narrative culture

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group of self-organized volunteers in a German town used different kinds of narrative during their engagement to advance their own views on the migratory movements and on voluntary work with refugees. A collective narrative in terms of a cognitive structure evolved during the event that shaped the relationship between the volunteers and authorities.

Once a country of emigrants, Italy has become a receiver of migrants. These reverse migratory flows have triggered strong reactions by Italians, such as nativist discourses about national culture and identity and the aggressive, exclusionary, anti-immigration politics promoted by the Lega Nord (Northern League) political party. This article explores how Veneto ordinary speakers' political narratives are sometimes performed in ways that totally or partially exclude certain groups, such as migrants, while creating collective and intimate spaces for speakers living in Veneto, northern Italy. In their stories, both storytellers and audience members participate in the coconstruction of their social, political, and cultural identities in interaction while their storytelling event unfolds.

Statements by politicians on Russia's unity and stability are omnipresent. This article deals with people's daily narratives by focusing on the legacies of the Great Patriotic War in the city of Kaliningrad (previously Königsberg). In this endeavor, the article explores the immortal troop project, an alternative march to the official militaristic parade on May 9, which is devoted to the remembrance of people's fate during the war. However, the narratives' diversity and their potential as political counter narratives only becomes visible by taking into account people's personal relationship to the city's materiality. My arguments are based on long-term fieldwork, conducted between 2015 and 2017.

Political scientists have discovered that most political categories (political authority, democratic legitimacy, identity building) are closely linked with the concept of narrative. We demonstrate the relevance of narrative analysis in politics by analyzing two cases of urban riots (Paris 2005, Baltimore 2015). We propose a micro-oriented perspective focusing on people's everyday life experiences and cultural practices of

storytelling. The analysis dissects state narratives, which discredit protests through the language of criminality. Our case examples show that sudden violence in urban riots is often a desperate expression of marginalized voices articulating moral claims of justice, particularly concerning everyday racism.

ARTICLE *Stefan Groth*

Political Narratives / Narrations of the Political

An Introduction

"Incorrect Narrative": The Story of Pizzagate

In late 2016, the online disclosure platform WikiLeaks published the contents of the hacked personal email account of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign manager, John Podesta. In the emails, users stumbled across exchanges between Podesta and the owner of a Washington, DC, pizzeria—a donor to the Democratic Party—in which they converse about organizing events for the Clinton campaign. In the emails, the words "pizza" and "sauce" appeared—everyday expressions typical for this type of restaurant. But users in message boards began speculating that these words might be code used by a sex trafficking and pedophilia ring operating out of the basement of the pizzeria and involving Clinton and other officials of the Democratic Party. The story about Pizzagate soon spread to other online forums and was circulated widely on social media, not just by conspiracy theorists. Later, the Turkish press reported in a number of articles on the alleged scandal in the midst of US elections. However bizarre the story of Pizzagate, it gained traction and inspired users to develop its plot further, with links to FBI investigations, secret symbols, and evidence of a corrupt political party conspiring to harm the communal good.[1]

As an extreme example, the story of the Pizzagate conspiracy provides insights into some crucial elements of political narratives. Such narratives assist in reducing complex political processes and political value systems to easily understandable stories. These are not necessarily simple—as the Pizzagate story, with its many subplots and secrecies, illustrates—but provide clear-cut divisions of the political system with morally bankrupt and corrupt political opponents responsible for all developments bad and wicked. They seek to explain intricate processes of lobbying, coalition building, and campaigning with criminal intent, nepotism, and sexual deviancy. This explanatory dimension creates order and orientation: those involved in Pizzagate, those dazzled by corrupt politicians, and those able to see through this mist of conspiracy and corruption. With this order, narratives like Pizzagate reinforce or validate worldviews and conceptions of the political system, for example, as a swamp that needs to be drained by political outsiders or as an overly big government that needs to be minimized for the good of the people. The "stickiness" of such narratives with "sufficient tenacity to survive and thrive" (Boyle 154) in the social media market of ideas and stories motivates those receiving and agreeing with their message: to share, amend with more details, and even organize and try to gain political advantages from their distribution. In its radical form, this motivation to act can take the shape of the shooter intruding into the alleged sex trafficking headquarter in the basement of the pizzeria with an assault rifle, seeking to directly fight the conspiracy.[2]

Apart from reception, sharing and distributing narratives helps in actively conveying political messages and worldviews to harm political opponents and support political movements and ideas. "Controlling the narrative" means political advantage and the ability to frame political processes according to one's views. For many observers, Pizzagate was an attempt to manipulate the political opinion with the help of fake news websites and social bots, automatically distributing the story to reach a larger audience.[3] However ephemeral the act of storytelling or the invention of a narrative might be, they can be "sticky," gain traction and momentum. Strategically used, a narrative can control the news cycle and force politicians and campaigners to defend themselves against far-fetched accusations. Gadinger, Smith Ochao, and Yildiz (in this issue) show how political events such as demonstrations and riots evoke reactions from politicians and protesters, framing conflict as either criminal conduct ("thuggery") or legitimate political action ("resistance"). As such diverging interpretations resonate in the broader public debate, the more "sticky," persuasive or powerful narrative of events influences public opinion and has the

capacity to suppress certain issues and interests. In their contribution, Gadinger, Smith Ochoa, and Yildiz shed light on contextual features contributing to the success or failure of narrative framings of events.

