INDIVISIBLE

Social Responsibility in the Age of Entropocene

edited by:
Marta Błaszkowska-Nawrocka, Monika Różalska, Anna Treska-Siwoń

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IN/DI/VISIBLE

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TISCHNER
EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY

NAWA POLISH NATIONAL AGENCY
FOR ACADEMIC EXCHANGE

Contents

Introduction

This publication is the result and further reflection on the broad theme of the IN/DI/VISIBLE: Social Responsibility in the Age of Entropocene conference that took place on March 29–31, 2023, at Tischner European University in Krakow, Poland.

The conference's primary purpose was to bring together scholars from various disciplines and sciences, as well as practitioners and activists, all concerned about the current state of the world in crisis and the overwhelming entropy at all possible levels, from social to biological. All those who would like to fight against the inaction of decision-makers and politicians, and the passivity or even ignorance of individuals and societies, around the world. The intention was to discuss new trends, transformative ideas, and alternative approaches related to the question of social responsibility understood by various professionals – educators, scholars, scientists, business people, policymakers, environmentalists, designers, artists, and activists.

We wanted to reflect on the idea that we are more than individuals and more than professionals, and that everything is interconnected. Our world is indivisible with respect to the processes shaping contemporary ideas, trends, and behaviours. Almost all experiences and challenges are shared globally. Human rights abuses and discrimination, migration and refugee crises, climate change, deforestation and environmental degradation, wildlife trafficking and biodiversity loss, economic crises, and inequality are all connected and caused by humans. Climate change is the best illustration, as it affects people everywhere, albeit with different consequences. Similarly, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has been another experience shared by people across the globe.

There is interconnectedness not only between human and human, but also between humans and the environment. People perceive nature in various ways, which enormously affects their lives. Whether we see ourselves as just a small part of the universe, a tiny piece of something and we feel the connection with everything that surrounds us, or whether we want to control and dominate nature so that we are the primary species on the Earth, it all has an impact on how we live and what conditions we create for our descendants.

According to the French philosopher Bernard Stiegler, the current geological era, marked by the significant global impact of human activity on the Earth's ecosystem, in other words, the Anthropocene, should be understood as the Entropocene (Stiegler, 2021, p. 11). Because the Anthropocene/Entropocene is the epoch mainly characterised by a concentrated process of entropy growth in all its forms – physical, biological, informational, and even psychosocial, which manifests itself in the widespread (political and collective) apathy and lack of will, as well as disorientation in the face of all challenges. 'This general and accelerated process towards the maximal disorder leading to social and political dislocation, turning biosphere and the fossil energy in the ground into carbon dioxide and warmth (energy that is lost forever), is a proper albeit broad definition of entropy. That is why it may be worth considering the word "Entropocene" as an easy alternative for "Anthropocene"' (Symbiosphere, 2019).

Human activities and techno-economic production and consumption processes have resulted in the disturbance of various systems – disturbance of climate and nature systems, the disappearance of languages and cultures, and the over-exploitation of resources and human force. Climate change has brought a new type of weather conditions – less predictable, more extreme, and more disastrous as a consequence. Overproduction and overconsumption have led to the depletion of resources and tons of useless materials, including fast fashion products and plastics, which pollute oceans, rivers, and lands. The belief in technology, which was supposed to bring the betterment of human life, has caused colossal environmental damages, in many places irreversible. Nature is constantly being destroyed, and we are not just on the verge of catastrophe, but the catastrophe is already here. The problem is, however, that people do not want to acknowledge it. It is hard for us to believe in the truth, especially when this truth is disappointing and highlights our agency and responsibility for the crises. We do not want to hear it, and we ignore it.

Our world today is in a state of social, political, and economic entropy that requires immediate action and strong will, not only from the side of policymakers and decision-makers, but also from each of us. Therefore, the indivisibility of our decisions and actions could be the force in decreasing the omnipresent entropies. We should work together and take a solidarity approach to bring change.

As Mańczak and Małecki (2021, p. 242) state in their book on climate change, the Earth is just one organism in which all vessels are connected. Moreover, all human activities: economy, culture, and social life, are integrated with nature; they do not work in a vacuum. Fixing this huge ecosystem with one mechanism or a specialised device is impossible. The roots of the problem are in us, in our habits, striving for 'success', love of comfort, and expecting immediate results. One person cannot solve it, even with the perfect invention. It is a global problem; it affects everyone and requires solidarity. The solution is in us.

Thus, there are many questions to be asked. How can we change the ill-adapted models and re-orient our lives to be more responsible? How can we reimagine human-environment and human-technology relations? How can we rebuild social, economic, and political relations to address planetary crises? How can we reconceptualise our worldviews to make them more inclusive, pluriversal, and open to various cosmologies from different parts of the world? How can we avoid divisiveness among people from different professions and various backgrounds? How can we shape education and information to encourage greater responsibility? And how can we build a more equal, just, and prosperous world for us all?

The conference and its aftermath in the shape of this book are just a tiny attempt to bring some reflections to these crucial questions. The following book contains texts from various disciplines, including graphics, game design, sociology, political studies, linguistics, and language teaching.

The first five texts present the design and graphic perspective with hints of social aspects. Anna Treska-Siwoń in her text entitled *Design. Where did it all go so terribly wrong?* discusses the role of design in creating the chaos that surrounds us everywhere. She firmly claims that many problems of the contemporary world are related to design activities, such as the usefulness of design objects. She also investigates tools for evaluating graphic design – new assessment criteria and the importance of visualisation in judging design projects. The question remains open, however, whether it is only the problem with the design of objects, or maybe a problem with the design of our thinking and attitude towards particular objects.

The subsequent text talks about such a change through small but meaningful efforts. Simeon Genew, in his article *Social impact and artistic expression of the street art stickers of Noemis*, reflects on the role of street art, notably stickers that address a range of contemporary social issues on a global scale. Stickers can be interpreted from social, political, and personal dimensions. Their role is to nurture people's awareness of social problems and are an invitation to become more responsible for our contemporary world.

Marta Szperlich-Kosmala, in her text about the role of local changemakers, touches on the issues of responsibility, reminds us about the human predisposition

to cooperation, and encourages us to participate in the search for common sense and synergy of a crowd to increase the level of our responsibility. She discusses various trends in the new management order, including multi-level governance and direct democracy, networking, innovations, co-creating, and the welfare society.

Marta Błaszkowska-Nawrocka, on the other hand, in her text *Permitted/prohibited – moral choices in digital games*, analyses the issue of moral choice in digital gaming, which on the surface seems to serve only as entertainment, but in reality can be modern teachers and game changers. She claims that many games include ethical and moral issues, and are constructed in such a way as to provide challenges to players in order to search for solutions that are different from the obvious ones. In other words, games can teach us to bear responsibility for specific problems and be more responsible in decision-making.

The next text talks about the creation and image in artistic work. It is more a philosophical reflection on the issues related to uncertainties of today and constant utopias, a perpetuation motion machine that deprives people of deeper analysis. Joanna Róg-Ociepka discusses the role of time and its influence on nature in relation to the concept of the feminine archetype. She reflects upon extreme events in our life, such as birth and death, and presents a vision of time as a spiral in which the history of the world is based on repeating cycles.

The above leads us to the other papers, concentrating more on the political dimension and its impact on social issues. Olga O'Toole's paper, *The Generation that blocks the streets!*, refers to the rise of the importance of social media outlets and their impact on society in the context of climate change activism. Her study concentrates on analysing the representation of social actors (climate activists) in right-wing Polish media discourses. She investigates how youth climate activists are portrayed by such right-wing Polish media, which present these activists as villainous, harmful to society, and deceitful.

The text authored by İlkan Can İpekçi touches on the challenges of the Queer population that live in Turkey, a predominantly Muslim country. He refers to the issues of government responsibility for the extreme radicalisation of homophobic beliefs and practices through state-sponsored oppression, surveillance, and hate politics for sexual dissidents and gender non-conforming individuals.

Adam Krzyk's article concentrates on other aspects of social entropies and the education system in Poland – and in particular, challenges that secondary schools must deal with, especially regarding language teaching. He talks about the existing contradictions and conflicting interests of various actors involved in education: students, parents, education authorities, and teachers. He also refers to the importance of English in the contemporary world and lists some difficulties in foreign language learning and ideas for better language education.

Piotr Rembowski's text deals with the issues of rising populism and social inequality. He also talks about international actors and institutions losing control in a time of permanent entropy. His study focuses on three examples: the United States of America, Brazil, and Poland. Finally, he also provides some recipes on how to develop more equal societies and a healthy political system in which politicians truly believe in democracy and respect the rights of minorities.

Finally, Monika Różalska, in the text *Creating a more liveable world*, reflects on the necessity of change in the current development discourse of international and state institutions and social life. She asks questions about the sense of the idea of constant development in times of contemporary ecological and social crises and entropies at all possible levels – social, political, economic, and environmental. She investigates the possibilities of creating a more liveable world – suggesting that what is needed in development thinking and activity is a more pluriverse approach and design thinking. Contemporary development should be understood as prosperity based on the decentralisation of the economy, and respect for cultural diversity, social equality, and nature.

Summing up, the texts mentioned above cover various seemingly disconnected topics. However, in reality, all of them are linked and show how huge the whole spectrum of challenges in the contemporary entropic world is. Interdisciplinarity can help find answers to many problems and the proper design of our thinking and actions applied to every aspect of our life. Being responsible requires time and reflection on both the mistakes and future opportunities. But, only by working together in the spirit of solidarity, can we achieve more, as we are more than individuals.

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Design. Where did it all go so terribly wrong?

Intro

We often observe that designers at design conferences desperately attempt to change opinions of their harmful influence on society and the environment. We know about the circular economy, new biomaterials, and concerns about inclusion. When the speaker is really good, we even almost believe that design is actually solving problems. But there are important questions: what kind and whose problems? And when the oceans are full of plastic bags and pens with well-designed logotypes we should ask: what is going wrong? And how to see it? Should we still only discuss the construction of proper logotypes?

Looking for the proper assessment

Ruben Pater in his book *Caps Lock. How Capitalism took Hold of Graphic Design and how to Escape from It* ruthlessly show us links between designers' jobs and problems such as social unfairness and climate disasters. His quick look at the history of economy, education, work, and others shows us how graphic design has influenced and stimulated the Entropocene. Indeed, there is not enough hope for a successful escape. However, his work is very important and not typical because he focuses on the mass of ordinary graphic designers: 'as designers we find ourselves creating endless promotional images for products we don't need, working all-nighters for low wages **while dreaming of becoming star designers**. But we are not famous, and we are not only individuals' (Pater, 2021, p. 512). And this last question is the background for his proposals for the escape: let's start working together, for people and with them (Pater, 2021, pp. 447–516).

But what about those who dream of being a graphic design star (with large incomes)? How to change those dreams? The dreams that began not so long ago – the position of design stars developed during the 20th century and led to the creation of designer celebrities in the 1990s. (Drucker, 2001, p. 194). Suppose during the whole life, throughout the whole education process, a designer only hears about design stars and learns about aesthetic ways of judgement design. In that case, a lack of admiration – or even worse, often a lack of a client's trust and the necessity of building confidence over and over again with the next client is a nightmare, not a dream. A designer's ego in this job is irrelevant, and finding compromises between a designer's and the client's sense of taste could be challenging. Therefore, for fans of design stars, a member of a cooperative who is working in the province for local society could look like a loser. Ordinary and sometimes dull work for small clients, without any chance of red carpets and glossy trophies, looks like a failure. Your ego in this kind of job is not relevant and finding compromises between you and your client's sense of taste could be really difficult. Therefore, for fans of design stars, a member of a cooperative, who is working on the province for local society could look like a loser. Ordinary and sometimes boring work for small clients, without any chance of red carpets and glossy trophies, looks like a failure.

As long as we measure the quality of design without considering true social and environmental influences, the icon of success in the designer activity will remain the rich white man, who is designing things we don't need.

Jorge Frascara asks: 'What criteria can be used to assess quality in visual communication design? As a design community, have we learned to use the right parameters?' (Frascara, 2022, p. 272). I faced a similar question while analysing publications about design intended for children (Treska-Siwoń, 2022, pp. 176–201). How do we assess their impact? Which of them are good and which are bad? Audrey Bennett[1] has some proposals: 'good design can no longer solely be based upon formal metrics' (Bennett, 2012, p. 74). The same is René Spitz's[2] conclusion after huge research on world design education in 2021: 'For the design of the 21st century, answers to aesthetic questions no longer come first. More important are competencies for international, interdisciplinary, intercultural, and cross-hierarchical collaboration in mixed teams based on human values, in order to make a sustainable contribution to public value' (Polch-Jahn, 2021). The next question follows these statements: how to measure such values in design?

1　Co-author of the Icograda Education Manifesto 2011.
2　Member of the iF design Foundation, which I will also mention later.

Audrey Bennett formulates five features of good design, and some of her proposals are quite easy to check. For example: 'The design outcome has a user-friendly interface that facilitates and stimulates use' (Bennett, 2012, pp. 75–76). We can test such properties, we have a methodology to do this and even many helpful tools to investigate details, such as colorsafe.co. No doubt we are ready to evaluate design in this way. Universal, inclusive design demands deeper knowledge of people – users. However, there is still a possibility that one can use this knowledge against people instead of helping them. Design could also be 'the most destructive tools of deception' (Bennett, 2012, p. 74). Therefore, just to be safe from skilled graphic designers with wrong intentions, we have to find also other tools for design evaluation, which allow us to see true goals and the real social impact of judged objects.

The visualisation of information can help us see what we might otherwise miss. Therefore, in this article, I will focus on using charts and diagrams to visualise the social impact of design objects.

Review of existing visualisations

The need for a tool that helps with attempts to objectify the evaluation of design objects was taken up by Paul Mijksenaar.[3] He based his diagram on historical foundations – starting with Vitruvius' criteria. He explains it as follows: *Firmitas* – durability, firmness; *Utilitas* – usefulness, commodity, and *Venustas* – beauty, delight (Mijksenaar, 1997, p. 18). His diagram consists of three factors, so-called thermometers: *Reliability*, *Utility,* and *Satisfaction*. In Mijksenaar's view, these factors not only make it possible to identify the main objectives guiding the designer but also to catch situations where he has been seduced by dogma (Mijksenaar, 1997, pp. 20–22). As an example of such dogma, he cites the Bauhaus decision in 1925 to dispense with capital letters – a decision that is still cultivated today. Mljksenaar considers the application of this principle by the Amsterdam studio Total Design to the wayfinding of Schiphol Airport in 1967 to be particularly damaging, since a British typography study (in the 1960s) on directional signs proved that their legibility 'increases significantly when each name or sentence begins with a capital letter' (Mijksenaar, 1997, p. 22). Indeed, it was very important research[4] on fast-growing roads, but in these British tests, designers only checked how legibility

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3   Dutch wayfinding specialist; known especially for airport information systems, such as at Schiphol, La Guardia, JFK, and others.

4   Reports from this research are known as the Anderson report (1960) and the Worboys report (1962). I use findings from the second one. More information on sabre-roads.org.uk and trl.co.uk/publications.

changes when road signs use <u>capital</u> or mixed letters (lower-case with an initial capital), and how it affects the size of boards (*Traffic Signs*, 1962, p. 4). English directional signs traditionally have only used capital letters, and the introduction of mixed-case letters met strong conservative objection (www.roads.org.uk, 2017). In the face of loud opposition, it is likely that nobody thought about legibility tests using only lower-case alphabet (Baines P. et al, 1999). However, conclusions of Jock Kinneir's and Margaret Calvert's analysis accented how changing the shape of words in mix-case type was found useful for fast-reading drivers (*Traffic Signs*, 1962, p.4). This finding could be in some way applicable to using only lower-case letters. Did it lead us to the curious question: what is the impact of Bauhaus's decision that German all nouns begin with a capital letter? I have no answer, but we can see the difference in letter rhythm and word recognisability when looking at the example below.

On the motorway to London there are road signs.

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Auf der Autobahn nach London sind Verkehrszeichen.

Figure 1. Comparison of two sentences: in English and German, author's study

Nevertheless, the British test from the 1960s did not show any significant advantage of either system. Signs using only capitals were a little more visible for users, although Jock Kinneir already had an official agreement with the Road Research Laboratory, and the design process with his version was advanced in production (Lund, 2003, pp. 108–113). The Road Research Laboratory decided to stand by that decision, and from the financial point of view it made sense. This story teaches us how many details influence the success of a graphic design project. It is hard to say what exactly prejudiced opinion that Kinneir's and Calvert's signs have better social influence than Kindesley's[5] proposal.

Keeping in mind that social influence can't be precisely measured, let's look at Mijksenaar's charts, which always uses pairs of projects to show the use of his diagrams. For example, Falk and Michelin maps, Dutch and British road signs, and a Swatch watch and a coffee measure (Mijksenaar, 1997, pp. 18–20). This points to a common feature of the diagnostic tools in question: it is much easier

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5　David Kindersley was Kinneir's opponent in the fight of the shape of the signs for new-build motorways. His proposal (in short) consisted of new, but more traditional typography – only capital letters with serifs (a little irregular) and a smaller surface of the directional signs.

and more efficient to use them for comparison than for evaluating individual projects. Therefore, they are also the perfect tool for evaluating students' work.
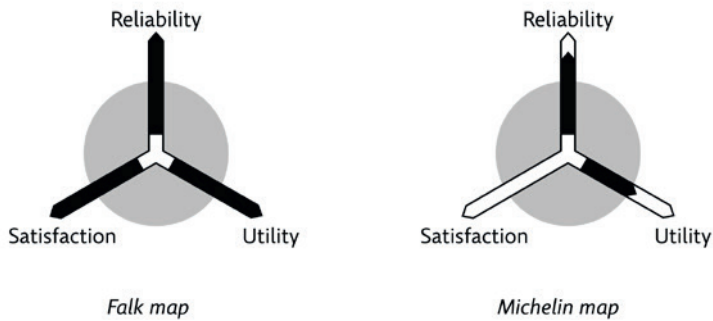
Figure 2. Comparison of Michelin and Falk production maps, own study based on diagrams by Paul Mijksenaar, *Visual Function*, p. 18

The AGRAFA International Student Design Competition (Katowice, 2022) used a visually similar diagram. Its directions were *Social*, *Commercial*, and *Beyond*. The chart was created during the reformulation of a competition rules. Organisers broadened its scope beyond graphic design. As the curators explained, the purpose of the diagram was to map out 'what needs and challenges the design responds to' (agrafa.asp.katowice.pl). Interestingly, when submitting their projects, the participants themselves defined their place on the diagram. The organisers reserved the right to change it, but did not exercise it.[6] The viewer also had a say, as the diagrams were placed next to the exhibited works and it was possible to modify their settings. More information on how organisers interpret those axes can be found in the competition rules: '**Social**: projects that support social innovation, socially engaged projects, projects that support solving complex social problems, projects developed in harmony with the natural environment, projects that emphasise the role and responsibility of a designer in society; **Commercial**: custom-made projects (based on a project brief, competition, public contract), projects limited due to market/implementation reality, projects using new technologies, implemented projects (not conceptual); **Beyond**: experimental projects, precursor projects, innovative projects, projects beyond convention, speculative projects, interdisciplinary projects.' (formularz.agrafa.asp.katowice.pl).

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6   Information from a telephone interview with Dr. Agata Korzenska, member of AGRAFA Competition committee, 03.08.2022.
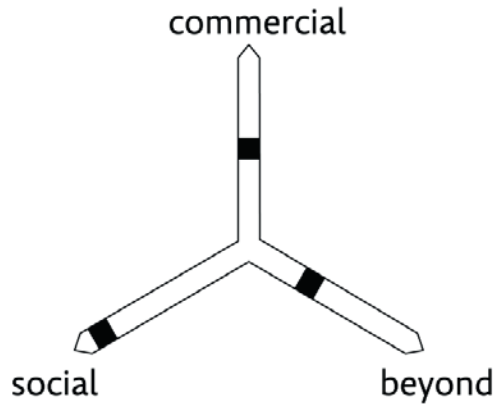
Figure 3. Agrafa charts, author's study based on charts from the exhibition

Another example of an attempt to depict project goals and priorities was used at the Design Museum in London for the Beazley Design of The Year 2019 exhibition. The charts created for the occasion are simpler, as they only have two directions. Although four types of such sliders were on display at the exhibition, only one type appeared next to each object on show. The organisers did not annotate these charts with comments, so we can only analyse the possible overtones of the offered references (figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. Beazley charts, author's study based on charts from the exhibition

A voice with a gender-neutral identity

Title: Meet Q: The First Genderless Voice
Designers: Virtue Worldwide, Copenhagen Pride
              and Equal AI
Nominator: Anna Bates
Location: Denmark and United States

Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa and Microsoft's Cortana are the market leaders in all-knowing household digital assistants. One of many points of concern about these devices has been that the computerised voice is almost always female. In 2018, the United Nations released a report stating that the use of female voices 'reinforces commonly held gender biases', encouraging stereotypes as 'obliging, docile and eager-to-please helpers'. Q is the first gender-neutral voice technology, designed by a group of linguists, technologists and sound designers aiming to eradicate this evident technological bias. Made by combining the voices of five people who do not identify as either male or female, the voice was 'neutralised' through linguistically trained software. The past year has seen progressive leaps, like Q, towards more cultures accepting, and even embracing, non-binary and third genders.

HUMAN ——————●—————— MACHINE

A postcode for London's homeless

Title: ProxyAddress
Designer: Hildrey Studio
Nominator: Anna Bates
Location: United Kingdom

This project uses one of the most important and valuable commodities of our age – data – and wields it to address problems facing some of society's most marginalised: the homeless. Without an address as a means of identification, many people are immediately cut off from the basic services they need to recover. This entrepreneurial idea from a young British designer takes existing data to identify empty homes within a particular council, then uses these addresses to generate a 'proxy' address that can be used by the homeless to access services regardless of location. A trial is starting at Lewisham Council in south London, and a strategic partnership with homelessness charity Crisis is also being established to continue the project.
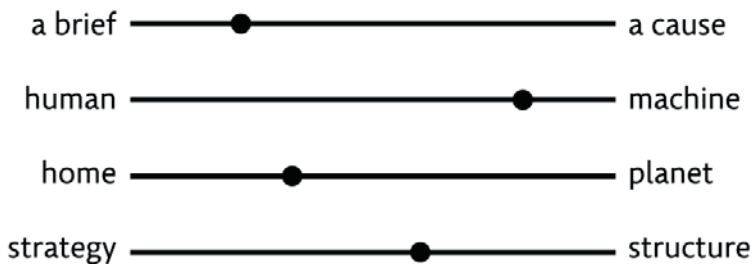
STRATEGY ——————●—————— STRUCTURE

A book celebrating new female designers

Title: Notamuse – A New Perspective on
              Women Graphic Designers in Europe
Designer: Silva Baum, Claudia Scheer
              and Lea Sievertsen
Nominator: Matylda Krzykowski
Location: Germany

Notamuse is Silvia Baum, Claudia Scheer and Lea Sievertsen's response to the lack of female role-models in the graphic design industry. While many women work in the field, their contributions are, as the trio notes, 'invisible' amid the dominant presence of men. Their publication, on display here, was a Kickstarter crowdfunded project. It shares the work of 54 new female graphic designers, and interviews theorists and thinkers in the field to investigate this imbalance. The book celebrates contemporary designers like Anja Kaiser – one of her projects is displayed nearby – and Offshore Studio's Isabel Seiffert.

A BRIEF ——————●—————— A CAUSE

A quiet, hands-free breast pump

Title: Elvie Pump
Designer: Elvie
Nominator: Anna Bates, Andy Law, Tim Parsons
              and Catharine Rossi
Location: United Kingdom

Elvie is a London-based start-up founded in 2013 that designs 'smart' technology for women. To address the difficulties for breastfeeding mothers of breastfeeding in public, they have designed the world's first silent wearable breast pump. Previous iterations of the design were noisy and often involved lots of cumbersome cables and cords. They also required mothers to change clothing to suit the pump. Elvie's differentiated technology means the pump is silent, offering unprecedented discretion for mothers while pumping. The pump also connects to a free smartphone app, allowing women to view milk volumes and track the pumping history for each breast.
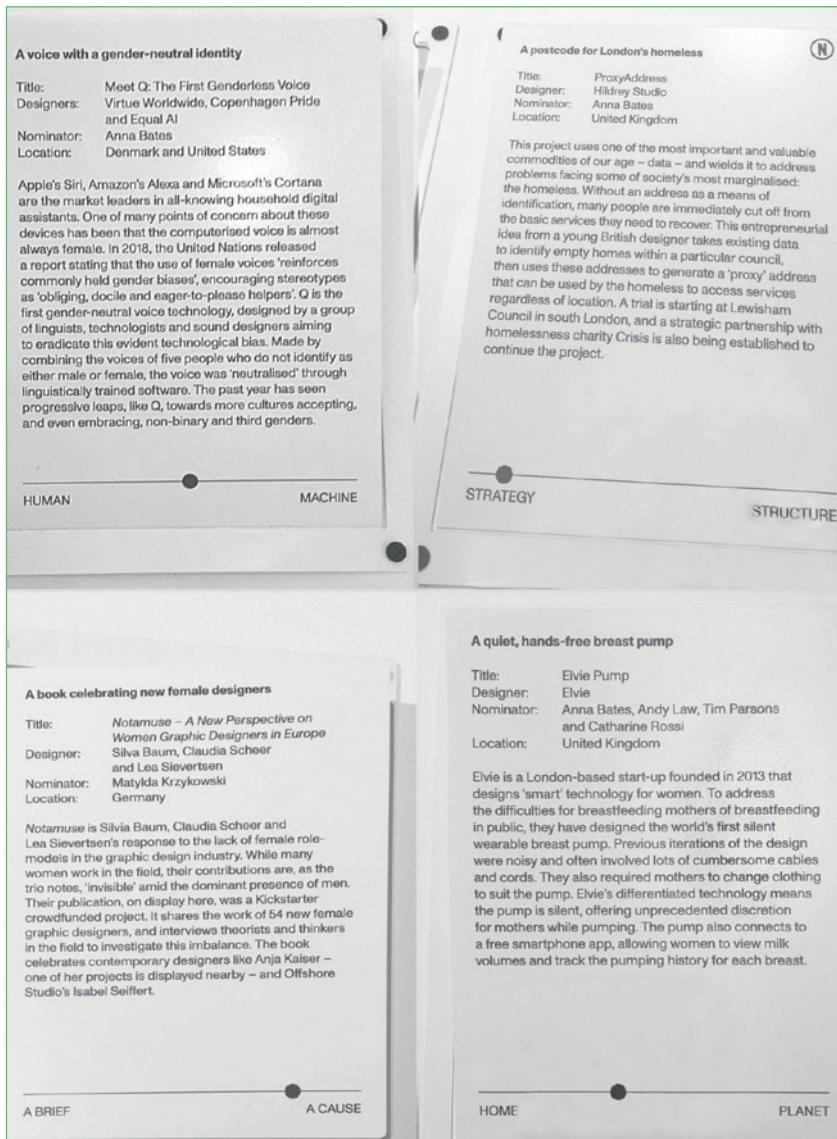
HOME ——————●—————— PLANET

Figure 5. Charts included in the descriptions of the works on display at the Beazley Design of The Year 2019 exhibition, author's photo

Just like the AGRAFA International Student Design Competition in Katowice, the Beazley Design of The Year 2019 changed its formula, abandoning its previous divisions and declaring a search for new factors that defined the areas of design (Galilee, 2019, pp. 11–12).

Agrafa's and Beazley's graphs are intended to make us reflect upon our vigorously evolving field – designers and spectators alike. It seems that the opportunity

for interaction, as applied in Katowice, is more developmental. If some form of recording of the choices was introduced, we would obtain extremely valuable material – a contribution to further reflections on our field. The imprecision inherent in these visualisation tools is an ally to us. At this stage of design research, we need openness, different perspectives, and an escape from accepted dogmas. However, it is worth taking a close look at the keywords that constitute the factors of the charts.
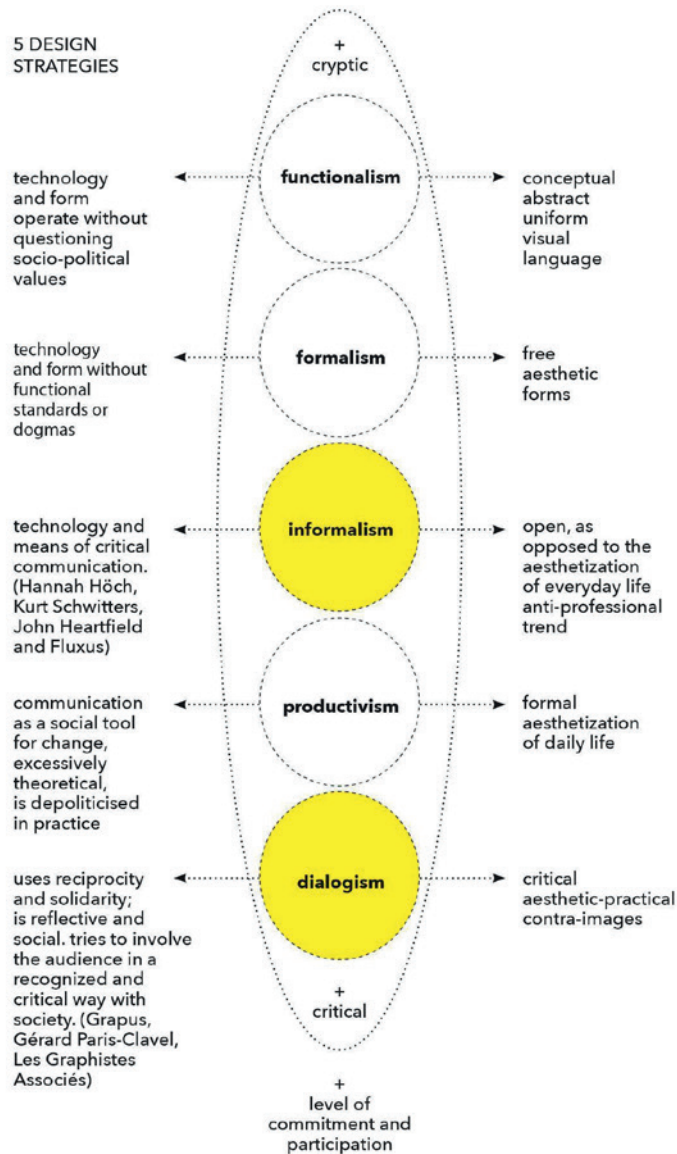
Figure 6. Un Mundo Feliz. Five design strategies (according to Els Kuijpers), G. Martínez, S. Díaz, '*Love is a Human Right*'…, op. cit.

Els Kuijpers,[7] with reference to the work of Jan Van Toorn, has defined five strategies for visual communication: *functionalism*, *formalism*, *informalism*, *productivism,* and *dialogism* (Kuijpers, 2014), and the Madrid-based collective Un Mundo Feliz has developed a chart based on this these strategies indicating their potential for social influence (Martínez & Díaz, 2020, p. 51).

Taste

Paul Mijksenaar's considerations are exceptionally important because they accent the most visible and loud question when judging design: taste. The factorial of 'satisfaction' is associated with the feeling of beauty and contentment. The notion of beauty, in turn, inevitably leads us to the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. He linked aesthetic preferences and beliefs to the classism of societies – particularly to the maintenance of upper-class status (e.g., through symbolic violence). The research he conducted on a large scale in the 1960s indicates, among other things, that when evaluating the effects of design, the evaluator's perspective, their belief in the natural order of things, which they acquired in the immediate environment (primary habitus) or in the process of education (secondary habitus), is crucial (Bourdieu, 1996). Graphic designers are well acquainted with this problem, as working with a client is often a constant clash of different habitus.

Comments on the government's edition of *My Child's First Book* (*Pierwsza książka*, 2013) were also good examples of such clashes. See some of them below:
  – 'trivial, slapdash work, simply ugly (…) the whole thing is not much different from the dubious quality children's books sold for 5 PLN in a supermarket'[8]
  – 'psychologists (…) emphasise how important the contours of illustrations and vivid colours are for a young child. We did not make this book for illustrators'[9] (Rachid Chehab, 2013)
  – 'My Child's First Book is a symbolic rape' (sic)[10] (Cackowska, 2014).

In the design magazine *2+3D*, Professor Tomasz Bierkowski expressed his longing for the possibility of a more rational system of evaluation, accusing critics representing the art community of 'most often referring to "good taste" in their narration, which does not contribute anything constructive to the discussion – on

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7   Dutch independent publicist and curator on communication design.
8   Opinion of Maria Kulik, children's book promoter and teacher.
9   Opinion of Irena Koźmińska, graduate of the Warsaw School of Economics, head of the ABCXXI Foundation – publisher of *My Child First Book*.
10 Opinion of Dr Malgorzata Cackowska, an educational expert in visual and media literacy.

the contrary – it dangerously lowers its level' (Bierkowski, 2014). I share this sentiment as well – in particular – because the taste of the representatives of the environment is often part of a secondary habitus, developed in design studies.

