults in private—the equivocation inherent in the justification of its international anti-queer actions hold particular significance. India's apocryphal justifications have been put forward to provide a context in which India's international behaviour can be made to appear reasonable and/or even predictable. Its approach towards rights politics at the UN remains complicated by many layers. India's behaviour has been emphasised by state officials as predictable and benign, aiding the state in the evasion of scrutiny, also helping it escape accountability. However, upon investigation its official claims appear indefensible. Analyses offered here attempt to discredit those justifications, creating the possibility of India's attempts at normalizing covertly anti-queer actions and rhetoric to be opposed and discredited. This effort is geared towards uncovering the veneer of regularity on which India bases its inactions and diffidence. It makes a case against perceiving India's international approach towards LGBTQ rights as those expected of a state where the rights of its LGBTQ citizens are yet to be legally determined.

It is of significance to India's politics that it has not assumed a moralistic tone to argue against queer rights like many advocates of cultural sovereignty have at the international level. However, India has voted in favour of extending greater recognition to cultural sovereignty in world politics, particularly when LGBTQ issues were deemed to be in conflict with India's cultural self-imagination, thereby attempting to thwart, on occasions, recognition of LGBTQ causes at UN forums. The reason cited primarily for its actions has been the menacing presence of Sec 377 in the Indian Penal Code which infamously criminalises voluntary "carnal intercourse against the order of nature." In its 2013 verdict the Supreme Court of India refused to declare Sec 377 of the Indian Penal Code unconstitutional (Venkatesan 2013). However, in 2016, the Supreme Court of India agreed to hear curative petitions on Sec 377 (Scroll.in 2016). The Court date remains undecided on the issue. Apart from this apparent legal quagmire, India has also cited many other reasons, to justify its reservations about voting in the affirmative on LGBTQ issues, as and when they have been raised, at the international level. The subsequent sections will delve deeper into it, attempting to uncover the problems of India's global human rights politics.

Resolutions and the lack of resolve

In this section, efforts are made to unravel nuances of India's position on sexual orientation and gender identity in connection with human rights at the UN since the beginning of 21st Century to understand India's position on LGBTQ rights and the narrative it advances as justification for its political behavior. Several resolutions have been passed or proposed directly and indirectly addressing sexual orientation and gender identity issues at the UN; taken together these resolutions help us decode India's international behaviour on LGBTQ rights and concerns and provide an alternative discourse about its behaviour, challenging the ones constructed by the state.

In 2003, Brazil pushed a surprise draft resolution at the 59th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights—which was at the time only a subsidiary body operating under the aegis of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)—to recognize the human rights of people who are subjected to gratuitous violence and discrimination because of their non-normative sexual orientation (Human Rights Commission 2003). It did not go down well with members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Vatican, among others, who claimed that the resolution threatened their religious freedom and demanded that all references to sexual orientation are promptly removed from the resolution. Pakistan, on behalf of dissenting nations, called for a no action motion. However, when a vote was taken on the matter, the call for no action was defeated by a narrow margin. India had voted in favour of the motion (United Nations Press Releases 2003). Regardless of the outcome, India's vote remains significant as it was the first and the last time that India would take an anti-LGBTQ position so fervently at the UN. Its subsequent moves would be far less overt and a lot more cautious and come to be rationalized with an anti-phobic narrative advocated by the state.

On December 18, 2008, backed by 66 states, the representative of Argentina, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), made a statement affirming that the principle of non-discrimination commands that human rights be made applicable to individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities having progressively interpreting rights codified in the UDHR, International Covenants on Civil and Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Human Rights Watch 2008). Expressing concerns about the brutal and rampant violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights suffered by LGBTQ people, the statement urged all states and human rights organizations to commit themselves, and take necessary measures, for the promotion and protection of human rights of people regardless of what their sexual orientation might be. As a response, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic issued an immediate counter-declaration—being bolstered by the strength of 60 states behind it—before the United Nations General Assembly and declared that human rights on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity have no legally validated status in any international human rights agreement (Worsnip 2008). It also asserted that the "effort to decriminalize homosexuality threatens to undermine the international framework of human rights by trying to normalize pedophilia among other acts" (Slomanson 2010, 615). The counter declaration also remarked that the family must be protected "as the natural and fundamental group unit of society" as is necessitated by Art 16 of the UDHR. The statement called upon all states to expend their resources on fighting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance of similar kinds. (OutRight Action International 2009). The latter response was largely supported by states which would later construct an alternative discourse about its position on LGBTQ rights and thereby begin to self-identify as defenders of cultural sovereignty at the international level. In this section of the paper, an attempt will be made to understand how India has, on numerous occasions, voiced many of their concerns and shared their apprehensions against the inclusion of LGBTQ rights within the framework of human rights at the UN.

At the 11th session of the UNHRC in June 2009, only a couple of months after the declaration on LGBTQ rights was signed, Russia presented a draft resolution (UNHRC 2009), first of its kind, calling for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to study the "views and opinions" of member states "on the issue of promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of the traditional values of humankind…" (UNHRC 2009, 2). States rallied behind Russia, especially those who were unsettled by the increasing urgency with which dialogues were had to recognise the human rights of LGBTQ people. Many resolutions1 on 'Promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms through a better understanding of the traditional values of humankind' were adopted subsequently at the United Nations. LGBTQ activists have expressed their misgivings about the resolution, and observed that, "It sounds innocuous, but its implications are ominous." (Graeme 2012) In the October 2009 resolution, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was requested to convene a workshop "for an exchange of

[1] See UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/12/21 (October 2009), UN doc., A/HRC/RES/16/3 (March 2011), UN Doc A/HRC/RES/21/3 (October 2012)

views on how a better understanding of traditional values of humankind underpinning international human rights norms and standards can contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms…" and it also requested the Office of the High Commissioner to present a summary of workshop discussions (UNHRC 2009, 2). India also voted in favour of this resolution, and subsequent resolutions of this kind, which were opposed by pro-LGBTQ states and networks. For example, Russia's endeavour to secure human rights in tandem with its "traditional values" has not been viewed without suspicion.

"Homophobia", argues Wilkinson, "…functions as a Slavophile political shorthand for national identity and traditional values" in Russia (Wilkinson 2014, 365). Wilkinson argues that "the development of "traditional values" as a concept broadly parallels the rise of homopropaganda laws" (Wilkinson 2014, 367). India has allied forces with purported defenders of cultural sovereignty, one of them being Russia, who have had a long history of opposing LGBTQ rights at the international level and at home. It is evidenced that as debates and dialogues are being had to accommodate LGBTQ rights into existing human rights frameworks, India appears increasingly unwelcoming to these developments. Subsequent events further evince this claim.