For Terry Eagleton, narrative is "the most potent of all ideological forms" (Eagleton 71) in that it presents closed stories with coherent logics. Much like ideologies as "world-historical plot[s]," it claims to offer stringent explanations, causal relations, and genealogies for sociocultural and political realities. Perrino (in this issue) shows how narratives and linguistic performance feature in constructing collective identities that exclude outsiders and enforce essentialist categories of nationality and race. Here and in other cases (e.g., Briggs and Mantini-Briggs), narrative stretches to biopolitical perceptions of order beyond the scope of situated performance. It has explanatory potential for complex processes, organizational principles, and diverging values. As Sanders (in this issue) shows, the explanatory potential has historic dimensions and concerns the politics of memory when contested narratives of the past come together in public performances. Political narratives are not limited to this explanatory dimension but have performative power to motivate and organize collective action (Mayer). Sutter (in this issue) makes use of the concept of collective action frame to show how volunteers during a refugee crisis used a dominant narrative to make sense of their engagement and represent it vis-à-vis public authorities. Controlling narratives and telling compelling stories features in the construction of political realities, with tangible outcomes in political debates and elections.

The importance of narrative and other forms of communication to the political is highlighted given the premise that "politics is largely language" (Shilton and Schäffner 4) and that various forms of communicative behavior and linguistic discourse make up a large parts of politics. This begs, if not a definition, an explication of what can be understood as the political in political narratives—what qualifies a narrative as political? Shenhav proposes to consider the context of emergence or production and the content as criteria:

> We can thus define a political narrative as one that emerges from a formal political forum, such as a parliament, a cabinet, party meetings or political demonstrations, or as narrative produced by politicians and public officials in the course of their duties. Another possible approach is to note the contents of the narrative or the conclusions that may be drawn from it. If these contain themes that are considered "political," such as power relations and collective decision-making or compromise,

the narrative might be defined as political, even if it was generated outside official political frameworks. (Shenhav 2006, 247)

By using such a broad approach, contestations of power "between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (Shilton and Schäffner 5) and modes of arguing and bargaining as well as processes of deliberation and cooperation (Habermas; for international relations, see Müller) fall into the scope of the political. Understanding the political as not limited to official political frameworks has two major advantages for the study of political narratives:

1. Not just political institutions and actors (as "elite micro fields of power," Adam and Vonderau 17) or conventional governance processes but also more complex political constellations, policies, and discursive elements come into focus. This includes everyday "conflicts of interest, struggles for dominance and efforts at cooperation between individuals, between genders, and between social groups of various kinds" (Shilton and Schäffner 5).
2. Narrative in reference to political processes is not excluded but is understood as coconstitutive. Accordingly, not just the level of state institutions but also everyday practices, the reception of political narratives by the broader public and the individual or collective mediation of narratives are important.

The contributions in this special issue, while considering the influence and importance of political institutions and formal policy frameworks, shed light on such aspects and take qualitative approaches to political narratives. From different disciplinary backgrounds, the authors explore the intricacies of political narratives and show how narrative can be understood as a research perspective, as practice, as strategy, and as methodology.

Over the past couple of decades, the notion of political narrative has gained increasing attention in public debates and academia (see Shenhav 2005). In these debates, storytelling is portrayed as an innate quality of human existence, used to make sense of and construct conceptions of the political at the same time. Political pundits and academics draw from the concepts of *Homo narrans* (Koschorke; Lehmann; Niles) and narrative structure as universal (Fahrenwald 82f.; Gottschall) to point to the centrality of "stories" in politics, as well as to its power. Narratives

help one understand prefigured political processes and feature in the figuration of political practices, whether it's because they are innate cognitive patterns or because they are learned cultural modes of perception. The reception of narratives is argued to be able to reduce complexities, to deal with risk and contingencies, and to shape worldviews. Narratives, it is argued, are crucial and effective in mediating political stance, selling policy programs, or positioning forceful "metanarratives" (Lyotard) of liberalism, conservatism, or socialism. They feature in the construction of social realities and political systems and ideologies. Less the content or logics of political arguments, but catching stories and being "on message" (Silverstein) are understood to enable political success.

The "narrative turn" (Czarniawska; Kreiswirth) in the social sciences and the humanities is a turn away from positivist approaches to social realities (Goodson and Gill 18) and political processes. It does not take the social as a given, ready to be observed and analyzed, but works with the assumption that perceptions of the world are mediated. Such mediated perceptions— for example, in the form of narratives, and the ways they are mediated, the modalities of their transmission, their effects, and the relation between different and diverging narratives—are the object of study. For political narratives and narratives of the political, this poses questions of trust and plausibility added to questions of evidence and truth. The story of Pizzagate had to be retracted as an "incorrect narrative"[4] by the website Infowars in early 2017—not because it had been proven to be untrue numerous times by well-established newspapers and other publications shortly after its release,[5] but because the owner of the pizzeria threatened to sue if there was no apology and retraction. In the reception of the story, truth claims and substantial evidence against accusations are only one aspect. More important, the Pizzagate narrative is related to issues of mistrust in political processes and journalism and to closed worldviews and networks of power. The mediation of narratives is contingent on social status and political orientation. If narrators are not trusted because of their political stance or because they are perceived of as representative of opposing political beliefs, narratives are less likely to be believed—and vice versa.