Describing a study of aesthetic choices in architecture, Charles Montgomery argues that the longer the period of study of architecture, the more often the subjects' taste diverged from the tested group average. Non-designer participants were comfortable with imitations of the Victorian style, and architects were delighted with the black skyscraper Seagram Building (Montgomery, 2021, pp. 128–130).

Maria Kulik accented a significant element of her values when judging *My Child's First Book* – the price of the object. It could be connected with the very Polish word *dizajnerskie* (also *designerskie*). This word is sometimes translated into English as *designerly*, but when looking at Google pictures we can easily see the differences in meanings – please compare figures 7 and 8.
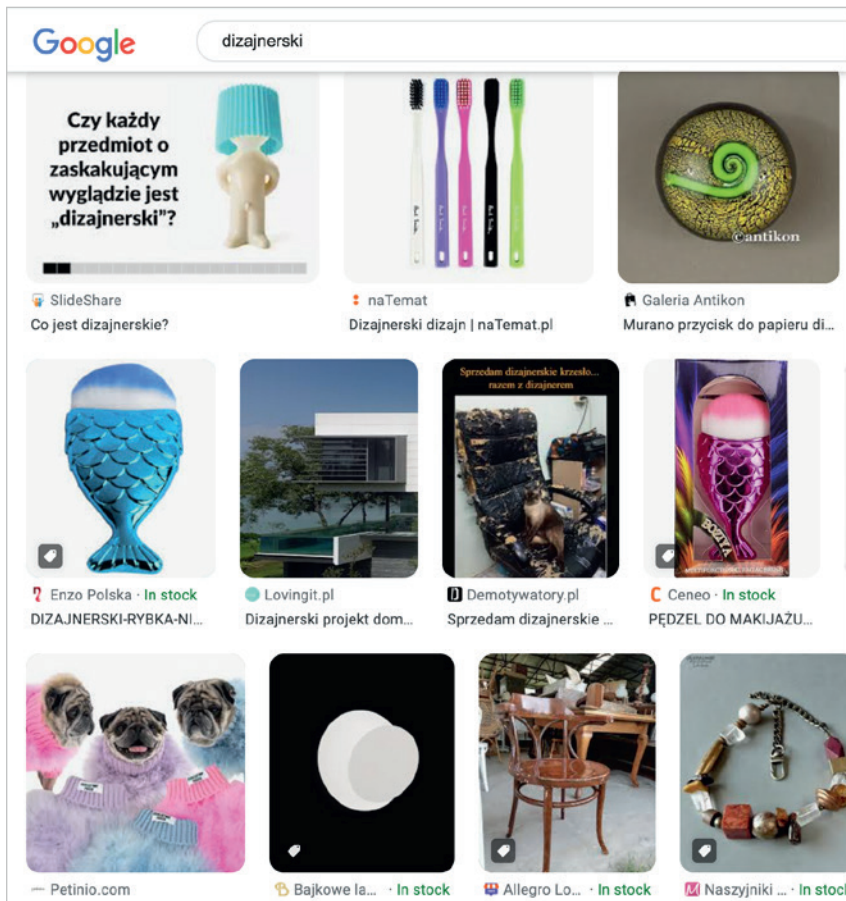

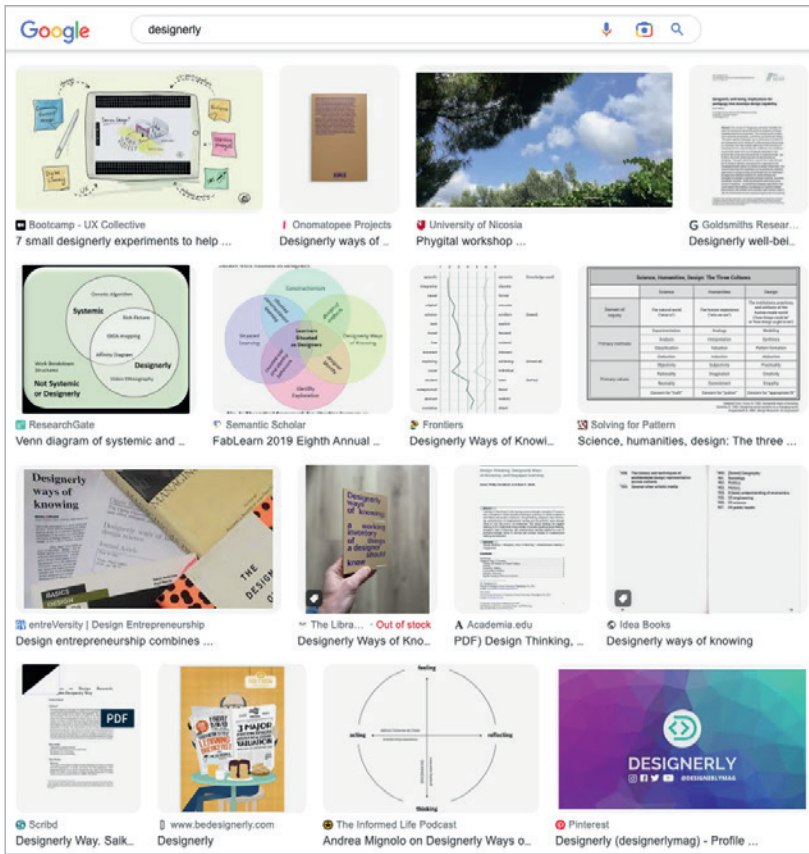**Figure 7.** Screenshot of Google search for the word *dizajnerski*, accessed: 05.03.2023

Figure 8. Screenshot of Google search for the word *designerly*, accessed: 15.11.2022

Originally, the term *dizajnerskie* meant object connected with good design, and the most important feature typically was high usability associated with well-looking form. In time it changed. Now the first connotation is *expensive*.[11] Maybe this is because salaries in Poland are noticeably lower than they are in western countries and therefore design objects appear to be even more expensive? Analysis of this requires more information and additional research which is beyond the scope of this article. But important for us is that the term *dizajnerski* could mean very confusing objects with low utility. The form could vary, as we can see in Figure 7. In addition, only one thing is common for all of these objects: they are distinguished by their higher price from other products with similar functions. The relationship between design and the high price should bother us.

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11   I fear that slowly the meaning of the word is drifting towards meaning *bizarre* and *impractical as well*.

The financial dimension shaped the perspective of Maria Kulik, quoted above, who emphasises the relationship between low price (but thus also more accessible) and poor quality of the books. In addition, Ewa Solarz refers to prices in the introduction of her book for children – D.E.S.I.G.N.: 'Almost all the items described in this book are manufactured and can be bought. But unfortunately… most of them are very expensive' (Solarz, 2013, p. 006).

Figure 9. E. Solarz, *D.E.S.I.G.N. Domowy Elementarz Sprzętów i Gratów Niecodziennych*, Dwie Siostry, Warszawa, 2013, photo K. Sowiński

In the French publication *La vie en design* (Delavaux, 2015), children can find egalitarian, accessible objects. This book presents a different point of view, and the narrative is also varied. Even when talking about a fancy model of hoover, the authors refer to the history of cleaning tools – and they start with a simple broom.


Figure 10. C. Delavaux, S. Kiehl, *La vie en design*, Actes Sud, Paris, 2015, photo K. Sowiński

The new tool

I was looking for a tool to help visualise the differences in the tones of communication publications relating to art and design for children. It led me to the conclusion that it was necessary to define their place in the space between elitist and egalitarian or exclusive and inclusive (Treska-Siwoń, 2022, pp. 167–168 and 195–199). The second factor I chose to explore was to prioritise: form or function, that is, aesthetics versus usability.
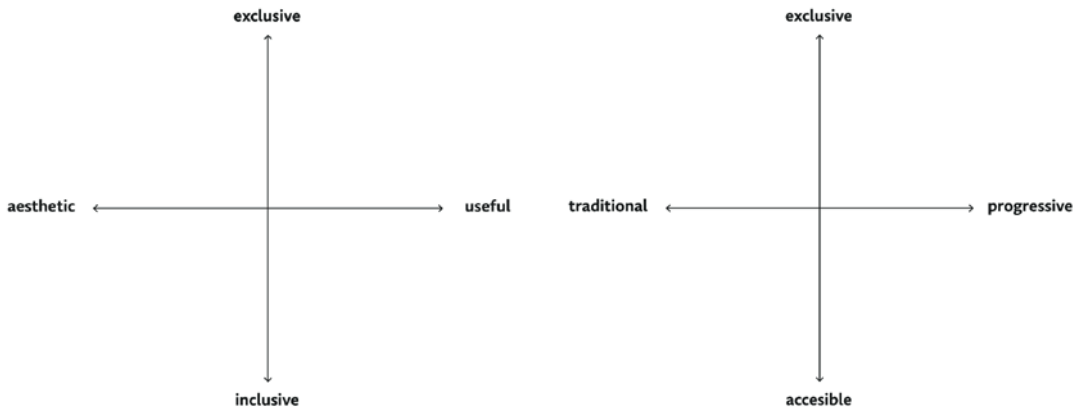
Let's take a look at how it works. First, we judge the egalitarian nature of the two earlier-mentioned publications by their selection of objects. In the French publication, we have a lot of objects that are widely available – such as a Bic pen, a Stabilo highlighter, or Heinz ketchup bottles. Examples of design are discussed in a broader historical, cultural, and social context. The authors compiled the objects by their functions, not their stylistic features. Here, we have a history of tools for writing, cleaning, lighting, etc., which increases the usefulness of the book for young readers. Thus, it can be diagnosed that this publication will be in the bottom right corner of the chart.

I have placed the Polish book on the opposite side of the chart. The aesthetics adopted in it do not reflect the actual appearance of the objects depicted. Therefore, I supposed that for the authors, their sense of taste was more important to share than the information. The contrast of backgrounds and letters is sometimes insufficient, also probably because of aesthetic reasons. It also lacks proper context, which makes it less useful. For example, next to the Savoy Vase description, we have a suggestion to keep a fish in it, which would certainly shorten the fish's life expectancy considerably. The main function of this publication remains to play with design icons created by design stars from ordinary designers' dreams. Additionally, as I mentioned earlier, most of the selected objects are elitist in nature. Comparing the aims of both publications in one chart helps in understanding how much they differ.
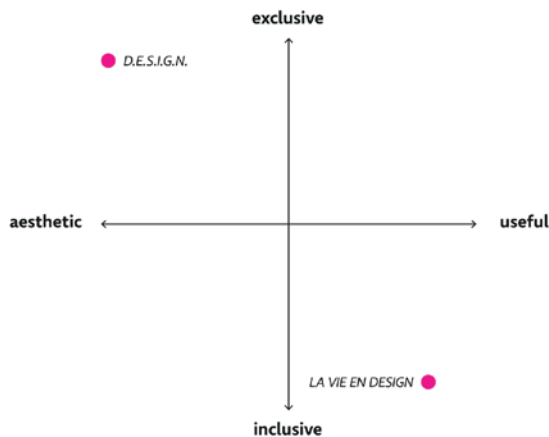
Figure 11.
Evaluation of two design publications, compiled by the author

Choices similar to mine was made by the iF Design Foundation in the *Designing Design Education* report (2021). In Figure 12 we can compare the charts.

```
        exclusive                                  exclusive
            ↑                                          ↑
            |                                          |
            |                                          |
aesthetic ←-+-→ useful              traditional ←------+------→ progressive
            |                                          |
            |                                          |
            ↓                                          ↓
        inclusive                                  accesible
```

Figure 12. Chart comparison: left mine, right iF Design Foundation, author's study based on a chart from *Designing Design Education*, p. 75

The vertical axis of their graph spans between *exclusive* and *accessible*, which in principle is the same as on my chart. The difference between our visions is in the horizontal axis: iF Design Foundation spans it between 'traditional' and 'progressive' (*Designing Design Education*, 2021, pp. 74–75).

Basically, our intentions were similar. The main idea of the horizontal axis is to avoid taste judgement. Hence, iF Design analyses attachment to styles, which we can easily recognise; and in my chart, we have to evaluate which feature determined author choices: form or function. iF Design used this chart to map the areas that characterise different types of design schools (*Designing Design Education*, 2021, pp. 45–46). They surveyed a selection of design schools. Based on the descriptions next to the chart, we can conclude that the accessibility assessment is mainly related to tuition fees, as state universities were rated as the most accessible (traditional; main teaching model: Bauhaus), private universities as more exclusive (described as progressive, but on the chart, they are exactly in the middle of the axis; main teaching model: HFG Ulm), and a separate category, the 30 leading universities, as the most exclusive (there is a 'vague mix of traditional and progressive working methods' in the description, but a clear shift towards interdisciplinarity in the graph). For a good understanding of the concepts of traditional and progressive education that appear in the iF Design Foundation chart, it is still worth quoting from the description of traditional universities. Most of them define design as 'an expert practice to boost aesthetic appeal' and innovation as 'the generation of new variants of formal and aesthetic elements of a product' (*Designing Design Education*, 2021,

pp. 74–75). In key conclusions about the future of design, the authors of the report emphasise that formal and aesthetic measures alone will no longer guarantee the success of a project or even the professional success of the designer himself. There is necessary a broader understanding of the design context is required: technical, business, cultural, political, and social. They also point to the growing importance of user experience design (*Designing Design Education*, 2021, p. 67).

Conclusion

Beazley 2019 curator Beatrice Galilee writes in the catalogue's introduction: 'By separating themes from objects, we invite visitors to examine it and consider each thing on its own terms, wondering where it sits on the spectrum of contemporary thought within its own discipline' (Galilee, 2019, pp. 11–12). This quote seems to sum up our reflections well. Visualising the differences in design priorities helps us to think more broadly and deeply about the project, and to see it from a new perspective. Can we therefore accurately and objectively assess the quality of a project? Of course not. The charts we discuss only help us to take a step back and look at the bigger picture, although, what we see depends both on our habitus and on how insightful we are able to look, how broad our perspective is, and which objects have been chosen for comparison.

The time we have to spend thinking about values and ethics will be probably the most important for the process of changes in factors of design evaluation. The presented charts are particularly helpful in giving a structure to our analyses.

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Abstract

Graphic design has been an ambassador of modernity for the past 1000 years, leading us to a new, brighter future. In the time of the Entropocene, we are convinced the future will not be bright. Indeed, we are not sure if there is a future for humankind. As creativity and designing things are one of the oldest human activities, we have to ask ourselves the question: what is the role of design in the creation of such chaos we observe now? Many designers and thinkers now explain that the role of design in creating the human environment is crucial. Hence, we are afraid that many problems of planet Earth from postcolonial injustices to a destroyed environment are strictly connected with design activities. A lot has happened since humans designed the first tools and the first infographic on cave walls, and nowadays we have tons of trash in the oceans, climate emergency, and drastic social injustices. Why does this happen when we have many proofs of the usefulness of design objects? Driving without road signs would be very dangerous. But why are some symbols just the first letters of English words when the meaning of those words is not recognisable in other countries, even those who use the Latin alphabet? Or let's look at how useful smartphones are! But why are they not for all? Why can't I put an iPhone in my pocket when it hardly fits into my hand – also, is this smallest model? Something has gone wrong and there is a possibility that the mistake is deeply ingrained in our way of design evaluation. In this article I investigate the tools for the evaluation of graphic design. First, I look at different proposals for new assessment criteria. Next, I explore the usefulness of visualisation in judging design projects, and then I look at the connection between taste and symbolic violence. Finally, I propose my tool, which could be helpful in such considerations.

Keywords: judgement, evaluation, social impact, responsibility, graphic design, education, visualisation, typography, charts, taste, symbolic violence

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Social impact and artistic expression of the street art stickers of Noemis

The subject of this paper – the stickers of Noemis – have been designed and produced by Simeon Genew, a graphic artist residing in Krakow, Poland, who has been actively engaged in street art since 2018 under the pseudonym Noemis. The content of the stickers addresses a range of contemporary social issues that have significant global impact. The present work serves to delineate the social, political, and personal dimensions of the issues that the stickers aim to address. Moreover, the paper aims to explicate the primary and ancillary objectives of the stickers, which involve cultivating awareness of the social problems being presented to the general public, as well as providing a means of combining artistic expression with a therapeutic function for the artist.

I. Street art stickers and their social impact

The contemporary sticker art that adorns various surfaces in public, restricted, or private areas is predominantly part of the street art or urban art movement, which scholars often categorise as a subset of public art. Street art is frequently a form of artistic protest that addresses a range of political and social issues. In Noemis' stickers, the primary goal of the author is to create a social impact, with aesthetics playing a secondary role. Karolina Izdebska's monograph emphasises that street art creators intentionally disrupt the urban environment, subverting established cognitive patterns and directing attention to significant issues that may have been suppressed in the collective memory. Their work can be viewed as a street game that engages the audience in a dialogue. In some instances, the artist's objective

is to entertain through the use of beauty, humour, and irony. (Izdebska, 2021, p. 53). By violating rules of public areas and being a mostly illegal act of creation, street art poses a problem to philosophical accounts of artistic value. Street art works disregard the confines of the art world and aims to be judged for their social usefulness, which is a worrying trend (Simoniti, 2018).

In the case of Noemis' stickers, the chosen social problems are addressed through a unique form of artistic expression. As an act of protest, street art and sticker art, in particular, serve as a means of disrupting established cognitive patterns and draw attention to important issues that may have been suppressed in the collective memory. This type of art creates a public dialogue and encourages individuals to re-evaluate their stance on the issues presented, even if only momentarily. The anonymity of the artist allows the observer to focus on the message rather than the messenger, emphasising the importance of the social impact of the artwork.

When discussing the social impact of art, it is essential to understand the various ways in which it can address social problems. The term 'social problem' refers to various conditions, situations, and events that are perceived in society as painful and requiring a solution. These issues become the subject of interest of the state and are often addressed through various social policies and programmes. Socially engaged art, on the other hand, offers a unique perspective on these problems, aiming to generate social change through creative expression. By stimulating reflection and awareness, the art can prompt individuals to take action and contribute to solving the social problem at hand. Noemis' stickers serve as an example of this type of socially engaged art, with their primary purpose being to create a social impact through artistic expression[1] (Izdebska, 2021, p. 261).

II. Structure of the stickers' message

Noemis' use of visual narrative and text is a deliberate strategy to communicate their intended message. The use of sarcasm and irony in the text serves to engage the observer by challenging their preconceived notions and prompting them to question their beliefs. The simplified graphic sign acts as a hook, capturing the observer's attention and drawing them in to read the accompanying text. This two-phase interaction allows for a deeper understanding of the message presented. The use of English in the stickers is a strategic choice, as it allows for a wider audience to engage with the stickers and the issues they address. However, the use of Polish in certain cases demonstrates an awareness of local issues and a desire to connect with a specific audience. Additionally, the intentional use of 'lolspeak' highlights

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1   Cit. translated by the author, S.G.

the playful and humorous nature of the stickers, while also conveying a message. Overall, the combination of visual narrative and text in Noemis' stickers allows for a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of various social issues.

The stickers are divided into two content categories:

1. Fully original content (drawing and text)
2. Mixed content (collage), consisting of either:
   a) drawing of another creator and Noemis' text
   b) fragment of text of another creator and Noemis' drawing.

III. Authorship

In the context of Noemis' stickers, the author utilises different strategies to sign or not sign the artwork. The stickers from category 1, which address a particular social issue and contain both text and visual elements, are signed with 'Noemis'. This can be seen as a deliberate decision by the artist to take responsibility for the message and to establish a personal brand identity. In contrast, the stickers of mixed content, which include a combination of pre-existing images or texts and Noemis' own artwork, are not signed and created in a passive voice. This can be seen as part of a postmodern mixing culture or collage street art, where the author's identity is less important than the message conveyed by the artwork.

Furthermore, stickers without text, which do not address a particular social issue and simply present fragments of other artworks made by the author, are signed with 'genew.pl'. These stickers are not part of the socially engaged series and can be seen as a way for the artist to promote their personal website or showcase their artistic style without a specific message. The decision to sign or not sign the stickers can be seen as a deliberate choice by the artist to communicate different levels of intention and identity through their artwork.

IV. Technique

The stickers are first sketched with a pencil or black pen and then the image is scanned and digitally enhanced. The text is written with the Bluberry Typeface font, designed by Squarepack, a free font for personal use. This is a simple, raw, handmade, decorative font often categorised as 'children's book' or 'comics'. It has very high readability when used in caps only. The stickers are printed at a local print shop on UV- and water-resistant adhesive paper in A3 format and cut out manually.

In some of the stickers, the image is a photograph of an acrylic painting by the author or a fragment of it.

V. Topics presented on the stickers

1. Global social problems

a) consumerism:

The messages behind 'buy more stuff' (1), 'buy yourself that' (2), and 'how fulfilled are you in your life' (3) are ironic, pointing out one of the problems of the so-called 'first world' – overconsumption and addiction to shopping. All the drawings related to this topic are made by the author.

b) global surveillance and control
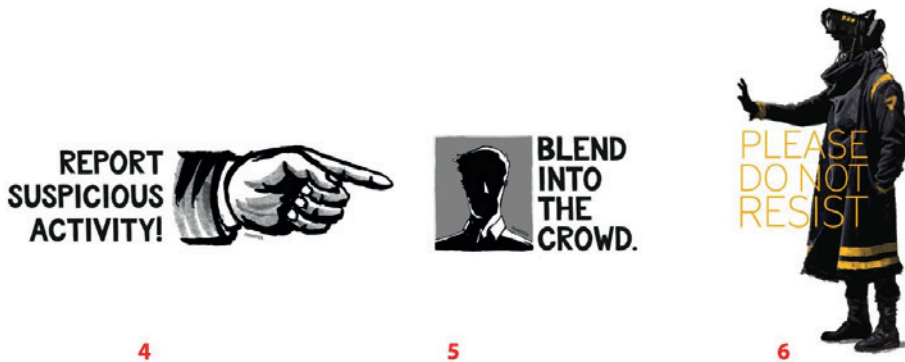
The increasing control of the state and private companies in the form of constant surveillance, facial recognition, and tracking is a violation of privacy. If this is the price that modern society has to pay for security, then the issue is a social problem.

Stickers (4) and (6) are of mixed content. 'Report suspicious activity' is a US slogan from the Cold War era, and 'please do not resist' is a common order used by police forces. All the drawings in this topic are made by the author.

c) social inequality

7   8   9

These stickers address the following social problems: the unfair distribution of wealth (7), the patriarchal society (9), and the constant urge for profit (8). Projects (7) and (8) are part of social inequality topics.

These two stickers are also examples of mixed content creation: The quote 'Silly poor people, money is for rich people' is attributed to Mitt Romney and is a well-known internet meme. The drawings are characters from old US commercials from the 1940s, which are copyright-free today. The author of the drawings is unknown. Using the language of advertisements and transforming them into ironic announcements is common in the Polish street sticker scene. The drawing in sticker (8) is made by the author in the style of the famous comic book artist Mike Mignola.

d) workaholism, overworking, burnout

10   11

These two stickers address overworking and burnout as social problems, along with the false solution of 'the happy pill'. Both stickers use mixed content, combining drawings from old 1950s US editorial commercials with the author's text. 'Fuckitall' (11) is a sarcastic name for an imaginary antidepressant drug. Sticker (10) depicts a polite way for management to ask their employees to 'kindly work their asses off'.

e) existential crisis, impostor syndrome

WE LOSE OURSELVES SO EASILY IN RELATIONSHIPS, CIRCUMSTANCES, FAMILIES, CAREERS, AND ENDLESS GOAL-DIGGING THAT WE FORGET WHO WE ARE ALONG THE WAY.

12

FOCUSING ON SOMEONE ELSE'S ACHIEVEMENTS WILL NOT BRING YOU THE SAME FORTUNE.

13

These are also mixed content stickers, but this time the drawings are made by the author – inspired by a photograph and a scene from a short, animated movie. The text in sticker (12) is a sentence from a life coaching blog. The text in sticker (13) is written by the author, based on various popular inspirational quotes.

REALIZE THAT EVERYONE IS ON THEIR OWN PATH, AND YOU HAVE MADE MANY CHOICES TO BRING YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE.

14

TIRED OF BEING TIRED

CUZ BEING TIRED IS **TIRING**

15

ALWAYS BLAME SOMEONE ELSE

16

Sticker (14) is a combination of mixed content where the picture is a digital sketch for one of the author's acrylic paintings, and the text is a mixture of inspirational quotes. The painting titled 'Corpoblood' with a size of 70 × 70 cm portrays the idea of working one's way up in a typical corporation.
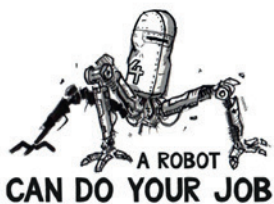

BORED OF BEING BORED

CUZ BEING BORED IS **BORING**

17

CALM DOWN YOU DONT MATTER.

18

YOU ARE MISLEADING ADVERTISMENT OF YOURSELF.

19

Stickers (18) and (19) address the issue of impostor syndrome.

2. Technological singularity

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

Stickers (24), (25), and (26) present the idea of technological singularity in various ways: the new AI self-conscious mind will treat people as a lower life form (22). New robotic machines will be superior to us on all levels, doing everything a human did better, faster, and cheaper – 'I'll do it better' (24). To survive, humans have to accept transhumanism and become one with the machine, discarding the flesh (21), (25), and (26). Stickers (20) and (24) address the problem of unemployment caused by robotic implementation in factory assembly lines.

3. Secularism and anti-religion

27

28

29

The stickers express the author's personal views on religion in general, and in particular, the role of the Catholic Church in Poland. Sticker (27) features the author's

drawing of Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz, the former personal secretary of Pope John Paul II, with the text 'Don Stanislao doesn't remember anything.'[2] Sticker (28) expresses support for the 'All Polish Women's Strike' protest movement.[3] Sticker (29) conveys the author's personal anti-religion views in general.

These stickers express the author's personal views on religion in general and in particular the role of the Catholic Church in Poland. Sticker (27), 'Don Stanislao doesn't remember anything', is the author's drawing of Archbishop Stanisław Dziwisz, the former personal secretary of Pope John Paul II. Sticker (28) supports the 'All Polish Women's Strike' protest movement. Sticker (29) presents the author's personal anti-religion views in general.

4. Kafkaesque

30
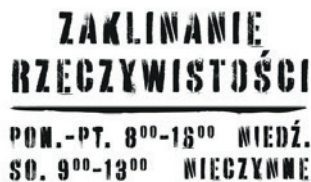
31

32

The Kafkaesque stickers address the bureaucratic absurdity of modern society with an ironic approach. Stickers (30) and (31) describe the 'opening times' of an imaginary institution that offers 'feigned actions' and 'renouncing reality'. Sticker (32) is mixed content, with the drawing taken from a 1950s editorial advertisement and the text created by the author ('The dear committee is taking important decisions').

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2   The text refers to the denial of the archbishop any memory of reported paedophile cases to the Pope in a famous interview for TVN channel on 20.10.2020. 'Don Stanislao' was the nickname the Italian staff called the archbishop when he was living in the Vatican.

3   The **All-Poland Women's Strike** or **Polish Women's Strike** (Polish: *Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet*, **OSK**) is a women's rights social movement in Poland, established in September 2016. It was set up in protest against the rejection by the Parliament of Poland of the 'Save Women' bill, which was considered by the Sejm in parallel to the 'Stop Abortion' project. The movement was responsible for the organization of Black Monday, a protest action, involving various forms of strike, that took place simultaneously in 147 Polish cities, towns, and villages (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Poland_Women%27s_Strike).

5. Philosophical

REALITY IS SUBJECTIVE
33

EXISTENCE IS UNPROVEN
34

THE UNIVERSE IS UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO MAKE SENSE TO YOU.
35

YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE EXPERIENCING ITSELF.
36

WE SIMULATE OURSELVES FOR EACHOTHER.
37

LIFE IS MEANINGLESS, NOTHING YOU DO MATTERS. YOU ARE JUST ONE INDIVIDUAL AMONG SPECIES OF PRIMATE WITH BILLIONS OF RELATIVES LIVING ON A TINY ROCK IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
38

The philosophical stickers represent the author's views on cosmology and the question of our understanding of the nature of our existence, based loosely on some of the latest theories in quantum physics. Some of the stickers are mixed content: the graphic symbols of stickers (33) and (34) are copyright-free icons representing the concept of a universe, combined with the author's text. Sticker (35) is the author's drawing based on a movie character with a quote from Neil deGrasse Tyson. Sticker (37) presents a concept of the scientific explanation of how communication between the eyes and the brain functions, and sticker (38) is mixed content: a scan of the author's acrylic painting combined with a popular meme quote.

VI. The space of implementation

In the realm of street art culture, there exists a distinction between the various types of public spaces where street art is placed. As Karolina Izdebska notes in her monograph, the public status of urban areas can vary, and the audience of a space is determined by its social use. This implies that some private spaces, such as clubs and cafes, may have a greater potential as public spaces than some urban areas that are typically thought of as public by definition. As such, becoming a part of street art culture involves more than simply placing stickers in open street areas; it requires a keen understanding of the social context in which the art is being displayed. 'The boundaries between public and private spaces can be fluid, and the public status of a space is defined by action. *Espai public*, or public space, is

a space of public life that consists of common places, some of which are public spaces, and some of which are private.' (Izdebska, 2021, p. 106).

In the context of street art, the placement of stickers plays a significant role in their effectiveness in conveying a message. While public street areas are commonly used for sticker placement, not all areas are equally suitable for this purpose. As noted by Karolina Izdebska, the audience of a space is determined by its social use, and not all spaces may have the potential to effectively engage the public with street art stickers. Furthermore, not all members of the audience may be receptive to the messages conveyed by street art stickers, which can limit their effectiveness in communicating the intended message.

Moreover, street artists may be selective in their placement of stickers, preferring to choose specific locations or objects that better align with the message they are trying to convey. By doing so, they can create a more cohesive and effective communication strategy that resonates with their target audience. This targeted approach can also help to avoid dilution of the message, as stickers that are placed randomly may be viewed as disconnected from the intended message or the larger context of the artist's work. Thus, careful consideration of placement is an important aspect of creating impactful and meaningful street art stickers.

a) Public areas

b) Private areas

As Karolina Izdebska writes, the accessibility of the space is a matter of careful choice: 'The question remains whether the physical accessibility of the work translates into its comprehension by a wider audience. In the case of public art accessibility, it is also important to overcome certain barriers related to the reception of the artistic message. This touches upon the issue of cultural and artistic competences. Cultural competence refers to a set of features that predispose an individual to learn about culture, as well as the way of using knowledge and developed skills. Artistic competences are a subordinate category to cultural competences, specifically concerning patterns and the ability to interpret works of art, and are creative in nature, giving individuals the ability to create new patterns, interpretations, and more.' (Izdebska, 2021)

In the context of street art and sticker culture, the physical availability of a space is of secondary importance. Instead, the primary criterion for choosing a space to place stickers is its emotional and intellectual availability. For example, restrooms in pubs may be a suitable option for sticker placement, but the majority of the stickers created by Noemi are given to colleagues, students, and friends. This suggests that the choice of space is influenced not only by the potential visibility of the sticker but also by the intended audience and their receptiveness to the message.

VII. Artistic expression and the therapeutical function of the process of creation

My role, as an *artist-reporter*, is to collect significant information about important issues and selectively present them in the form of an artistic metaphor without making judgments, as stated by Izdebska (2021, p. 386). The information I present on social issues is in the form of ironic commentary on reality, without explicitly explaining the cause of the problem or proposing solutions. My objective is to increase public awareness of these issues.

Regarding the colour palette of the stickers, I generally keep it to a minimum, with the exception of those that incorporate my acrylic paintings. The intent is to maintain simplicity and create a strong visual impact using black-and-white symbols with bold, capitalised text. This approach is intended to convey a sense of urgency, as if issuing a warning.

In addition to their primary purpose of creating social impact, the creation process of the stickers also serves as an artistic expression and has therapeutic benefits for the creator. The process of cutting out the final form of a sticker is done manually and can result in slight variations in each individual piece. If the first step in the creation of a sticker is mostly (but not always) an analogue sketch, then the cutting is the final part of the production process and is, again,

an analogue work. This step of the creation process takes hours and is a calm and meditative activity.

The act of placing the stickers in various locations, including semi-public and private spaces, has a liberating effect on the creator. While the messages themselves address global social issues, the decision of which ones to present in sticker form is a personal one. Issues such as burnout and depression are often seen as affecting others, rather than acknowledging their relevance to oneself.