In 2011, at its 17th session, the UNHRC's very first resolution on "Human Rights, gender identity and sexual orientation" was adopted. However, even as sexual orientation was established within the mandate of the UNHRC, efforts to provide a context in which the importance of "traditional values" could be addressed were relentlessly pursued. On 9th October, 2012 the final resolution (UNHRC 2012) was passed which called for the better understanding and appreciation of traditional values shared by all humanity. It noted that traditional values, especially those shared by all humanity, can be applied to promote and protect human rights, can uphold human dignity, and can be employed in the process of human rights education. This was accepted by India along with states like Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, China, Congo, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Thailand, and Uganda. And was opposed by Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States of America. When the resolution was adopted on 'human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity' in 2011, majority of the states which voted against this resolution, had advocated for the inclusion of traditional values in the evolving conception of human rights at the UN. Some of these states are Angola, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Djibouti, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Uganda. India had sponsored the traditional values resolutions and would also support subsequent resolutions which had caused pro-LGBT networks ample consternation. Prominent among those were resolutions introduced under the title 'Protection of the family'.

At the 26th session of the UNHRC in 2014, a resolution titled 'Protection of the family' was adopted for the first time which decided to convene a panel on protection of the family and to

implement states' obligations regarding the matter in accordance with international human rights law, and the High Commissioner was requested to prepare a report on the panel (UNHRC 2014). When this resolution was adopted, it came under criticism for containing an exclusionary definition of family: neither did it include single parent families; nor did it recognize families run by LGBTQ parents. It was feared that the "resulting panel and report will be used to further marginalize diverse family structures" (Miller 2014). Miller also notes that "Chile, Uruguay, Ireland and France support an amendment to the resolution designed to acknowledge family diversity but the motion was denied after Russia utilized a procedural maneuver that prevented discussion on the issue" (Miller 2014). Russia called for a no action motion on the inclusion of the diversity language and was backed by India among other 22 states. Many states had abstained from voting on the no action motion but India did not choose this option. A statement was released by the Permanent Mission of India at Geneva which stated that the "resolution is short and procedural and has rightly left the space for every country to interpret its own understanding of the family" (Permanent Mission of India, Geneva to the United Nations 2014). Hence, it argued that "directives" do not require to be necessarily given on the nature of the family and hence amendment L.37 which sought to include the diversity language was redundant. The statement claimed that it was the only reason that India had supported the no action motion, implying that its action was not a prejudicial move against LGBTQ families. This statement from India was not uncharacteristic of itself. India has never supported pro-LGBTQ resolutions but has either voted against or abstained from voting on them. To be able to resist an anti-phobic presentation, it has often raised procedural questions or resorted to evoking mere technicalities, as in the case above. Few more events are introduced to highlight this point.

On 26th September, 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) adopted a resolution in order to combat violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (UNHRC 2014), India abstained from voting. On another occasion in March 2015, in the 33rd meeting of the General Assembly's 69th session, India backed a Russian-drafted resolution (United Nations Press Releases 2015) that opposed extension of benefits to same-sex partners of UN staff, a resolution which was not passed by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly eventually since as many as 80 states voted against the unjust denial of these rights to queer spouses of UN staff. However, characteristically, India's decision to back this failed resolution was not publicly couched in any anti-queer rhetoric. Instead, it was justified as a righteous move made out of the want for proper democratic procedures where critical decisions regarding UN functioning is made. Indian officials reasoned that it was a difficult case complicated by the question of whether states should have the right to decide matters of importance on their own or whether it should be left to the discretion of the UN Secretary General. India asserted that its support for the resolution was caused by the fact that the then Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon reformed the system of entitlements without prior consultations with member-states. Russia drafted the resolution having made a similar claim and found the support of many including India. Moreover, Indian state officials remarked that the issue was further complicated by Russia's troubled ties with the U.S. In its opinion, U.S.A was trying to isolate Moscow in the international community. The Indian government, facing flak from the media for its support of Russia on the matter, clarified that its move was not

"anti-gay" per se but involved more complicated issues (Haider 2015). To back this resolution, India had voted with minority of defeated nations like China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, to jeopardize the extension of entitlements (The Indian Express 2015) The coming together of this group of nations time and again to resist the recognition of rights and extension of benefits to LGBTQ people sketches a pattern holding critical significations which I will come to later in this paper.

In July 2015, at its 29th session the Human Rights Council adopted another seemingly innocuous resolution (UNHRC 2015) with improvements titled "Protection of the family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development." It recognised that the family is a strong force for social cohesion and integration, intergenerational solidarity and social development, and that the family plays a "crucial role in the preservation of cultural identity, traditions, morals, heritage and value systems of society" (UNHRC 2015, 3). The resolution is important because of who it excludes: it does not mention same-sex couples and their right to a family. The resolution, however, recognises single-headed, child-headed and intergenerational households, which were ignored in the preceding resolution in 2014. But when an amendment was sought to be introduced in the resolution to include the phrase "various forms of the family exist", it was summarily rejected by hostile nations. Incorporation of the language of diversity was urged by South Africa and supported by Uruguay and Chile, but the proposal was defeated on a procedural vote of 22 to 21 with 3 abstentions. India sided with states like Bangladesh, China, Qatar and Saudi Arabia among others to back the no action motion on amendment L.37. Thus, despite insisting that India is not against LGBTQ rights per se, it has been found opposed to concerns shared by pro-LGBTQ states and groups, while being supportive of states who have opposed LGBT rights on several grounds and through various means.

On another occasion, on 30th June 2016, when the UNHRC adopted a resolution (UNHRC 2016) to establish the first Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity to prevent discrimination against LGBTQ people, India abstained from voting on a number of issues raised. However, India voted with opposing nations to introduce six crucial amendments which ran the risk of defeating the very purpose for which the resolution, titled 'Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity', was drafted in the first place. These amendments made strong assertions for recognising member-states' right to cultural sovereignty, respecting their religious sensitivities and ethical values in the development and universalization of international human rights standards (Mitra 2016). India, not unlike itself, lent its unequivocal support to advocates of cultural sovereignty.

Finally, India's rights politics cannot be understood without reference to its Universal Periodic Review evaluations and how the state has responded to them. In 2006, with the creation of the UNHRC, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was set up. Its purpose is to advocate, support and promote the protection of human rights in member countries. The UPR

is vested with the responsibility of evaluating states' human rights record and addresses human rights concerns and violations (United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner) Under UPR, UN member-states face a peer review every four and a half years when states are held responsible to their national and international human rights obligations, commitments and duties. India was one of the first states to be reviewed in 2008 when the process began. At the first UPR session, only 18 recommendations were made to India, while it increased to 80 in 2012 and 250 in 2017, all of which were based on the human rights challenges that India needs to work towards mitigating (United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner).

In the customary report submitted by the state, prior to the beginning of the first review process in 2008, a telling definition of 'human rights' was provided. This definition holds critical importance to our understanding of India's human rights politics at the UN. Stating that India is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society, the state went on to assert that "Human rights in the country are to be viewed in the backdrop of its diverse social and cultural ethos" (United Nations Human Rights Council Working Group Report 2008, 3). India's support for advocates of cultural sovereignty at various UN forums subsequently has also evidenced the conviction behind this assertion.