Despite a proclaimed lack of micro perspectives (Shilton and Schäffner 5) on political narratives and narratives of the political, strands of research from folklore studies focus on the role of politics in everyday narratives (recent examples being Astapova; Bernal; Hercbergs; Noy), especially in relation to the concept of political narrative. The relations between narratives and political processes have been scrutinized regarding the use of narrative both in contemporary politics (Bohmer

and Shuman; Noyes) and from a historic perspective (e.g., Mills). In folklore studies, the political entanglements of folklore (and narratives) have been highlighted vis-à-vis their role in nation building processes (Dundes; Oinas; Wilson 1973, 1976), their legitimizing function for political processes (Wilson 1975), or their meaning for the formation of the discipline (Ó Giolláin). Specifically, the role of jokes and tales (Laineste; Oring; Shehata) and the relations between folklore and political representation (e.g., Moody-Turner) have been highlighted. Furthermore, disciplines such as political sciences, sociology, and linguistic anthropology have used the concept of political narrative as an analytic category (Gadinger, Jarzebski, and Yildiz), probed it with regard to its relevance to political theory (Hofmann, Renner, and Teich), or analyzed its role in constructing, for example, a "European narrative" to foster a European identity (Beck and Grande). More recently, studies have looked at how narratives are used by political actors (Bacon; Shenhav 2006), in relation to linguistic-anthropological concepts of political discourse (Lempert and Silverstein; Silverstein), or how narrations in media—movies, TV series, books—take politics as their theme (Gadinger et al. 2016).

Against the backdrop of studies from different disciplines that have analyzed the use of political narratives in politics and their conceptualization in theory, focusing on them in everyday contexts foregrounds a number of specific questions: how are political narratives, produced in policy processes, taken up, interpreted, modified, and reproduced in everyday stories and as part of popular narratives? How are political processes and structures framed in everyday narratives in the public sphere? This special issue of *Narrative Culture* takes these questions as a starting point to investigate the role of narratives for and in political processes. The contributions in this issue focus on both the reception of political narratives in everyday contexts and conceptualizations of political spheres in everyday narratives of the political. They probe the interpretation, modification, and reproduction of political narratives not by professional political actors and in policy arenas but in specific situations. The contributions in this issue analyze how political processes are made sense of in narratives, how concepts of the political spheres are constructed in narratives in specific situations and everyday contexts, and how narrative features in shaping political identities. They show how narratives are used to make sense of political engagement and shape relationships between volunteers and public authorities (Ove Sutter), how political narratives feature in the coconstruction of political, social and cultural identity (Sabina Perrino), how official narratives relate to local narratives as part memory politics (Rita Sanders), and how different stories

of political events circulate and relate to each other (Frank Gadinger, Christopher Smith Ochoa, and Taylan Yildiz).

For the analysis of political processes and practices, three distinct perspectives of narrative are pertinent: (1) narrative as practice and ontology, that is, the view that telling and receiving stories are universal modes of mediating (political) views; (2) narrative as strategy, that is, the intentional or automatic use of narrative to further relatively specific goals; and (3) narrative as method, that is, as an analytic approach to socio-political realities in academia. In the following, I outline these three dimensions and show what role they play for political narratives.

Narrative as Practice and Ontology

Narrative approaches conceptualize actors as "storytelling animals" (MacIntyre 216) or as *Homo narrans* (Koschorke 9–12). A perspective on narrative as practice and ontology conceptualizes storytelling as a universal cultural and social practice. This is—implicitly—a cognitive argument: if storytelling and the reception of stories are innate qualities, they predetermine social life and political organization in the sense that they are contingent on narrative forms. Accordingly, the constitution, stabilization, and transformation of individual and collective identities depends on narrating (Neumann 7). Sabina Perrino (in this issue) shows how storytellers and audiences coconstruct their national identities based on linguistic clues and political stance in the process of narrating. Following such a perspective, the political is— constituted by narrative as much as it constitutes political identities and processes. Similarly, narratives "provide a rich source of information about how people make sense of their lives, about how they construct disparate facts and weave them together cognitively to make sense of reality" (Patterson and Monroe 315). Following a social constructionist approach, Bruner argues that processes of social interaction are structured in narrative form—not only as a means to describe social reality, but also as a way to construct and make sense of it (Bruner 4f.). As Gadinger, Smith Ochoa, and Yildiz (in this issue) illustrate, such processes of coconstruction involve different levels: politicians, protesters, and public debates as well as security policies, experiences of marginalization, and mediatized examples of discrimination and conflict. As part of performative approaches, for example, in folkloristics and anthropology (Bauman; Bauman and Briggs; Bendix), creative and situational aspects of narrative have been highlighted. Rita Sanders (in this issue)

shows how private stories of suffering take form in public and official commemoration processions—not as strategic performances but as situated enactment. In this context, it has been stressed that although social and cultural repertoires of narrative certainly affect storytelling, the generation of narratives is influenced more by competence and performance than by prestructured patterns.