Despite being perceived by some as a 'nerdish' concept, the rapid development of AI technology in 2022 has made it clear that the technological singularity is a very real and near-future phenomenon. Governmental control and surveillance have become commonplace in 'first-world' western societies, akin to the 'boiling frog' analogy.

Women's rights remain a global problem but are often deprioritised with the belief that they will be addressed once more 'urgent issues' have been resolved.

Our contemporary era, as characterised by the Chinese proverb 'May you live in interesting times', is marked by a host of pressing global issues including warfare, poverty, hunger, and environmental disasters. In light of these overwhelming problems, the stickers produced by Noemis draw attention to the insidious issues that gradually undermine the wellbeing of society from within. These issues are often suppressed, with individuals waiting for an opportune moment to address them. However, such procrastination can lead to chronic diseases that become hidden within society. Protests, in response to these issues, can take a variety of forms, including fluid, forceful, snappy, arrogant, provocative, or humorous. The entire process of sticker creation can be viewed as a civic act that consists of conception, production, and execution, and functions as a form of societal revolt that arises when there is a need for repair (Emelife, 2022, p.13).

As an author, I am personally touched by the topics I choose to address in my work. It is through my creative process that I aim to develop an awareness and understanding of these issues, ultimately choosing the appropriate course of action. The stickers produced by Noemis can be classified as protest art, which, similar to other forms of street art, prioritises social impact over artistic expression.

In addition to their aesthetic value and contribution to street art culture, the primary purpose of Noemis' stickers, like other forms of protest or socially engaged art, is to prompt the viewer to reflect on their perspective regarding the issues depicted. The intention is to provoke and question, with the aim of encouraging individuals to reconsider their stance on these issues, even if only briefly.

Creating street art and exhibiting it in public spaces is a particularly honest form of artistic expression, as the artwork is exposed to criticism that can sometimes take the form of destruction. Street art, often executed without permission

from authorities, straddles the boundary between art and vandalism, for which street artists can face legal repercussions. As a trained architect, I have a deep appreciation for the architectural heritage of the city. Living in the old town, I observe acts of vandalism towards historical buildings that I cannot classify as street art. However, this is not solely a matter of new versus old architecture. I always treat every urban environment with respect when implementing a sticker. The implementation stage is the final act of the creative process and requires decisions about how to 'occupy' public space. With this step, the artist's work is complete, and the public begins to consume the result of the artist's creation.

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Participation and cooperation as a key answer to increase global responsibility
The role of local changemakers

Introduction

Pandemics, wars, humanitarian crises, water supply, starvation, demography, social, gender, and regional and national divisions and disparities are only examples from the past three years. The roots of today's challenges are complicated and run deep. In social studies and service design (based on design thinking methodology) they are called *wicked problems*. They are so complex and connected with each other providing we cannot suggest any single solution to each. Lack of global responsibility is one of them. Can it be solved?

Since the *anthropological frame of mind* (Czarniawska, 1992) is close enough to the subject, I have chosen ethnography as the main methodological perspective, with special emphasis put on the participatory action research paradigm. As a researcher, I try to bracket myself in order to explore social reality; but as an activist, I also try to implement change, as I am a part of it.

Action research is a systematic, iterative, and active method useful both in design strategy and implementation of change. This kind of investigation also demands a practical approach associated with management science, more precisely the management of change. Change managers are devoted to search development opportunities through empowerment. The research perspective is based on the belief that humans are supposed to be looked upon as an end in itself (Kant, 1997).

Given in a nutshell, action research consists of the following agenda:
1. Spotting a problem with an experiment
2. Performing a cycle of problem identification, planning, action (change implementation), and evaluation
3. Iteration of prototypes (simulations) to enable informed change-making
4. Challenging the *status quo*
5. Effective re-education resulting in knowledge and an increase in know-how.

Being a researcher in such a paradigm, one is able to manage and perform within these three: research, action, and cooperation (participation). From a hermeneutic point of view, it is a very enriching perspective. Collecting data (pre-existing interpretations), testing (engagement, experiment), eliciting data integration, and deeper understanding are the footing of the hermeneutic circle (Ricoeur, 1976).
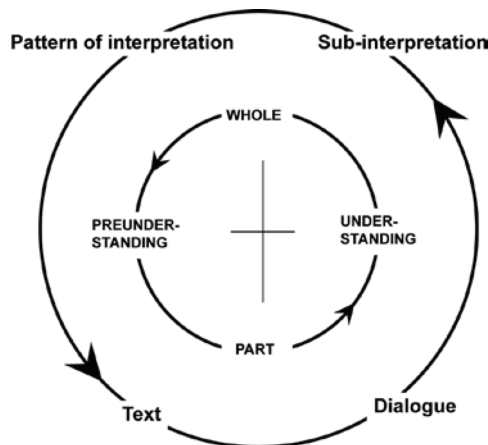
Figure 1. The hermeneutic circle basic version (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 66).

As local knowledge is required in ethnography-based methodology, during my research I met local leaders, mostly women, in order to conduct in-depth interviews for better understanding of *conditio humana*. Rich descriptions, full immersion, storytelling, and contextuality also come to the assistance. Together with methodological triangulation, these elements all led me to discover that there are two key factors that have a great impact on a sense of responsibility:
- Participation
- Cooperation

The aim of this article is to present the connection between these two factors and global responsibility from the perspective of a new model of leadership.

Subject

Monika Kostera says: 'Our times are characterised by a particular kind of volatility without specific change vectors' (Kostera, 2020).

Zygmunt Bauman used to call it *interregnum*: the state of liquid modernity, where everything has become unstable, precarious, and uncertain (Bauman, 2017). The term *interregnum*, then, is not entirely negative. When cultural norms do not work and standards are loose, humans are more open to social experimentation and creating a sense of community – *communitas* according to Victor Turner (Turner, 2010). People at *interregnum* are in front of implementing true and deep change, based on humanity: bottom-up, self-management that ignites systematic work on global transformation. Yet, they need a proper leader to initiate and motivate their engagement.

Monika Kostera suggests initiating such a change even before we do not know what its output could be or what the cause is. *Occupy Management!* (Kostera, 2015) is not only the title of her book; it is also a very specific postulate of deeds, actions, and initiatives directed bottom-up by an organisations' members and facilitated by world leaders.

In the face of a crisis, leaders have at least three options:
1. Pretend that nothing has changed
2. Just let it go
3. Facilitate the change.

If the last option is applied, we might be dealing with a state that is supportive rather than oppressive. Zuzanna Skalska calls it *wise statehood* (Skalska & Kołodziej, 2021). The previous options only jeopardise attempts to initiate change.

In fact, as we live in constantly changing circumstances of VUCA, the world of entropy or even dystopia, we need to rebuild social, economic, and political responsibility to address global crises – and to survive.

There is a reason why our civilisation is on the brink. As Douglas Rushkoff states in his book *Team Human* (Rushkoff, 2019), a long-standing issue of an antihuman agenda is the underlying cause of the current human collective incoherence and disempowerment.

'By unearthing this agenda, we render ourselves capable of (…) reconnecting to one another, and remaking society toward human ends rather than the end of humans' (Rushkoff, 2019, p. 3).

These solutions must be *designed* with as many *stakeholders* as possible, *cooperating* as much as possible. Quoting Rushkoff again, 'being human is a team sport' (Rushkoff, 2019).

Such an attitude is compatible with service-dominant logic (SDL), which is a frame of human economic activity based on five axioms:

1. A service is the basis of trade
2. Value is co-created by stakeholders, including beneficiaries
3. All social and economic stakeholders are resource integrators
4. Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary
5. Value co-creation is coordinated by stakeholder-led institutions.

This kind of logic requires very careful management, which relies on drawing and (re)using existing resources instead of making them from scratch (Flemming, 2017). Management that is more working on abilities than anything else. Today, these abilities should be recognised, rewarded, and put at the service of growth and development. Having this in mind, in the VUCA world, GDP is the curse (Klaus Schwabb calls it *Kuznets' curse* (Schwabb, 2022)).

Leadership

This kind of change demands a new model of leadership. What has come out of my research so far is that a progressive leader should apply and *share* lots of responsibility. This *sharing* of responsibility would be the greatest challenge in Poland, where we are taught to play a *one man show* with constant competition and grading at school, beginning in kindergarten.

Following the book *If Mayors Ruled The World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (Barber, 2013), the management praxis could learn a lot from progressive city leaders. Cities (and towns) could be places where communities and co-ops are built, or where the idea of civil society comes true. Under one condition: their leaders should be knowledgeable and brave enough to share leadership with others.

In his famous book, Barber says that cities are the most promising chance for democracy. They should be sought as social change labs (Barber, 2013) and model future organisations. Apparently, Barber did not have to deal with Polish mayors (88% are men – we will not decide here whether this is a coincidence or not) who tend to compete with the most talented and the most active citizens instead of benefitting from them.[1]

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1   This comes from my own experience, as I have been a 'change agent' in my hometown, Starachowice, where I also conduct my local research studies. I did not start my agency as an opposition, on the contrary, I offered my know-how to the local government, but the proposal was rejected, and I soon became 'a public enemy' for the town mayor. That is how autoethnography and participatory action research comes to the aid of social change.

That is our Polish specificity of management: the average Polish leader is afraid of admitting that he or she does not know everything. Participation encounters one big obstacle from the start.

Primum non nocere might be the new leadership call. Asking for advice is not something to be ashamed of; it is an extraordinary talent and the foremost sign of leaders in change. Our civilisation has developed on such a basis: no single individual can learn everything. We share know-how with our fellow humans and that is one of things that binds us together. We need each other. Alone, I do not survive. A good, self-esteemed leader see this and takes advantage of it.

The new leaders should learn how to lead *without* actually leading: how to guide people and facilitate organisational processes as *a backseat driver*, i.e., a person who gives clues that one can accept or reject. He or she might be more experienced, but it is me who holds the wheel now. That is our shared responsibility because we are both in one vehicle.

Participation

The new world will belong to stakeholders (not just shareholders) and new leaders should follow. Each stakeholder and each single employee should be responsible for the actions he or she undertakes.

A direct democracy has been a trend for a while. At the 21st Conference of the World Summit on Participatory Democracy in Grenoble (December 7–10, 2022), the theme was 'Taking Action! Towards a democratic renewal in the face of the ecological, health and social crisis'. Participants made a general statement that change will only be achieved with the participation of all. But apart from this general statement, they determined the guidelines called the Grenoble Declaration: nine commitments from local elected officials and seven appeals for increased participatory democracy (OIDP, 2022).

The first commitment is as following:

1. We commit to examining ourselves, for all of our public policies, to understand if we have done our utmost to involve citizens and make them participate;

As the proverb says, 'it takes a village to educate a child'. We believe that it takes a whole society to make democracy work. A democracy that excludes even only one of its citizens is already incomplete. In urban planning, culture, the creation of laws, ecology, health, equal rights for women and men, when citizens are given the power, they often go further and faster than politicians who are afraid to interfere. (OIDP, 2022)

When people take part in decision-making processes, 'they align in ways that open up novel avenues for sharing values and rationality criteria and, therefore, for exercising responsible agency' (Bonicalzi & Gallotti, 2018).

Responsibility is a civil right. In a questionnaire survey[2] conducted in June 2022 for my research usage, 58% respondents pledged they *would like to participate more if they could see their actions bring any change*. A sense of agency is a crucial component of empowerment and any engagement at all – and that should be a key factor for leaders' decisions.

In Pierre Bourdieu's perspective of performance studies (Bourdieu, 1990), we understand social agency as constructing the subject within a specific field of power. *Em*powerment, so to speak. Blanchard suggests replacing the hierarchy with self-directed individuals and effective teams (Blanchard, 2019). I am keen on that suggestion because there is also a link with freedom, both in decision-making *and* in acting with a sense of responsibility.

Responsibility

Responsibility comes together with participation. It seems to be a common-sense idea, but it is well established and repeatedly observed social phenomena, including my own research. As Ewa Bogacz-Wojtanowska points out, *a community of practice* has both practical and emotional benefits, and a sense of responsibility, strongly connected with a sense of agency, is one of them (Bogacz-Wojtanowska, 2015).

Responsibility means that we *respond* (same in Polish *odpowiedzialność – odpowiedź*). Being *responsive* does not mean being *reactive* – just like our immune system which responds to viruses or bacteria after vaccination. Being responsive means being *adaptive* to changing circumstances, being agile. Creating a responsive immune system is one of the newest trends of management at all levels and stakes: resilience.

Resilient leadership should provide all the services the community needs and sharply address these needs, with relatively low resource usage – which means employing stakeholders in participation and cooperation processes to mobilise resources in order to create a welfare society.

Yet the role of the leaders cannot be underrated. They have to be equipped with *moral responsibility* for the Other in Levinas' sense (Levinas, 1991). The moral impulse is pre-social according to Levinas; it comes before all relationships

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2   *Badanie aktywności obywatelskiej mieszkańców Starachowic* – an online questionnaire consisted of 15 questions among small town (Starachowice) inhabitants. 241 people participated.

and actions. Actually, it does not work in groups at all. Some might even think (including Bauman) that this is utopia: this burden might be too heavy for common people to carry. Although a strong leader is able to lift the unconditional responsibility, but also:

- Codifies duties for others to learn
- Sets the scope of indifferences and morally neutral deeds.

These are the frames for the new revised social order preceded by a new social contract based on cooperation.

Cooperation

Thankfully, humankind has evolved to cooperate. Relations are our superpower. We do not have sharp paws or teeth, but we are armed with quite a working brain and the ability to build connections: both within the knowledge network and with others (not only our kind).

Although an antihuman ethos has overtaken people's society, undermining our ability to connect, it is all driven by the human need for higher levels of social organisations (Rushkoff, 2019). Having this potential, people are able to regain the capability of collective power, however 'cheesy' this may sound.

At the global level, international cooperation and multilateralism are essential to address challenges of our global community. Governments, international organisations, and civil society must work together to develop and implement solutions that are fair and effective. Interactive, civil governance is, indeed, a vital trend.

According to Adler and Heckscher (2006) there are three features of cooperating community:

Figure 2. Three features of cooperating community (Średnicka, 2019, based on: Adler & Heckscher, 2006, pp. 11–77).

This is what distinguishes social groupings, both traditional ones based on mutuality and emotional bonds, and modern ones referring to instrumental relationships (*Gemeinshaft* and *Gesselschaft*, Tönnies, 1988), from progressive cooperating ones. The last type requires a special kind of member who do not have to be leaders, but definitely set the whole organisation in motion: the changemakers.

Changemakers

Changemakers, especially local changemakers, are meant to be *social change designers*. They can act as catalysts for broader change by inspiring others and building momentum for collective action. They can also help ensure that global solutions are grounded in the needs and perspectives of local communities. By working together, global and local actors can build a more responsible and sustainable future for all.

As Anna Domaradzka says (Domaradzka, 2021), these actors challenge the *status quo* and introduce change to the existing scope. According to Finnemore and Sikking (Finnemore & Sikking, 1998) they are called *norm entrepreneurs* – a particular kind of contestant. It is clear from the reading of their concept that we refer to changemakers here. The subject has not been explored enough yet, hence my interest in the topic and area of research.

At the local level, changemakers play a crucial role in promoting participation and cooperation. These individuals and groups work within their communities to raise awareness, build networks, and advocate for change. They can be activists, social entrepreneurs, educators, or simply concerned citizens who take action to make a difference.

A changemaker is not always easy to spot. Due to the process of social omission, based on the famous concept of *adiaphorization* developed by Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman, 2017), a changemaker tends to be transparent unless they *contribute* (that is, discover something, rescue somebody, give their life to protect a tribe).

The most challenging part in my research is to distinguish between 'normal' local leaders and local changemakers. Nevertheless, it is crucial for the development of good practices and future benchmarking. Methods of ethnography, case studies, life stories, and different observations based on action in action research methodology come in handy.

As the authors of *Change Leadership: Oxymoron and Myths* suggest, change has pace (Todnem, Hughes & Ford, 2016). So do changemakers. They might require very particular conditions to make an impact: enough space, enough pace. Then they thrive, which simply means the whole society can benefit from them.

Summary

To sum up, a crisis is useful for us because we can be faced with our *status quo* to challenge it: rethink, respond, remake. If a crisis is permanent, the whole public (and private) strategy, public policy, management and politics, global and local, needs a complete makeover.

Considering all of this, academics, policymakers, politicians, leaders, and local changemakers should turn towards participation and cooperation in search of common sense and, in particular, the synergy of the crowd to increase our responsibility. Especially we, the academics, are responsible for providing intellectual outcomes to the realm of VUCA. I am positive that the knowledge we provide will not only be expertise and reliable but also applicable. Comprehensive know-how and clear guidelines produce results that support better decisions in change-making and minimise risk in 'risky' times.

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Abstract

Currently we, the world's inhabitants, are facing many challenges. The roots of these events are complicated and run deep. As we live in constantly changing circumstances of VUCA,[3] a world of entropy or even dystopia, we need to rebuild social, economic, and political responsibility to address global crises.

Humankind has evolved to cooperate. Considering this, academics, policymakers, leaders, and local changemakers should turn towards participation and cooperation in search of common sense and, in particular, the synergy of the crowd to increase our responsibility. Multi-level governance and direct democracy seem to be the new order in management. As do networking, innovation co-creation, and welfare society. These tendencies and trends will be presented in the paper.

The particular role of changemakers as (not exclusively) leaders will be shortly discussed, in particular what traits and strategies they should adopt to be able to implement and manage

3   VUCA is an acronym based on leadership theories that means: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity. These terms reflect the general conditions of our world. VUCA is also a practical code for readiness and anticipation of crisis.

change in the world. How should they encourage people to participate in decision-making processes? Should they think big or work at a grass-roots level to increase local responsibility? This paper will briefly cover what action we should undertake to secure our future and how extensive changemakers' facilitation of the process needs to be.

Based on research, scientific forecasts, and self-collected data alike, the paper has been maintained in the action research paradigm, as I believe nobody can ethically study change without implementing it.

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Permitted/prohibited – moral choices in digital games

The concept of 'moral choices' frequently arises in discussions about digital gaming in various contexts. It is commonly used by researchers who study ethics in gaming and game development, such as Miguel Sicart (2009) and José P. Zagal (2009), as well as by gamers. According to Ian Bogost's procedural rhetoric (2007), moral choices in games can refer to decisions that impact the game's storyline, elements that contribute to the player's character development, and mechanics that encourage players to take actions with symbolic or ideological implications. Choices, including moral ones, are fundamental to many games with complex storylines, such as decisions to kill or spare an enemy, loot a corpse, or initiate or cease hostilities.

This definition is quite broad and not particularly practical, as Sicart notes. It is essential to differentiate between ethical gameplay and seemingly meaningful choices that have no real impact on the gaming experience (Sicart 2009, pp. 208–210). Nevertheless, including difficult moral choices in games is a popular solution among players, as evidenced by their prevalence in major productions and indie titles. While some game genres necessitate certain gameplay mechanics, such as killing non-playable characters in first-person shooters, many games explore ethical and moral issues and challenge players to deviate from intuitive solutions. For instance, in *Bioshock 2*, players must decide whether to attack or ally with the Little Sisters, young girls who have undergone body and psyche modifications, to gain resources or identify additional enemies. Both options have rewards and consequences, offering players two equally beneficial yet morally distinct choices. While this is an extreme example, many games

introduce similar moral dilemmas, forcing players to make decisions that carry specific outcomes.

This text aims to look at a selection of games that contain complex moral choices and see what options they offer the player. The critical point for me will be that many games provoke players to experiment and test the consequences of a given decision, push aside internalised rules of conduct, and apply what can be called a 'moral prosthesis'. What is meant here is a situation in which the game proposes rules valid within its world, which allows one to remain within the bounds of ethical norms. For example: in many games of the cRPG genre, theft is considered an immanent element of the world and committing it does not immediately mean that the protagonist is considered a criminal or punished. He may experience negative consequences when caught in the act (as in games of the *Gothic* or *Elder Scrolls* series). However, the act of stealing itself does not become the basis for viewing the protagonist as evil or immoral. Such examples could be multiplied – games take different approaches to the treatment of dead bodies (for example, in *Call of Juarez,* you cannot shoot them, while in many other titles, there is no such restriction) or the killing of various creatures (in *Skyrim* killing a chicken causes a reaction from the guards, in *The Witcher 3* you can slaughter fowl without any consequences). Essentially, games induce the player to accept the rules of conduct in force within their storyworld – or to act against them, but at the risk of punishment.

The use of the aforementioned 'moral prostheses' and the player's relationship with the game, which forces him or her to confront ethical issues, can, I believe, be well analysed using categories drawn from the philosophy of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This perspective seems all the more interesting to me, as psychoanalysis has so far been used mainly in the context of examining the category of desire (Rehak, 2003) and the limited agency of the player as a weak subject (Matthews, 2011). Lacan, meanwhile, devotes a great deal of space in his reflections to man's relationship with the law (or rather, with the Law – the hypothetical instance that orders human life), which is also transferable to the relationship between the player and the game. In order to carry out such an analysis, however, it is first necessary to point out several categories that require a broader discussion; the main ones are alienation, separation, the Law, as mentioned earlier, and the Name of the Father, *nom du père*.

According to Lacan's philosophy, the subject's life is marked by a sense of unquenchable lack, the source of which the French psychoanalyst sees in the processes of alienation and separation accompanying the formation of subjectivity. At the very beginning of life, the child identifies with their mother – understood not necessarily literally, but as a figure of the closest person – who is perceived by them as the Other: all-powerful and almost impersonal, not subject to earthly

laws and remaining above the rules. The child's own separateness begins to be seen through alienation, which occurs when they realise that their mother cannot give them all her attention and spend all her time with them. Thus, they begin to see no longer a safe, delightful unity but two persons – themselves and the Other-mother (mOther), who is judging, observing, and refusing. At some point, however, the subject notices a certain inconsistency. Thanks to the words directed to them, they realise that the mother cannot devote time to them because she must fulfil her other desires and needs: get money, satisfy her hunger, and experience entertainment. If, on the other hand, she has such desires and needs at all, she cannot be recognised as an all-powerful and weakness-free Other. So instead of remaining in fearful suspense, the subject begins to search and ask: *che vuoi?*, 'what do you want?', deluding themselves that if the mother's desire is satisfied, she can entirely focus on the bond with her child. However, this, of course, is a pipe dream – the mother's desire represents a challenge that cannot be met (Lacan, 1991, p. 112). Lacan refers to the process of seeking and the ensuing disillusionment, from which the loss of the belief in the omnipotence of the supposed Other-mother comes as separation. The paternal figure is its inalienable element – who 'is more of a prohibition for the child than a flesh-and-blood figure' (Polak, 2016, p. 148). The father thus becomes the exponent and symbol of prohibition and the law itself.

The full meaning of the term 'Father's Name' (*nom du père*) is based on the sound similarity of the French words *nom* ('name') and *non* ('no'). Thus, it is not only about the name but also about the paternal prohibition (Magnone, 2011, p. 56): according to the interpretation of the French psychoanalyst, the metaphorical Father shows the child that the sphere of the mother's desire is beyond his reach. It is worth noting here that Lacan is inclined to attribute the function to any third element separating the subject from the mother, the original source of satisfaction. The collision with it marks the forming subject the first contact with both language and the Law – it involves a verbally expressed prohibition, but also the naming of the child and the designation of its place in the lineage, and thus indirectly in the world.

The process of alienation and separation thus has significant consequences for the subject. The first, resulting from alienation, is the breaking of the original unity with the Mother figure and the exit from the Real to the Imaginary order. At this stage, the parent is seen as ideal and flawless, the symbolic Other, setting the rules to be followed. In the course of separation, on the other hand, the subject perceives that the Other, however, is not the ideal and begins to strengthen his own identity, but at the expense of the belief in the infallibility of the instance that constitutes the Law. How does this relate to games, and what kind of relationship can a player enter into with them?

Lacanian Father's Name can manifest itself in games in many ways. The most easily discernible of these, of course, is the set of rules governing the game – this is primarily about rules understood as what 'makes the game a game' (Juul, 2005, p. 13), that is those constraints that determine what the player can and cannot do, and what will result from his specific actions. Interestingly, the player's relationship to the game's rules can also be described in a psychoanalytic key, as Katarzyna Prajzner argues, after Jesper Juul. The user is aware of the rules, which are usually associated with something negative and limiting. They can also lead to the development of strategies to circumvent them (Prajzner, 2011, p. 181). Looking at this relationship, one can see a relationship similar to the one between the subject and the Other: although the Other (the game) imposes rules on the subject (the player) that are part of the Law (the rules of the game), the subject, after the process of separation, derives more pleasure from finding defects and imperfections in these rules and trying to get around them – like a player, for whom the source of satisfaction is overcoming the challenge posed by the strict rules of the game (Juul, 2005, p. 56).

An interesting example of a game that provokes players to enter into a subject-other relationship with it is *the Sims* series, whose primary goal is to create their own characters, the Sims, and play out their daily lives. The series uses the so-called ergodic narrative (Aarseth, 2014, p. 12), i.e., created virtually entirely by the player, who arranges his own stories from the elements offered by the game. The assumptions and rules are explicit: the player's task is to guide the Sims through life in such a way that they achieve maximum satisfaction, live happy years, achieve personal goals and, above all, fulfil their current needs (both physiological and higher ones, related, for example, to the search for intimacy and companionship). Many players, however, choose to consciously ignore these rules and pursue their own goals, sometimes opposite to those set by the game, or to supplement what they perceive to be shortcomings of the original gameplay, for example, by using codes or fan-made modifications; this is due to their perception of the non-ideality and incompleteness of the game-Other. Going against the rules of the game sometimes takes on a drastic dimension: players share dozens of ways to – sometimes with great finesse – murder Sims, as well as to break other rules or even violate taboos, such as in the case of methods that allow a Sim-infant to be roasted on a grill. The law that the game-other shows as binding, the detached, conscious player-subject can therefore undermine and transgress, or at least attempt to do so, recognising the subject, marking it as intrinsically flawed and negating its position of authority. This is an act that Alan F. Meades calls counterplay: exploiting shortcomings or bending the rules to gain an advantage over the game (Meades, 2015). Some game scholars sometimes analyse phenomena of this kind as practices that liberate and allow people to resist those norms that the game points to as objectionable ideo-

logical schemes for the player (Taylor, 2007, pp. 112–130). It is hard to see ways to kill Sims in the most interesting ways, but already game modding practices seem susceptible to such readings (Wysocki, 2015, pp. 195–199). As a curiosity, it is worth mentioning that mods created by fan communities are often erotic – they introduce themes of nudity or sex into games, which in the original production version were censored, little developed, or omitted altogether – which also steers towards a psychoanalytic interpretation. This is because it draws attention to the tension created in the player-subject by the game-Other: on the one hand, many titles do not shy away from signalling erotic themes or the sexualisation of characters, but on the other hand, these elements are often pretextual, introduced more based on curiosity, and the player has access only to those of them, which often carry a rather conservative message (Majkowski, 2019, p. 110).

Back to the Name of the Father: another place where its action can be indicated in games are the parts of gameplay based on following the directions of a non-player character – a guide, helper, or master. Of course, such a procedure is a conventional element of many games, often serving, for example, as a plot framework for tutorials. In some titles, this relationship between the guide and the player character who follows him is problematised. It becomes an integral part of the gameplay experience, also related to making difficult ethical decisions. This includes situations in which the aforementioned 'moral prostheses' appear, i.e., when rules other than the generally accepted moral rules in the real world apply in the game world. However, it also happens that the player is confronted with a situation in which he perceives the actions imposed on him as controversial or when he realises that there are intentions other than those declared behind the guide's instructions. Blindly following directions – which seems to be the default and legitimate mode of action for the player – can result in the fact that, although the immediate goal of the gameplay is achieved (for example, advancing to the next stage or earning an achievement), the player feels frustration or dissatisfaction with the ethical consequences in the game world. In the opening passage of his book on the ethics of digital games, Miguel Sicart writes about these feelings as follows:

> I am not quite sure how it happened, but I felt guilty. No, no, I *was* guilty.
>
> It started like so many other times: my weapons of choice, banal words, and action-good action. I was formidable, unstoppable, the master of my surroundings, a lethal instrument with one goal, vaguely heard while I was enjoying my newly acquired arsenal. And then it all stopped.
>
> […]
>
> What if I am wrong? What if they lied to me? What if the goal is a lie? (Sicart, 2009, p. 1)

In some productions, this problem is pointed out directly and even placed at the centre of the gameplay. This is the case, for example, in the first part of the *Bioshock* series, in which the protagonist, Jack Ryan, finds himself after a plane crash in the underwater city of Rapture, already at the beginning of the game, gains an ally – Atlas, who contacts him via walkie-talkie. The two men have a conversation from which it is clear that their goals are aligned, and Atlas will help Jack elude their common enemy and escape the city. In the course of the gameplay, however, it turns out that the information provided to the player's character – and therefore to the player himself – is utterly inconsistent with the truth: Jack Ryan is in Rapture not by accident, and his mind has been modified so that he obeys commands that begin with the words 'Would you kindly…', which Atlas obliquely exploited. Such a plot device can be read on many levels: as a simple criticism of the mindless execution of orders and submission to authority, as a meta-commentary on the player's seemingly high, while in reality severely limited, causality, and thus also as a reflection of the player-subject relationship with the game-another. In such a view, the unreflective following of the guide's directions is due to the subordination of the player, who – knowing the convention of reward for following instructions – recognises this path as the right one. Only when confronted with the non-ideal, previously concealed motivations of the Other, as in the process of separation, is there an understanding that however performing these actions was necessary to push the game further, their rightness in ethical terms can be questioned.

The take on this issue in the game *Portal* is even more explicit, which also uses a guiding theme. In this case, the plot frame for the logic-platform game is the participation of the playable protagonist, Chell, in a series of tests of new technology, through which she is to be guided by GLaDOS, an artificial intelligence, commenting on the protagonist's actions and issuing subsequent orders: at first specific and neutral, and gradually more and more firm, irritated, outright malicious and even contradictory. The tasks also become increasingly strange. One of the game's highlights is the test room, where Chell is given a *companion cube* identical to those previously used in other rooms for climbing, for example, but decorated with a heart. GLaDOS presents it as an indispensable aid, a companion, and something to be taken care of – although, simultaneously, it reminds us that it is an inanimate object. After completing a series of tasks for which the *companion cube* is necessary, the protagonist is told that she must 'euthanise' the cube. The AI evidently plays on the protagonist's emotions. When the *companion cube* is thrown into the oven, the comment reads, 'You euthanised your faithful Companion Cube more quickly than any other test subject on record. Congratulations.' *Portal* uses this type of treatment frequently, suggesting, for example, the ambiguous ontic status of machines and manipulating the feelings of the playable character and the

player. For example: although GLaDOS consistently orders the heroine to destroy enemy turrets, the dialogue lines of the latter sound mostly friendly, are spoken in a high, almost childlike voice and are strongly emotionally saturated: 'Ow!', 'It burns', 'Please stop', 'Can't breathe…', 'I don't blame you', 'Oh, my', etc. The sincerity of GLaDOS's intentions is also undermined by notes hidden in the test rooms about its lies (hence, among other things, the oft-quoted phrase 'The cake is a lie' referring to the cake that the artificial intelligence promises as a reward for completing the tests).

As in *Bioshock*, *Portal's* linearly guided narrative forces the player to follow GLaDOS's commands until Chell realises that the end of her efforts is the same 'euthanasia' that befell the *companion cube*. She then begins her escape through the deserted building, which ends with a final confrontation with the corrupted artificial intelligence. Of course, all these actions are also planned by the game's developers and linearly lead to the finale, so there is no question of real player agency and the possibility of actual rebellion. There is no doubt, however, that the player's relationship with the game can again be framed as that of a separating subject with anOther who proves to be untrustworthy, insincere and forcing the player to abide by rules that are restrictive and harmful to the subject. Interestingly, players thirsty for true causality found the moment of subjecting the *companion cub*e to 'euthanasia' to be crucial – it turns out that it is possible to cheat the game and find a way to pass a stage without throwing the heart-decorated cube into the oven.