However, in January 2017, when facing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in its third cycle, India made some startling claims regarding the status of its LGBTQ citizens. India had agreed to study the possibility of decriminalizing same-sex relationships following Argentina's recommendation in 2012. In response to the progress of the state on that count, India stated:

> "In 2014, the Supreme Court recognized that sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to a person's personality and are basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom. The Court stated that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation violates India's constitutional guarantee of equality" (United Nations Human Rights Council 2017, 20).

Moreover, it also claimed that in the NALSA verdict, in 2014, the Supreme Court recognised that sexual orientation and gender identity are vital to individual personhood and constitute core aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom. The Court in the same verdict also stated that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation violates the guarantee of equality provided to every citizen by the Indian Constitution. NALSA verdict recognised that discrimination, violence and prejudice based upon a person's gender identity, as well as the non-recognition of transgender persons in law, violates India's constitutional commitments to equality, liberty and life with dignity (NALSA v. Union of India 2014). Citing this verdict, India tried to give the impression that since the NALSA verdict has clearly stated that discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation violates the constitutional norm of equality, LGBTQ people are protected under the Constitution of India.

Making sense of India's human rights politics

India's international actions regarding LGBTQ rights at the international level have recently caught media attention at home as a result of which the state's unwillingness to recognize LGBTQ rights as human rights at the UN is no longer under wraps. India's opposition of UN Secretary General's decision to extend entitlements to spouses of queer UN staff had made national news in 2015. It was due to wide coverage by the media that state officials issued a justification in defense of its action. It was stated that India's vote was not "anti-gay" but an assertion against the unilateral measure by the Secretary General to extend benefits without prior consultations with member-states. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Syed Akbaruddin stated that, "It was a complex issue of whether nationals of a state [are] governed by their laws or others' decisions. That was the basis on which the decision was taken" (Haidar 2015).

Again in 2016, when India abstained from voting to establish the Independent Expert, the year old rhetoric of the abstention not being "anti-gay" made its re-appearance. When questioned on India's decision to abstain, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Vikas Swarup reasoned, "The issue of LGBT rights in India is a matter being considered by the Supreme Court under a batch of curative petitions filed by various institutions and organizations. The Supreme Court is yet to pronounce on this issue. As such, we had to take this into account in terms of our vote on the third UN resolution to institutionalize the office of an Independent Expert to prevent discrimination against LGBT persons" (Bhattacharjee 2016).

However, Swarup's clarification rings hollow in light of India's international actions. India joined hands with Pakistan, which, on behalf of the OIC, proposed amendments that not only made the institutionalization of an Independent Expert look like a hegemonic move by the West but also helped shift its primary focus from LGBTQ issues to more generic matters of concern related to intolerance. Out of the eleven amendments that Pakistan introduced only seven were passed. India voted in favour of six of out those seven amendments. It abstained from voting on the larger debate of whether the Independent Expert should be created but aligned forces with hostile nations to defeat the fundamental purpose of the resolution to battle rights violations and abuses suffered by LGBTQ people.

On the same issue, former Indian diplomat Mira Shankar said in a television discussion, "I think India's position has improved a little from the last UN vote which took place on the issue of giving allowances for gay spouses of UN diplomats when we had voted against" (NDTV 2016). She emphasized that India's vote was primarily dictated by the presence of Sec 377 and that the law needs to change before India can be held accountable for its actions. On the same show, Krishna Sagar Rao, the spokesperson of the current ruling party of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party or the BJP, said that there are several reasons why India had not voted in the affirmative for the institution of the Independent Expert at the UN. "First, we are a multicultural population. We have a huge multicultural population and we need to have a larger discussion and debate on the LGBT rights and what is our exact stand and what should be and where do we stand. And we also have a heterogeneous population. We have not experienced the kind of cultural transformation like the West and the other regions where

they have been exposed to LGBT issues since three to four decades and the knowledge and the awareness socially and culturally about LGBT issues and rights has happened only in about a decade's time. So, I think India requires time. We are only seeking time. We are not being indifferent, we are not being disrespectful, we are not being Third World" (NDTV 2016).

By dissociating itself from "being Third World", India attempts to battle allegations of pathology, from which an abject queer emerges. Kapoor argues that the West thrives in the "queering" of the Third World. The Third World is "queered" in the sense that it is made intelligible to the West only as "unnatural, abnormal, effete (read: effeminate), passive, strange, backward, underdeveloped, threatening" (Kapoor 2015, 1615-1616). In the wake of, what she terms, "homorighteousness", the Third World is essentialized into categories of either "homo-friendly" or "homophobic", Kapoor identifies "these Orientalist technologies of power" aimed at "estranging the Third World, belittling it, putting it in its place" (Kapoor 2015, 1617). India resists this categorisation, evidenced by the anti-phobic narratives it has espoused to mask the homophobic implications of its international actions. India has never taken an overtly moralistic stance against LGBTQ issues: it has not indulged in debates on whether queer relationships should be opposed on grounds of morality. Instead, it has framed its anti-queer actions using two seemingly potent narratives. The first one is more dominant than the second. However, the second narrative has been revealed frequently through its international actions but less so in official statements. The first narrative is that since the Indian judiciary is yet to pronounce its final verdict on the constitutional tenability of Sec 377 of the Indian Penal Code—which criminalises "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" between consenting adults in private—the Indian representatives at the UN cannot unilaterally vote in the affirmative in support of LGBTQ causes. The presence of Sec 377—which the Indian government has not repealed despite being advised to do so by the Supreme Court of India if it so deems fit—has been employed to provide a rationale for India's unreceptive stance on LGBTQ issues of concern. The second narrative has been engaged in support of many of its international actions that have helped communicate the message—as has been done by other similarly oriented players at the UN—that human rights goals envisaged at the international level have to work favourably with states' cultural values. This assertion is reflected in its support for defenders of cultural sovereignty who have frequently brought forward resolutions at the UN deemed anti-queer by advocates of LGBTQ rights. India has, through its actions, tried to assert that its political values cannot be dissociated from its cultural values. The assertion India made in the customary report before the first UPR cycle in 2008 has been reinforced through several actions.