Narratives are a way to deal with complexities and contingencies. Under circumstances of uncertainty and risk—what sociologist Ulrich Beck calls the "risk society" (Beck)—narratives have the capability to reduce complexity by leaving out some aspects while highlighting others and creating causal chains of action.[6] Narrative as practice and ontology denotes a mode of understanding and framing political practices as an everyday heuristic, applicable to political organization, political processes, and policies. From this perspective, political narratives and narrations of the political are not a specific mode for thinking about political processes but a crucial part of them. This is also illustrated by Ove Sutter (in this issue), who describes political narrative in terms of cognitive structure, fundamentally shaping how political processes and political engagement are perceived of.

Narrative as Strategy

Narratives are used as strategy in political processes, that is, intentionally or intuitively to further relatively specific goals. Their potential to mediate messages, to persuade, and to garner support makes narratives as the "mediation of political process in story form" (Hartley) suitable to harness strategically. Phrases like "controlling the narrative" hint at this persuasiveness: if stories are told in the right way and at the right time, stressing the appropriate aspects and addressing the appropriate audiences, they are effective and can be used to frame political positions as favorable. They are controlled vis-à-vis political opposition or chaos: if one does not control the narrative, others will to your disadvantage, or the narrative will spin out of control with potentially negative effects. In popular culture, movies such as *Wag the Dog* (1997), TV shows such as *House of Cards* (2013–), or the more comedic *The Thick of It* (2005–2012) poignantly portray what it means to get on top of a story and perform damage control. Narratives need to be framed by adding new elements, by confession, or by producing new narratives more potent than the original ones. This involves lobbying reporters, leaking information, or—in the hyperbolic case of *Wag the Dog*—staging a fake war to deflect attention from domestic scandals.

Such and other framing efforts are not necessarily intentional in the sense that the potential effect of telling a story is anticipated and the story is told as a conscious attempt to manipulate, steer, or call to action. In relation to a perspective on narrative as practice and ontology, the strategic use of narrative can be understood as a quasi-automatic or intuitive process in which narrative patterns are creatively performed, often improvised against the backdrop of socially and culturally available repertoires of narrative.[7] Sutter and Perrino both show how actors make use of political narrative to represent their agendas to others. As a common communicative form, telling stories is in this sense not decoupled from other everyday communicative events, but one where narratives feature in the mediation of perspectives, be it on political processes or other fields. While telling jokes as subversive practice against authoritarian regimes (Oring) can be strategically harnessed for political organization and resistance, in many cases it is a way in which political positions in private spaces are signaled and in which socially shared meaning is created in a relatively nondirected way.

Narrative as strategy scales up from such personal spaces of private conversation to communal spaces—social media posts about Pizzagate as an alleged strategy to harm the Clinton campaign—to domestic politics and diplomacy. As reflexive strategy, narratives are "a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future for international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors" (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2). The well-researched case of the European Union illustrates how narratives of shared European history are referenced to create justification for the EU integration process (Larat) or to create the idea of a cosmopolitical Europe as the "only effective pragmatic utopia" (Beck and Grande). By positioning grand narratives of shared European culture, peace-building, and values (Groth 2016; Groth and Bendix), they are aimed to legitimize the European project or the foster a European identity among its citizens. As much as they are capable of motivating collective action (Mayer), actors at local levels can make use of such narratives to frame their claims and interests into the according cultural and developmental policies and apply for funds (see the Sutter's contribution in this issue for how narratives are used to shape the relation of volunteer workers with public authorities). The appropriation of powerful narratives can thus be harnessed by those telling the story and by those inscribing themselves into the stories (Groth and Sutter).

Similarly, narrative forms are used in international negotiations to bolster arguments or frame positions as authentic or normatively just: more elaborated

stories, but also proverbs and sayings are used in such multilateral settings to frame positions as vernacular and "authentic," that is, as grounded in complex value systems and less as informed by economic or strategic interests (Groth 2018a). Narrative scales in this regard, too: from grand narratives of political systems to stories of specific processes and narrative fragments in interaction situations. Because such fragments or narrative tokens have indexical qualities, narratives need not always to be spelled out in full: references to shared stories (about Pizzagate, European identity, or proverbial wisdoms) elicit political framings and point to policy positions without telling the whole story.