While linear games such as those discussed above may raise critical ethical issues, they seem to relegate the player's decisiveness and their sense of morality to the background, since the only way to complete the game is to follow the rules, which allows even decisions that are cruel or immoral from the player's point of view to be justified. However, in light of the above analyses, there are also interesting games that give the player much more freedom and that put moral choices at the centre of attention. For example, we can point to the independent production *Papers, Please*, created in 2013, in which the player directs the actions of a border official deciding on the right of entry to an authoritarian state. Each day the protagonist gets a list of current rules and permits, and later also warnings against subversive or terrorist organisations. On a mechanical level, the gameplay is relatively easy throughout: you have to review the documentation of each person wishing to cross the border, check whether they meet the requirements, and issue a positive or negative decision. The seemingly black-and-white choices get complicated, however, when the protagonist's window is reached, for example, by the spouse of a legal immigrant wishing to join his wife but lacking a set of documents, a girl asking for an adverse decision so as not to be forced

into prostitution, or a man going for surgery whose visa expired the previous day. The player can choose to go against the rules, but this makes the gameplay more difficult – any poorly spent decision can result in financial penalties, which can leave the protagonist unable to afford to buy medicine for his child, for example. The fundamental narrative tension is thus in *Papers, Please*, as Piotr Sterczewski writes, 'a dialectic of obedience and resistance (and – on a different level – of egoism and altruism)' (Sterczewski, 2014, p. 108), a choice between the protagonist's happiness and his – and the player's – sense of moral comfort.

Like many games that do not put ethical choices firmly in the spotlight, *Papers, Please* also offers the player a 'moral prosthesis': following top-down imposed rules. There is no specific person behind the formulation of these rules with whom they can be discussed or opposed; they are written down and non-negotiable. By making moral choices the game's central theme, productions such as *Papers, Please* do not allow the player, thanks to this 'moral prosthesis,' to achieve peace of mind – on the contrary, they inspire guilt. The nonlinearity of the gameplay and the relatively high level of the player's dexterity do not allow justification of the game's actions with the need to push the gameplay forward – after all, the ending can be reached in many ways. It is possible, then, to read this kind of game in relation to the question which, according to Lacan and Žižek (2012), is one of the central dilemmas of philosophy: 'If there is no God, then everything is…', that is, what happens to the human subject when he or she loses the sense that there is some higher, objective, and unchanging instance standing over him or her. The options for ending this sentence are two. 'Permitted' implies that the subject's internal beliefs serve as binding laws and sufficiently order his actions. 'Prohibited', on the other hand, indicates that such a subject is weakened and lost because he finds no external reference point. The reactions and impressions of users of games such as *Papers, Please* seem to point toward the latter response. The rules imposed are easy to circumvent and impossible to internalise, so theoretically, the player can choose whatever solutions he wants; however, he is ultimately left with a sense of discomfort because ethically questionable decisions are difficult to justify, creating a sense of confusion and guilt.

The games discussed above are not the only examples of productions that put the player in an uncomfortable situation and force him to think about ethical issues. In addition to titles of an entertainment nature, such treatments are used by games belonging to the genre of so-called *serious games*, i.e., those intended to serve educational or persuasive purposes. There is no doubt that such themes appear – and will continue to appear – in many productions because games, thanks to the aspect of interactivity and giving the player agency (even if it is sometimes only apparent), make it possible to problematise moral choices and force the player

to confront them more efficiently than traditional media. By teaching the player specific behaviours, rewarding them for some actions and punishing them for others, and forcing them to cooperate, games can become a voice in the discussion of submission to authority, the relationship of obedience and resistance, or mindless following of rules (Sterczewski, 2014, p. 108). Analysing these contents using concepts from Lacan's philosophy, on the other hand, makes it possible to look at them from a broader perspective: as commentaries on the subject's relationship with the Other and on man's position in a world that forces him constantly to decide on sometimes challenging issues.

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CHAPTER 5

Creation and image – the role of time and its impact on nature in aspect of the concept of the feminine archetype[1]

Among my artistic and social interests, a key role is played by man and his life. Impermanence, the aging process, the existential condition, and in all this, the role of time and reflection on its meaning. The cyclicality and repeatability of events in an individual's life. The social processes around us – economic, technological, or cultural progress – incline me towards creative reflection. I am intrigued by extreme events, such as birth or death, as well as ambiguous states between the past and the future. I hold dear the vision of time as a spiral, in which the history of the world consists of repeating cycles, which tribal or ancient cultures revered and professed.

The passage of time is linked to its reflection in an unchanging eternity, in which ideas are

permanent and not subject to its effects. According to Zygmunt Bauman, however, who in his book *Liquid Modernity* describes contemporary culture as a liquid modernity in which the notions of permanent ideas undergo constant deconstructions, and their meanings are subjected to constant criticism and interpretation. Culture and art are determined by the individual's sense of uncertainty towards the contingency of beings, an unending utopian adventure. This utopia only helps to chase away questions about the meaning of life. It consists of episodes and fragments that drive the perpetual motion machine, giving no time for reflection. Bauman argues that 'progress' is no longer just the drive to elevate one's status,

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1   More about the feminine archetype – see Paglia 2006, pp. 1–36, Bennewicz 2015, pp. 63–64.

but the prevention of failure and the effort against the exclusion of the individual from society (Bauman, 2011, pp. 35–46). Today's progress is an imperative that determines personal survival. I refer to both of these concepts in my painting.

The *Selfie* series was an attempt at retrospective illusion, referring directly to my loved ones and their relationships in the context of art and its symbolism. It showed the external death of the body and the juxtaposition of it with psychological-internal growth and development. And hence the questions that trouble me: is the juxtaposition of two women from different eras justified artistically? Will the juxtaposition of the same figure but at different ages be understandable? Can the memory of a particular character portrayal be considered the present?

Figures 1, 2, 3. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Samotrzeć I, II, III*. 2008–2009, acrylic and oil, own technique on canvas, 75 × 90 cm, 85 × 100 cm, 75 × 90 cm

The painting installation '*I am only an inspiration*' also touched on similar themes, in which the observation of time (the present becomes the past and the future becomes the present) constituted a synthesis of the image of its passage and instability. This painting installation is a play on words, form, and image. The small forms of the paintings are like stills from life, capturing the moment and character of a particular child: the artist's daughter. The child, however, is an excuse to show several directions of reflection: 'here and now' (moment, stopping), 'I am' (being, existence, subject), 'inspiration' (reflection, dream, aspiration), and 'time' (image on the grid, synthesis of the image of time's passage and instability, a fading moment of inspiration). The installation is reminiscent of a children's game: a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of which have to be moved to form a certain pattern. In the installation, any order is good: 'I am the inspiration here', 'Here I am the inspiration', 'The inspiration here is me'. Only the image *Time* cannot be arranged – it gets in the way a bit. One would like to get rid of it. This is a metaphor for the attempt to stop time, which is often unsuccessful, and memory is already another story.

Figure 4. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *I am only an inspiration.* 2011, acrylic and oil, own technique on canvas, 77 × 90 cm

The Sérénité Serenity series touches on the problem of loss and death of a loved one and is an attempt to reflect on the meaning of an individual's existence and confront the fear of death. The title is a conscious reference to a short story by Jaroslaw Iwaszkiewicz (Iwaszkiewicz, 2009), in which the writer addresses the eternal theme of the meaning of life and the inevitability of death. Although one can find in it admiration for the shape of the world and existence, the short story is lined with a pessimistic vision derived from existential philosophy. In contrast, through my works, I wanted to give hope that 'serenity', that is, a state of tranquillity, is possible, as well as the belief that love can overcome death.


Figures 5, 6, 7. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Touch II, III, IV.* 2014–2015, oil on canvas, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm

The *Artifacts* series, on the other hand, was concerned with the deconstruction of objects and clothes, which serve a metaphor for memory. Physical artifacts are all cultural creations in the form of objects, such as shirts, T-shirts, undershirts, nightgowns, as well as signs seen on walls – traces of someone's presence in the form of tags on walls or clothing used for work in a particular place. They still exist, even though their owners have gone, forgotten them, or left them behind. They remain, however, nameless, without history, defenceless. They are simply stored in boxes, made available and sold to others in second-hand stores, appearing on walls in public spaces, until they deteriorate. They will not get repurposed into something else or discarded or repainted. Artifacts become our culture, which we pass by indifferently. We become accustomed to the aesthetics of destruction that affect them. The *Artifacts* series is a personal attempt to find answers to the questions of whether physical artifacts have a soul and whether it bears the stamp of the owner's history. Or maybe objects devoid of the context of identity become a separate entity, an aesthetic image pleasing to the eye?


Figures 8, 9, 10. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Artifacts, Artifact II, Siren.* 2016, acrylic, oil on canvas, 95 × 95 cm, 120 × 120c, 125 × 125 cm
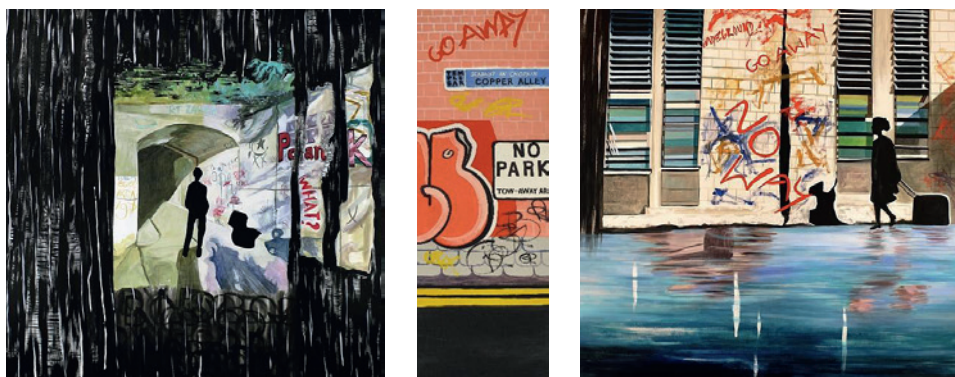
Figures 11, 12, 13. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Street I, Anybody, Nobody.* 2016, acrylic, oil on canvas, 120 × 40 cm, 125 × 125c, 125 × 125 cm

The *Retrospectives* series from 2016–2017 and *Closeness* from 2018–2021 deal with the widely understood stereotype and archetype of women, which is firmly embedded in contemporary culture and customs. They are an attempt to find answers to the questions of whether it is at all possible to fight against such deeply ingrained patterns. Can they be permanently changed in any way? Both series were exhibited at Elektra Gallery in Warsaw in 2023 under the common title *Lot's Wife* referring to the poem by Rhet Kelly (Murdock, 2020, pp. 21–22).

The first group of works depicts the woman as a demonic being, often juxtaposing her body with those of animals, for centuries associated with unclean powers. This also emphasises the close connection between the heroine and the primordial, untamed force of nature. However, the grotesqueness of the approach easily turns the expression of the works from demonic to satirical, exposing the absurdity of the fears that stem from such a one-dimensional perception of femininity. The inadequate fear of unknown and untamed female power is expressed in intense abstract patches, at which the heroines of the paintings seem devoid of identity and almost lifeless. In this way, fears and the stereotypes born of them detach from their cause and begin to live their own lives.
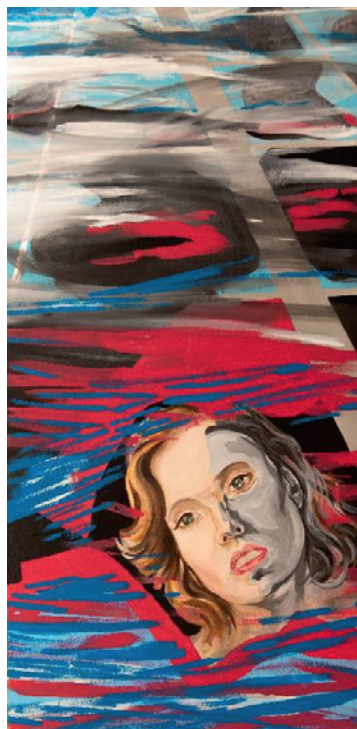
Figures 14, 15, 16. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Corvus Corax, About I Love You More, About What I Will Never Tell You.* 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 × 95 cm, 120 × 60 cm, 120 × 60 cm

Figures 17, 18, 19. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Purple is the color of my true love's hair, Strzygi, Retrospection.* 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm, 120 × 120 cm

The second part of the series has a more personal character. The women portrayed are no longer silent and impersonal, although they are still quiet, seemingly alone. However, they find themselves very close to the source from which they grew and from which they draw their energy – surrounded by the forces of nature, which here seems much more harmonious, governed by their own internal logic, and majestic. The heroines turn towards nature, seeking their own place in the world.

The starting point for my considerations and painting and intermedia solutions is always the human being and his or her relationship to the object, attribute, symbol, and nature. The concept of the cryptoportrait,[2] which is primarily an attempt to capture the emotions of the portrayed, seems related to me. When painting a picture, building an installation, or creating a video, I try to capture a particular emotional state in memory and contemplate it. Out of respect to the emotions of the people portrayed, the history of objects, and nature, I try to be a mirror, but remain in readiness and engagement. Because only engagement can bring a profound message. To quote Pablo Picasso:

> One should speak of a human as if one were painting them. The more you engage in this, the more you will remain yourself, the closer you will be to the truth. By trying to remain anonymous, out of reluctance or respect, you will do the worst thing, you can disappear. You have to be in it, have courage. Only then will the work become interesting and bring something. (Stassinopoulos-Huffington, 1996).

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2   Crypto-portrait – the practice of consciously giving a particular historical or legendary figure the features of the author. More about crypto-portrait – see Juszczak 1979, 60.

In the later stage of portraiture, I deliberately move away from realism, as such. What interests me is the afore-mentioned state of the object, stopped in time, and giving it new meaning, a new place in accordance with the prin-ciple of the golden ratio, specifically on the canvas. I create a painterly collage combining many originally unrelated elements. I juxtapose it with pure planes, which are often not just a background for objects, but also permeate them, isolate them or bring them to the foreground. The inspira-tion for their creation comes from the art of Andy Warhol,[3] the king of pop art.[4] While the visual references are obvi-ous, also noteworthy for me is his stance as a critical artist who ridicules and sanctifies the object at the same time. An example of this is the painting of a can of Campbell's soup, which on the one hand is a pure advertisement for the product, while on the other a denial of it.

3   Andy Warhol is an American artist of Lemko origin, one of the main representatives of pop art (born on August 6, 1928, in Pittsburgh, died on February 22, 1987, in New York). He is known primarily for his simple and serial compositions with high colour contrast, which he created using the silkscreen printing technique. The resulting screen prints present consumer products from an average American refrigerator, i.e.: cans of Coca-Cola or Campbell's tomato soup, as well as objects from everyday life, e.g., poppies, bananas, boxes of Brillo pads. Silk-screen printing enabled Warhol to reproduce stylised portraits of the entertainment world's biggest stars, which included Brigitte Bardot, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Marlon Brando, and Elizabeth Taylor. He also created images of other widely known figures, such as Mao Zedong, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Beuys. Andy Warhol treated every-thing he painted objectively and without unnecessary emotion. Brillo pads and dollar bills were just as valuable to him as portraits of his contemporaries – all of these were consumer ar-ticles of American society and pop objects. See Artimento 2022.

4   Pop art is an artistic movement in the art world after the Second World War, originating from abstract expressionism. The term *pop art* was first used by English art critic Lawrence 'Alloway in the Architectural Review ('Architectural Digest') in 1952 to describe those images that illustrated postwar consumerism and drew from the goods of materialism.
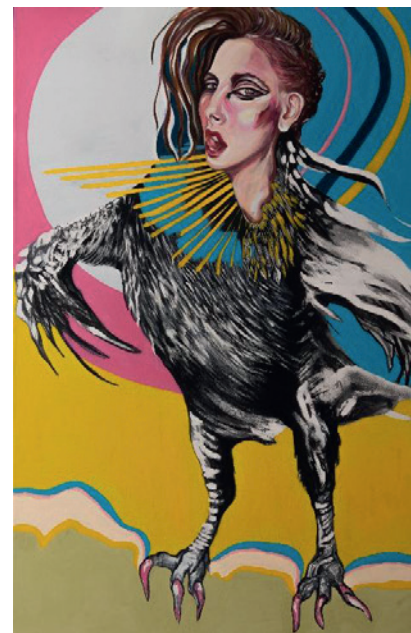
Figures 20, 21. Warhol, Andy. *Campbell's Soup Can*. 1962, serigraph, paper, 90 × 60 cm; Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Domestic Hen*. 2017–2018, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 × 95 cm

In more recent paintings, I have replaced the abstract planes of the second and third plan with more realistic landscape elements that interact with, influence, and permeate the figure, becoming a full-fledged character in the painting.

Figures 22, 23. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *I invite you there, At sunset.* 2018–2020, oil on canvas, 120 × 150 cm, 50 × 70 cm

Figures 24, 25. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *From afar l, From afar II.* 2019–2020, oil on canvas, 60 × 80 cm, 60 × 80 cm

Figure 26. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Witch*. 2019, oil on canvas, 60 × 120 cm

Figure 27. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Laguna*. 2020, 50 × 1150 cm

Figures 28, 29. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Dream I, Black Pond*. 2021, oil on canvas, 80 × 60 cm, 50 × 60 cm

The *City* series is a return to the earlier *Artifacts* series, but from a new perspective. It depicts the city as empty, uninhabited, untamed – a city as walls of postmodern residential buildings from different parts of Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Ireland, and Poland. It is also a city of concrete but anonymous buildings – sometimes dirty and littered, sometimes damaged by the passage of time, covered with graffiti. The signs and slogans on the buildings, traces of someone's presence, still exist, even though their owners have left and someone else has partially painted over them. They remain, however, nameless, without history, defenceless. They simply coexist on the walls in public space, giving it a different context from the original, until they are destroyed, transformed into something else or repainted. They become part of the culture we pass by indifferently. Zygmunt Bauman argues that:

> the city walls: open and constantly updated registers/inventories of the most modern of the arts, the truly postmodern art; the art of living in a modern fashion. It is on the city walls that one can search for, uncover, and record the overt or surreptitious but in both cases unyielding effort of modern life, in order to then transfer it to the interior of gallery walls and reincarnate it as a work of art. (Bauman, 2010, p. 7).

Figures 30, 31. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Gdansk, Heads*. 2023, acrylic, oil on canvas, 50 × 50 cm, 50 × 50 cm

Figures 32, 33. Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Untitled I, Happy small version*. 2023, acrylic, oil on canvas, 50 × 50 cm, 50 × 50 cm

In the figurative paintings I create, one can find the influence of the work of Lucian Freud[5] and Andrew Wyeth.[6] Autobiographical motifs, attempts to record and represent people and spaces that Freud painted throughout his life, are for me an important feature in his work.

Figures. 34, 35. Freud, Lucian. *Painter's Room*, 1934–44, 62.2 × 76.2 cm; Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *My Room*. 2016, mural on Traffo building inspired by L. Freud's painting *Painter's Room*, approx. 5 × 9.5 m, Park in Borek Fałęcki, Krakow

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5   Lucian Freud was a British painter (born December 8, 1922, in Berlin, died July 20, 2011, in London) of Jewish descent and the grandson of Sigmund Freud (Soliński 2019).

6   Andrew Wyeth was an American painter and printmaker (born July 12, 1917 in Chadds Ford Township, Pennsylvania, United States, died January 16, 2009 in the same place) and a representative of the American scene painting and social realism movements. He is best known for the painting *Christina's World*, which is one of the most important American
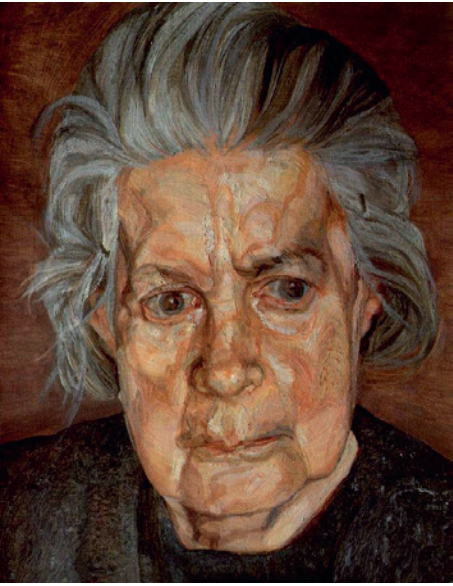
Figures 36, 37. Freud, Lucian.
Painter's Mother II. 1974,
oil on canvas, 17.8 × 14 cm;
Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *How
Pearl Is My Life (Artist's Mom).*
2010, oil on canvas, 90 × 75 cm

An important aspect in Wyeth's paintings is the observation of an individual's existence in the context of raw nature and their symbiosis. The art of silence, which his work falls into, in my opinion, must ask questions about meaning and direction. It should encourage reflection not only on an aesthetic level, but also on a social level. It must be sincere yet universal at the same time.

paintings of the 20th century. He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Institute of Arts and Letters, American Philosophical Society, American Watercolor Society, Académie des Beaux-Arts, National Academy of Design, Royal Watercolour Society, and the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg (AndrewWyeth.com, n.d.).

Figures 38, 39. Wyeth, Andrew. *In the Orchard*. 1974, watercolour on paper, ca. 50 × 73 cm;
Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Marina*. 2020–2021, oil on canvas, 80 × 120 cm

Figures 40, 41. Wyeth, Andrew. *River Cove*. 1958, tempera on board, ca. 120 × 72 cm;
Róg-Ociepka, Joanna. *Odnoga Wisły*. 2023, watercolour on paper, 56 × 42 cm

I have been interested in the concepts of idol, role model, icon, and authority for some time. While working with junior high school students as part of the project *I am a cultured person (editions 3 and 4)* of the ZNACZY SIĘ[7] New Art Foundation, with which I have been working for eight years, I created a series of educational and art workshops *Authority, icon, role model, idol.* Together, we explored these concepts and their cultural symbolism, we embedded them in an iceberg model according to the inverted levels of logic by Bateson-Dilts (Dilts, 1990) (which distinguishes six levels of thinking or situations: environment, behaviour, ability or skills, beliefs, identity, and spirituality), and on this model placed the protagonists of the story about the migration of the Asian white tiger.
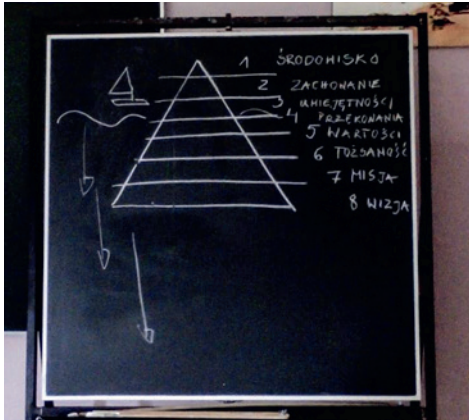
Figure 42. Logical level, Bateson-Dilts mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016

Figure 43. Mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at the Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016

7   'Znaczy się' Foundation, operating since 2007 in Krakow, is a contemporary art foundation dedicated to promoting culture and art through workshops and education among children and youth at risk of social exclusion.
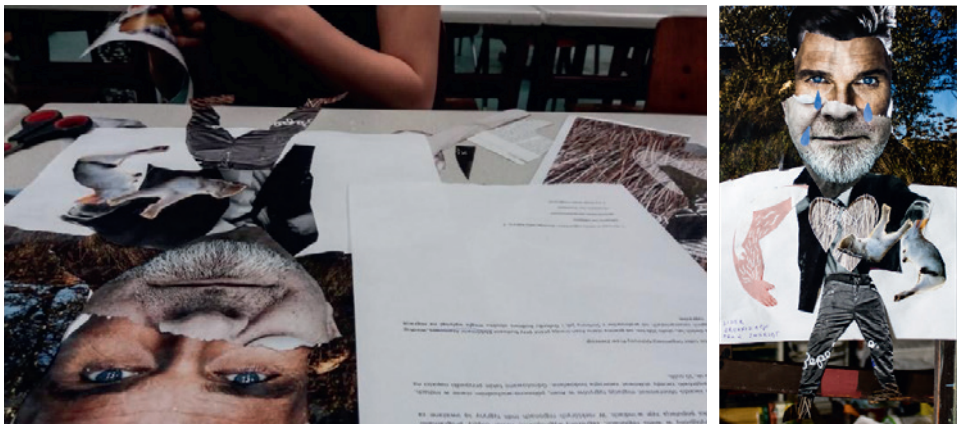
Figure 44. Mural workshop, as part of the *I am cultural, I am cultural* project, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at the Middle School in Mszana Górna, 2016

Figures 45, 46. Mural workshop, as part of the project *I am cultural, I am cultural*, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Mszana Górna Middle School, 2016

This allowed us to work together, through the technique of collage, to create a design for a mural under the same title, which we realised on school grounds. I have been working with wall techniques and murals for many years. These techniques, by their very nature, are always a challenge for me. The size of the wall and its architectural division (doors, windows, pipes, cables, etc.) are often elements that dictate the form of the painting in advance. This has influenced my way of seeing painting in general.

Figures 47, 48, 49. Mural workshop, as part of the project *I am cultural, I am cultural*, 3rd edition of the ZNACZY SIĘ New Art Foundation at Mszana Górna Middle School, 2016.

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'The generation that blocks the streets!'

A critical discourse analysis of language against climate activism in Poland's right-wing online news media

1.0. Introduction

Discourses function for various reasons and have varying purposes, including playing a role in media, transferring knowledge, and perhaps most covertly, serving as the building blocks by which people embed themselves in understandings of ideological constructs (Fairclough, 1995; Amalia, 2019). Discourses on social problems are at the forefront of critical discourse studies and highlight their representations through linguistic means, whether a subject is explicitly referred to or referenced by indirect means.

Discourse analysis of text and talk on the subject climate change and climate activism has expressed a range of theory and various stances on the topic, including its politicisation, sentiment surrounding climate change, the necessity of awareness and bringing about change, as well as those discourses directed directly at activism (Dryzek, 1997; DeLuca, 1999; Stibbe, 2014). To date, sentiment analysis within the area of discourses about climate change has been conducted as a means of describing the problem of climate change and the narratives which surround it (Kleres & Wettergran, 2017), discourse analysis of ageist textual representations of climate activists has been carried out (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020), as well as the analysis of the discourses that young people use themselves in relation to the problem of climate change and its discussion in the sphere of social media (Hautea et al., 2021).

While discourses that are climate-change-averse, including those of climate change denial, have been described as using religious metaphors and asking that 'better science be carried out (Van Eck & Feindt, 2022), the Polish context of discourses about climate activists and their representations has largely been left undiscussed. As such, because critical discourse analysis contains within its agenda an approach to the analysis of language and discourse where manipulation and propaganda are concerned, it seen as a relevant and perhaps the best tool to undertake the analysis of such a phenomenon, providing the tools needed further investigate the effects such representations might have on social groups. Critical discourse analysis (hereafter referred to as CDA) provides systematic ways of looking at discursive data (i.e., longer pieces of text, usually longer than a sentence) to locate where power, manipulation, and inequalities lie and views discourse as having a major impact on social life, including on social structures. It is a framework which additionally provides various methods for the analysis of discourse.

An increasing tendency towards the politicisation of youth additionally contributes to what has been seen as ageist attitudes towards young activists, who are usually teenagers, and their efforts to combat climate change and raise awareness on the subject (Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020). Discourse analyses on the representations of climate activists in Poland have yet to be carried out, especially from a critical linguistic perspective.

1.1. Climate activism and youth

Climate change, which is understood as those anomalies associated with an increase in average temperatures on Earth, is an issue considered by many scientists to be one of the greatest challenges, if not the greatest, facing humanity today. Although it is important to note that the discourse on climate change is impacted by subjects that surround it both directly and indirectly, this paper concerns the discursive construction of those activists whose aim is to draw attention to the problem. Youth climate activism is a global phenomenon that has been demonstrated through the Youth Climate Strike in Poland, as well as through the Fridays for Future movement (Medoń, 2020; Jaśko, 2021)

The Fridays for Future campaign in Poland, which began in early 2019, has since grown significantly in its reach. The movement itself has been at the head of the organisation of several protests and demonstrations across the country, including in major cities such as Warsaw, Krakow, and Gdansk (Kocyba et al., 2020). For the purpose of this paper, it is crucial to highlight that these protests have been attended by thousands of people, primarily young students, which is

a fact that impinges on the current discourses about both climate change and climate activism (ibid; Jasikowska & Pałasz, 2022; Kowalska, 2022).

Young people are known to undertake climate activism for a variety of reasons, including to express their politicised social identity, via which they see their role in society as impinging on future climate outcomes, knowledge of environmental threat, and shared responsibility towards the state of the planet (Haugestad et al., 2021). Some researchers have noted that age is a factor in the construction of the image of the 'excused rebel', acting as a justification for risk-taking that activists are known to partake in, such as protests in public places and public demonstration of dissatisfaction with governmental policy-making about climate change (Shah, 2019; De Moor et al., 2021).

Taking this aforementioned into account, the age of the social actors analysed is not of mere accidental importance in the discussion of their discursive representations, for it can be viewed as having a polarising effect on the evaluation of their persons. In fact, this highlights that what is important to the analysis of the way in which right-wing media discourses, more specifically, are harmful to these actors, one may view how their image becomes discursively distorted in the media, thus having an indirect effect on the perception of the goal of climate activism.

1.2. Critical discourse analysis

Although no generally accepted definition of the term *discourse* has been accounted for in the social sciences, including linguistics (Pedersen, 2009), it is understood in doing critical linguistic analyses that discourse is any text (oral or written) that is longer than a sentence and embedded within various contexts, i.e., physical and social ones. The text as constrained by social constituents cannot act or exist without the said context, which moulds it into the ideology-container that critical discourse studies aim to investigate.

Critical discourse analysis (hereafter referred to as CDA) looks in depth at text on the level of its structure within the sociopolitical context in which it has come about, by describing, interpreting, and explaining it (Fairclough, 1995). This process shows the relationship between discourse and existing ideologies, highlighting the fact that while they may look natural or common sense on the surface, they act in manifold ways and almost always contain and express some form of ideology.

CDA attempts to unpack discourses for their underlying ideologies and constructions of power, looking at the 'hidden' meaning behind syntactic structures, lexical choices, metaphorical reference, and intertextual constructs, among others. There is no monolithic approach to critical discourse analysis. It is viewed as a framework of varying methodologies by which one might analyse the ideolog-

ical structures present in language, including that of the representations of social actors, used here in this analysis.
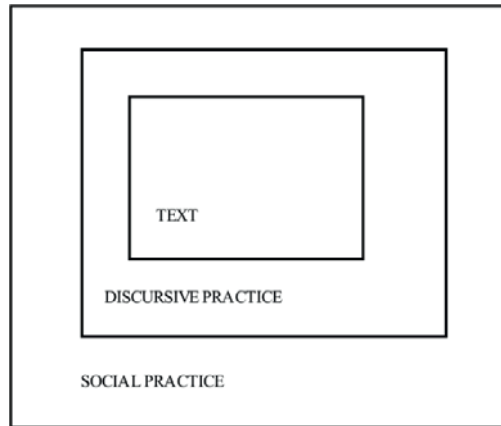

Figure 1. Reproduction of Fairclough's 3D model (1995)

The approach to CDA that is *the representation of social actors* investigates the naming strategies for social actors, their activation and/or passivation, and the verbs patterns in which they are linguistically situated (Van Leeuwen, 1996; 2004). Van Leeuwen's (ibid) theory of the representation of social actors posits that a social semiotic analysis of how individuals and groups are represented can tell an audience or reader more about their identities or ideological representations. Both affective representational portrayals of actors, as well as the ideological status that they are seated in, are seen in his theory as crossing over or overlapping to provide a highly nuanced linguistic means for expressing evaluation through the adherence to such ideologies. The framework provides a window into understanding more fully how inequalities can be constructed through linguistic means and on varying linguistic levels.

The categories used in the presented analysis include the nominal representations of social actors, including the categories of *functionalisation* and *classification identification*, as well as verb processes in which those actors are represented as partaking (Van Leeuwen, 1996). These categories further include the connotations and symbolism behind the discourse used to describe the actors (i.e., young climate activists as described in Polish discourse). The discourse in question in this paper belongs to the sphere of digital discourse (previously known as computer-mediated communication (or CMC), a moniker which has been modified with changes in technology and the use of online media beyond the sphere of just computers) (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2018).

2.0. Materials and methods

The discourse analysed was taken from a total of eight online news reports of climate activism from various contexts in the world, including Greta Thunberg's activism in Sweden, the activism of German youth climate strikers, and that of Polish youth climate strikers from all over the country representing the Youth Climate Strike movement. The articles were chosen based on their sources and within the window of a six-year period, around the time that climate activism among youth began to pick up speed. A table of the sources, including the year of their publication, the translated title of the article and the source from which they were taken (i.e., which online media sources) has been provided:

Table 1. Sources and their coding

SOURCE	Year of publication	Article title	CODE
Do Rzeczy	2018	15-year old Swedish girl on strike to draw the attention of politicians to climate change. One of her teachers joined her[1]	DR1
Fronda	2019	Jan Bodakowski: Youth Climate Strike. Sexist slogans and calls for suicide[2]	Fr1
Fronda	2019	Shocking protest signs at the Youth Climate Strike! 'Destroy my pussy, not the planet'[3]	Fr2
Do Rzeczy	2022	'Climacatastrophe!'. 'Climate activists' go crazy in the museum again[4]	DR3
Do Rzeczy	2022	Climate activist – as he calls himself – stuck his head to the glass covering the famous painting *Girl with the Pearl Earring*[5]	DR2

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[1] Translated from Polish: 15-letnia Szwedka strajkuje, aby zwrócić uwagę polityków na zmiany klimatu. Dołączył do niej jeden z jej nauczycieli.