Saiz claims that the appeal to cultural sovereignty and traditional values has become all the more forceful in response to the onslaught of economic globalization and global cultural homogenization. While the UN consensus documents have established that culture cannot be privileged over human rights, by the very nature of UN functioning, states are given "a wide margin of discretion" to decide on matters of sexuality (Saiz 2004, 60-61). Taking advantage of the latitude afforded by the UN, culture has had the space to assert itself and have assumed an independent personality in this schism. The immutability of the cultural logic as is argued

by defenders of cultural sovereignty allows its firm purchase over the contested terrain of human rights. Hence, queer people and non-normative sexual behavior often gets "incarcerated by culture" (Dave 2012, 16). India's defense of cultural sovereignty cannot be dissociated from its opposition to LGBTQ rights at the UN which makes this defense significant. A discussion on Indian culture will be broached in the subsequent section. However, it is important to take cognizance of the fact that even as India distances itself from recognizing LGBTQ issues at the international level, it appears unwilling to do so on terms that are overtly moralistic, prejudicial and which offer faith-based reasoning against extending acceptance to queer individuals and relationships. By doing this, it distances itself from the colonial characterization of its postcolonial statehood as necessarily 'pathological'. It also attempts to distance itself from being branded a queerphobic, 'Third World' state, since, from such conceptualization emerge more significant, and starker, categories of identification—and consequently discrimination—that shape and define international politics as well as strengthen and validate its norms. Cynthia Weber makes the critical distinction between 'normal' and 'pathological' states where the "'normal states' become those that champion gay rights as human rights and fold the LGBT into state and social institutions as a moral and legal equal, while 'pathological states' are those that deny human rights and state protection to the LGBT" (Weber 2016, 138). India's great power aspirations are in direct conflict with the risk of being identified as a pathological Third World state caught in the mire of its own prejudices. Moreover, domestically the Indian state's anti-queer posture at the international level is well-known and has been critiqued by activists, critical elite as well as critical sections of the media in the recent past. However, justifications that have been provided in favour of India's behaviour were attempts to shield itself from being branded pathological internationally and invite further criticism from an already discontented critical public domestically. Queer activists and their allies have felt marginalized and wronged by the state owing to the unwillingness of the government to repeal Sec 377 of the IPC since a long time. Hence, India's have had to use its rhetorical devices strategically to defend itself against allegations of discrimination and prejudice. An overtly hostile prejudicial pronouncement against LGBTQ rights would reflect poorly on any government and could also have electoral consequences. Devesh Kapur argues, "…India's political landscape has become more fragmented…Fierce electoral competition has meant that marginal voters matter more for electoral success. And while foreign policy issues may not enjoy issue salience with the median voter, if it matters more for the marginal voter, then public opinion on foreign policy issues could become a more potent electoral issue" (Kapur 2009, 290).

Moreover historically, Wojczewski argues, India has been regarded a responsible power that believes in peaceful co-existence with other states in the international community and can work its way through differences in the world owing to its own diverse interests and identities. (Wojczewski 2017, 7-8) Thus, while India extends its support to advocates of cultural sovereignty at the UN, India's self-proclaimed moral superiority over the West is one of the reasons why India taking an anti-queer position that cannot be covered in the garb of principled politics would be detrimental to its self-image. Besides being identified "pathological", India would lose claims to moral superiority. Rahul Rao rightly points out that the "internationalization of LGBT rights" has taken on "the character of a modern day

civilizing mission" with those states that have failed to recognize sexual diversity are at the risk of being characterized as "backward and uncivilized" (Rao 2011, 43). Rao has also argued that the split is pronounced at the geopolitical terrain where the 'Third World' stands divided into camps of the 'rising' and the 'rogue'. This pits locations of hope like India, South Africa and Brazil against locations of phobia like Iran, Uganda and Jamaica. He contends that one important reason behind India's inclusion into the former category is its critical elite opinion against Sec 377. He argues that such reactions serve as confirmations of Indian modernity, helping the state dissociate itself from Orientalist imaginings of its past self as pre-modern as also underdeveloped and phobic (Rao 2014, 3). This has helped India maintain its image as the 'location of hope' despite the state's political efforts to resist the recognition of human rights of LGBTQ people at the international level. To further reinforce this image, India has carefully constructed and relentlessly espoused an anti-phobic narrative which however has been challenged and questioned by its critical elite.

However, regardless of the lack of credibility attached to such a narrative owing to the skepticism raised by critical Indian elite, it is precisely this narrative, along with adverse reactions that it has garnered, India sustain its image as the 'location of hope'. The Indian state seems to be aiming to occupy a middle ground between queer-friendly and queer-phobic both domestically and internationally. By doing so, internationally, it tries to evade falling victim to what Jon Binnie calls 'new racism' in international politics which is based on tolerance and recognition of LGBTQ rights that a state can afford becoming a "measuring point of a nation's success at developing" (Binnie 2004, 68). Domestically, India's non-committal stance on LGBTQ issues at the international level, laced with anti-phobic justifications that it has offered, also appear to be attempts to tread the middle path between queer-friendly and queer-phobic. Combined with the awareness of 'new racism' as also the hierarchization of world politics around LGBTQ issues and domestic challenges to governance India might face owing to an overtly anti-queer posturing, India's attempts at re-imagining itself in the 21st century is worthy of scholarly attention.

Torri argues, "rarely has the image of a major country changed so rapidly and completely as the image of India during the past twenty years" (Torri 2011, 29). As soon as the economy was liberalized, India came to represent an untapped but lucrative market, a profitable destination for foreign investors. This was the new India that was waiting to be explored. In sharp contrast, its older self was found to be incommensurate with this "new" India and its aspirations. Kaur argues, "India's potential and its realization are attributed to the new nation, whereas the old nation in opposition constitutes its limits" (Kaur 2013). Elsewhere, Kaur posits that the task of nation branding holds significance for neoliberal India which manifests a desire to be "post exotic" (Kaur 2015, 4). However, while mindful of the compulsions of the time, India also appears reluctant to abide by dominant norms and standards set by major powers in North America and Western Europe who often appear imperial in their intentions. Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites caution that the human rights discourse authenticated by the West that accommodates LGBTQ rights is often politically motivated. The Global South views them with a fair amount of skepticism which has heavily influenced the human rights politics of postcolonial states. The likes of the USA and UK governments, have often

employed the trope of human rights to derive sustained political benefits, particularly the rights of women and human rights relating to sexual orientation, especially during the Global War on Terror in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This skepticism has also been reflected in India's international actions.

In a revealing assertion, former foreign secretary Kapil Sibbal had remarked in 2012 that India does not "want to get co-opted into the existing international order that is controlled by the West. It must find its due place in its own right and be in a position to change the rules rather than simply adhere to existing ones" (Wojczewski 2017, 8). This is reminiscent of India's political values during the Cold War when it had proclaimed to be non-aligned and had denied joining either camp in 20th century's conflicted binarized world order. To what extent India had stayed true to its commitment is beyond the purview of this paper but suffice it to say that India carries with it the legacy of subverting dominance and contesting existing hegemony in the world order since its independence in 1947 and charting alternative courses in world politics which has often served it well. However, in this arduous process, India also went through several transformations itself, having felt the urgency of re-imagining itself when faced with Orientalist challenges about its underdevelopment. India has had to prove its modernity time and again, particularly to evince its commitment to development.