The correlation between strategy and narrative leads to an aspect of narrative that has been intensely discussed in the past few years, for example, in the context of "fake news" debates. It is the relation between narratives and truth claims or how narratives relate to claims of "true" or "false" in political processes. The phrase "political narrative" can be understood in contrast to that of "political reality" (Hartley 1) to differentiate the narrative mediation from observable processes. This does not necessarily mean that political narrative is inconsequential or without ramifications for political reality, but it presupposes that the thing being mediated differs from its mediated form and exists prior to it. The idea of such a "single truth" has been criticized in the wake of the narrative turn and social-constructivist understandings of social (and political) reality. The shift to mediation allows for the analysis of multiple interpretations of political processes and political spheres. As Frank Gadinger, Christopher Smith Ochoa, and Taylan Yildiz as well as Rita Sanders show in their contributions, there is always more than one narrative of a specific situation or process. Yet these processes and spheres can be understood as shared references rather than objective political reality. Much as the psychoanalytic distinction between narrative truth and historic truth (see Spence 1984), such an antipositivist approach to political narratives is interested in how narrative truth is fabricated, how the validity of narratives is constructed or deconstructed, and how different modes of reception influences the felicity conditions of political narratives. Going back to the example of Pizzagate, the interesting aspect is not how (and if) the story was grounded in true or verified facts but how its relation to efforts of debunking and verification was configured. As part of narrative strategies, the analysis of the construction of validity—in terms of both mediation and reception—is a crucial aspect of understanding the strategic use of political narrative.

Narrative as Method

This leads to the third perspective on political narratives and narrations of the political: narratives and stories can be harnessed to investigate political processes from an analytic perspective. From this perspective, narratives are a methodological tool in the social sciences (Patterson and Monroe) to study the construction, mediation, and negotiation of political processes. By analyzing narratives as "the everyday life beliefs that operate through a culture" (Tambling 3), the authors in this issue are able to scrutinize the construction of political identities, the interface between different political spheres, or the emergence of political positionalities as part of stories. In this regard, the study of narratives can be understood as a methodical approach to the political in its various dimensions because it can aid in explaining aspects of political processes. By pointing to divergent understandings and interpretations of political organization, structure, and practice, the study of narrative unveils how they are always mediated and part of complex sense-making processes. In contrast to positivist approaches, analyzing political narratives or narrations of the political seeks not to pinpoint exact sequential orders of political processes but to show how different actors reflexively position themselves, how they make use of stories to interpret and bolster their arguments, and how they integrate narrative as strategy. Against the backdrop of shared and verifiable factual reconstructions of political developments—the construction or mediation of political "truth"—such a methodical approach to narrative has the potential to capture conflicting and seemingly incommensurable versions of sociopolitical events.

Besides this explanatory potential, narratives allow access to fields that cannot be sufficiently studied with ethnographic methods, such as past practices without adequate sources or documents to reconstruct the emergence of political structures or policies. Even if documents of political processes— for example, multilateral negotiations, lobbying efforts, bilateral talks or deliberations on domestic policy—are published and accessible to research, they remain decontextualizations (or entextualizations; Park and Bucholtz) of communicative practices and leave out contextual features and events crucial for an understanding of strategies and motives (Groth 2018b). Valdimar Hafstein's work on UNESCO's intangible heritage convention illustrates that the delineation of political decisions—traceable in the form of contracts, conventions, and publications—is only one piece of the picture. Although such explicit and overt steps in the emergence of a global policy on heritage inform us about procedural sequences, political milestones, and

policy results, they fail to make tangible the persuasive efforts and situational factors required to make the idea of an intangible heritage policy convincing and sticky enough to develop into its present form. The founding myths of UNESCO's intangible heritage convention—the stories told by central actors about how the idea of intangible heritage made it onto the international stage and how it become forceful enough to be made into policy—are a cornerstone in understanding the process, as they explicate issues of injustice, misappropriation, fear of loss and decay, and cultural hegemony. They transform policy matters into compelling calls for action and—from a methodological standpoint—give insight into how processes of coalition building and negotiation are informed by ideas entailed in narratives (Hafstein). Such founding myths motivate political engagement, garner political support, and, not least, create public support for political projects. Told differently by different actors, alternative accounts to these stories are possible. In most cases, there is not just one version but diverging views and contesting interpretations. Without limiting itself to the "one" version (and, moreover, without relying solely on narrative), narrative analysis thus aids in grasping a wider picture of political processes.

The study of narratives provides insights into practices that are inaccessible to ethnographic approaches for another reason. This is the case for what Bueger calls "clandestine, illicit or violent practices" (Bueger 1811). Using narratives in publicly available interviews with Somali pirates, Bueger analyzes different justifications for piracy in the Gulf of Aden. He identifies the political narrative of piracy as a form of coast guard, used to legitimize the practice and as a recruitment tool. As a "meaningful fiction," the narrative of Somali pirates as a quasi coast guard "is of high practical utility for different people in different situations" (1824). Under conditions of fragile statehood, the question of whether this narrative is actually believed is of less importance—what matters is that it is used to make sense of the practice, to organize social life, and to structure political order. Although such narratives on clandestine practices are limited in scope and have limited explanatory power, they allow research on fields such as insurgencies or criminalized political movements otherwise inaccessible. They can serve as a starting point to delve deeper into certain aspects, be it the notion of piracy as communities of practice (Bueger), founding stories of international organizations (Hafstein), or other fields.