[2] Translated from Polish: Jan Bodakowski: Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny. Seksistowskie hasła i apel o samobójstwa

[3] Translated from Polish: Szokujące transparenty na Młodzieżowym Strajku Klimatycznym!, „Zniszcz mi pusie, nie planetę"

[4] Translated from Polish: „Klimakatastrophe!". „Aktywiści klimatyczni" znów szaleją w muzeum

[5] Translated from Polish: Działacz na rzecz klimatu – jak sam siebie określa – przykleił głowę do szkła zakrywającego słynny obraz „Dziewczyna z perłą".

SOURCE	Year of publication	Article title	CODE
W Gospo-darstwie	2023	These are climate activists. 'Hypocritical double standards'[6]	wG1
Rp.pl	2023	Berlinale: Climate activists stuck themselves to the red carpet[7]	RP1

The study of right-wing representations of actors in the Polish press is not something that is new in the sphere of communication studies, however, as mentioned earlier, the representations of climate activists is a phenomenon that is understudied. In order to carry out such an analysis, with an allowance for systematic work, the framework known as the representations of social actors framework was used to locate the ideologies and power expression present in the discourse on the subject of climate activists.

The analytical CAQDAS (i.e., Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) program MaxQDA was used to look at a total of 10 articles taken from far-right sources in Polish online media. The data was then coded for the representations of social actors that were found in the texts and then underwent a qualitative analysis for what categorisations of linguistic constituents could render. It is important to note that the analysis is a qualitative analysis, and thus investigates the main themes which run through right-wing online news discourses about these activists.

3.0. Discussion

The representations of social actors' approach to discourse is not new; however the investigation of climate activists from this perspective has not yet been undertaken in critical linguistic analyses. This study shows that there are two main categories for the representations of climate activists in media, as described in more conservative media, the first of which is the image of the activist as dangerous, and therefore immoral, and the second of which is the activist as perverse. Both of these images of the activists contribute to the process of their othering, placing them into a frame which defines them against what is categorised as civil disobedience and thus reflective of acting outside of the ramifications of normative behaviour.

6   Translated from Polish: Oto aktywiści klimatyczni. „Obłudne podwójne standardy"

7   Translated from Polish: Berlinale: Aktywiści klimatyczni przykleili się do czerwonego dywanu

3.1. Representations of the activist

In the articles analysed, the activists are presented as dangerous and irresponsible individuals, harmful to their surroundings, the environment, as well as to cultural values. This is done through the construction of the actors through naming processes, as well as through their description via means of predicatives in clauses. The actor is named in ways that are connotative of radical action or irresponsibility and activated through being agentive in processes that are seen as harmful to society or social values. By activating the actor in juxtaposition with evaluative verbs (i.e., those which have negative connotations) that highlight the deviant nature of their activity, the discourse of the news reports analysed, which are reflective of conservative or right-wing ideologies, places doubt in the goals of the actors and shapes them as dangerous or malicious.

3.1.1. Functionalisation and classification representation of actors

Studies have pointed to an interesting fact regarding the influence of stereotypes of activists on bringing about actual social change, which has an effect on the way that they are discursively represented. As Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 77) note, there is no neutral way to represent a person and that any linguistic choice for their representation draws attention to aspects of their identity. In Van Leeuwen's framework for the analysis of the representations of social actors in discourse, he names, among other categories, classification and functionalisation.

The way that actors are named (i.e., the use of nominal expressions in discursive representations of their persons) not only reveals much regarding the social perception of them from a socio-political perspective, but also about right-wing ideologies on the subject of climate change. In this sense, the negative evaluation of climate change activists is amplified, as their direct association with the destruction of social stability is highlighted.

The following examples show that the negative evaluation of climate activists in such right-wing discourses as the ones analysed is not always direct.

1) Skoro ikona tego ruchu Greta Thunberg słynie z pełnych hipokryzji podróży, to czego się można spodziewać po **młodzieży szukającej rozrywki**?
[*If the icon of the movement, Greta Thunberg, is known for the hypocrisy of her travelling, what can we expect from young people looking for fun?*]

2) **Działacz na rzecz klimatu – jak sam siebie określa** – przykleił głowę do szkła zakrywającego słynny obraz „Dziewczyna z perłą".
[*The climate activist – as he calls himself – glued his head to the glass covering the famous painting 'Girl with the Pearl Earring'*]

3) Histeria **„aktywistów klimatycznych".** Obsypali dzieło sztuki mąką (Do Rzeczy)
[*The histeria of 'climate activists'. They poured flour over a work of art.*]

By referring to them as *young people looking for fun*, they are endowed with the image of not being serious about their overall activist goals, and that it is an excuse, even. Example 2 begins in a seemingly neutral manner, but subsequently places the status of the activist in doubt by undermining the credibility of a young person referring to themself as an *activist*. By using inverted commas around the term *climate activists* (cf. example 3), the seriousness is taken away from their activism and once again placed in doubt. Among the naming representations for the activists, there were also references to the age of the actors, falling under van Leeuwen's categorisation of classification identification.

4) Demonstracje były złożone z **dzieci**, które po to zwolniono z lekcji, by mogły uczestniczyć w manifestacjach. (Fronda)
[*The demonstrations were made up of children who had been excused from school so that they could participate in the demonstrations.*]

5) Wiele z **dziewczynek**, albo **chłopców** (mających niezdrowe pragnienie seksualne), trzymających plakaty wywiązało pragnienie „posiadania gorącego chłopaka, a nie gorącej planety". (Fronda)
[*Many of the girls, or boys (with unhealthy sexual desires), holding posters exuded a desire to 'have a hot boyfriend, not a hot planet'.*]

The juxtaposition of young people, presented in the discourse of *Fronda* as children rather than teenagers, against acts that portray them as irresponsible or perverse creates an image of dissonance that goes in line with the assumption that left-wing discourses and ideologies have a negative impact on the minds and well-being of young people. The same is true of comments regarding the protest slogans that were criticised by the same media.

3.2. The activist as perverse

Other constructions of the activist include the image of the activist as a perverse figure, and one who is hypersexualised, thus adhering to the idea of the actor as a deviant being. To expand on the previous example, homophobic discourses which present homosexuality as sinful, deviant, or immoral is juxtaposed against the climate sceptical tone of the negative evaluation of youth climate activists (cf. examples 6 and 7).

> 6) Wiele z **dziewczynek**, albo **chłopców** (**mających niezdrowe pragnienie seksualne**), trzymających plakaty wywiązało pragnienie „posiadania gorącego chłopaka, a nie gorącej planety". (Fronda)
> [*Many of the girls, or boys (with unhealthy sexual desires), holding posters exuded a desire to 'have a hot boyfriend, not a hot planet'.*]

> 7) **Szokujące** transparenty na Młodzieżowym Strajku Klimatycznym!, „Zniszcz mi pusie, nie planetę" (Fronda)
> [*Shocking protest signs at the Youth Climate Strike! 'Destroy my pussy, not the planet.'*]

This, as Machin & Mayr (2012, p. 3) have argued, contributes to the conservative discourses on sexuality that 'point to assumptions that a text makes yet which remain implicit,' due to the fact that the ideas communicated in a text are not made directly present. Here, the sexualisation of children, an idea long-critiqued by Poland's Law and Justice party, comes to light in the discourse and is additionally highlighted in connection with youth activism.

The analysis of the representations of social actors has also revealed a category of right-wind discourses about activists as taking the position of viewing activists as criminal, villainous, and malicious in their intent and action (cf. examples 8 and 9).

> 8) **Wandale** ochoczo zamieszczają nagrania ze swoich **przestępstw** w mediach społecznościowych. Mnóstwo tego typu akcji można zobaczyć m.in. na Twitterze.
> [*The vandals eagerly post footage of their crimes on social media.*] (Do Rzeczy)

> 9) **Eko ekstremiści** od dawna głoszą, że ludzie są zagrożeniem dla planety i by ratować środowisko, trzeba likwidować ludzi. (Do Rzeczy)
> [*Eco extremists have long been saying that human beings are a threat to the planet and that in order to save the planet, we should get rid of people.*]

Other negative evaluation in the discourse is presented in *Do Rzeczy*'s representation of the actions undertaken by the climate activists, including vandalism, crime (cf. examples 10 and 11), and the overexaggerated nature of the reactions of activists to climate change, which inadvertently constructs them as mentally unstable (cf. example 12).

10) W ostatnich kilkunastu tygodniach do **aktów wandalizmu** ze strony samozwańczych „aktywistów" dochodzi coraz częściej. (Do Rzeczy)
[*Acts of vandalism by self-proclaimed 'activists' have become increasingly frequent in the past several weeks.*]

11) Wandale ochoczo zamieszczają nagrania ze swoich przestępstw w mediach społecznościowych. (Do Rzeczy)
[*Vandals eagerly post footage of their crimes on social media.*]

12) **Histeria „aktywistów klimatycznych".** Obsypali dzieło sztuki mąką (Do Rzeczy)
[*The histeria of 'climate activists'. They poured flour over a work of art.*]

By representing the activists as vandals, or criminals, rather than risk-takers with a goal in mind (Medoń, 2020), such discourses reproduce the stereotype of the activist as youth that does nothing but create havoc, waste time, and adhere to the stereotypes of youth as lazy, rebellious, and unproductive to society (Telzer et al., 2022). This type of discourse may be viewed through the dichotomy of *us vs. them*, creating structural oppositions that are not explicitly named in the articles themselves, as explained by Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 39). Such discourse carried out a series of actions in consequence, including that it creates a divide between the reader and those criticised by expressing a tone of animosity towards the actor(s) described. This discourse additionally portrays their behaviour as abnormal, which displaces them even further from a normalised culture or what can be seen as acceptable behaviour for youth.

3.2.1. Verb processes in which the actor is involved

Youth climate activists are not only evaluated through naming processes, but also through the verb processes (predicates) they are described in relation to. This takes from MAK Halliday's (1985) framework known as *systemic functional linguistics,* to which the analysis of transitivity belongs, an approach which is widely used

and underlines many critical linguistic analyses (Halliday, ibid; Graham, 2004). In the transitivity system, clauses are analysed based on three main elements: the process, the participants, and the circumstances, similarly to what is described in Van Leeuwen's social actors approach (2004). The process refers to the action or event that is being described, the participants are the entities involved in the action, and the circumstances provide additional information about the action.

The discourse in question poses the actions of the activists by means of activating them in verb processes that contain negative connotation, thus negatively evaluating them. In the collectivised reference to the activists as school children, they are portrayed as irresponsible and wild children who simply do not want to attend school and therefore do not partake (cf. example 13).

13) Uczniowie oczywiście poświęcają się dla klimatu w godzinach nauki, de facto **robiąc sobie wagary**. (Fronda)
[*Of course, school children are sacrificing their time for the climate when they should be in school, they are basically playing hooky*]

14) Para aktywistów klimatycznych, która **przyklejała się** do drogi, **blokując** ruch w obronie środowiska, **poleciała na wakacje** na Bali samolotem. (wGospodarce)
[*The two climate activists who stuck themselves to the road, blocking traffic in the name of saving the environment, have gone to Bali on vacation by plane.*]

The discourse in such media presenting the processes or actions in which the activists partake also construct an image of civil disobedience which goes against acting like a good law-abiding citizen might.

15) Działacz na rzecz klimatu – jak sam siebie określa – **przykleił głowę do szkła** zakrywającego słynny obraz „Dziewczyna z perłą".
[*The climate activist – as he calls himself – glued his head to the glass covering the famous painting 'Girl with the Pearl Earring'*]

16) Zwłaszcza ci, którzy wynoszą się tak wysoko moralnie i **tyranizują blokadami innych z powodu ich prywatnego stylu życia**, powinni w prawdziwym życiu trzymać się ziemi.
[*Especially those who exalt themselves so morally high and bully others with blockades because of their private lifestyles should in real life keep their feet on the ground*] (wGospodarce)

It is worth noting that the presented analysis has shown that there are two main categories of negative evaluation of climate activists as a social group, the first being as young people juxtaposed against sexual impurity. The discourse on the subject of climate activists in the online periodical *Fronda* especially denotes them as perverse individuals, impure and unhealthy in their expression of their perceptions of sexuality.

17) **Dzieci nie zgadzały się z tym, że „grzechem jest oglądać porno, a nie jest grzechem** patrzeć jak planeta jest ruch..a". **Proponowałyby „się ruch.ć nawzajem, a nie ruch.ć planety".** (Fronda)
[*The children disagreed that 'it is a sin to watch porn and it is not a sin to watch the planet fucked over'. They would suggest 'fucking each other, not fucking the planet'.*]

As mentioned earlier, the tone of articles presenting a discourse that consists of structural opposites through the choice of actor representation, and by constructing the activist 'other' as an actor that does not have their own best interests in mind, nor the best interests of the people. Such representations draw on stereotypes of youth activists as adhering to stereotypical rebellious youth behaviour and feeds into the belief that climate activism is part of a leftist agenda and is focused not only on degenerating youth, but also degenerating society and traditionalist values.

3.3. Discourse of climate scepticism hand-in-hand with activist criticism

The discourse analysed does not only display evaluative stances towards the social actors, but also towards climate change as a phenomenon, including climate scepticism. It is important to note that such discourse is not bereft of overt climate scepticism.

18) Przez stolicę oraz inne miasta, w kraju i na świecie, przeszły demonstracje przeciwko **rzekomym zmianom klimatu rzekomo wywołanym przez ludzi**.
[*Demonstrations against alleged human-induced climate change have marched through the capital and other cities, nationally and internationally.*]

Right-wing discourse is known to display attitudes of climate scepticism and is indicative of climate scepticism, as such discourses have been described as adhering to the idea that climate change and activism to raise awareness on the subject is a leftist agenda. This also plays into the indirect framing of the climate activist as an actor who does not contribute productively to society, but rather acts destructively.

4.0. Conclusions

The analysis presented draws attention to the fact that the discursive construction of youth climate strikers and climate strike action reveals more about the ideological construction of climate change action. Not only is climate change discourse problematic on the level of the subject itself, but also the discourses on those acting against climate change and a lack of climate change action.

In line with Halliday's (1985) theory of social semiotics, that words do not take on meaning only by themselves, but also 'as a part of a network of meanings' and that 'vocabulary also makes distinctions between classes of concepts' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 39), the structural oppositions presented in right-wing discourses reveal attitudes of negative evaluation in news media discourses online by sites such as *Fronda*, *wGospodarce*, *Do Rzeczy*, and *Rp.pl*. This in turn is important to note, as it skews and distort the image of climate activists and their goal in such a way that it takes away from the reason behind their activism and the overall goal, and places emphasis on harmful and destructive action.

The overall representations of the social actors in the discourses analysed represents climate activists negatively, contributing to their negative evaluation both in the way that they are represented as subjects of clauses, as well as in their predicative representations. This takes place through the process of relating them to the extremist actions, negatively connotative verb processes and indirectly speaking of them through the nominalisation of their actions as vandalism or criminal.

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Scriptural contentions: challenging the heteronormative translational hermeneutics of the Qur'an through the voices of Queer* Muslims[1] in Turkey

I. Rigid Islamic conservatism and Queer* sexual politics in Turkey

'If a child is given to a homosexual family, then this runs counter to the general moral values and religious beliefs of [Turkish] society', the President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said, upon being asked what he thought of the 'scandalous' incident when a Dutch boy of Turkish origin was taken from his abusive Turkish parents and consigned to a lesbian foster family in Holland

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1 Throughout the paper, as long as my interlocutors did not specify how they like to be referred to, I employ the term *Queer** whenever I refer to individuals with non-heteronormatively sexualised and gendered subjectivities – a myriad of gender and sexual identities, including lesbians, gays, bisexuals, bi+, trans*, intersex, queers, non-binaries, asexuals, greysexuals, demisexuals, aromantics, genderfucks, gender non-conforming and others who do not identify themselves as allosexual or alloromantic. I opt for a once-pejoratively used term since I see politically empowering potentialities in reclaiming and re-appropriating a slur, turning it into a linguistic instrument of defiance against homonegativity. The asterisk use is a homage to Halberstam's term *Trans**, through which I similarly maintain the volatility and permeability of identities as well as differentiating it from those who identify themselves specifically as 'queer'. Moreover, I assert that this usage enables us to be sensitive to the local resistances towards Queer theory, a Western theory of gender and sexual subjectification in origin, as well as to the future possibilities of transformation and authentic synthesis by non-Western Queer* subjects.

(Baklinski, 2013). This statement of Erdoğan, whose stance apropos of gender equality and sexual liberation has always been in accordance with the cultural conservatism and populist concessions of his party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP, trans. JDP), did not surprise any close followers of Turkish politics at the time, as JDP leaders and representatives, ever since its formation, have constructed the political identity of the party according to conservative traditions and centrist policies (Altınordu, 2016, p. 163). Over the years, these conservative traditions have been systematically articulated in reference to orthodox Islamic doctrines on family, gender relations, and sexuality (particularly those of Sunni Islam), which delineate the standards of 'proper' intimacy and sexual morality for many JDP supporters. Gradually increasing the intensity of their systemic discrimination and institutionalised violence against Queer* individuals in Turkey since 2008 (Savcı, 2021), JDP politicians and authorities have become more and more intolerant against Queer* people in Turkey, evident in the recently recurring theme of anti-Queer* sentiments in their political rallies and even in the Friday sermons. As feminist/Queer* movements have gained further impetus since the Gezi Park protests, there has emerged an organised political focus by JDP leaders and the partisan journalists on the looming 'threat' of the dissolution of the family as a social institution due to the 'devious' schemes of 'Western Powers', which are said to be funding, lobbying, and encouraging the LGBTQ+ organizations to 'end Turkey'.

Even though Ali Erbaş, the Head of Turkey's Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*), had targeted Queer* individuals in Turkey numerous times before, having once claimed that the coronavirus epidemic was a divine punishment on humankind due to the practice of homosexuality which he proclaimed to be a 'heresy' and a 'big sin' (Duvar English, 2020), the organised hostility of JDP officials towards Queer* individuals rose to insurmountable levels of intimidation and criminalisation following the Boğaziçi University protests (see UN Urgent Action Letter, 2021 for a summary). Following the incident in which five Boğaziçi students were taken into custody over a picture of the Kaaba at a students' art exhibition, a few JDP officials and ministers, including Süleyman Soylu, the Minister of the Interior, Abdülhamit Gül, the Former Minister of Justice, and Melih Bulu, the politically appointed former rector of Boğaziçi University, called Queer* people 'perverts', 'dirt', and 'disgrace' in their social media accounts (Tar, 2021). As the recent examinations of JDP's policies and attitudes towards Queer* individuals in Turkey demonstrate (Savcı, 2021; Özbay & Öktem, 2021), the level of homonegativity[2]

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2   The term *homonegativity* is preferred over the term *homophobia*, recognising that the use of 'phobia' has explicit psychological connotations of 'irrational' fear towards things and people, whereas negative and shaming attitudes towards Queer* individuals continue to

and hostility towards the Queers* demands for equal citizenship rights, and legal protection has been an identifying characteristic of the moral values JDP leaders and supporters have been viciously promoting since 2015, the first time Queer* individuals were attacked at the annual Pride March in İstanbul.

However, following Erdoğan's statement on the Boğaziçi protests, which claimed that 'there was no such thing as LGBT in Turkey', a 2002-dated video of Erdoğan in *Abbas Güçlü ile Genç Bakış* (a former popular TV program) recirculated on social media platforms, depicting a university student asking Erdoğan about his views regarding LGBT rights in Turkey. Visibly bewildered by the question at first, Erdoğan then responds by stating the necessity of addressing and legally securing the individual rights and freedoms of homosexuals in Turkey (T24, 2021). While this statement may be interpreted as an unfulfilled promise or a tactical appeal at the time, through which Erdoğan might have aimed to attract and influence a larger number of citizens, it nevertheless marks the first, and probably the last time, a JDP representative affirmatively enunciated the individual rights and freedoms of Queer* individuals in Turkey. Although the sincerity of Erdoğan's words in 2002 is easily questionable now, some Queer* Muslims, even if their expectations did not directly coincide with JDP's public messages and political stance, felt some sort of affinity towards it because of the party's promise for a less 'selective' secularisation, which meant that Muslim individuals' daily life practices in public areas would no longer be a matter of governmental interference and/or political discussion, as was the case in Turkey's infamous headscarf controversy (Kuru, 2007). However, this earlier focus on individual freedom was soon replaced by strict limitations on any practice or discourse that defied or conflicted with JDP's political and ideological interests, as the recent events recapped above illustrate.

Unmistakably though, JDP's renunciation of the failed 'Just Order' model of the former right-wing Islamist party, the Welfare Party (trans. RP), and its idiosyncratic appropriation of the democratic and neoliberal discourses, had attracted and recruited numerous citizens to their side in the early days (Tuğal, 2009, pp. 50–55), among whom was a group of Queer* Muslims who defined themselves as a group of conservative JDP supporters. Following the assembling of this group in 2015 and their rapid popularisation in the media, they were fetishised and ridiculed at the same time, for they were believed to be a 'perfect oxymoron' considering JDP's anti-libertarian stance on sexual freedom and gender equality. However,

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manifest themselves even when there are no such cases of psychological fear. Moreover, the preferred term has a richer sociological context, where socialisation processes and societally-held beliefs may be brought into discussions more effectively.

this organisation soon dissolved after the members were outed by a journalist, while they also suffered from serious financial problems that prevented them from turning into an official organisation (Selici, 2019). While the recent political events palpably highlight the unlikelihood of a similar contact between JDP ranks and Queer* individuals in the near future, it remains to be further investigated whether JDP's homonegative policies against Queer* people in Turkey were ignited by AKLGBT's 'shocking' statements and/or how Queer* Muslims (JDP supports or not) were affected by the contradictory executions of JDP's earlier (pre-2011) and later policies (post-2011)[3] remain to be further investigated. Although I do not aim to document and explore the post-2011 hardships experienced by Queer* Muslims, these stories come forth as defining moments of breaking point in the ways my interlocutors were precipitated to rethink what it meant for them to be Queer* and Muslim at the same time.

II. Queer* hermeneutics of Islam: searching for a Queer* believer

A brief account of the key political events in the recent history of Turkey's Queer* Liberation movement[4] has been provided above to accentuate the eminent role of religion in the lives of Queer* people in Turkey who have long been told that they were 'doomed for eternity' just for being their authentic selves. More im-

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3   The temporal line of separation regarding the significant changes in JDP's policies, plans, law amendments, annulments, and regulations has been delineated according to Altınordu's argument, which states that by the end of 2011, JDP had established an infrastructure, a facilitating base, strengthened by 'constitutional reforms, changes in the judicial, military, and civil personnel', which made counteractions and difference of opinion less likely to emerge and sustain itself (Altınord 2016, p. 148).

4   The histories of Queer* liberation movements in Turkey span over 30 years, even though the presence of Queer* individuals in the Middle-Eastern geographies abound in the literary and legal records of the Ottoman history, which have ideologically been left out due to heteronormative history-writing (Bardakçı, 1992; Andrews & Kalpaklı, 2005). However, the first collective actions in Turkey's Queer* past date to 1993, when the first volunteer-based Queer* organisations Lambda and KaosGL were founded in İstanbul and Ankara, respectively. Thanks to the unyielding vigor of these organisations and the activists in the mid-1990s, it has become, since 2003, a tradition for Queers* in Turkey to march in the last week of every June to publicly express the pride they feel in their genders and sexualities without feeling ashamed or fearing the consequences of public avowal. Yet, a 'rupture' happened in 2015, when the Pride Parade was banned by İstanbul Governor's Office for it was initially claimed that it concurred with Ramadan, and therefore, would have been against their religious values. Before this ban, which persists up to this day, the Pride Parade had seen its largest population of 50.000 marchers in 2013.

portantly, it portrays how the Turkish state has contributed to maintaining and recirculating homonegative discourses and practices on religious, administrative, and legal grounds. From the President of the State to the Head of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, many influential figures have played their parts in the proliferation of homonegative discourses that situate Queer* desires and identities against Islamic doctrines. These homonegative discourses are prevalent to such an extent that even those who do not identify as Muslim believers are affected by them in their daily lives since Turkey is arguably one of the countries which 'are more receptive to religious framing of politics owing to long-standing fusion of religious and national identities' (Gryzmala-Busse 2015, p. 429). Religion in Turkey plays an incommensurable part in restructuring and actualizing Queer* sexual politics, crystallising a particular set of moral and aesthetic preferences, and attuning the imagined 'cosmic order' of the believers to the human sphere (Geertz, 1973, p. 90). It is this strong salience of religious identities that incites JDP supporters to turn to the homonegative Islamic narratives, and it is through these discriminatory narratives and messages that they construe their standards of morality and decency. Through the politicisation of religious identity and the nationalization of religion via the support of religious institutions (Lord, 2018), Queer* people in Turkey have been reframed as *personae non-gratae*, who have been recast as the 'foreign agents of Western influence'. Accordingly, orthodox Islamic discourses on Queer* sexuality have been central to JDP officials' and adherent journalists' attempts at pathologising and criminalising Queer* sexualities, arguing that homosexuality is a sin (*haram)*, which meant a total rejection of Queer* people.

Even though the classical approach[5] imagines the relationship between religion and sexuality to be antagonistic in essence, one does not need to consider the two (religion and sexuality) as necessarily opposing. On the contrary, religion and sexuality may be thought of as co-constitutive by distancing and reconfiguring themselves through the different values and norms that they refer to, continuously adapting to the times and 'junctures' that force them to transform. Therefore, religious morality and sexuality, in a symbiotic manner, have historically relied

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5   On the fervent dynamics between religion and sexuality, Weber wrote that 'the brotherly ethic of salvation religion is in profound tension with the greatest irrational force of life: sexual love. The more sublimated sexuality is, and the more principled and relentlessly consistent the salvation ethic of brotherhood is, the sharper is the tension between sex and religion.' (Weber, 1946, p. 343). Weber emphasised the rational and regulating tendency of organised religions to control and discipline sexualities on the grounds of moral indecency. According to his formulation, religion, one of the Weberian 'value spheres', casts the other, sexuality, as the 'diabolic power endangering salvation'.

on each other, both being conceived as typical matters of private life under the scrutiny of secular modernity (Mahmood, 2016, p. 9). As unpredictable and irrational as death, sexuality has unsurprisingly been one of the most widely discussed and controversial topics of our worldly existence, not only in the works of religious scholars and the clergy but also in Western medical and social sciences – an enigma to which Abrahamic religions had provided specific explanations (mostly essentialising ones) and 'proper' ways of intimacy and sexual practices. In the light of the recent work on the socio-political conditions and the daily lives of Queer* individuals in Turkey (Bereket & Adam, 2006; Gürsu & Elitemiz, 2012; Görkemli, 2014; Özbay, 2022) which demonstrate that contemporary homosexual identities and sexual practices are being authentically co-constructed in the double bind of ever-disseminating, globalised Western sexual politics and the social, cultural, and political forces of local particularities, I suspect that religious beliefs, norms, and practices are interwoven with the formation and reorganising of Queer* people's sexual and gender identities due to the acute confluence of human rights politics and religion in Turkey, even if one might decide to distance themselves from religion and lead a non-religious life.

As Hendricks (2016) aptly displays the extent to which a Queer* Muslim's affective, psychological, and religious experiences are negatively influenced by homonegative discourses on their gender and sexual identities, when Islamic doctrines form the bases of a believer's construals as to how they should live, love, and relate to others, hermeneutics pose several critical problems within the framework of interpreting and translating Qur'anic narratives. As it is provided in the following sections in detail, various alternative modes of translational strategies have been proposed for constructing Queer*-affirmative interpretations of Islam without being forced to renounce one's religious beliefs and sentiments *and* one's investment in Queer* sexual politics. Culturally-oriented perspectives on translation studies regard translation as a site of continuous renegotiation and reproduction of multiple meanings – a 'multidimensional site of cross-lingual correspondence on which diverse social tasks are performed' (Porter, 2010, as cited in Spurlin, 2017, p. 173). In many circumstances, translation determines how one reaches 'foreign' information and comprehends the message and the meanings imbued within. Linking the pivotal role of translation to the socio-political and using it as a methodology, Savcı argues that translation is one of the sites through which we can examine how 'meaning is made in practice and how changes in language and in practice inform each other'. Savcı goes on to state that 'this has particular salience as political language and political practice are deeply linked, informing what we come to imagine as a politically viable future' (2018, p. 80). The political nature of translation practices and translational hermeneutics, which have long

served crucial functions in determining the content and messages of religious narratives and doctrines, came to the front as central themes of scriptural contention and reinterpretation in my in-depth interviews.[6]

Informed by the determining role of translation practices and translational hermeneutics[7] as implicitly ideological and political endeavours, this study initially aims to examine the ways in which Queer* Muslims in Turkey experience their religious and sexual identities and their various strategies for challenging contradictions (if they experience any) in their intersecting identities. Concordant with the function of translation practices on the generation and reception of homonegative statements, brief background information is provided below as to the terminology used in the Qur'an regarding Queer* sexualities while disambiguating inconsistencies regarding these concepts that have been postulated to manifest themselves in accordance with their socio-historical correspondence. After examining how the interlocutors in this study challenge (i) Qur'anic narratives

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6   While this project started back in 2014 when I became interested in this area of inquiry as I was preparing a research paper for an undergraduate course in Translation Studies, the first in-depth interview I conducted with a Queer* Muslim took place in 2018 when I started working on my Master's thesis. The first round of the interviews was limited to four interviews, while the second round of the interviews, which I conducted in 2019, included five more. Hence, the material that I make use of here is taken from seven in-depth interviews with Muslim-identifying Queer* individuals living in İstanbul between 2014–2019. As a lot has changed in terms of JDP's policies and attitude towards Queers* during this period, the latter interviews revolved around less hopeful and more anxiety-inducing topics and themes for the interlocutors and their experiences of being a Queer* Muslim in Turkey. All the names are pseudonyms picked by the interviewees themselves, and all the excerpts have been revised and affirmed by the interlocutors after the writing process.

7   In this paper, when I refer to 'scriptural hermeneutics' or 'Queer* hermeneutics', I rely on Abraham's approach towards Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and how he exemplifies Ricoeurean hermeneutic system in Ricoeur's biblical hermeneutics with the case of Queer Muslim Hermeneutics (Abraham, 2007). According to this convergence model (that of Ricoeurean Bible Hermeneutics and Progressive Muslim Organizations and Scholars Queer Hermeneutics on the Qur'an), Queer* subjects are not only the recipients and the audience of the scriptural message, but they are also the subjects of the retainment and interpretation of the holy message (p. 4). The Ricoeurean premise acknowledges that multiple interpretations of a text attain their force and legitimacy from the lives of its readers, and the actions compelled by the text and its interpretations are good as long as they enable 'liberating, compassionate, or politically progressive' praxis (p. 9). Consequently, I believe that there are 'better' translations and interpretations in the sense that they reflect the central message of their source texts (Bible's and Qur'an's universal messages for love, acceptance, and just world).

and (ii) the Qur'anic terminology on Queer* sexuality, it will be problematised why the creative modes of alternative hermeneutics (Yip, 2005) are less likely to be employed by Queer* Muslims in Turkey than by their Western counterparts. In the concluding passages, after recapping the translational and re-interpretive strategies employed by these interlocutors vis-à-vis the dominant, heteronormative messages of the politico-religious orthodoxy in Turkey, it is debated whether the strategies employed by the Queer* Muslims in this study can be incorporated into Islamic theological hermeneutics, and what sorts of democratic actions may be necessary for Queer* Muslims in Turkey to freely practice their religion without turning their back on their Queer* desires.