Partha Chatterjee argues, "Ours is the modernity of the once-colonized. The same historical process that has taught us the value of modernity has also made us victims of modernity. Our attitude to modernity, therefore, cannot but deeply be ambiguous…we know that to fashion the forms of our modernity, we need to have the courage at times to reject the modernities established by others" (Chatterjee 1997: 20). India has not disavowed modernity but has professed commitment to it in its own terms without dissociating from what it understands to be its cultural values and realities. However, the Indian state's postcolonial politics that has had an influence on the practice of its human rights politics foregrounds a particularly truncated notion of Indian culture and its cultural self-imagination. As a consequence, India is often attempted to be made through deliberate "unmakings". This involves "selective appropriation and willful rejection of India's past and present histories" (Ahmed 1996 cited in Narrain 2004, 144). Parts of India's cultural history and memory are erased to project onto it a heteronormativized cultural self-imagination which invisibilizes India's diverse history and sociality. By joining forces with advocates of cultural sovereignty, India has further reinforced this truncated notion of India's cultural past and, as a result, has been able to articulate its own definition of human rights, and practices its own brand of rights politics, where the LGBTQ has been conveniently left out of the statist conception of the 'human' and hence effectively 'dehumanized'. Mythical cultural values have been reified and have been allowed to command a formidable authority. In this bid, like other adherents of cultural sovereignty, India has often voluntary indulged in, 'political homophobia' to construct its "national identity against a permissive 'Western Other'" (Anthony Chase 2016, 705) at the international level as is revealed through interrogation of its rights politics. However, India's national identity based on an exclusive culture premise is problematic. The next section of the paper offers a brief discussion of India's cultural past and sheds light on what this means for India's defense of cultural sovereignty at the international level.

Queering Indian culture

From different conservative political quarters, a view has emerged that homosexuality has never had a place in Indian culture.2 By advocating for cultural sovereignty and opposing LGBTQ issues from being promoted further at the UN, the Indian state has not been able to gauge the extent to which Indian cultural past was sexually diverse. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai suggest a general attitude of tolerance in pre-19th century India towards same-sex relationships between women and between men. Nobody in India is ever known to have been persecuted for homosexuality, unlike the mythical West where men found engaging in homosexual activities were often subjected to torture; they also earned vilification and faced legal execution for it. Women were also persecuted till 18th century for the same crime (Vanita and Kidwai 2000, 194-195). However, it was with the advent of the British colonial authority in the Indian sub-continent that the era of indifference towards homosexuality came to an end. British influence in the sub-continent initiated the creation of a climate of intolerance towards homosexuality by regulating sexual behavior among men in its Imperial Army.

Venereal diseases, which were sharply on the rise among men serving in the Army in colonial India, were considered a major threat. British rulers feared that the absence of wives would encourage those men in the service to become replicas of Sodom and Gomorrah. Viceroy Elgin believed that such a condition would persuade them to engage in homosexual activities, which he termed 'special Oriental vices'. Thus, in order to prevent men from becoming inflicted with these 'oriental vices' colonial authorities started running regulated brothels (Bhaskaran 2002, 17). From 17th century onwards, British colonial authorities started regulating desire based on its own Judeo-Christian morality. Colonial control of desire was further reinforced in 1861 as homosexuality was criminalised by law with the introduction of Section 377 into the Indian Penal Code. Thus, India's domestic legal norm pertaining to homosexuality was introduced by the British in India which framers of the Indian Constitution after independence retained. However, Britain decriminalised homosexuality in 1967.

If one traces the literary history of India, queer lives find their space. The Markandeya Purana has the story of Avisikta, the son of a king who was averse to marriage, as he identified as a woman. The story of Teeja and Beeja is popular in Rajasthani folklore. In a version by Vijaidan Detha, Teeja and Beeja, two women, are promised to be married to one another by their fathers. Beeja is raised as a boy and subsequently married as a man to Teeja. However,

[2] See: Indian health minister under fire for homosexuality remarks, July 5 2011, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jul/05/indian-health-minister-homosexuality-remarks; Human Rights Watch, December 17, 2008, This Alien Legacy: The Origins of Sodomy Laws in British Colonialsim, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/17/alien-legacy/origins-sodomy-laws-british-colonialism#_ftn2>

after marriage, on the insistence of Teeja, Beeja starts to dress as a woman. Soon they end up earning the ire of villagers who drive the couple out. They pray to compassionate apparitions who make Beeja turn into a man. However, Beeja as a man turns out to be a bully, making Teeja run away from him. In the end, the two live together as women, in a forest outside of society (Roy 2012).

Pattanaik narrates a story from Skanda Purana in Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You. Ratnavali, is the daughter of the king of Anarta who shares a powerful "friendship" with the daughter of the king's priest, Brahmini. They feel so strongly for each other that they refuse to be separated after marriage. They confess that they would prefer death over separation. Their relationship is not admonished but accepted. It is also accorded some respect when the king, having valued the girls' wishes to not be separated from each other, decides to marry them off in the same household. It is decided that King Brihadbala of Dashana and Ratnavali would be married and his priest would be married to Brahmini. However, as fate would have it, neither of the marriages ultimately takes place. As King Brihadbala refuses to marry Ratnavali, Brahmini rejects his priest's proposal. They leave their parents home for a forest where they perform penance. In the end, both of them are blessed by Shiva. Pattanaik pertinently asks, "Are the gods indifferent to, or indulgent of, the homoerotic nature of the relationship?" (Pattanaik 2014: 61)

Khan argues, "Indian histories are replete with evidence of homosexuality. Mugal (15th century onwards) paintings and poetry are often explicitly homoerotic. There is an abundance of Hindu temple carvings and iconography that show same-sex sexual behaviours. Konarak, Khajaraho, and other sites become places of pilgrimage for the diasporic Indian lesbian or gay man." However, he also cautions against seeking validation from the past. "Our existence is our own validation, however we may label ourselves" (Khan 2001, 105). His study primarily provides insights into the invisbilization of the "rich diversity of alternate sexualities" that exist in India even though individuals may either not be in a position—or be unwilling—to identify themselves as either gay, lesbian or bisexual and instead lead knowable private lives that fit normative standards of heterosexual cohabitation, often within institutions of marriage. Such fluid sexual cultures belie India's attempt to foreground a mythical public culture that can be homogenized without violating the quotidian realities of people inhabiting various identities.

Apart from the cultural sovereignty argument, India's domestic judicial situation has also been used to make a case in its defense. Like the cultural sovereignty argument, India's domestic judicial situation as another potent reason befitting its inhospitable stance on queer rights and concerns at the UN can be debunked.

Queering Indian judiciary

In 2009, Delhi High Court decriminalised homosexuality declaring that Section 377 violates Arts 21, 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and is hence unconstitutional. However, the verdict was challenged by Suresh Kumar Koushal who moved the Supreme Court against the

Delhi High Court judgment. He became one of the petitioners in the case with Naz Foundation. Firmly believing that it was his moral responsibility and duty to protect cultural values of the Indian society, Koushal's appeal made possible the retention of Sec 377 (Pisharoty 2013). In 2013, the Supreme Court of India, overturning the landmark Delhi High Court ruling which was regarded as having "decriminalized homosexuality" in India, had merely refused to declare Sec 377 of the IPC unconstitutional (Venkatesan 2013). However, the verdict of the Supreme Court, widely criticised by the media for not being able to deliver justice to one of the most vulnerable people of India's population, had not been essentially anti-queer.