Contributions in This Special Issue

The "narrativist turn" in the human sciences helped establish a perspective on history, society. and politics that allows for a breadth of methodology and "multidisciplinary dexterity"[8] (Kreiswirth 64) in approaching different topics. The articles in this special issue on political narratives and narrations of the political in their various forms present accounts and definitions of narrative from different disciplinary backgrounds—linguistic anthropology (Perrino), political sciences (Gadinger, Smith Ochoa, and Yildiz), European ethnology (Sutter), and social anthropology (Sanders)—and deliver overlapping perspectives on narratives. In bringing together such different disciplinary perspectives, theoretical understandings, and methodical approaches to narratives, the issue hopes to open a discussion on the thematic scope of political narratives without constricting itself to theoretical demarcations.

   Ove Sutter ("Narratives of 'Welcome Culture': The Cultural Politics of Voluntary Aid for Refugees") analyzes the role of narrative in civic political engagement for refugees. He shows how narratives feature in constructing concepts of voluntary work, in mediating political views on migration, and in shaping the relationships between volunteers and public authorities. Sabina Perrino's article, "Narrating Migration Politics in Veneto, Northern Italy," employs a sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropology approach to the topic of migration. Focusing on narrative practices of speakers in Veneto, she illustrates how political narratives feature in the coconstruction of political, social, and cultural identity and how processes of exclusion and racialization are performed in narratives. Rita Sanders ("Unity and Stability? Legacies and Remembrance of the Great Patriotic War in Russia's Exclave of Kaliningrad") scrutinizes how official narratives relate to local narratives as part memory politics. She shows how personal family narratives are positioned vis-à-vis official political frames of past events and how different aspects of suffering, helplessness, military prowess, and patriotism are juxtaposed in the process. The contribution by Frank Gadinger, Christopher Smith Ochoa, and Taylan Yildiz on "Resistance or Thuggery? Political Narratives of Urban Riots" make use of narrative analysis as a micro-perspective to show how state narratives and local practices of storytelling make sense of urban riots in Paris and Baltimore.

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■ **NOTES**

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2. *The Guardian*, "Washington Gunman Motivated by Fake News 'Pizzagate' Conspiracy," *The Guardian*, December 5, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/ us-news/2016/dec/05/gunman-detained-at-comet-pizza-restaurant-was-self-investigating-fake-news-reports, accessed January 5, 2018.

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5. Tom Kludt, "The Story behind Alex Jones' Unlikely Pizzagate Apology," CNN, March 30, 2017, http://money.cnn.com/2017/03/30/media/alex-jones-apology-pizzagate-james-alefantis/index.html, accessed January 5, 2018.

6. Yet this is not a necessity, nor is it a constriction of narrative forms. For popular culture formats, Mittell argues that there is a shift away from relatively simple "episodic and serial forms" to more "narrative complexity," for example, in TV series, without losing any appeal (Mittell 29).

7. See Bendix 103–28 for an overview of the development of performance theories in folkloristics that deal specifically with such issues.

8. Kreiswirth ascribes these qualities specifically to the work of Hayden White and Paul Ricœur.

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Narratives of "Welcome Culture"

The Cultural Politics of Voluntary Aid for Refugees

This article discusses how narratives were used by volunteers providing humanitarian aid to refugees in the migratory movements of 2015. It draws on an ethnographic and discourse-analytic study of humanitarian activities that started at the railway station of a medium-sized German town in September 2015.[1] Tens of thousands of refugees passed through the station between September and December 2015 and were provided with food, clothing, information, and accommodation by a self-organized network of volunteers collaborating with the authorities.

I argue that the volunteers used different kinds of narratives during the event to advance and establish their views on the migration movement and voluntary work with refugees. Moreover, a collective narrative in terms of a cognitive structure evolved that shaped the volunteers' self-image and their view of the local and public authorities. This narrative was employed by the volunteers on different occasions when interacting with authorities and other audiences.

In a first step, I outline my field of research and the political dimensions of self-organized voluntary work with refugees. Subsequently, I explain how the civic engagement developed during the sometimes conflictual relationship between the

volunteers and the authorities. After defining my understanding of narrative, I argue that the volunteers created a collective action frame and, in doing so, used different kinds of narrative as rhetoric devices. Furthermore, I illustrate how a collective narrative of the civic engagement developed during the event.[2]

"Welcome!" Voluntary Work with Refugees in the Migratory Movements of 2015

In 2015, when the European border regime was put under pressure by migratory movements, civic support for refugees took various forms, from protest marches and privately organized transport to the basic provision of food, clothing, and accommodation (Della Porta). Humanitarian aid for refugees at this railway station and many places throughout Europe was basically provided by volunteers and civic solidarity networks. According to a survey undertaken by the Social Scientific Institute of the Protestant Churches in Germany (Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland), more than 10 percent of people above the age of fourteen were involved in such activities at the end of October (Ahrens; cited in Karakayali and Kleist 7). Some scholars call this event "the summer of welcome" (Karakayali and Kleist), given the vast civic engagement and large numbers of volunteers involved.