III. Anti-heteronormative translational hermeneutics as Queer* resistance

Until very recently, most studies focusing on the lived experiences of Queers* have made little attribution to the substantial influence of their religious beliefs and spiritual striving, only reporting that religious beliefs and sentiments may have a protective effect on the maintenance of a healthy psychological state and interpersonal relations (Hoffman et al., 2006). Even then, these claims have been proposed mostly related to Christian Queer* communities (Rodriguez & Oulette, 2000; Yip 1996; Yip, 2000) or Jewish Queer* communities (Shilo, Yossef, and Savaya, 2016), whereas in Muslim countries the pertinent scenarios follow rather divergent roads, most of which could either end in Queer* individuals' rejection of the religious beliefs of the society they are born into, or even in some countries where it is illegal to be gay, being stoned to death according to these countries' legal sanctions (i.e., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan). Similarly, when it comes to conservative religious institutions and authorities, Queers* all over the world are faced with manifold negative, exclusionary statements, most of which directly condemn homosexuality, while some of these statements are more ambiguous as seen in the biblical idea of 'Love the sinner, hate the sin'. Whether their messages are ambiguous or not, it has been shown that homonegative statements have been perceived as being painful enough for some individuals to contribute to the development of suicidal ideation (Hoffman et al., 2007) as well as being correlated with their suffering higher rates of abuse, bullying, and victimisation, and higher levels of mental illness (King et al., 2008, Gibbs, 2015; Kidd et al., 2016; Lytle et al., 2018). As it can be seen in these meta-analyses, most of the recent research has been conducted in the psychological sciences, even though there are a few fundamental studies that emphasise the source; the Qur'an, and the importance of the Islamic doctrines and narratives on Queer* sexuality that negatively affect

the lives of Queer* Muslims (Jamal, 2001; Habib, 2008; Hendricks, 2010; Kugle, 2010; Ali, 2006, Siraj, 2016; Zahed, 2019).[8]

Since the early 1990s, a growing number of Feminist and Queer* Muslims have adamantly contested the cisheteronormative and heteropatriarchal interpretations and translations of specific verses in the Qur'an which refer to the 'homosexual' communities of the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. These 'Progressive Muslims' advance the poetic style and the polysemic language of the Qur'an as the fulcrum of their criticism against the prevalent homonegative discourses in their societies, propounding that the Arabic term *liwat* has been ideologically translated in an anachronistic fashion that does not reflect the socio-cultural historicity of the time – a timeline spanning over almost 25 years from the beginning of the first revelation in 609 CE (Schmidtke, 1999; Ali, 2006). Most of these counter-arguments were initially formulated by a small number of academicians, whose seminal works (Ali, 2006; Habib, 2007; Kugle, 2010; Hendricks, 2010) focused on the real-life experiences of Queer* Muslims. In addition to the early scholarly work and activism on Queer* Muslims, a growing number of organisations have appeared since then professing their Queer*-affirmative perspectives, notably Al-Fatiha, The Inner Circle, and the Al-Ghurbaah Foundation (Minwalla et al., 2005)[9]. In the same vein, a few religious leaders and imams in England, France, Germany, Sweden, South Africa, Canada, and the United States have explicitly created Queer*-affirmative spaces and communities for their congregations (BBC News, 2013) with Muhsin Hendricks and Daaiyye Abdullah being two of the first figures in this respect. The central organising principle of these communities has been to challenge the ubiquitous homonegativity expressed by their heterosexual Muslim 'brothers and sisters', and the traditional hermeneutics concerning Queer* sexualities in Islam. As Smith noted, the main goal of such translational and re-interpretive attempts is not to 'manipulate the content of their sacred texts to fit the political needs of the moment.

8   In addition to these sources, please see the articles on the special volume of the journal 'Theology & Sexuality' (2016, Vol. 22) edited by Hoel and Henderson-Espinoza with the title of 'Approaching Islam Queerly'. One of the most fundamental pieces in the volume are as follows (personally selected): Kugle's article on lesbian sexuality in the Qur'an, Rahmani and Valliani's piece (2016) on LGBT Muslims in Canada, and Hendricks' phenomenal work on 'ijtihad'. For a more clinical and health science-oriented review, see the multiple works of Jaspal (2010–2021) and also Tellawi, Khanpour, and Rider's paper 'Navigating (Queer) Sexuality in Islam' (2020).

9   In addition to these organisations and initiatives, more than 30 LGBT Muslim organisations are listed worldwide, as listed on Salaam Canada's website. Additional information can be found on the websites of 'Muslims for Progressive Values', 'Queer Ummah: A Visibility Project', 'Hidayah LGBT', 'Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity'.

The point is that the religious authority of sacred texts generally exhibits in openness and flexibility that can often facilitate the legitimation of a variety of organizational and strategic-tactical forms, as social movements may need them.' (1996, p. 18). However, the 'creative' modes of alternative hermeneutics take one step further and challenge how Islamic narratives have been constructed and interpreted within strictly homonegative discourses from the beginning, stating that it is this 'unquestionable' authority of the texts that are damaging them in the long run.

While the intensity of homonegativity towards Queer* individuals in many Western societies has reduced considerably because of, in part, laws and policies that prohibit hate speech and hate crimes, the current situation in Turkey and other Muslim-majority countries, where Queer* rights are not legally recognised by the state, and hence hate speech and hate crimes are not penalised justly, are more vehement. Hate speech towards Queers* in Turkey circulates pervasively, not only in daily conversations but in political discussions as well. While the current status of Queer* rights in Turkey negatively affects all gender non-conforming and sexually dissident individuals, the fact that homonegative discourses are systematically enunciated and promoted by the official religious institutions and its official representatives exacerbates the situation for Queer* Muslims in Turkey. As the President of Religious Affairs of Turkey has explicitly stated numerous times in the past, there is no place for Queer* sexualities in Islam (according to their way of understanding what Islam is), arguing that Queer* rights are a 'Western' political cause and a modern 'evil' that the youth and their parents should be wary of (T24, 2018). In such a hostile environment, therefore, I argue that the experiences of Queer* Muslims in Turkey are different from those living in countries where legal systems protect the rights of sexual and religious freedom of the individuals.

As one of the central studies on the topic of 'Queer*-affirmative hermeneutics' (Yip, 2005), Yip's analysis of the existing strategies of Queer* hermeneutics reveals that Queer* Muslims engage in three strategies when confronting heteronormative religious narratives: (i) challenging the traditional hermeneutics of the Quranic verses (the defensive strategy); (ii) problematising the authority and objectivity of religious figures who have performed heteronormative translations and interpretations (the offensive strategy); and/or (iii) engaging in Queer*-affirming translation and reinterpretation, recasting the holy texts and narratives according to sexuality-affirming standards (the creative strategy). In the following pages, I focus on how Queer* Muslims in Turkey experience relationships between their religious and sexual identities in respect to heteronormative hermeneutics, problematising why Queer* Muslims in Turkey engage in defensive and offensive strategies, but not the creative strategy (as far as the interlocutors of this study are concerned). Due to length constraints, the English and Turkish translations of the Quranic verses and

their in-depth translational analyses are not provided here.[10] Similarly, a discussion around the hadith is not provided since the hadith's liability (*isnad*) is intricately complex. (see: Kugle, 2010, and Hendricks, 2016, for in-depth analyses of the issue).

i. Cataclysmically Queer*: challenging the heteronormative Qur'anic narratives

There are five explicit references to male homosexuality in the Qur'an (Nisa: 16; Shuara: 165 & 166; Neml: 55; A'raf: 81), which focus on the story of the Prophet Lot and the 'heinous crimes' of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. In his seminal piece, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (2010), Kugle re-examined the story of Lot and wrote that 'focusing only on this [same-sex acts] distorts one's reading of the story. The story is really about infidelity and how the Tribe of Lot schemed for ways to reject his Prophethood and his public standing in their community.' (p. 69). The apocalyptic story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (the names of the cities are mentioned only in the Bible, not in the Qur'an), and how the citizens failed to listen to Lot's words are claimed to be crucial for Turkish people's understanding of homosexuality in relation to the Islamic doctrines, as the story of Lot has been brought up in every interview by the interlocutors themselves within the scope of homosexuality in Islam. Even though the story of the doomed people of Sodom and Gomorrah (or *Lut kavmi* as it is mentioned in Turkey) has been a recurring theme for many interlocutors in this study, the story's influential role on Meltem's memories was remarkably distinct from those of the others:

> *Meltem:* If you are not rich, that is, if your parents are not wealthy old-timer İstanbulians, everyone around here is raised in a conservative manner.
> *İlkan:* Conservative as in how? Could you explain what you mean by that?
> *Meltem:* I mean, plain conservatism… My mum used to make us fast without asking us if we wanted to. We just obeyed. If we didn't pray, she would scold us… You know, they were harsh like many parents. A lot! And not just

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10 Unfortunately, there is no Queer*-affirmative translation of the Qur'an in Turkish at the moment. However, the interested readers are encouraged to look at the original pieces of Muhsin Hendricks (2010) and Scott Siraj al-Kugle (2010), in which they tackle the translation-related issues regarding the Arabic terms in the Qur'an and why translating them into English is problematic and done by confining them to the conventional, contemporary meanings of the terms rather than their meanings at the time. Another useful source on this issue, which references multiple verses, can be found online at this link: https://www.luthercollege.edu/university/academics/impetus/winter-2013-impetus/a-muslim-non-heteronormative-reading-of-the-story-of-lot-liberation-theology-for-lgbtiq-muslims.

towards me, they wanted everyone to live the way they did… For example, if a homosexual were on screen, my mum would immediately knock on wood and say that these were signs of the end times. She would say we should burn these perverts like Lot (phub) did… I wished to disappear in those moments. My own mum would want to see me burn… Later, I learned that the Prophet Lot's story was more complex and different than we were taught.

İlkan: Different how?

Meltem: As I read some English sources, I learned that their biggest sin was not homosexuality. They committed adultery, rape, incest, among many other ugly things. There was an edition of the KaosGL journal on this issue couple of years ago. It wrote that they raped their guests and neighbours. They even wanted to approach the angels who were sent to Lot. Our people, however, were somehow only focused on the homosexuality thing. I am not even sure if it should be included as a sin. (21, Undergraduate Student)

Meltem's words point to a common occurrence in Turkish society regarding the 'accurate' portrayals of the historical/metaphorical incidents that take place in the Qur'an. In this case, her mother mistakenly believes that the Prophet Lot burnt the 'sinners' of Sodom and Gomorrah, though it is unclear how Lot might have burnt these people according to her mother's knowledge. As far as the traditional story goes, the people of Lot (even this framing suggests close ties between the Prophet Lot and the people he lived with in the same city, which is counter-factual) were condemned and destroyed by God because of their homosexual acts (Kligerman, 2007). However, as people refer to this narrative, they usually tend to ignore some aspects in the story that are vital to arrive at a more encompassing reading. Contrary to the Qur'an's emphasis on treating one's guest with great hospitability and respect, people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were ruled by 'selfish' aristocrats, indulged in numerous 'immoral' crimes, ranging from idolatry (which is one of the greatest sins in Islam) to denying Allah's word, and from engaging in incest, paedophilia, and bestiality to raping their guests, foreigners, and anyone who did not have enough power to resist (Schmit & Sofer, 1992). The frequently referenced 'heinous sin' of Lot's people has generally been evoked concerning the terms *liwat* or *fahisha* in the Qur'an, which have traditionally been translated as the 'ugly/foul deed', even though 'fahisha' refers to many activities that are considered wrong, immoral, indecent, atrocious, and gruesome (Siraj, 2014). Siraj's interpretation (2016, p. 93) argues that the story, even if some of the passages were concerned with homosexuality, the main message was on 'nonreciprocal exploitation of bodies' and that the story was 'an account of condemning rape, not contemporary consensual same-sex relationships' (Music, 2010; Geissinger, 2012,

as cited in Siraj, 2016). Likewise, Kugle contends that the story's message was distorted by the heteronormative selectiveness of the early jurists and translators, stating that 'the Qur'an does not clearly and unambiguously address homosexuals in the Muslim community, as there is no term in the Qur'an corresponding to "homosexual" or "homosexuality"' (2010, p. 70). These arguments, I believe, reflect the discernible power that the homonegative intellectuals and religious authorities possess with their access to the translational sources and the knowledge of the scripture, pointing at the role of translational politics played in the jurists' goals of heteronormative 'culture planning' (Even-Zohar, 1997).

ii. Equivalizing Queer* desire: losing joy, finding terms

For the Arab intellectuals who performed the early translations and interpretations of the Qur'an, Massad argued that they were highly influenced by the Victorian notions of inappropriate sexual behaviours, which they believed to be directly applicable to Arab sexual desires (2007, p. 15). Massad's claim sheds an illuminating light on the 'epistemological violence' (Teo, 2010) caused by the colonialising forces since the majority of the concepts of the post-Victorian sexological studies were not present in the minds of the Middle Eastern people before the 'moral white men' came with their 'mission' and cataloguing sciences. While I am not naively suggesting that there were no individuals with Queer* desires, sexual practices, and non-normative gender identities in the Middle East, I present that the issue of Queer* sexuality was formidably a matter of the private sphere or even when treated as a taboo, free from all the clinically pathologising and moralist discussions around it. Following the Foucauldian analysis of the Western history of sexuality, El-Rouayheb (2005) argued that, notwithstanding the fact that anal intercourse was generally considered to be an immoral act by many jurists and writers, the issue of homosexuality between men was ambiguously approached before the cultural conquest of the Western norms and terms on Queer* sexuality.[11]

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11 Behind the informed positionality and the activist yearnings of this current piece for positive social change lies the premise that 'Muslim stance' on Queer* rights in Turkey is not singular with the recognition that the 'Muslim versus secular' binary that has served the authoritarian and autocratic politics of the current Turkish government (Savcı, 2018, p. 80). I claim that we also need to realise that the lived realities of the believer and non-believer cis-heterosexual Turkish citizens as well as those of the believer and non-believer Queers* in Turkey are different from another. If not diligently tackled and questioned, a binary formation runs the risk of being used against Queer* Muslims, who want to freely practice their beliefs without being scorned or cast the improper other by other Muslims or non-religious Queers* in Turkey.

A similar problem occurs when Islam meets the Western knowledge on Queer* sexualities and genders: the terms 'homosexual' and 'gay', as we understand them in their vernacular, do not have proper Arabic equivalents, since these terms have socio-historical connotations to them, as having emanated in the Western medical/ clinical discourse (Foucault, 1978). Whereas in today's Arabic, *shadhdh jinsi* is generally interpreted as 'homosexuality', the term actually refers to someone who acts in unusual sexual practices, not restricted to sexual practices with same-sexed individuals. Similar to Bereket and Adam's findings (2006), which indicated that sexual practices seemingly have more self-identificatory value in the ways Turkish gay men make sense of their Queer* identities, the contemporary Arabic terminology on Queer* sexual practices and identities are multiple and heterogeneous in terms of their meanings and daily uses, none of which are included in the Qur'an. These cross-cultural problems Western Queer* politics pose for the Queer* individuals in Turkey have been underlined numerous times in the interviews. For instance, one interlocutor remarks on the way the term *lut kavmi* (people of Lot) has been translated and used in daily Turkish with the following words:

> *İlkan:* How do you think of when you hear the words Islam and homosexuality together?
> *Ferit:* Sorrow (*acı*). Rejection. Hell… Well, let me correct myself. This is what I thought before. For years, I have believed that *livata* (liwat) meant homosexuality, and *lut kavmi* (people of Lot) was a bunch of homosexuals. [laughs]. They taught us so. But, it turned out that there were punished after trying to rape the angels sent by Allah. I first heard this, watching a morning show with the late Yaşar Nuri Öztürk. Then I did some research and understood that *livata* could be any sexual thing that was not considered okay at the time. Anything that was not for recreation purposes, you know. Can you imagine?! But I think I need to read more on this. My mind is too muddled about the translation issue. I now wish I continued going to the Qur'an courses; I would like to read it in advanced Arabic.
> *İlkan:* May I ask why you stopped going to the Qur'an courses?
> *Ferit:* Why do you think?! Again and again, the discussions would come to the damning of the people of Lot. I used to have frequent nightmares. Constantly! My parents got furious that I dropped out, but I had to. I was merely a child.

While there are more contemporary terms in Arabic such as *luti* (the active partner who likes to penetrate a boy or man), *mabun* or *ubna* (the passive partner who likes to be penetrated), *dab* (a man who rapes his victims as they sleep), *musahiqa*

(lesbian), and *liwat* (anal sex regardless of genders), Lagrange states that these terms were not present at the time when the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (2000, pp. 170–171). In the same vein, Monroe argues that one cannot talk about the presence of homosexuality in the pre-modern Arabic civilisation in the sense that it has been used in the West because there was no differentiation between heterosexuals and homosexuals in the first place. The sexual difference was delineated according to the sexual practices, whether one was the penetrating or the penetrated part in the intercourse (1997, pp. 115–116). In particular, the active partners were generally not considered as 'gay', whereas the passive partners were usually regarded as such due to the act of being penetrated having been associated with effeminacy.

Therefore, in pre-modern Arabic society, homosexuality was not focused on 'identity' (Shakila); instead, it was a matter of bodily practice, who penetrates and who is penetrated. It is probably on these grounds that female homosexuality has never been much of an issue since it was thought to be devoid of penetration (Schmidtke, 1999, p. 43). These translational problems of cultural equivalence are of utmost importance in this study because language is conceived to be both a cultural and an ideological entity, 'always already produc[ing] an array of new codifications, textualities, and cultural meanings, as well as deterritorializations and reterritorializations of social and discursive systems' (De Toro, 2009, p. 80, as cited in Spurlin, 2017, p. 173). For that matter, it can be realised the conditions in which translations and interpretations of the pertinent Qur'anic verses and narratives have been conducted within the heteronormative worldviews and discourses. In line with Yip's modes of challenging traditional hermeneutics, only one of the interviewees engaged in an 'offensive' approach, through which he challenged the authority of religious figures and structure. However, his critiques were also directed at the political figures whose underlined words have influential power over the masses. The following excerpt is illuminating on the impact of the religious and political authorities on Queer* Muslims in Turkey:

> *İlkan:* Concerning your relationship with Islam, have there been other influential figures besides your parents?
> *Tarık:* Of course, there have been! I used to follow some of the famous *hoca*s that everyone likes, Nihat Hatipoğlu and Mustafa Karataş,[12] for instance. But then I saw that they said that homosexuality was a sin and a disease. As if it can be cured! I don't believe that. Allah created me this way. Anyone

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12 Nihat Hatipoğlu and Mustafa Karataş are two famous Turkish academics of Islamic Studies and theologians who frequently talk about Islamic issues in Turkish TV programs. Their ideas are classically orthodox in general.

who claims the opposite would contradict Allah's strong will and judgment…
But the culprit is JDP. It's like they are obsessed with us! They keep targeting
us. I no longer go to the mosque because of these people. If they are Muslims,
I am not! At least not like them. Such a pity!

As Tarık's words indicate, the homonegative ideas and discourses of the in-
fluential political figures on Queer* sexuality negatively affect Queer* Muslims
and their relationship with religion to a considerable extent. As he explained, it is
Tarık's anger towards JDP leaders' attitudes towards Queers* that caused him to
stop going to the mosque or supporting JDP in the first place. While he stated that
he voted for JDP in the early days, he now regrets his actions and claims that such
public expressions of intolerance and hatred have no place in Islam, which, as he
calls it, is 'a religion of peace and togetherness'. Even though he does not employ
any 'defensive' modes of challenging traditional hermeneutics (he does not want
to 'misinterpret or read into Allah's words'), his 'offensive' approach takes a sig-
nificant portion of responsibility from the shoulders of the Queer* Muslims and
mount it on the politicians and the theologians who, in his words, 'manipulate
society's ideas and attitudes towards' Queers* in Turkey. It is interesting that
none of the interviewees employed the 'creative' modes of challenging traditional
hermeneutics, in that they did not imply or mention any 'possible' account of
same-sex intimacy and love in the Qur'an (outing the text) or did not inject Queer*
meanings into the narratives and figures (befriending the text) (Yip, 2005). In the
final section, I hypothesise why such differences in hermeneutic strategies might
exist and what sorts of democratic strategies and liberties may be necessary in
Turkey's case for the 'creative' modes of Queer* hermeneutics to emerge.

IV. Concluding remarks: believing and desiring Queerly* in Turkey

Ostracising claims that posit non-cisheteronormative genders and sexualities are
not accepted in Islam have several detrimental effects on the lives of Queer* Mus-
lims, as my interlocutors' experiences above reveal. The majority of Queer* Mus-
lims that are trying to reconcile the conflicting aspects of their religious and sexual/
gender identities end up experiencing numerous difficulties in their relationship
with their self-concept, their family relationships, friends, partners, and colleagues,
which are found to be creating further problems of belonging both in the Queer*
scenes and Islamic communities (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Jaspal & Siraj, 2011;
Jaspal, 2017). Yet, most of these studies do not focus on the salience of the Qur'an-
ic narratives and the Qur'anic verses on the affective states and the memories of
the Queer* Muslims they study. On the other hand, this study presents a different

case than the countries studied in the literature so far.[13] Religious authorities do not always have the same amount of extensive social influence, and the salience of the collective religious identity is not the same everywhere (Altınordu, 2010, p. 541). For Queer* Muslims in Turkey, religious identity cannot easily remain in the background because religious discourse is ubiquitous in the course of the daily lives of Turkish citizens. Not only is religion more apparent in the public sphere, but it has political connotations as well. Any religious statement or claim that might contradict the ideas and judgments of the central political party might easily be labelled as blasphemous and, even worse, legally punished, as we have seen in the art exhibition incident at Boğaziçi University.

While there is a rapidly growing movement of 'Progressive Muslims' across the world, which aim to develop alternative Islamic theologies on Queer* desires, genders, and sexualities that utilise various modes of nonheteronormative translational practices, reinterpretation, and Queer* hermeneutics, there are only a few individuals in Turkey who engage in these modes of Queer* translational hermeneutics of Islam due to the problems of having the necessary social, cultural, and intellectual resources to do so. As the intricate relationships of my interlocutors with their religious and sexual identities have shown, there are multiple, grave problems involved in the question of how to approach Islam queerly in Turkey's case: not only the issues of how to read, understand, and promote the alternative Queer* hermeneutic traditions like the *ijtihadic* tradition Hendricks proposed (2016) when there are no Turkish resources, groups, and figures to turn to, but also the very possible realities of being legally accused of disrespecting the religious values of Turkish society if one attempts to promote these ideas publicly. In this respect, I argue that it is the apparent lack of legal protection of the religious liberties of individuals in Turkey to freely 'profess, practice and propagate religion' (Bhargava, 2010) that causes Queer* Muslim in Turkey not to invest in the 'creative' modes of alternative hermeneutics that Queer* Muslim living in Western societies can. The state's tendency to ignore how religious communities act within themselves stems from 'assertive secularism' of the Turkish Republic, which demands a strict wall of separation between state and religion (Kuru, 2007,

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13   Even though this is the first study in Turkey to examine and analyse ways in which Muslim LGBTQIA+ people in Turkey experience their intersecting religious/spiritual and sexual/ gender identities with a focus on traditional and/or non-heteronormative translational hermeneutical strategies, there have been influential publications regarding Queer Muslim lives in Turkey that deserve to be read in their own right to be rightfully cherished for their innovative insights and styles (Bereket & Adam, 2008; Keniş, 2012; Ayten & Anık, 2014, Yıldırım, 2018; and most notably, Kuyumcu, 2020).

p. 527), and thereby leaving religious minorities (in this case, Queer* Muslims) vulnerable before the dominant religious groups. Whereas it is acknowledged that it is not easy to establish a medium that will protect Queer* Muslims from the homonegative Muslim groups due to the 'ideological path dependence' present in the country's political history, I think future studies in political sciences and religious studies may benefit from thinking through Bhargava's concepts and ideas pertinent to 'contextual secularism' and 'principled distance', so that Muslim sexual minorities and their religious liberties and equal citizenship rights might be protected against the groups that might want to harm Queer* Muslims on the ground of desacralising 'their' values.

In conclusion, even in the case of Queers* individuals, who have been systemically condoned and discriminated against by the orthodox institutions and authorities of Abrahamic religions since the Middle Ages, religion and spirituality still continue to play indispensable roles in the daily trajectories of their gendered and sexualised experiences (especially in countries like Turkey in which politics, religion, and everyday life of citizens are irrevocably interwoven), the lived realities and experiences of Queer* Muslims, and the questions this study raises are exceptionally relevant for our contemporary discussions around the relationship between religion and gender/sexuality politics. Not only are the stakes high for the Queer* individuals everywhere who would like to enrich and empower their religious experiences without feeling the need to hide or reject their sexual/gender identities or giving upon their religious and spiritual needs as if these two options are bound in an ultimatum, but there is the immediate necessity of attending to the rapidly growing problem of pervasive Islamophobia in the West that is centred on the misapprehension that Islam is inherently hostile against Queer* individuals. Just as Mohamed and Esack have argued (2011), the 'burden' of shared responsibility falls on both sides of the debate, namely Muslims who need to sort out their vexed relationship with sexual diversity and gender equality, engaging more closely with the contemporary understanding of Queer* sexuality, and the Western LGBTQ+ organisations and activists who need to stop reproducing Islamophobic discourses to vilify Muslims and Islam even when Queer* rights are exploited and disparaged by the Muslim institutions and authorities in the Middle-Eastern countries as in this complex case I have demonstrated here. Ultimately, it should be realised that the ongoing intolerance and negativity towards Queers* and other marginalised groups are to be contextualised within the socio-historical and politico-cultural embeddedness of Islamic societies, since from the non-ideological, theological point of view, the Qur'anic verses and stories on love, acceptance, tolerance, social justice, embracing and celebrating 'unity in diversity' outnumber the five verses on same-sex practices and the story of Lot.

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Quo vadis foreign language teaching in Polish public secondary schools? Is the public education in the 21st century effective enough and technologically sufficient?

The education system in Poland is undergoing some structural reforms once again.[1] Highly dependent on politics, education is prone to both structural changes and philosophical concepts, officially, to strengthen the general quality and to address the raising demands of the labour market. Consequently, there is no surprise that English has been playing a significant role in our schools for some time. Rajathurai Nishanthi puts English in historical contexts: 'English was initially the language of England, but over the historical efforts of the British Empire, it has developed the

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[1] A major reform in the school education system has been underway since the school year 2017/2018 and will be completed in 2022/2023: 'The pre-reform system comprised 6-year primary schools (ISCED 1), 3-year lower secondary schools (ISCED 2), 3-year (upper secondary) basic vocational schools, 3-year general upper secondary schools and 4-year technical upper secondary schools (ISCED 3), and 1- to 2.5-year post-secondary schools (ISCED 4). The reform has transformed the '6+3+3 years' education model into an '8+4 (or +5) years' one, with 8-year single-structure education (ISCED 1 and 2) in the primary school followed by a 4- or 5-year education cycle in a secondary school, and a 1- to 2.5-year cycle in a post-secondary school. Pupils enrolled in pre-reform schools follow programmes based on transitional arrangements. Structural changes in the system are combined with a curricular reform, and new arrangements have been put in place for pre-primary education and vocational education and training' (Kolanowska, 2021, p. 12).

primary or secondary language of numerous former British colonies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka, and India etc. Currently, English is the primary language not only of countries actively touched by British imperialism, but also many business and cultural spheres dominated by those countries' (2018). Nowadays, the words referring to language of business become quite apparent as to why English is so popular among the youth.[2] Particularly, since Poland joined the European Union in 2004 and the common market became open for employment, the ability to communicate in the English language started to be seen as an asset and a crucial competence. The EU recognises its linguistic diversity as significant and calls it a fundamental value.[3] Meenu and Prabhat Pandey state that 'in the international commercial sphere English has become lingua-franca of the business world irrespective of geographical, social, political or religious differences. It is being recognized as one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Earlier people used to get a job if they possessed expertise in their respective fields but in the current era the specific skills should be complemented with communication skills. The need for giving emphasis on the English communication development is of utmost importance in the present scenario with an objective to make the job aspirants gainfully employed' (Pandey & Pandey, 2014). Polish foreign language education seems to head in this particular direction where English is the most popular foreign language, where between 68.5% and 96.7% of students in different parts of Poland choose to take it at their matriculation exam.[4]

In the world's largest ranking of countries and regions by English Skills of 2022 (English Proficiency Index[5]) Poland was placed in 13th place. The question remains

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2   'English is the most widely spread foreign language taught in European schools. In the previous issue of Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2008, it was stated that English dominates in Europe as it is used in 14 countries. In countries where it was not stated which language should be chosen, English also is the most popular language' (Górowska-Fells, 2012) [author's translation from Polish].

3   In an EU based on the motto 'United in diversity', languages are the most direct expression of our culture. Linguistic diversity is a reality, the observance of which is a fundamental value of the EU. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) states that the Union 'shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity'. Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) emphasises that 'Union action shall be aimed at developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States', while fully respecting cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 165(1) TFEU). For further reading see: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/142/language-policy.

4   See: Universality of teaching foreign languages. https://www.ore.edu.pl/2015/03/raporty-2/

5   **The EF English Proficiency Index** (**EF EPI**) attempts to rank countries and regions by the equity of English language skills amongst those adults who participated and took

how did we achieve such great result? The very first association is public education which is, according to the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland, to be both free and mandatory until the age of 18.[6] The system of education comprises of early childhood education and care (crèches and kids clubs) for 0 to 3-year-old children, pre-primary education in form of a nursery school, a preschool class, a preschool unit or preschool centre for children aged 3 to 6 years. Compulsory education is divided into one-year compulsory pre-primary education for 6-year-old children and primary school for 7–15-year-old children and teens. For young people aged 15–18/20 there are various types of schools available, they can choose between 4-year general secondary schools, 5-year technical secondary schools, or 3-year stage I sectoral vocational schools (Kolanowska, 2021, pp. 14–15). In those types of schools English classes as a second language are conducted with lower and higher intensity. Primary school education is divided into two stages where from grades 1–3 for integrated education (Polish, Mathematics, Social Education, Natural Sciences, Technology, ICT Education, Art Education, Music Education, Modern Foreign Language, and Physical Education) there are cumulatively 20 hours weekly, where certain hours are distributed among the individual types of classes by the teacher conducting lessons (Kolanowska, 2021, p. 41). However, the allocation of hours dedicated to first modern foreign language is specified clearly; that is, three hours weekly throughout grades 4–8, which in total give 108 hours (approximately 3 hours weekly x 36 weeks per school year) of foreign language education and 540 hours during the 5-year cycle (Kolanowska, 2021, p. 42). When it comes to secondary schools, both in 4-year general secondary school (3 hours x 4 years) and 5-year technical secondary school (2 hours x 3 years and

the language test available for free over the internet. The index was first published in 2011 and based on test data from 1.7 million test takers. The 2022 edition was based on test data from more than 2.1 million participants. However, the test seems to be biased towards respondents who are interested in pursuing language study, and the sample was roughly balanced between male (59%) and female (41%) representatives from a broad range of ages (87% of those respondents were under the age of 35, and 97% were under the age of 60). Retrieved from: https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/about-epi/#faq-about-epi

6   **The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland** guarantees the right to education for all, provides for free access to education in public schools, and stipulates that education is compulsory until the age of 18. Article 70 section 1: 'Everyone shall have the right to education. Education to 18 years of age shall be compulsory. The manner of fulfilment of schooling obligations shall be specified by statute'. Article 70 section 2: 'Education in public schools shall be without payment. Statutes may allow for payments for certain services provided by public institutions of higher education'. Retrieved from: ttps://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Poland_1997.pdf

3 hours x 2 years), there are 432 hours (12 hours x 36 weeks) of foreign language education during the whole cycle, that is, 4 and 5 years respectively. Altogether, throughout the entire public education, students are exposed to approximately 600 hours of English as a Foreign Language over the course of 12–13 years of studying. Public schools, of course, cannot and should not take all the credit for foreign language education and students' progress, as there are other motives behind foreign language acquisition. Zhu Quan clarifies that '[…] motivation, as far as its notion is concerned, is a kind of strong stimulus which comes from a certain learner's perspective of his/her own social milieu and drives this learner to study hard and smart (e.g., use appropriate learning strategies) and finally acquire the proficiency of the target language in a quick and effective way. It could come either from the learner's inner desire to become integrated with the target language speaking community or external pressure which requires the learner to have a good command of the language to cope with daily life or both' (Quan, 2014). Therefore, it seems that school serves as this external source of motivation, where students are provided with a constant input of information, divided by skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking, along with language components such as grammar and vocabulary, expand students' language abilities. Along with pupils' inner desires such as: the possibility of playing your favourite game (when one has to speak English to communicate with a member of one's team around the globe), listening to and understanding music, watching movies, traveling and finding employment abroad, all serve as good reasons behind language learning.