However, a close reading of the Supreme Court's 98 page judgment of 2013 clearly reveals that the Court's intention was to merely pronounce its verdict on Delhi High Court's ruling which it found to be legally untenable. The Court insinuated that its intention was not to become the moral guardian of the state to condemn homosexual or queer practices. Moreover, the judgment cited cases of sexual violence committed against women and children that have been entertained under Sec 377 and the Court's actions have expressed eagerness to provide justice to survivors. The Court also held that the manner in which the section has been interpreted does disservice to the cause of women and children who are at the risk of suffering sexual violence. It is clearly stated in the ruling, "We are apprehensive of whether the Court would rule similarly in a case of proved consensual intercourse between adults." Sec 377 criminalizes certain acts which have to be established in a trial conducted in accordance with the provisions of Code of Criminal Procedure and other status relating to it. Thus, the Supreme Court claimed that the High Court was not right to declare that Sec 377 ultra vires Arts 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India. The implication is that the declaration of an individual being queer is not punishable by law, neither sexual engagement between consenting adults in private. Guilt has to be established in a court of law following due process. It also asserted that Sec 377 does not criminalize people of a certain sexual orientation or identity. This particular section of the Indian Penal Code only criminalizes acts which would be considered an offence, privileging cases of sexual violence over consensual sexual activity between adults. It stated:

> "…Sec 377 does not criminalize a particular people or identity or orientation. It merely identifies certain acts which if committed would constitute an offence. Such a prohibition regulates sexual conduct regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation."

In the verdict, the Supreme Court of India further stated that:

> "Respondent 1 attacked Sec 377 on the ground that the same has been used to perpetrate harassment, blackmail, torture on certain persons, especially those belonging to the LGBT community. In our opinion, this treatment is neither mandated by the section nor condoned by it…"

The Court also held that while it is understood that the section has been misused by police authorities, the legislation can take this into account while judging the desirability of the

section in the Indian Penal Code. Moreover, the verdict declared that the Court is always guided by the presumption of constitutionality, keeping with the spirit of democracy where the virtue of the legislature has to be respected. As an elected representative body, the legislature is thought to be imbued with a strong sense of people's interests and needs and is believed to respond to the best of its ability. Like any other law, Sec 377 is also regarded as the expression of the will of the people as manifested through the Parliament in keeping with constitutional norms. Moreover, no conviction against LGBT people under Sec 377 has taken place in independent India (Semmalar 2014, 289).

India abstained on a resolution passed by the UNHRC in September 2014 that sought to battle discrimination and violence against queer people across the world. However, it was only a few months prior to the adoption of that resolution that Supreme Court of India in the landmark NALSA verdict had made a stunning declaration:

> "Each person's self-defined sexual orientation and gender identity is integral to their personality and is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom" (NALSA v. Union of India).

This argument would find pride of place in 2017 when India faced UPR for the third time, evidencing that it had not escaped the notice of Indian political elite.

The NALSA verdict generously referred to United Nations and other human rights bodies that carefully deal with sexual orientation and gender identity to make a case for legitimate inclusion of transgender people in Indian society. It acknowledged that the United Nations actively advocates for the protection and promotion of rights of sexual minorities and made references to Yogakarta Principles which has applied issues of sexual orientation and gender identity to a wide range of existing international human rights standards. The Court brought to attention the fact that Yogakarta Principles enjoy the endorsement of UN bodies, Regional Human Rights Bodies, National Courts, Government Commissions and the Commissions for Human Rights, Council of Europe etc. These bodies, organs of government and institutions regard Yogakarta Principles a powerful tool for identifying State obligations to respect, protect and realize human rights of all persons. The verdict obligates the Indian state to respond to the needs of transgender people but while establishing a case for it; it has urged the State to act in deference to the universal human rights standard evolved at the international level.

Primarily, the NALSA judgment asserted on behalf of transgender individuals that they have the right to determine their gender preferences independent of the sex assigned at birth. It also stated that transgender individuals have the right to be recognized as male, female or third gender regardless of any medical involvement in matters of such identification. It secured for trans people, the right to equality and equal protection under Arts 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India. Discrimination on the ground of gender identity and sexual orientation was also prohibited through this landmark verdict. However, despite the verdict India has abstained on resolutions sought to protect LGBT people from violence and discrimination

(UNHRC 2014). India's move ignored the verdict of the Supreme Court that has prohibited discrimination against transgender persons by emphasizing on non-discrimination and the universal nature of human rights. India chooses to ignore the fact that transgender people constitute an invaluable part of LGBTQ communities worldwide and their lives run the risk of being impacted by conservative politics of states. There is little in judicial verdicts which urge the Indian state to stay silent or becoming hostile to measures battling discrimination and violence against LGBT people are adopted at the UN. It is the willful rejection of progressive aspects of judicial verdicts that leads India to not recognize the human rights of LGBT people.

However, when India finds it convenient to do so, it allows itself to engage critically with judicial pronouncements and echoes the queer friendly voice of the judiciary, disregarding the dominant uni-dimensional approach to verdicts it otherwise advocates to battle queer friendly measures at the international level. However, judges are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold the law of the land, its job is not to legislate. The job of making laws, taking into account the needs and interests of people, is that of the legislature which is composed of elected representatives of the State. But whenever efforts have been made to introduce pro-queer legislations in the Indian Parliament, they have met with strong resistance from India's elected representatives in the Lok Sabha (Hindustan Times 2016). When an alternative reading of the verdict of the Supreme Court is entertained, it is revealed that the judiciary has not outlawed non-normative sexual and gender identities. Selective reading of judicial verdicts on LGBTQ issues has aided India's stance on LGBTQ issues at the international level and has been used as an effective shield by India to defend itself against allegations of discriminatory behavior against queer people. In the ultimate analysis, the political elite come across as lacking in the will to embrace or partake in pro-queer measures being adopted at the international level. The domestic legal quandary has been a frequently cited reason, and hence has become the most dominant one, enabling India to frame its anti-phobic narrative. However, as evidenced in this section, such an argument does not hold water since India has not assumed a neutral position on LGBTQ rights at UN but appears hostile to the growing assertion of pro-LGBTQ groups even as it tries to give an impression of indifference.