The key role played by civic engagement in the state's provision of assistance for refugees was emphasized and subjected to critique following the migratory movements of 2015. The issue of the "neoliberal instrumentalization and appropriation of humanitarian aid" (Steinhilper and Fleischmann 67) for refugees by the state was raised. According to recent studies, most services provided to refugees in the more recent migratory movements to Europe were delivered by volunteers. The devolvement of humanitarian provision to volunteers has been seen as part of a comprehensive change in the welfare state toward one that activates rather than acts, in which the "the community-as-resource" is deliberately deployed, even while there is a simultaneous "underfunding of public infrastructure and administration" (Van Dyk and Misbach 209). According to this view, state benefits (welfare payments) are "outsourced" to an unpaid voluntary sector as part of neoliberal welfare policy (Pinl). Recent studies have come to various conclusions regarding the transformation in volunteer motivations and practices. Some indicate that many currently active volunteers define their work in emphatically political terms,

choosing political forms of action and therefore have to be conceived as a new kind of social or citizen movement (see Schiffauer). By contrast, others suggest that the spread of civic engagement brought with it a rather depoliticized understanding among volunteers of what they were doing (see Aumüller, Daphi, and Biesenkamp; Daphi; Hamann and Karakayali; Hamann et al.; Misbach; Mutz et al.; Speth and Becker). Elias Steinhilper and Larissa Fleischmann argue that a new "humanitarian dispositif of helping" has emerged (Steinhilper and Fleischmann), since the civic engagement for refugees involved more and more committed citizens beyond those "faith-based circles of left activist networks" (ibid.) who shaped engagement in previous years. According to them, this new dispositif "consists of an ensemble of sense-making processes that evolve around the claim to provide ('apolitical') help to people in need and are accompanied by an impetus to relieve human suffering" (Steinhilper and Fleischmann 20).

Local Negotiations of Welcome Culture between Volunteers and Authorities

The volunteers at the main station of Middletown[3] played an important role within the provision of humanitarian aid for refugees from the beginning. The initial point of the event was a breakdown of the local public transport system in September 2015, which interrupted the travel of more than 100 refugees on their way to neighboring countries. The authorities had canceled all departing trains on this day, so the newly arrived refugees were compelled to spend the following night at the station. Within hours, news of this, together with photographs of people sleeping on the concourse floor, had spread throughout social media, such as Facebook. Soon, a large number of helpers gathered to provide the refugees with food and clothing.

The volunteers occupied and appropriated the railway station for their own purposes from the first days of the event and converted it into a space of humanitarian aid. They reconstructed the entrance hall by equipping it with furniture and different signs and symbols. They carried out these changes initially without any official approval from the German railway company "Deutsche Bahn." In addition to converting the entrance hall, the volunteers built a well-stocked clothing chamber, filled with donations from local people and private companies, in an empty storeroom adjacent to the hall. Over the subsequent days and weeks, volunteers set up a comprehensive humanitarian aid infrastructure that was self-organized

and received donations from the local community and local entrepreneurs. Their assistance consisted principally of providing refugees with clothing, food, information, accommodation, and even free train tickets. To maintain their self-organized infrastructure, the volunteers divided into different teams, each of which had different tasks, such as providing information to the refugees, running the kitchen and the clothes chamber, or organizing and coordinating the various work processes. Over a period of months, the railway station became a place of almost continuous social interaction for the volunteers. For the refugees, it generally remained a place of transit: they arrived in an exhausted state and used the location for just a few hours to sleep and get clothing, food, and information for their onward journey, while waiting for a connecting train.

Some authority employees confirmed to me that they had been initially surprised by the extent and speed of the volunteer engagement. At first, they felt only partially responsible, since the arrival and temporal stay of the refugees was not classified officially as a humanitarian case of emergency or a security problem. They started collaborating with volunteers during the event by providing some equipment and electricity. The fire brigade and the German Red Cross, together with the municipality, provided accommodation, transport, and hot meals for those refugees who arrived late and had to stay for the night in Middletown. The police usually monitored the event within and in front of the station.

The relationship between the volunteers and the authority employees relaxed soon after the event began, even though both sides perceived and interpreted their relationship with each other ambivalently. On one hand, the volunteers called repeatedly for support from the authorities. On the other hand, they insisted on maintaining their self-organized humanitarian aid. The authority, in turn, perceived some of the activities taking place at the station rather skeptically. As far as I could understand from the data available to me, they welcomed the volunteers' activities as a relevant resource, as they could acquire a much higher amount of donations, or as a positive and relaxing effect on the refugees' mental condition. In fact, I had the impression that a "liminal" situation (Turner) had evolved in the first few weeks of the activities around the station, in which in some of the participants' certainties (i.e. daily routines), their perception of authorities up to political power relations were questioned and to some extent had become an object of negotiation. Within the relationship between authorities and volunteers, the latter could partially and temporarily gain the position of a broad scope of action. Consequently, some of the volunteers used their existing social and cultural capital (Bourdieu) and their

social reputation and prestige, which they had gained by previous official political functions, among other ways. Those volunteers could achieve an exposed and somehow "charismatic" position during the event by making use of these resources. Most of these charismatic volunteers were part of the team that, among other things, was responsible for communicating with the authorities and moderating the volunteers' Facebook page.[4]

Narratives were involved in this process on various levels. Using narratives, the volunteers created a "collective action frame" (Benford and Snow), which suggested certain views on the civic engagement. Narratives helped the volunteers empower themselves on a symbolic-discursive level and strengthen their collective identity. Furthermore, they employed narratives as rhetoric devices during their negotiations with authorities.