However, schools today are not doing so great; the educational process faces both difficulties and challenges. Even though pupils are exposed constantly to English through different means of educational tools over many years, they seem to constantly forget basic vocabulary, as a piece memorised once is not going to be retained indefinitely in a student's memory. Rusudan Gogokhia explains that each pupil is different in terms of memory types. 'It is known from observations that some make it easier to remember visual material, some acoustic, and some motor. This is also shown how each given material is studied orally: some prefer silent reading (optical type), some prefer when they are read, […] it depends on the methodological teaching methods' (Gogokhia, 2020). Consequently, with numerous classes, it is impossible to anticipate whether students will retain the presented material or not. Additionally, Blake Richards and Paul Frankland cast a new light on memorising, claiming that despite each individual best efforts, storing information in chaotic and quickly changing environments proves difficult. Knowledge that is not perceived as crucial is simply forgotten and should not be seen as failure, but more in the context of strategy (optimal mnemonic strategy) (Richards & Frankland, 2017). In this context both educators and learners should

be constantly reminded of the fact that their success behind language learning depends on their ability to remember. Undoubtedly, one may claim that nowadays we do not have to retain vast chunks of information, as such knowledge is widely accessible through the internet. This conviction implemented too early is very damaging, especially when your neural system and synapses are still developing, which is particularly true at primary school. This goes along with the fact that more and more students have and use their smart phones in schools. Of course, such situation is both positive and negative at the same time, and fine lines should be drawn on how and when to use phones for educational purposes. In addition, we should make sure that students are able to disconnect themselves from the virtual world. What would be the point of students being in a classroom if they were not able to concentrate on the topic of a lesson? Most importantly, we should not confuse basic cognition which allows us to grow up when we are young with selecting what is useful and not when we are fully grown human beings. As it was argued by William R. Klemm, '[…] the ultimate goal should be to teach people how to think, solve problems – and to create. Central to these capabilities, however, is the ability to remember things. The more one knows (remembers), the more intellectual competencies one has to draw upon for thinking, problem solving, and even creativity. […]. Knowledge and skills are acquired through memory. Even our ability to think depends on memory' (Klemm, 2007, pp. 61–73). For this reason, we should not let students go away with the simple explanation that they do not possess language ability, as is often justified on the account of poor class performance. We should start treating poor memory as impairment and work towards helping students. Educators must teach pupils to learn how to memorise pieces of information – not by learning things by heart but rather by associating pieces of vocabulary to things students already know (Susanto, 2017). Students in primary schools ought to be prepared for further education at secondary school, but also for the final years of primary school. During students' initial years in primary school, learners should comprehend how to gather, retain, and store information for the upcoming 7 to 8 years of more conscious education when they are constantly exposed to new information.

It seems that by secondary school, when a student is around 15 years old, it is almost impossible to change a pupil's minds about foreign language learning. Either one likes it or one cannot stand it at this point. For this reason, it is very important, as early as it is possible, to create a positive enforcement in association to foreign language learning. It must not be trivialised and the significance of foreign language should not be ignored. Education, at this stage, should be demanding as far as teaching is concerned, as it resonates on later education. It seems that we have reached a situation when we have to redesign education,

as it is not respected and both students and their parents ignore its purpose and significance. No longer are students required to memorise and therefore produce parts of material, they are rather required to recognise content. Consequently, they know language passively and are unable to produce it – to speak it. The contents of the core curricula used in primary and secondary schools should be differentiated.[7] The same topics should not overlap, as it does not help in making the process of learning easier, as it is not interesting, and in fact it becomes quite predictable. In addition, testing should gradually change as we are progressing; no longer should closed-type exercises where answers are predetermined be present, but more open exercises created to stimulate thinking and creativity should be designed. Nowadays, the resources that foreign language teachers can use are inexhaustible, providing that each school has access to the internet and that a computer is present in every classroom, more often accompanied by over-head projectors and less often by interactive whiteboards. Teachers might easily prepare interesting, though provoking, well-structured classes. Foreign language teaching should, as it is postulated for long time, be concentrated on communication, where students are not afraid of speaking.

Taking everything into consideration, teaching is not as easy a process as most people think; the complexity and importance of some classes are not apparent at

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7 1) human (e.g., personal data, periods of life, appearance, character traits, personal belongings, feelings and emotions, skills and interests); 2) place of residence (e.g., house and its surroundings, rooms and equipment home, housework); 3) education (e.g., school and its premises, subjects, learning, school supplies, school grades, school life, extracurricular activities); 4) work (e.g., popular professions and related activities and duties, place of work, choice of profession); 5) private life (e.g., family, acquaintances and friends, activities of daily living, determining time, forms of spending free time, holidays and celebrations, lifestyle, conflicts and problems); 6) nutrition (e.g., groceries, meals and their preparation, eating habits, dining establishments); 7) purchases and services (e.g., types of stores, goods and their features, selling and buying, means of payment, exchange and return of goods, promotions, use from services); 8) traveling and tourism (e.g., means of transport and their use, orientation in the field, accommodation, trips, sightseeing); 9) culture (e.g., fields of culture, artists and their works, participation in culture, traditions and customs, media); 10) sports (e.g., sports disciplines, sports equipment, sports facilities, events sports, playing sports); 11) health (e.g., lifestyle, well-being, diseases, their symptoms and treatment); 12) science and technology (e.g., scientific discoveries, inventions, use of basic technical devices and information and communication technologies); 13) the natural world (e.g. weather, seasons, plants and animals, landscape, threats and environmental protection); 14) social life (e.g., social events and phenomena). For further information see: https://www.ore.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/jezyk-obcy-nowozytny.-pp-z-komentarzem.-szkola-podstawowa-1.pdf

first, or never for certain individuals. Nevertheless, whatever is taught is always carefully planned to make the learning process easy and efficient. One might think that upon graduation from either a 3-year or 5-year-long study one has finally completed one's educational journey to finally becomes a teacher; however, one is mistaken. The process during which an educator needs to learn how to teach effectively and how not to be blamed for your students' mistakes has just begun. Additionally, constant education is advised if one wishes to keep up with general knowledge, trends, culture (film and music industry), and most importantly with a foreign language. Otherwise, soon enough, thanks to the internet, students will become linguistically sufficient, or so they will think, once educators stop providing them with the answers they need. Learning, on the other hand, is also a complex and demanding process, for which any student needs to be prepared, in the form of note making, the ability to be concentrated for the duration of classes, and readiness for constant revision throughout the learning process. Teachers make the learning process more understandable and bearable, but they will not study and do everything for you.

There is no doubt that educators are aware of problems associated with teaching, and they have been expressing their discontent on numerous occasions.[8] However, as more commonly more members of general public express their strong opinions on the system of education and teachers in particular, it seems that a proper debate should be initiated. It ought to be reminded once and for all that education is a common good which should be treasured and not dismantled if we are not happy with the assessments of each individual. It does not need constant change of its basic principles. It must not be modified on the assumption that one year it should be easy to pass the matriculation exam and the next more difficult to do so. One time a student passes with 51%, another time 30%, and the next time they even fail one subject and still be granted a pass. Universal public education allows members of society to achieve their desirable goals despite their backgrounds; one can become virtually anybody thanks to education, as it is free even at the university level. However, it will not be achieved by constantly undermining those who create it and discussing it with parties who are not prepared for a constructive exchange of ideas towards better education. Sadly, what school is lacking is its previously high status and the situation in which highly driven professionals will be willing to work in schools to teach the next generation of pupils. Unsurprisingly, it seems that qualified and highly driven graduates are not willing to become teachers, not necessarily because of the complexity of the teaching process, but because of the uncertainty, the frequently changed concept of teaching, and the

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8   For further reading see: https://www.wprost.pl/tematy/10211537/strajk-nauczycieli-2019.html

low social status of teachers and wages. Who, then, is going to teach the next generations of students? It is almost certain that not pensioned individuals, who love what they do, but rather those who behind teaching see holiday breaks and fewer responsibilities, as according to them teachers don't do much!

As far as foreign language education is concerned, the majority of students understand that English is important for their education and that it creates employment opportunities along with additional perks such as access to American films, music, and gaming industries. To reach such awareness you need proper education. As it was stated in the English Proficiency Index, those willing to study achieve great results, and the 13th place that Poland scored proves this. However, there are still those who do not see any advantages in foreign language education. 'Although it has been almost 17 years since Poland's accession to the European Union and the significant opening of Polish business to foreign markets, our knowledge of foreign languages is not the best. It turns out that there are almost the same number of those who know a foreign language at an advanced level (15.9%) and those who do not know it at all (14.7%). The rest of the surveyed representative group are people who know a foreign language at a basic level (38.5%) and an intermediate level, i.e., one that enables communication (36.3%). The survey shows that we do not have many language specialists on the market. There are hardly any people with advanced knowledge of a foreign language in Poland […]. The data collected by the Eurostat over the last few years indicate that the share of people who decide to take courses at an advanced level is increasing year by year, but it is still a small percentage'.[9] The long process of language learning still proves to be overwhelming for many. It seems that for both educators and learners it might bring some difficulties. In the context of language acquisition, we should use time efficiently, we ought to teach students how to learn quickly when they are still very young and willing to do so, as usually with time and more demanding content they might easily get discouraged. Foreign language teaching should not be used in a political context as leverage against patriotism – a threat used by populists. On the contrary, foreign language education should be viewed as crucial in serving as a means of bringing new ideas on various topics such as: sustainability, environmental protection, equality, law, and immigration, just to name a few. Lyudmila Levina, Olga Lukmanova, Lidiya Romanovskaya, and Tatyana Shutova argue that: 'There are at least two reasons why we should consider teaching cultural skills as part of language teaching: 1) the international role of the English language, which has evolved into a 'code' of communication in various

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9   For further reading see: https://www.prawo.pl/kadry/dlaczego-polacy-nie-ucza-sie-jezykow-obcych-skoro-ich-znajomosc,506024.html

spheres, and 2) globalization, which has opened many new ways for nations to come closer to one another and requires more and more people to move from one cultural environment to another. […] In order to avoid this cultural and political disintegration, and foster empathy and understanding, teachers should present students with a true picture or representation of another culture and language' (Levina et al., 2016, pp. 277–282). Consequently, it is better to handle topics when we are equipped with the proper tools, which in most cases that refers to language that allows us to gather the necessary information from different sources in most cases in English. In order to understand today's world, especially in the era of miscommunication and fake news, we are obliged to get our information from various sources, ideally foreign and domestic.

Schools, like universities, should stay open for different concepts and ideas; we do not have to agree on everything, but we should definitely talk about issues that prove to be important in our lives. Schools must become a safe space. We still have a long way to go to change individual teachers' opinions and ideas of us as a collective. However, we must not allow the situation when individual educators' progressive opinions are silenced as we are not ready to tackle certain topics. Consequently, we may face situations in the future when school boards will sensor what should and what should not be a part of core curriculum on the previously basic and widely accepted concepts of nudity presented in art, when pupils are not allowed to see famous Michelangelo's sculpture of David due to its nudity that leads to the school's principle being fired.[10] Each such case tells teachers that they had better be carefully analysing what they are presenting and saying to students, as they may lose their jobs. This is a very dangerous precedent that might be used on different occasions when school authorities, parents, or students themselves are discontented with what they are faced with.

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Abstract

School faces many challenges in the 21st century, which become quite visible as they accumulate in secondary school. From one side we have students, parents, education authorities that try to shape education in their individual way; and on the other, we have teachers trying to navigate between those expectations. This article tries to present those sometimes-contradicting ideas in relation to curriculum and technological advancement used while conducting classes. Additionally, it enumerates some difficulties behind foreign language acquisition and ideas of what language education should be.

Keywords: foreign language education, English as a foreign language, education of the 21st century, challenges.

Piotr Rembowski

Political entropy – the problem of social inequality and the rising global wave of populism

'I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.'

Nelson Mandela,
Rivonia Trial in South Africa, 1964.

Introduction

The world is currently struggling with different crises – global food crisis, climate crisis, poorness/poverty crisis, and democracy crisis. It is evident that the reality shaped during the Cold War is changing into an unknown one. In the 20th century, international relations were ruled by two world superpowers – the United States of America and the Soviet Union. A bipolar world system was appropriate for international relations because the two sides wanted to improve their damage and defence abilities in order to surpass their opponent.

Kenneth N. Waltz, the American scientist and representative of American realism, admitted in his 1964 article 'The Stability of a Bipolar World', that:

'In a bipolar world, on the other hand, attention is focused on crises by both of the major competitors, and especially by the defensive state. (…) One's motto may still be, "push to the limit", but limit must be emphasized as heavily as push.

Caution, moderation, and the management of crisis come to be of great and obvious importance' (Waltz, 1964, p. 884).

During the Cold War era, world crises created by one superpower would be defeated by the opposite side. The Soviet Union cared about countries under communism and socialism, while the United States of America and its allies also cared about their ideological partners around the world. It was much easier to create a predictable, stable international system and affirm it. At the end of 20th century and the beginning of 21st century, when only one superpower remained, the situation changed into something like entropy. As we can see, a new multipolar world has begun that we can call a new political system: political entropy.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, entropy is a complete lack of order (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). We can observe it in the modern political system, where we notice plenty of aspiring old and new regional powers and politicians who have their own perspective of justice, rule the country, and solve problems. We could easily define it as political entropy. In this article, I analyse the connection between social inequality and the rising wave of populism around the world from the international relations point of view.

1. Populism and social inequality – definitions

Populism in theory is the thing or idea that appeals to the majority of a group or society. Populist leaders do not look for real political long-term priorities that can improve the economic, social, or military sphere of their nation or state. They rather turn into concepts of nationhood and national identity to gain more in a short period of time. Their way of making policy is based on propaganda. Usually, populists are against values such as: cooperation, liberal values, and even migration processes (Lilleker, 2006, pp. 160–162). The beginning of populistic policy harks back to the 20th century – when Hitler, Mussolini, Lenin, and Stalin ruled Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became the new Chancellor of German Reich. One of the most important things for Hitler was appearance – looking good during speeches, in propaganda films, and materials. Benito Mussolini also wanted to base his popularity on extremely emotional speeches and performances (two most important things in a populistic way of policy) (Koepnick et al., 2004, pp. 47–54).

Hitler gained power because of his impressive promises to normal people, f. ex. the unemployed, farmers, people suffering from hunger and economic crises after Germany lost the First World War. Hitler also said that the new administration would not recognise classes, they would recognise 'German people' with whom all together they would overcome the period of distress (Gallately, 2007, pp. 285-288). If we want to define the meaning of populism from the political

point of view, it is difficult. There is no one single ideology behind it. There are promises to normal people (see the example of Hitler above), and people want simple answers for complex questions and problems. This policy is based on a charismatic leader (see the example of Hitler and Mussolini), and simple people and opposition to elites to create new order. Politicians who are populist usually come from a low social, civil, and economic competence (The dictionary of political knowledge, 2021, pp. 384–386). Populism can occur on both the right and left wing, attacking traditional democratic institutions just to keep power in hands of new political group based on 'normal' people (Robertson, 2009, pp. 336–337).

Politicians use crises to give promises and start populistic policies. In the modern world, the most common useful crisis is economic and hunger, which cause social inequality.

Social inequality according to Penn State University (Pennsylvania, The US) refers to differential access to and use of resources across various domains (e.g., health, education, occupations) that result in disparities across gender, race/ethnicity, class, and other important social markers (The Pennsylvania State University, 2015). Social inequalities have obviously been present during the past, but at the end of 20th century and at the beginning of 21st century, they became more visible in the public sphere and important in national and international policy. Many authorities concentrate on the effects of inequality, how to build society for all, and to turn it into new perspectives, f. e. inequality resulting from gender, age, sexual orientation, or even place of birth, living, or working. That way of making policy is possible because of feminist theory of international relations. The feminist theory of international relations concentrates not only on gender gap, but covers a lot of different topics, and is important in international relations (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001, p. 36).

It should be noted, that before the feminism paradigm in international relations, Marxism pointed out important thought about inequality between two antagonist classes in society. The way in which the world works is based on economics – there is a class that possesses capital (bourgeoisie) and just want to increase its wealth. On the opposite side – there is a class with the ability to work (working class) that works for the class with the capital. Everything in international relations is based on economic (Jackson and Sorensen, 2012, pp. 201–210).

2. The connection between social inequality and the rising wave of populism – the United States of America, Brazil, and Poland

In 2013, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat published a report titled 'Inequality Matters. Report of the World Social Situation 2013' about increasing inequality around the world. They concentrated

on important issues in world policy, which were to create more equal societies with access to education, healthcare, well-paid work – and how income is shared by 1% of population of some countries, f. e. one of the richest countries in the world – the United States of America – which has 1% of the population who own about 20% of the income (measured in 2012, after the World Financial Crisis from 2007). The report was also about the situation of minority groups – indigenous people, women, children, etc. The report followed the previous report from 2005 – the answer on how to adapt the Millennial Declaration from 2000 while world leaders pledged to create a more equitable world (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). We can see that social inequality is one of the most important problems to solve in the modern world. Social inequality also causes a global wave of populism. The three best examples we can examine are the United States of America, Brazil, and Poland.

The United States of America is always defined as the promised land, where everyone can live the 'American Dream' – which means going from being a very poor man to becoming a very wealthy one with access to prosperous social advancement. This is also the home of modern democracy and civil rights, called the oldest modern democracy. In 2007, one of the biggest crashes in contemporary world economy started in the United States. It caused an unemployment crisis and recession both in the US and across the world. At that time, the newly elected president Barack Obama faced a lot of challenges in his presidency (Derengowski, 2016, pp. 826–828). To resolve all these problems, Obama turned to multilateralism in international relations and foreign policy, and also turned more to social in domestic policy (Rudolf et al., 2016, pp. 3–4). Objectively, a good situation did not help the country to save itself from the populism virus, which was spread by next president.

Former President of the United States Donald Trump has sometimes been called a populist or authoritarian populist, for whom the culmination of populism policy could be seen as the storming of the Capitol on January 6th, 2021 – one of the symbols of American democracy – by the people who did not recognise his loss in the election with Joe Biden (Mounk, 2021). In his presidential campaign in 2016, Trump repeated his slogan 'Make America Great Again', he 'wanted' to restore lost American greatness (Dodds, 2022, p. 29). Inequality was one of the most important issues during the campaign and Trump supporters were people who felt themselves 'behind' great politics and felt less important than other society groups, f. e. immigrants, minorities, and crooked politicians. Trump promised great change and used those feelings in an efficient way to move him into national policy. It seemed that he just wanted to fight for normal people's rights and states stakes (Reeves, 2016).

The United States of America under the Trump Administration withdrew from a lot of important international activities. In the first days of his presidency, on January 30th, 2017, the US withdrew from the major economic initiative that connected countries from the Pacific area – the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) (The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) 2017). In 2019, the US also withdrew from the Paris Agreement to reduce all types of emissions, which, according to President Trump, was unjust to the American people – workers, businesses, taxpayers – and economy; the country had done enough (US Department of State 2017). The other unacceptable stake to the US was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran (a plan to reduce nuclear weapons and powers in Iran), because it 'failed to protect American's national security interests' and 'enriched the Iranian regime and enabled its malign behavior' (The White House Website (archive), 2018). During the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, President Trump warned and declared that his country would withdraw from the World Health Organization, which represented an 'alarming lack of independence' from China to solve the problems of the pandemic (Congressional Research Service). Even during his presidential campaign, Trump criticised NATO and shocked member states by stating how unfair this defence alliance was for the United States. He pointed out that American military donations were too high compared to others European allies (Pothier & Vershbow, 2017, pp. 1–2). The most important foundation for international security after the end of the Second World War was undermined not by the main opposite state – Russia – but the main founder state and guarantor of world peace.

President Donald Trump created a new political reality after his inauguration; he wanted to help normal American people in their regular life by withdrawing from a lot of 'unfair' international initiatives.

A similar approach was adopted by the former president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. Brazil is one of the most important states in international policy; it could be next superpower. It is very densely populated, with over 200 million people and a very large territory nears to 8.5 million km2 – half of all South America's territory. The main part of the Brazilian economy is based on the extraction of raw materials and its exports to developed countries (Gawrycki et al., 2011, pp. 148–149). At the beginning of 21st century, Brazil went through a very good economic situation due to the demand of raw materials for developing and developed countries such as China and the Arab states. In the second decade of the 21st century, the country saw stagnation and an increase in inequality between the classes in Brazil. People from the middle classes dropped to the low class, while the rich got richer (Gocłowska-Bolek, 2020, p. 5). These situations were used by Jair Bolsonaro in his presidential campaign.

Jair Bolsonaro had simple solutions for very complex problems. Poverty caused inequality, and consecutively inequality created the process of criminalisation of people's lives. In order to improve their living conditions, people turned to the criminal world and worked, f. e. for the mafia. Bolsonaro promised to stop this process by building more prisons, selling more guns to regular people, and expand military-controlled schools. He also turned to neoliberal politics by privatising almost all state companies and opening the territory of the Amazon Rainforest to foreign businesses (Galvão, 2018). Bolsonaro was regarded by society as a remedy for the crisis and other problems such as corruption (Rojas de Carvalho & Santos Junior, 2019, p. 199). The most controversial action by Jair Bolsonaro after having become president was initiating a massive deforestation of the Amazon – a rainforest known as the 'lungs of the earth', which is extremely important to the global environment, especially during climate changes. The Amazon contains more than 390 billion trees and retains near to 123 billion tons of carbon. It is also one of the oldest forests in the world, a natural habitat for endemic species, and home for some of the first civilisations (Gramer, 2022). The exploitation of the Amazon caused a great deal of damage to the natural environment and was disrespectful to ethnic minorities.

The next example is Poland and its ruling party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski's Law and Justice. In the 2015 campaign, the party talked about the negligence of the ruling coalition, f. e. the failure of security policy due to the Russian annexation of Crimea, the alarming level of social inequality, the large scale of dependence on European Union institutions, and the objection to immigrants from Arab countries and the Middle East. The party won the election with an overwhelming majority and initiated a lot of actions that were and still are very populistic and authoritarian (Kowalski, 2018).

The most dangerous of these actions is providing a narrative against the European Union. This can be defined by a statement by one of the most prominent party politicians, Krystyna Pawlowicz, who said (before the party gained power in 2013) that the flag of the European Union is a 'rag (to the floor)'. After the 2015 election, she became a member of the leading power in the Polish parliament, and is now a judge at the Constitutional Court (Bartkiewicz, 2021). The strong objective used to describe the feeling to the European Union, to its flag – the symbol of United Europe – by one of the most noted politicians is terrible. The leader of the party – Mr Jaroslaw Kaczynski – also manifests his firm attitude to this organisation. He accuses it of, f.e.: German domination (especially during the Angela Merkel era) (Dąbrowska & Szułdrzyński, 2017); the spread of 'gender and LGBTQ+ ideology' imposed on normal Polish people against traditional family values and beliefs (dziennik.pl, 2021); and 'madness' related to the plan 'Fit for 55' to reduce carbon emissions by member states (Czermiński, 2021).

Poland is one of the most important member states of the European Union – 74% of Polish trade is connected with other member states, mostly with Germany; the number of Polish representatives in the European Parliament is one of the largest; and it is the sixth largest country for territory and fifth for the number of people (The European Union Website). This narrative is dangerous to regional safety and sexual minorities in Poland. It is also a big game changer for normal people – in the future they would not support the idea of European integration due to belief in this terrible narrative that the European Union is against good of Poland.

3. The impact of populism on international relations, law, institutions, and peace – the modern political entropy

International relations could be interpreted by a lot of paradigms. One of the oldest is realism in international relations. In the beginning, it was only concentrated on economic dependence between countries, how they become wealthy or poor. Over time, realism found a new way of thinking – the international area is in permanent anarchy without any rules and cooperation. The main goal for everyone is to survive and not to look out for others. It could be used by every sort of power to ensure state survival – economic, and in terms of military power (Burchill et al., 2006, p. 97). In this case, states do not see other states' perspective or goods, which could be similar to 'political entropy' – a process produced by populism (populism is produced by social inequality). There are few differences: 1) realism concentrates on real long-term stakes of the state, while populism concentrates only about mid-term stakes; 2) realism takes into consideration international area such as an anarchy without rules, while populism destroys international cooperation using doubts of normal people in institutions; 3) realism and democracy are not enemies, while populism uses democracy to gain power and then takes this like a threat.

The Venezuelan journalist and writer Moises Naim in his studies concentrated on populism and how it affects international politics. He writes that every politician who uses populism rhetoric, works in the same model of policy. First, populists catastrophise everything – the world is sick, dysfunctional and in need to be saved; second, they use external threats to advance their power over the country; third, all democratic institutions are outdated and anachronic. The most important in this model is to be the messiah – that one person or party that can face all problems and provide correct answers for very complex questions (Naim, 2022, pp. 19–21). What should be mentioned is the fact that populists are always against globalisation and consensus with others, but they support each other in

their populistic policy in a in very strange way. They are only creating alliances with autocrats because they can then legitimise their undemocratic leading and repressions (Naim, 2022, pp. 349–351).

In the table below, a few chosen examples how modern political entropy is/was created – the populistic policies by former president of the United States Donald Trump, former president of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro, and the populistic policies of the ruling party Law and Justice in Poland.

HOW MODERN POLITICAL ENTROPY IS CREATING AND AFFECTING ITERNATONAL RELATONS		
Country	**The United States of America**	**Brazil**	**Poland**
The face of entropy	President Donald Trump	President Jair Bolsonaro	The Law and Justice Party
Main reason for populism	Social inequality		
Sphere of influence	Global security and stability	Climate and world nature	Regional stability and security (the European Union)
Possibility political entropy	Collapse of international system shaped after the Cold War	Threat to the world fight against climate change Disrespect for indigenous people	Threat to peace and integration in Europe Threat to minorities
	Threat to democracy around the world Less trust in international organisations, f. e. in the United Nations Denial of world problems – climate change, the spread of authoritarianism, threat to women/LGBT/indigenous people rights More military/economic/ethnic conflicts The end of world peace		

Self-made table: Summary of examples of the United States, Brazil, and Poland

4. How to build a more equal world – true democracy

President of the United States of America Joe Biden in February 2021 said that democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to defend it, fight for it, strengthen it, renew it (The U.S. Department of State, 2021). This was said at the Summit for Democracy organised by President Biden in 2021 to gather leaders of free world countries together to discuss challenges and opportunities facing democracies. There were three key themes at the meeting: defending against authoritarianism,

addressing and fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights. The summit focuses on the great advantage and unique strength of democracy – the ability to acknowledge its imperfections and confront them openly and transparently (The U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Therefore, I think that liberal democracy and Montesquieu's separation of powers are the solution for political entropy. The term democracy came from the Greek words: 'demos', which means the people, and 'kratos', which means power or authority. It is political system based on freedom to vote for all adult civilians of the country. The adjective 'liberal' refers to civil rights included in the constitution, which are defended by the courts (Robertson, 2009, pp. 71–72/76–77). In a real democratic system, all people can vote and think what they want; they have the opportunity to change leader and choose the way in which the country and society should go. Moreover, the people should strive for the separation of powers – it would be guarantee for a single person/dictator/ruling party, f. e. into populistic president or government, not adopting absolute power.

Another important issue to resolve the problem of the rising wave of populism and end social inequality is international cooperation based on consensus. A lot of countries have their own priorities – this is not bad – but they are not always going in the same way. Sometimes they exclude less important issues from their domestic or foreign policy, focus on the most principal stakes, and look forward to work together with others on the international area. The best example of this way of making policy is Barack Obama's presidency. He bet on multilateralism – apparently the reason for the weakening role of the United States of America on the global stage – and wanted to create a more equal world for all. He knew that the better the condition of the world, the more improvements would be made for America. He committed to making global developments based on cooperation, f. e. calling for a world food security programme at the London G20 Summit in 2009, launching an energy access programme for Africa (Power Africa) in 2013, and launching the Global Development Lab, Global Innovation Lab, and Global Development Council (The Obama White House, 2016).

The other core of creating a more equal world based on true democracy is education. Populism depends on people's ignorance of various issues – geography, politics, religion, history, etc., on people's fears to others, differences, and the unknown. There should be free access for all people to pure education without any ideology and showing how important democracy and equality is. Through education, we can also pass to the final point, which is to build civil societies around the world. People should know the importance of things such as voting, the right to protest, and association in local organisations. Educated societies choose more democratic politicians, who represent all civilians and respect minorities.

5. Conclusions

After the end of Cold War there was one superpower – the United States of America. Many regional powers wanted to improve their position in international relations and many populist politicians appeared. They used social inequality to gain power. Their populistic policy was based on fears and ignorance of people, and they declared their desire to defeat all of problems in a very easy way. The people did not pay attention to non-democratic actions, they wanted their lives to improve in an uncomplicated way.

Populism is not concentrated on long-term stakes of a country or society, but on mid-term stakes and gaining good results easily. In this system, international cooperation or peace is not visible – this system can be referred to 'modern political entropy', which means the lack of order in international politics. This policy is dangerous, because populists do not want to make consensus or turn into democratic institutions. Even democracy is seen as a threat for the country.

The recipe for modern political entropy is:

- To turn to real democracy and cherish it with the separation of powers
- International cooperation based on consensus to promote multilateralism in international relations and the state's foreign policies
- To educate people about what they fear and understand why they do so
- To create civil societies around the world.

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Abstract

This paper is about the connection between the rising wave of populism around the world and social inequality. From resulting political entropy, international relations shaped after the end of the Cold War are changing, and not in a predictable way like before. International law and institutions no longer have an impact and are not respected by the actors.

   The first part of paper answers questions of what populism and social inequality are. The second part is about the connection between increasing inequality and populism around the world, with three examples: the United States of America, Brazil, and Poland. In the third part, there is a discussion about the impact of inequality and populism on international relations, law, and peace, and how the new political situation – 'modern political entropy' – is created. The fourth part presents the remedy on how to develop more equal societies and a healthy political system based on politicians who believe in true democracy and respect minorities.

Keywords: political entropy, social inequality, populism, true democracy

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Creating a more liveable world – how to connect pluriverse and design thinking in development studies and activities in the age of the Entropocene

A fundamental rethinking and redefinition of the development idea has been needed for a long time. However, it has never been more urgent and necessary than today, at a time of growing inequality, increasing forms of exclusion, a crisis of social trust and misinformation, instability and security threats, and rapid climate change and environmental degradation. The current understanding of development, based on a colonial narrative, an ideology of economic growth and exploitation of the earth, should undergo a profound transformation, as should entire societies and economic systems (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 2023; Hickel, 2021; Rist, 2008; Sachs, 1992). The following article presents a brief reflection on the necessity of change in the leading development discourse promoted by international institutions, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and other multilateral, bilateral partners and most of state institutions across the globe.

Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer announced in 2000 that we are living in the age of the Anthropocene – a time when the global environment is shaped by humans rather than being submissive to nature. People and their activity heavily alter land, oceans, rivers, the atmosphere, and wildlife (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). *Homo sapiens*' impact on the planet, mainly destructive for other organisms living on the earth, but harmful also to humans, is the primary cause for the rec-

ognition of the Anthropocene. In addition, a Polish scholar, Ewa Bińczyk, refers to the Anthropocene as an age of Man, an epoch during which human activities influence the process of the geological evolution of the earth (2018). There are plenty of other publications on the Anthropocene from a variety of perspectives (Chakrabarty, 2009; Crist, 2013; Latour, 2017; Sayre, 2012) and debates on how the Anthropocene intersects with racism (Pulido, 2018; Baldwin & Erickson, 2020), colonialism (Simpson, 2020), extractivism, or the extinction of species, some of them questioning the disciplinary boundaries and well-established philosophies and political systems (Lövbrand, Mobjörk & Söder, 2020).

Nevertheless, the current level of problems humans create is even more than just humankind's impact on the planet. Therefore, the concept of the Entropocene (Stiegler, 2021, p. 11) is even better for describing the contemporary degree of destruction. The Entropocene is characterised by constant rapid and unpredictable change and crises. The ecological and social chaos and other entropies at all possible levels – social, political, economic, and environmental – are inseparable from the dominant model of social life based on unstoppable consumption, continuous pursuit of success, and economic growth. Meanwhile, as Stiegler, Krzykawski, and Toffeletto (2021, pp. 165–166) explain, most of the institutions we created within the United Nations system not only have limited the capacity of local authorities but led to situations when the recommended solutions became too abstract from the reality. Nation-states are encouraged to compete with one another and protect their interests rather than serve humanity in general. This disconnection of the international, national, and local institutions causes them to be powerless and unable to confront global problems. Thus, it is necessary to rethink how these institutions function in such a mode so that they adhere to locality. Their credibility is weakened when it comes to the challenges of either the Anthropocene or the Entropocene because they ignore people's interests.

Therefore, societies and economies, and the institutions they create, require radical transformation of their systems to break with the hegemony of such a model of development based on the policy of exploitation of the global South by the global North, the universality of capitalism (Hickel, 2021), as well as ignorance of local needs[1] (Cavalcanti, 2007) and system of knowledge. It is not just about decol-

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1   Cavalcanti (2007) presents an interesting case study of a goat-keeping project introduced in one of the northeast Brazilian rural towns as an example of conflicting development views. The project was a classic example of imposing an interventionist, ethnocentric, and modernist perception of development on the community of farmers, even to the extent of how they should work together.

onising the social imaginary,[2] as Serge Latouche (2015) put it, but understanding the causes and role of the ideology of economic growth, consumerism, and colonialism of power. We need to change how we see the world and take action to build a more democratic, equitable, and inclusive world. The solution is a matrix of alternatives to the dominant development discourse that will help liberate the world from the *homo oeconomicus* paradigm and stop the homogenisation of cultures. The organising principle of the world should be pluriversality, through which one can create a 'world that connects many worlds'. One such alternative is degrowth, which assumes moving away from economic growth and rebuilding the world economy so that it allows respect for human dignity.