Conclusion

India's actions and inactions evidence that the state has resisted various times attempts that were made to queer the human rights agenda at the UN by lobbying with defenders of cultural sovereignty—who find LGBTQ rights to be in conflict with their religious and socio-cultural values—arguing for the acknowledgment of states' cultural values when called upon to perform human rights duties and fulfill their international human rights obligations. However, the Indian state at the UN selectively appropriates India's cultural values in opposing LGBTQ rights as it neglects India's cultural realities before colonization which have not been found to be phobic or intolerant and sexual cultures existing heterogeneously. Homophobia was institutionalized with legal validation by India's erstwhile colonizers. Moreover, the argument that India makes about its domestic judicial situation being a

propeller of its international actions fail to be a convincing one. Despite trying to foreground an anti-queerphobic narrative, India has indulged in "political homophobia" at the international level. Interrogation of its actions and inactions on LGBTQ rights makes it appear queerphobic. However, India's attempts to construct an anti-phobic image by leveraging tactical rhetorical devices to its advantage are significant. India, caught between tradition and modernity, modernity and neoliberalism, and power struggles between the Global North and the Global South, finds itself in a position where its unwillingness to recognize LGBTQ rights as human rights can only be justified with an anti-phobic narrative if it has to escape Orientalist characterization of itself as "pathological". Hence, even as India opposes LGBTQ rights at the UN it is unwilling to be identified as a phobic nation. Political skepticism, distrust of great powers combined with India promoting a truncated notion of its culture and offering convenient reading of judicial verdicts exposes its unwillingness to support LGBTQ rights, thereby making it appear phobic despite cunning politically correct sophistry.

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Biography

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Book Review: *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*

Lotz, Amanda (2017) *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*, Ann Arbor: Maize Books (Michigan Publishing), p. 108.

ANNE SWEET

KEYWORDS

Television, internet-based media, cultural industries, media studies, business

In her recent work, *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television,* Amanda D. Lotz examines and defines frameworks, terminologies and methodological tools to understand and analyse the changing American business model of television, and its evolution from broadcast channels with scheduled content and advertiser-driven revenues to non-linear distribution systems with unlimited-access content and subscriber-based revenues. She denominates these 'non-linear distribution systems' as 'portals,' which she defines as 'the crucial intermediary services that collect, curate and distribute television programming via Internet distribution.'(Lotz 2017, 8). She gives HBO Now, Netflix and CBS All Access as examples of 'portals'—or the new form of channels—whose most important function, she believes, is that of 'curation' or 'of curating a library of content based on the identity, vision, and strategy that drive its business model.' (Lotz 2017, 8) This stands in contrast with more traditional channels whose main function, she maintains, is that of 'scheduling,' and selecting which content to broadcast at a given time to attract significant audiences.

Portals could be of interest not only to TV scholars but also to those researching cultural industries, as it attempts to bridge the gap between models and frameworks in order to conceptualize new media phenomena. Lotz notably analyses portals in terms of Bernard Miège's three models of media production ('the publishing model, the flow model, and the written press model') in his work *The Capitalization of Cultural Production*, and how they might apply to understanding the contemporary media landscape (Lotz 2017, 17/Miège 1989). She underlines that the 'flow model' fits traditional TV industry logics and practices, in which channels are essentially schedulers and continuous distributors of content. The 'flow model' as well as the 'written press model' (which concerns newspapers and magazines) involve advertiser revenue-based media and thus these models are not particularly applicable to the study of portals. However, Lotz believes that the 'publishing model' could be used to conceptualize portals to some extent. The publishing model is generally applied to examining the recording industry, the cinema, and book publishing because it involves the creation of cultural works that are distributed directly to consumers who purchase those that interest them. However, this model is an imperfect fit for the study of a portal like Netflix, as Netflix subscribers do not purchase individual shows, but subscribe to a bundle or library of

programmes. Yet Netflix does deploy a 'mass customization strategy' or 'conglomerated niche' strategy that targets different individual customer tastes at the same time by using 'filter bubbles' to seduce subscribers with customized content (Lotz 2017, 26).

Lotz also underlines various other economic and creative aspects of the portal business model and TV industry logics, from changes in revenue streams to changes in production. She notably analyses an important change in the way programmes are created. In the past, TV shows were often developed and produced by studios that were independent of the channels that broadcast them, and these studios would then control all the licensing, rebroadcast and resale rights. Portals often directly produce and control their own content, and thus become 'studio portals'. Lotz notes that this can have important implications for the sort of programmes produced. Executives at traditional channels select content in an attempt to garner mass audiences at specific times dictated by schedules, especially the sort of viewers that advertisers desire, notably those who are white and affluent. As portals attempt to reach 'niche' audiences, they can be freer in the sort of shows they can produce. Lotz also notes that the programmes that can be of value to a portal—in terms of cultural significance or resonance with viewers—do not need to be the most watched, and that the endless possibility for watching and re-watching on portals may allow for a programme to grow in value and viewers over time, whereas more traditional channels are still under pressure to produce immediate numbers for first-time viewing.

Lotz does not end the book with a conclusion, so much as a question, wondering if the book publishing industry may provide an 'alternative paradigm' for re-visioning the logics and the functioning of the evolving TV industry (Lotz 2017, 80). She writes,

> The book industry offers a long history of its medium's adaptation to shifting distribution forms (hardback, paperback, e-book) through corresponding adjustments in business models (subscription and circulating libraries, direct sale) and the establishment of sectors with distinct logics (mass market, award contender, specialized topics, academic) that aid thinking about the business of television in different ways required in a era in which television is free from linear schedules (Lotz 2017, 80-81).

Thus, as TV programmes are shifting from being programmed as scheduled events to being consumed more like books (at the leisure of their consumers), internet TV channels (or portals) are evolving to function more like libraries, as curators of great repositories of cultural products to be consulted at whim.

Lotz calls *Portals* a 'treatise', as she maintains it is an 'illegitimate offspring' of a longer book, *The Cable Revolution*, and it is written in a more free-form style (Lotz 2017, 1).[1] She further notes that as a 'treatise', her work exists outside of traditional academic publishing

[1] This was likely the working title of her book, *We Now Disrupt This Broadcast: How Cable Transformed Television and the Internet Revolutionized It All* (2018), which was published after *Portals*.

forms and crosses disciplines (business, cultural industries, media studies). Moreover, she expresses the hope that it will reach both academic and non-academic audiences alike. At 108 pages, *Portals* is shorter than a traditional full research book. In order to be able to publish information quickly about a rapidly evolving industry, Lotz published *Portals* under Maize Books, an arm of the University of Michigan Press, which deals with new and more experimental formats of academic writing. It was not blind peer-reviewed, although it was subject to review by an editorial board and received peer feedback, and Lotz remarks in the introduction that she takes full responsibility for the content.

Yet Lotz's expertise as a professor at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, and as an author of many books on the subject of TV studies, clearly shines in this treatise: *Portals* is informative and accessible. It would be a useful read for both beginning and experienced researchers as it clearly outlines frameworks, methodologies, and actors involved in 'new media' or internet-based media. However, as a 'treatise,' in some ways, it is more hypothetical and theoretical than concrete, and it lacks some of the examples, statistics and citations that might be published in a longer, more traditional study. It seems intended as jumping off point, a way to start a conversation and be part of the continuing and shifting dialog around new industries and practices, and as such it succeeds.[2]

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Biography

Dr. Anne Sweet is head of the Scientific Committee of the academic journal *Traits-d'Union*. She holds a Master of Arts from Columbia University and a Doctorate from the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3. Her doctoral research examined the cultural and commercial phenomenon of Girl Power that promoted media products featuring empowered women to young media consumers. She has also published articles on TV addiction. She teaches American Civilization, English, TV and Film Studies, and is a lecturer at L'École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées and L'Institut de Gestion Sociale (Groupe IGS).

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[2] This review was of the print version of the book, but an open-access online version is available at http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9699689 (accessed 31 August 2018).

Book Review: *Digital, Political, Radical*

Fenton, Natalie. (2016) *Digital, Political, Radical* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. 232 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7456-5086-9

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KEYWORDS

Digital, political, radical, technology, democracy

Digital, Political, Radical is a challenging book about politics and democracy. Natalie Fenton, encourages the readers to take a step back from their preconceptions certainties, and to "open their arms and their minds a little wider" (Fenton 2016, 149) in order to understand, to embrace, and, ultimately, to be able to analyse actual politics. Setting the expectations right from the start, the book aims to challenge current debates, to offer a pragmatic perception of politics, and to frame these discussions within a social, political, cultural and economic context.

The starting point for Fenton's insightful analysis is the collapse of global capitalism in 2007 and the unsettling situation this created for democracy with the increased power of corporations and the decreased influence of the public on policies. However, she also discusses the glimpse of hope that has been expressed through various forms of 'public manifestations of dissent' (Fenton 2016, 9). Fenton sets herself a difficult but important task: she asks us to rethink the seemingly basic, but highly significant and fundamental questions of "what is politics?" and "where is democracy?", aiming to respond to the equally significant questions of "how do we do democracy better?" and consequently to "what are the conditions required to live together well?" (Fenton 2016, 9).

As revealed by the title, the book covers three broad themes. Fenton develops her discussions around the digital, the political, and the radical, bringing in two other, complimentary and vital aspects: the critical and the contextual.

Starting with the *digital,* the book engages with academic discussions on the transformative powers of new technologies, highlighting, the tendency to overly focus on their potential to rejuvenate politics, rather than lifting the social and political critique that according to Fenton should accompany them. In other words, Fenton refers to the overemphasis on the technological capabilities of the internet - that manifest themselves through the characteristics of speed and space, horizontality and diversity, as well as connectivity and participation - rather than on the discourse that surrounds these technological functions. As Fenton notes, technologies are never neutral: they are "enmeshed with the systems of power within which they exist" (Fenton 2016, 135). Likewise, the networks that they facilitate are not "inherently liberatory", they not constitute a direct path to democracy.

Power is the key reference point in Fenton's argumentation - to rethink politics starts with power. Fenton builds her approach to the *political* by discussing politics both as the ordinary and the extraordinary. The first points to the "politics of being" and the passion that drives politics - in this sense, politics are affected by a synthesis of emotions and a collection of affective responses. The latter, on the other hand, focuses on the notion of "being political" and on how we (should) seek to alter the terrain of power. The ordinary and the extraordinary are interlinked: politics has to do with the individuals' outlook on the world and the way they approach others, but at the same time with our collective standing, as political subjects, who are "being political" when we address questions related to the (re)distribution of resources and translate them into organizational and institutional practices. Fenton's reasoning is guided by the question "what are the conditions required to live together well?". The answer to this question is to be found by prompting a new set of questions that respond to who gets what, why, how and where. In other words, power must be approached from the perspective of powerlessness/the lack of power and arrangements of counter-power.

Widening the frame of the discussion, these questions highlight how politics can (and should, according to Fenton's analysis) be conceived of as *radical*. Whereas this term has been used widely and attached to a diversity of meanings, Fenton here refers to radical progressive politics construed primarily as "of the left" and uses it in relation to the Latin origins of the term "roots", suggesting that radical politics is of the "grassroots": "it emerges from below and nourishes what happens above" (Fenton 2016, 15). Radical politics therefore is politics of the people. This definitional approach itself encourages a mental connection with the definition of democracy - etymologically the term means "rule by the people" - and Fenton follows this path. Radical politics here is a constant negotiation with democracy, it is "a constant dynamic process of inclusiveness, engagement, debate and struggle" (Fenton 2016, 17) to realize alternatives. In that sense, radical politics is the politics of emancipation, and it is concerned with political efficacy. In other words, radical politics is about political pragmatism, or, about putting "what is at stake in the actual politics on offer" (p.16) at the heart of the discussions (and the research).

Fenton underlines that it is of outmost importance to understand the context: "how the 'political' gains meaning is deeply embedded in social context" (Fenton 2016, 13). In other words, the discussion about power relies on our understanding of the roles of the market and of the state, which have a direct effect on every aspect of the *digital*, the *radical* and the *political.* Fenton outlines the relationship between the political and the financial situation, by referring to the economic dislocation and the current imposed constraints as challenges to democracy. She highlights that democracy should be protected from the "footloose logic of the market", or at a minimum, the need to democratically harness "the dynamics of the international capitalist market to the needs and interests of the citizens in any given political community" (Fenton 2016, 22). Fenton's use of empirical examples to explain her perceptions of the *politics of being* and *being political* enables the reader to travel down her conceptual pathways. Drawing on the recent cases of the left-wing political parties Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, Fenton provides a clear and well-thought through proposition

for how we can confront transformations in politics in a digital age and for how to move forward: by repoliticizing the economy and by resocializing the political.

The book is about the *digital*, the *political* and the *radical*, but at the same time it is about the *critical*. The author approaches the debates from the viewpoint of critical theory. She agrees with Horkheimer's reasoning that critical theory differentiates from traditional theory due to its specific practical purpose, which is to seek human emancipation, liberating human beings from the situations that enslave them (Fenton 2016, 11). This reasoning aligns with the argumentation Fenton develops throughout the book and with her aim: to move beyond description; to insist on dialectics which insist on the possibility of change; to be explanatory, practical and normative; and finally to be reconstructive and deconstructive. At the same time, this approach could be regarded as a "deliberative attempt to re-focus our critical lenses on a politics of transformation in the field of media and communication" at a time when we are at a loss to explain the most basic questions: "who is saying what to whom and why it matters" (Fenton 2016, 11). Radical politics relies on the production of knowledge and meaning making, areas where the media has a prominent role.

Fenton's thought-provoking book poses questions for further academic discussion, by pointing to issues that need to be discussed and re-discussed and to ways in which critical research could be reinvigorated. At the same time the book poses a challenge to media research: to bring politics back in to the picture. Fenton builds a dialectic approach in her book, which manages simultaneously to be explanatory, practical and normative; it explains how we experience politics in a digital age and how this may influence our ability to be political (Fenton 2016, 25); it engages with contemporary examples (such as the Occupy movement) which offer a practical overview; and it dives straight into conceptual inquiries and theoretical discussions related to the *digital*, the *political* and the *radical.*

References

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Biography

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