Therefore, this article attempts to embed the idea of development within the discussion on the Anthropocene and the Entropocene. It investigates and synthesises the possibilities of creating a more liveable world by connecting the pluriverse approach with design thinking in development studies and activities. The primary assumption of the paper is that contemporary development requires a radical redefinition, redesign, and opening towards innovations and pluriversality. Development understood as prosperity based on democratisation and decentralisation of the economy, respect for cultural diversity, social equality, and respect for nature can bring about colossal societal changes. A more pluriversal approach and design thinking can be valuable tools to create a more liveable world. To prove the feasibility of this idea, I want to follow some research questions: 1) What are the reasons for the redefinition of the idea of development? 2) What are the alternatives to the current development discourse? 3) In what way can pluriversality and design thinking be helpful?

The need to redefine the idea of development

We are currently experiencing unprecedented, in frequency and strength, natural disasters caused by global warming, the source of which is mainly human activity directed at continuous economic growth and constant expansion of consumption. It should be emphasised that it is not the people themselves who are to blame here, but the system in which they live that forces them to constantly meet sometimes non-existent needs. Because of this, the earth's resources are depleting at an alarming rate, including the resources most essential to life, such as water.

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2   Latouche claims that growth, development, and progress are beliefs, imaginary significations, and economic founding categories. Therefore, abolishing or going beyond them is possible only through a change of the imaginary. To achieve a degrowth society means to decolonise our imaginary.

Droughts and water shortages have affected many regions in countries around the world in recent years – in 2022 in Europe this occurred in Italy, France, Portugal, Romania, and England (European Commission JRC, 2022). In Africa, the worst drought has again, after 40 years, affected a region particularly vulnerable to water shortages, the Horn of Africa. In August 2022, the UN's experts reported that in Ethiopia, Somalia, and parts of Kenya, between 19 to 36 million people experienced severe food security challenges, health vulnerabilities, and other problems due to the drought, which began in October 2020. The recent drought surpassed the previous one from 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 when it comes to severity and catastrophic consequences (UNFPA, 2022). In 2022, the drought also affected two of the world's major economic powers – the United States, where the western and central parts of the country, in particular, were facing water shortages (NOAA, 2023), and China, where record low water levels were observed in the Yangtze River, the country's longest and most economically important river, threatening the operation of hydroelectric power plants and energy supplies for both private consumers and large enterprises (Davidson, 2022).

Meanwhile, millions of people in other parts of the world experienced flood disasters. Thousands were left homeless in Sudan and South Sudan, where floods recur almost yearly (Zoni, 2023). In Pakistan, floods destroyed infrastructure and many crops, displacing millions (reliefweb, 2023). Droughts, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes are weather conditions that are slowly becoming the 'new normal', with a host of problems for economies and communities, especially in regions vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Worthy of note here is that the countries still referred to as developing countries are currently paying the highest price for climate change, to which they themselves have contributed only a tiny percentage. Hence, in recent years, there have been voices from activists and politicians talking about the need to introduce a system of payment for 'loss and damage' which means costs already being incurred from climate-fuelled weather extremes or impacts or even 'climate reparations' to be paid by rich countries whose developed economies were and are responsible for producing most of the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere (Abnett, 2022; Schonhardt, 2022).

Human activity has led to global warming, the straining of the planet's resources, and the destruction of many plant and animal species. Declining biodiversity is a problem that is just as important to the economy and, counterintuitively, also threatens humans and their activities. 'The planet is in the midst of a biodiversity and climate crisis… and we have a last chance to act… A nature-positive future needs transformative – game changing – shifts in how we produce, how we consume, how we govern, and what we finance' said Marco Lambertini,

the Director-General of WWF International in the conservation charity's Living Planet Report 2022 (cited in: Whiting, 2022). The importance of biodiversity for economies is also underlined by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Lead Author and the World Wildlife Fund's Global Forest Lead Scientist, Pablo Pacheco: 'Without wild species, our whole planet unravels. Billions of people rely on wild species for food, medicine, energy, and clean water. They are especially critical for the livelihoods of vulnerable people in rural areas, who depend on them for subsistence, income, and cultural needs. Our modern global economy increases the threats to biodiversity due to pressures from local demand and global trade' (Polcastro, 2022). The effects of extractivist policies (Czerny & Czerny, 2021), i.e., a development model based on the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources such as metals or energy resources, as well as the overexploitation of agricultural land and the clearing of forests, are already visible in many regions of the world in the form of a devastated landscape and massive environmental damage. Some scientists claim that the ongoing deforestation and degradation of nature will also contribute to the emergence of many new, unknown, or 'dormant' viruses, thus threatening the emergence of further pandemics or epidemics (Sarao, 2020). This is possible for at least two reasons – the disruption of the boundary between the human environment and wildlife (Vidal, 2020), and as a result of climate change and the melting of glaciers, which expose hitherto hidden deposits of land (Geddes, 2022). Destruction of the planet, therefore, cannot foster development. Without natural resources, even the world's largest economies will not be able to function. In a situation of constant health risks, societies will not be able to work in such a system as we have now.

The recent global pandemic most likely resulted from such disorders. As for the socio-economic sphere, it was the Covid-19 pandemic that revealed and exacerbated existing problems and dividing lines in societies: national, racial, gender, and class. Even in the number one economy in the world, the United States, the effects of the pandemic proved more detrimental to those belonging to disadvantaged groups in American society, i.e., mainly black people (Gavin, 2021). The pandemic exposed a widespread divide along racial and class lines – black US citizens who live in so-called worse neighbourhoods with poor infrastructure and lower-paying, but more exposed workplaces were more likely to get sick and die from the coronavirus. Similar divisions were revealed in the case of the access to vaccines manufactured in countries of the global North, only a tiny fraction of which reached the developing countries (Alakiya, 2022; Tatar et al., 2022). Unequal access to health care or vaccinations, lockdown, and lack of prospects for recovery have had a negative impact on societies in many regions of the world.

This crisis coincided with the struggle for equal treatment and attempts to eliminate common discriminatory practices. The most prominent of the social movements, Black Lives Matter, managed to mobilise millions of people to take to the streets and participate in protests against unfair and discriminatory treatment of black people by police or law enforcement (Buchanan, Bui & Pater, 2020). These and other global protests are a call for transformational and structural change, for a struggle against racism, injustice, and social inequality, for the decolonisation of minds and actions, and to end the predatory economies and policies that promote exploitation (Miller & Mitchell, 2020). However, the need to break with the dominant narratives of development and social relations, often stemming from the colonial era, has clashed with forces seeking to undermine solidarity and collective resistance of individuals and whole societies. Cyber-propaganda or fake news contribute to undermining public trust, leading to the spread of populist and nationalist narratives (Cover, Haw & Thompson, 2022). There is an increase in voices calling for hatred and exclusion of so-called others simply because, or perhaps precisely because, they come from a foreign country and culture. There is a growing polarisation of views and actions – on the one hand, there is a part of society that demands change, but on the other hand, there are those who want to preserve the status quo and the dominant position in social and political life, usually at the expense of others.

Meanwhile, instead of solving all these problems, since Russia attacked Ukraine, the world, especially the economically developed part, has been focused on another war and rearmament. As a result of the criminal policies of Putin and his associates, we can speak of one of the greatest humanitarian and ecological tragedies in the Eastern European region, not to mention thousands of victims and millions of refugees (Roy, 2023). Instead of fighting climate change, we have another senseless war and environmental devastation due to warfare. Ukraine, which for many years has been the world's granary, is now an area where bombs are falling on grain crops. The consequences are being felt not only in Europe, which has faced an energy crisis due to the war, but also in more distant countries such as Africa, where the population frequently suffers from crop failure and water shortages. Obstructions to grain exports from Ukraine could further exacerbate famine and mortality, leading to indirect victims of the war (Yohannes-Kassahun, 2023). Similar situations of wasting human labour and land resources can be found in many parts of the world.

Moreover, the example of the war in Ukraine is a good illustration of how all the problems of the global world are interconnected – a war in one country, albeit a distant one, can exacerbate the problem of hunger in another part of the world, where famine has been caused by climate change due to human economic

activity. How, then should we talk about development in such crisis and tragic circumstances? How to manage development in times of entropies at all levels?

The insufficiency of the Sustainable Development Goals and the need for alternative ways of thinking about development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established as a continuation of the previous goals, the Millennium Development Goals, have been officially used since 2015. They serve as a reference for countries and nations in their efforts to raise socio-economic and living conditions. However, because of the global problems already mentioned, the question arises as to whether the SDGs formula is not based on flawed assumptions. This is especially true regarding the universality of economic growth, which was supposed to be both a driving force and a determinant of development. Growing social tensions, protests, activist actions, and the increasing involvement of societies in new, more local forms of cooperation indicate the need and necessity to answer the question about the essence of development – what is it and what does it constitutes? We already know that economic growth is not the best recipe for development. It is needed and can foster development, but it does not have to be a sine qua non condition. But what should it be?

The rhetoric of development, sometimes called developmentality (Lie, 2015), has been adopted and has become part of national strategies in almost all countries. Each country has a plan, strategy, or development institution. Nevertheless, only some developing or underdeveloped countries can be called developed today. They continue to implement their development strategies based on the economic patterns of the North, often at enormous environmental and social costs. Therefore, the problem is not the lack of action but the idea of development as a linear, one-way, material and financial growth driven by commodification and capitalist markets (Kothari et al., 2018).

Over time, discourses and narratives related to development have entered various stages, and successive concepts have evolved. From debates on economic growth, representatives of international institutions and researchers on the problem moved on to discussions about social and human development and then on to sustainable development.

The beginning of the debates on sustainable development was strongly influenced by the argument of the Roman Club about the need to 'limit growth' (*Limits to Growth*, 1972). Development experts and scientists repeated at many international conferences that there is a mismatch between 'development and the environment'. The problem was further highlighted in the report *Our Common Future* (1987). However, neither the United Nations' analyses nor the reports

of most countries contained a critique of the social and structural forces underlying the ecological crisis. Instead, the focus was on making economic growth and development 'sustainable and inclusive' through appropriate technologies, market mechanisms, and political reforms. The problem is that the idea of sustainable development has been swallowed up by capitalism and then stripped of its ecological content. Since the 1980s, neoliberal globalisation has taken control of everything. On the other hand, the UN focused on the 'poverty alleviation' program in developing countries without reflecting on the fact that its source was in the economies of the global North driven by the ideology of economic growth. It was even argued that less developed countries must first achieve a higher standard of living before they can allocate funds to environmental protection. This approach paved the way for the ecological modernist concept of the 'green economy' (Kothari et al., 2018).

Interestingly, a revised version of *Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update* was published at the beginning of the new century. The authors stated in it that:

> *'(…) we are much more pessimistic about the global future than we were in 1972. It is a sad fact that humanity has largely squandered the past 30 years in futile debates and well-intentioned, but halfhearted, responses to the global ecological challenge. We do not have another 30 years to dither. Much will have to change if the ongoing overshoot is not to be followed by collapse during the twenty-first century'* (Meadows, Randers & Meadows, 2005, p. xvi).

Almost two decades have passed since then, and the futile debates continue. Researchers often put forward their theories and build development models in opposition to one another, hoping only their theories will be recognised as the right ones. But would it not be better if they tried to join forces and create entirely new, alternative approaches that consider multiple voices?

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, the idea or ideology of sustainable development, already devoid of its essence (ecological content), was the primary approach used in multilateral discussions. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) also published a report on the green economy (*Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*, 2011), defining it as the economy leading to improved human well-being and social justice while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcity. In line with the pro-growth policies of sustainability advocates, this report considers living forms of nature across the planet as 'natural capital' and 'critical economic assets'. In this way, the market commodification of life on earth (flora and fauna) was codified and legitimised. What kind of sustainability is left there, then?

The international model of 'green capitalism' presented in the declaration *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (The UN, 2015) does not sufficiently address the critical roots of the development problem itself (Kothari et al., 2019). It fails to explain how the structural roots of poverty, instability, and violence are historically grounded by state power, corporate monopolies, neo-colonialism, and patriarchal institutions. There is also no indication of the important role of direct, democratic governance and responsible decision-making. Despite already known biophysical limitations, this model still emphasises economic growth as a driving force for development (gross domestic product (GDP) is arbitrarily assumed as an indicator of progress). Economic globalisation is recognised as a key economic strategy. Modern science, in turn, is supposed to be a recipe for all problems. Culture, ethics, and spirituality are ignored and subordinated to economic forces, and indigenous knowledge is not considered. Unregulated consumerism is still allowed, with no chance of changing the global North and South disparity regarding pollution, waste and impact on climate change (Hickel, 2021).

This list of 'shortcomings' of the SDGs is, of course, longer. What is striking, however, is the hypocrisy or ignorance of the creators of this still valid version of the goals. Under the guise of sustainable development, we still have the same development model based on economic growth and constant consumption. The authors of the report entitled *Planetary Boundaries* clearly state that development, understood as economic growth, leads to the planet's unsustainability or threatens its sustainability (Rockström et al., 2009). The SDGs are merely a semantic deception and should instead be called the Sustainable Survival Goals (Kothari et al., 2019, p. XIII). The most disturbing thing is that, again, thanks to international institutions and the SDG model, less developed countries fall into the mechanism of adapting their development to the vision promoted by the countries of the rich North.

For many decades, development has been seen mainly as economic growth, limited to increasing GDP, which has had little effect on improving the living standards of millions of people in many regions of the world. Development models based on economic growth did not consider local communities' needs, nor did they include indigenous knowledge. They perpetuated the established patterns of operation and aligned the economies of less developed countries (the global South) with the international economic system, which mainly benefited developed countries (the global North). It was even believed that the South could only cope with the help or intervention of the countries of the North. Development perceived in this way fostered the persistence of unequal distribution of power and wealth, asymmetrical terms of trade, deepening injustice, and unreflective exploitation of

natural resources. This perception of development is an outgrowth of Escobar's highly critical thought from the 1990s, in which he argues that development is a mechanism to produce and manage the Third World (nowadays, we would say the global South), specifically to realise the promises announced by theorists and politicians in the 1950s. According to Escobar (1992; 1995), development is a kind of colonial reality that has not benefited societies but rather poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation, and oppression. Escobar argues that the development discourse is the most ethnocentric, technocratic approach, which treats people and cultures as abstract concepts or statistics that can be moved around in tables indicating progress. This perspective coincides with the views of some postcolonial scholars who maintain that intellectuals and development practitioners are involved in neocolonial knowledge production, which can lead to the marginalisation of developing societies (Sumner, 2008). Therefore, for at least the last three decades, development scholars (including Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, Serge Latouche, Majid Rahnema, Wolfgang Sachs, and Gilbert Rist) have called for a shift in the approach to development and resigning from a universalist vision, dominated by Western concepts. They have suggested moving to more pluralistic approaches that consider the importance of cultural differences and local solutions to development.

These statements are still valid. A number of new and escalation of already existing problems mean that there are also voices calling for the so-called decolonisation and 'de-racialisation' of development, as well as a departure from the imperative of economic growth, which is the crucial idea of capitalism and which has a colonial character at its core (Hickel, 2021; Jackson, 2009). Experts call for the reconstruction of the rules of the global economy and resignation from treating capitalism as the most critical measure of progress. They call for a reconstruction of the ontological foundations, i.e., a change in the system of thinking and narration in relation to various issues, including the perception of nature (man as a part of nature; the need to protect biodiversity), the importance of work (striving for greater balance), and gender equality (equal treatment of women and recognising their role in development). They also postulate the return to old values and traditions (using indigenous knowledge).

The importance of pluriversality

For years, the international community was convinced that the world needed universality and a single concept of development, promoted by international organisations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, as well as almost every state in the world. The problem with these institutions is that they are fundamentally undemocratic, and their vision

of the world is based on the duality of the world. Their model of development or development strategies and plans embedded in the Western world were often recommended to developing countries without deeper reflection and adaptation to local conditions. Over the years, this universal vision of the world has not been successful. The world consists of various cultures and ways of living, not to mention different geographical conditions. Therefore, it needs pluriversality and openness to diverse concepts of the common good and prosperity.

The French philosopher Bruno Latour (2004) chooses 'pluriversum' over 'universum' as there is no universal structure that would fit everything and allow the totality of being to live in eternal peace. He talks about new actors and spokespeople whose voices were not heard before and who will allow things and non-humans to speak. They will construct the new collective. Latour points to political ecology that would give voice to things in negotiating the common good. In other words, democracy can be extended to animals and all of nature. Democracy should mean a more cosmopolitan character so that the common good becomes as broad as possible.

The Argentinian semiotician and researcher of coloniality[3] and decoloniality,[4] Walter Mignolo explains that pluritopic hermeneutics (that assumes no main frame or unified tradition at all) is needed because we are dealing with various meanings, not a universality. In Western thought, hermeneutics refers to reflecting on the meaning and interpretation of a particular concept within one cosmology, Western cosmology. So, what if there are two or more cosmologies, Mignolo (2018) asks. After all, every civilisation known to us is based on the universality of its cosmology. In that case, the understanding of development will be different in the Western view and in the African or Asian ones. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Western ideas and development schemes actually caused more harm than good, as they were implemented without reflection on local cosmology and the understanding of the world and interpersonal relations.

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3   Coloniality describes the colonial matrix of power; it serves as the basis and justification for the exploitation of the world and its resources by the European system of domination; it is the core of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, nationalism, and modernity. In comparison, colonialism is the ideology that has ruled the thinking of Western countries since the 16th century. It functioned through racialised hierarchies, including systems of knowledge and culture centered on Europe.

4   Decoloniality attempts to understand the permanence of colonial systems, not only in the form of colonial heritage but also in how the world is organised. Decolonialism is supposed to bring liberation from the matrix of colonial power. It is a continuous and evolving process, not just anti-colonialism or a reaction to colonialism. Decolonialism and decolonial thinking emphasise the importance of a pluriversal system of knowledge and thought, or in other words, coexisting, multiple systems of knowledge.

In his reflections on universality, Mignolo (2018) takes even a greater critique of Western thought and practice, claiming that the 'universalisation of universality' in the West was part of an imperial project. Scholars who study the origins of the idea of development often point to its colonial character and its sources in the imperial policy of the colonising states. The views, and thus colonial relations, influenced not only the shape of the colonised and colonising countries' societies, but also the development of economic relations and world capitalism. Development based on economic growth is the most significant project of modern capitalism. As Hickel emphasises, the development of capitalism and the industrial revolution in Europe did not come out of nowhere; they became possible thanks to the goods produced by slaves in areas plundered from colonised peoples and then processed in factories by European peasants, who were forcibly deprived of access to the land through enclosures which were the internal colonisation process (Hickel, 2021, p. 82).

Meanwhile, as Mignolo (2018) underlines, what is universal can only be pluriversal, multiple. Our reality consists of many coexisting worlds. However, pluriversality (multiplicity) does not mean cultural relativism, which assumes objectivity and refrains from value judgments. Multiplicity is a mixture of different cosmologies that exist separately and are entangled in the narrative of modernity, which is only a way of imposing universality. This is not to say that everything modern is destructive, and all traditions are adequate (Kothari, 2018). On the contrary, the feminist or human rights movements that are part of the narrative of modernity are a liberating force for millions of people. The problem lies rather in the cultural practices and institutions that constitute modernity as a worldview portraying the individual as independent of the collective and further emphasising private property, free markets, political liberalism, secularism, and representative democracy. While they are not a threat in themselves, the problem is that the narrative of modernity assumes that only such an approach can ensure progress. Modernity imposes a universal vision of interpersonal and interstate relations.

Moreover, according to Mignolo (2018), any universality is imperial in nature. Pluriversality is based on dialogue and the idea of living together despite differences. Multiplicity exists independently of states or corporations and is a product of a global political society – people who can associate and organise around a specific project that has no place in the politics of states or large corporations. This is similar to the case of civil society or the actions of activists for equality and elimination of racial or gender discrimination. Translating this into international relations, the world becomes multipolar. With the appearance of more emerging powers, it is difficult to talk about unipolarity and the dominance of a superpower in the form of the United States. The world, also in the political and economic sphere,

is becoming increasingly complex and multidimensional due to the complexity of economic ties, migration, information, and technology flows. All this means that we also need new, more diverse models of development or completely alternative ways of thinking about development to build a better world.

Degrowth or green growth? Or Post-growth?

According to the authors of the new version of the development dictionary (*Pluriverse. A Post-development Dictionary*), the idea of 'development as progress' must be deconstructed to open the way for alternative approaches based on respect for Planet Earth. The dominant Western model of development is a homogenising construct because it has been adopted by people in many parts of the world. The authors of the dictionary, therefore, propose a broad term, post-development, which encompasses various critiques and lifestyles (Kothari et al., 2019, p. XVII). In their publication, they discuss existing approaches that have been adapted to new challenges and those completely new, unknown, and perhaps revolutionary, taking into account the voices of people from the global South. They focus on those whose assumptions refer to human emancipation 'within nature' (Kothari et al. 2019, pp. XVIII–XXIX). These transformative alternatives also include values that, to a certain degree, undermine the existing socio-economic system, values rooted in the logic of relationality, according to which everything is related to everything else. In this way, they create a vision of societies that adhere to such values as pluriversality and diversity, autonomy and self-sufficiency, solidarity and openness, respect for nature and recognition of its rights, interdependence, inclusiveness, justice, lack of hierarchy, ecological sustainability, and peace and non-aggression.

There are many alternative approaches to development. I will mention only some of them to move on to the two currently receiving the most attention and are at odds with each other. So, they would be doughnut economy (Raworth, 2021), circular economy, ecomodernism, neoextractivism, smart cities, transhumanism, or the idea of conviviality which is the basis for building communities that enable each person to live creatively with the help of technologies and institutions that they control. It is also worth mentioning concepts that are even more transformative in their messages, such as the International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature or Debt Arbitration (Kothari et al., 2019). Some of these concepts, such as the Rights of Nature, but also other transformative ideas (e.g., cooperatives, 'more-than-human' management, education for the future) that can be useful in times of crises, especially climate change ones, are described in more details in the recently published, in Poland, book by Jasikowska and Pałasz (2022).

When it comes to the two opposing visions of development, these are green growth (and green economy) and degrowth. Green growth is a critical element in achieving sustainable development ideal – it is intended to protect the environment on the one hand and enable economic growth on the other. This approach makes the concept more attractive to politicians and other decision-makers than traditional approaches to environmental protection, often perceived as a factor in slowing down the economy.

As emphasised by UNEP, the green economy assumes such goals as the low-emission production process, resource efficiency, green investments, technological innovations, recycling, green professions, poverty reduction, and social inclusion. This approach to development is promoted by both UN agencies and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which mainly includes developed countries. In 2011, the OECD presented the *Green Growth Strategy*, which points to innovation as a method of decoupling economic growth from the depletion of natural capital. The European Union is also moving in a similar direction, which has created a plan for sustainable economic growth that promotes ecology but is still based on market economy. The approach and the idea of sustainable development is one of the main slogans of the SDGs. However, as in the case of the former, we are dealing with an oxymoron used to legitimise international politics by combining two completely different and contradictory interests and strategies for economic growth and nature protection (Kothari et al., 2019, p. 57).

Degrowth promoted, for instance, by Jason Hickel, one of the leading researchers of this approach, assumes a departure from development based on economic growth and promotes the transformation of socio-economic relations. Hickel (2021) says directly that capitalism and the constant pursuit of economic growth are the main barriers to the very idea of development in the countries of the South. Degrowth proposes to reduce the energy demand and rebuild the world economy in such a way that it allows respect for human dignity. Only when we limit our needs will we be able to stay within planetary boundaries and free the world from the problem of poverty. Focusing on people, not profits, will benefit the earth. Among the proposed solutions, shortening the working week, providing basic services and infrastructure for all, and redistributing income are worth mentioning. Interestingly, degrowth is actually supposed to be more about the countries of the North than the South. The North is responsible for most of the problems in terms of development. Degrowth is, therefore, about bringing global justice.

It is also noteworthy (although it is a topic for further and more extensive reflection) that apart from these mainstream ideas, there are plenty of local value systems, traditions, and approaches to development. Adopting a pluriversal approach to development would mean including all of them in development dis-

cussions. Indigenous solutions and initiatives are usually based on traditional understandings of development and local self-governance initiatives – from the South African philosophical system of Ubuntu (meaning 'I am because we are') and Rwandan Agaciro (meaning 'dignity' and 'self-respect'), through Indian Swaraj (a kind of self-governance) to Latin American Sumac Kawsay (the idea of a good life). Moreover, these are just a few examples, and some concepts and approaches may not even be known or researched. However, the scope of this article does not leave space for discussing these concepts in more detail.

Design thinking and development

The last part of this brief reflection on contemporary development should concentrate on the issues of incorporating and employing the ideas from the design field into development studies and activities. In his well-known book *Designs for the Pluriverse*, Escobar (2018) presents critical voices on capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy existing in our social life. He suggests looking at many contemporary problems from another perspective and using design, for example, the Transition Design Framework. This framework is based on a heuristic model related to four different but connected areas. It is envisioned for a longer time period and incorporates the ideas of sustainable futures. Creating visions of and for transitions should focus on tools and methods for facilitating discussion about alternative futures (including scenario development, forecasting, and speculative design) rather than a ready strategy to use. What seems to be the most important is that the design should be in relation to the transformation of everyday life (Escobar, 2028, p. 154). The design process should be adjusted to the needs of ordinary people who struggle with everyday challenges.

The importance of design in many spheres related to development was also recognised by the United Nations a number of years ago. In 2009, UNEP published its *Designs for Sustainability: A Step-by-Step Approach*. The manual was intended to help designers and industry by providing support to those looking to further their understanding of the field. The guidelines cover three design approaches: redesigning existing products, radical sustainable product innovation, and new product development. These approaches would be needed to change consumer behaviours so that they start more seriously considering real environmental and social concerns – not only focusing on the price, convenience, and quality in their purchasing decisions.

One of the newest Polish publications also discusses the issue of (re)designing the future. The authors and editors (Żarnowska & Michna, 2020) perceive the design of a new, better future in terms of the duty of contemporary scholars. They

also discuss the possibility of designing social changes with the help of varieties of speculative fiction. In particular, the authors analyse the concept of (re)design by Bruno Latour (2020) when he asks questions about what we are willing to resign from, and what we are willing to break with at a time of worldwide crisis.

Conclusion – what should development be? How can we save the planet? How can we build a liveable world?

We can talk about a paradox or even a collapse of the idea of development. Development based on economic growth was supposed to bring salvation from economic and social problems. On the other hand, sustainable development was meant to lead to everyone benefiting equally from the benefits of Planet Earth and better living conditions. Meanwhile, even sustainable development presupposes continuous economic growth, and no one mentions its limitation. Hence, this continuous development based on economic growth in any form leads us to a civilisational and planetary catastrophe – depletion of natural resources, destruction of the environment, further climate change, and consequently, socio-economic problems, and deterioration of the quality of life. A higher standard of living, better transport, and unlimited access to goods from other parts of the world increases the demand for energy and natural resources. In the near future, we may even be afraid of conflict over resources, including the most essential ones, such as water. The question should be asked, do we want such a vision of the world?

Finding a recipe for development will require enormous efforts, both on the part of individuals and entire communities or nations. Above all, it will also require a better understanding of the multiple, spatially, and temporally differentiated development models and strategies that have proven successful. This is a challenge in the form of transformation of fundamental policies and practices, ways of thinking and behaviour, the use of innovation and creativity, scientific approaches, technological improvements, as well as the use of cultural and intellectual heritage or artistic sensibility. Scientists, politicians, activists, and ordinary people face a challenge that should allow them to create new approaches, concepts, and methods of action that facilitate recovery from crises and lead to the creation of new structures and systems of socio-economic relations.

The United Nations, after finally acknowledging global entropies, proposes the return to human development,[5] but one embedded more in nature and adopting a more environmentally responsible approach:

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5   The human development approach focuses on expanding the richness of human life rather than expanding the economy in which people live. It is intended to lead to the creation of

'(…)in the context of the Anthropocene, it is essential to do away with stark distinctions between people and Planet. Earth system approaches increasingly point to our interconnectedness as socioecological systems, a notion highly relevant to the Anthropocene. Human development aligns well with such thinking. It has always been about breaking down silos and making connections. How could a development perspective centred on human possibility be otherwise? Every one of us moves in and out of social, economic and environmental spaces. (…) It is the lens centred on any individual's experience, rather than institutional structures organised in terms of sectors, that allows the human development approach to break free from disciplinary and sectoral shackles. It aims to be development as seen through any of our own eyes.' (UNDP, 2020, p. 8).

Perhaps modern development should be understood as 'a redesigned prosperity' – a concept promoted in the research of Henrietta Moore and her colleague (Moore & Mintchev, 2021). They talk about the need to challenge the structural features of the economy and the ideals it was constructed on. They also point to the need to refer to innovative ideas and new practices in dealing with the problems of inequality in novel ways. In their view, a redesigned prosperity is about the relationship between individual lives, in other words individuals – their quality, aspirations, and goals – along with the systems and constraints in which they are rooted. They claim that the pursuit of ever-increasing growth is not sustainable in the context of the planet's limited resources, nor does it provide us with the right paths to meet contemporary pressing challenges. Therefore, a redefinition of development into prosperity can allow us to be more attentive to the real needs of people – among others, good quality livelihoods and public services, a healthy environment, and a political system in which everyone's voice would be heard.

Development should allow everyone to live in such a way as to meet their needs and implement plans, but at the same time, take care of the well-being of others. It should be prosperity based on democratisation and decentralisation of the economy, respect for cultural diversity, social equality, and respect for nature. It should be understood as prosperity that takes into account the voices of marginalised communities, excluded from the general economic system, and at the same time having practical, indigenous knowledge based on what nature gives, but in such a way as not to destroy it. Only then is it possible to avoid this worse vision of the future.

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fair opportunities and choices for all people. The concept was established by the economist Mahbub Ul Haq (1992) and is rooted in Amartya Sen's work on human capabilities (Sen, 1984).

In conclusion, I would like to repeat the words of Ryszard Vorbrich, a Polish anthropologist and researcher of African societies: as long as there is a global system of polarised development that allows countries to be divided into rich and poor, 'developed' and 'developing', societies (and cultures) of the 'periphery', a global, asymmetric system of social relations will persist, in which one imposes on the other ways of life, models of development, and cultural patterns. 'Global' and 'local' people, donors and beneficiaries, people of power and those subject to its influence, anthropologists (researchers) and natives ('subjects' of research) will stand opposite each other. Dialogue between them requires both sides to be ready to – at least partially – undermine their own values without negating their identity (Vorbrich, 2009, p. 49).

And finally, I would also like to refer to the dream that Jason Hickel presented in his well-known book. The dream is about returning to Eswatini, where the author of *Less is More* grew up as a child. He writes about a vision of a world in which everyone would like to live, a world in which the principles of democracy are respected, incomes are shared fairly, and the differences between rich and poor countries have been eliminated. People would work less, be happier and healthier, and feel a sense of life, but also understand how much they are connected to the rest of life on earth. It is a vision of a world where the tropical forests of the Amazon, Congo, and Indonesia are being revived, rivers finally have clean water, whole ecosystems are revived, and the climate is back on track. All this is due to the fact that once people gave up following the idea of development, they got more by giving up some things (Hickel, 2021, pp. 58–59). The world requires more such visions, and for this, we need to be more open to different approaches, we need to design our decisions and the future in a better way.

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Abstract

This article reflects on the necessity of change in the leading development discourse promoted by international institutions, including the United Nations and each state, separately. The contemporary ecological and social crises, the omnipresent entropies at all possible levels – social, political, economic, and environmental – are inseparable from the model of social life that has become dominant over the past few centuries. They require radical transformations of socio-economic systems to break with the hegemony of economic growth based on the policy of exploitation of the global South by the global North, imposing solutions inadequate to local needs and the universality of capitalism. It is not just about decolonising the social imaginary, as Serge Latouche put it, but understanding the causes and role of the ideology of economic growth, consumerism, and colonialism of power. We need to change how we see the world

and take action to build a more democratic, fair, and inclusive world. Therefore, this article investigates the possibilities of creating a more liveable world by connecting the pluriverse approach with design thinking in development studies and activities. Contemporary development should be understood as prosperity based on democratisation and decentralisation of the economy, respect for cultural diversity, social equality, and respect for nature. A more pluriversal approach and design thinking may help choose the right strategy.

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