What Does *Narrative* Mean?

Before exemplifying the different forms and functions of narrative, what the term *narrative* actually means needs to be clarified. The interdisciplinary state of research and the variety of theoretical concepts of narrative seem to be comprehensive and sometimes confusing. This is so because narrative inquiries range from the analysis of literary narratives, such as novels, to the study of the political meaning of grand historical narratives, such as "the nation," to the sociological and ethnological examination of narrative as a form of everyday communication. Because of this multitude of approaches, I only draw on those concepts linked to my object of research in the following. Therefore, as a first step, I outline a minimal definition of *narrative*. Second, I draw on a sociolinguistic concept of narrative, and finally, I use the vast state of research on narrative as a framing device of political grassroots activism and social movements.

MINIMAL DEFINITIONS OF *NARRATIVE*

The following minimal definitions of *narrative* seem to be quite consensual and are used comprehensively by different disciplines. Narrative is a linguistic-discursive form of representation of the social world. According to the influential and manifoldly quoted definition of Gerard Genette, narrative is understood "as the representation of an event or a series of events" (Genette 127; cited in Ryan). Abbott

sees the event as an essential element of narrative that distinguishes it from other linguistic forms of representation, such as "description," "exposition," "argument," or "lyric" (Abbott 13). Referring to Maines, Davis argues that narratives consist of at least "three irreducible elements: events, sequence, and plot," and that narrative explanation works through "emplotment" (Davis 11f.). Furthermore, narratives have human or human-like characters (Polletta et al. 111). The narrative's particular events are ordered into a meaningful sequence that includes only those events that are meaningful to the narrator. According to Polletta and colleagues, narrated events are brought into a causal relationship, whereas the causal links are determined by the plot of the story (Polletta et al. 111). Davis argues that "to understand an event, even to explain what caused the event, is to locate it within the temporal and relational sequence of a story, linking it with both previous and subsequent events over time" (Davis 12). According to Shenhav, narrative discourse is distinguished from other forms of discourse by its temporal sequence. He refers to Labov's definition of minimal narrative "as a sequence of two clauses which are *temporally ordered*: that is, a change in their order will result in a change in the temporal sequence of the original semantic interpretation" (Labov 226; cited in Shenhav 80).

SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PRAGMATIC DEFINITIONS: EVERYDAY NARRATIVES OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In addition to these general and minimal concepts of narrative, I employ socio-logical and ethnological definitions that refer to the sociolinguistic theory of oral narrative of personal experience developed by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky. An analysis of everyday and biographic storytelling referring to the work of Labov and Waletzky, as well as to German functional pragmatics (see Ehlich and Rehbein; Rehbein 1980), has developed particularly in German folklore studies (Volkskunde) and European ethnology as an influential approach of narrative inquiry (see Groth; Lehmann; Meyer; Michel). According to this approach, narrative is defined as a specific type of linguistic action that can be distinguished from other types, such as reporting or portraying, by its structural organization, linguistic means, and social purpose (see Rehbein 1984). Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann argue that the most general characteristic of narrative is the representation of temporal change by sentences brought into a linear order (see Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 21). The structural center of narrative is a represented event that causes temporal change. Narrators usually present this change as an unexpected and extraordinary

incident that interrupts the normal course of things and, in doing so, can excite the audience (ibid. 22).

A narrative is basically structured in different sections or elements. As an idealized form, it begins with an "abstract," which consists of a brief summary of the story. It is followed by the "orientation," which orients the listener regarding the main characters of the story, place, and time. The subsequent section is the "complication" or "complicating action," which consists of the actual events of the narrative and is often presented as a dialogue between the main characters. Another important element of narrative is the "evaluation," the actual reason the narrative is told. It can be followed by the "resolution," which is the narrative's conclusion. Finally, there may be a "coda," where the narrator makes explicit the narrative's normative point. The coda is, so to speak, the moral of the story, which can be generalized beyond the narrated event.

Narrative can be employed as a type of linguistic action to achieve different social goals. According to functional pragmatics, its main purpose is to create a shared view of the social world (Ehlich 382). Narrative is an effective device for persuading the listener to adapt the narrator's point of view as presented in the story due to its elements and linguistic means. The narrative's structure and means are particularly effective to navigate listeners' attention and to involve them emotionally in the narrated event. Schwitalla argues that the narrative construction of a shared view of the social world aims at creating a relationship based on solidarity between the narrator and the listening audience (Schwitalla 111). The mutual assurance of narrator and listener thereby fosters the creation of a collective social identity. Furthermore, narrative can have an effect on the narrator's personal identity, as it involves them emotionally in the linguistic reproduction of the incident (Rehbein 1980, 84) and lets them undergo it once more. In doing so, it enables the narrator to reflect and reassess the event or, in the case of hurtful experiences, overcome it emotionally (e.g., Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 149; Rehbein 1980, 79).

NARRATIVE AND FRAMING AS A PRACTICE OF POLITICAL GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Further research on narrative as a social practice, which is of importance for my analysis, derives from the area of social movement studies, which has examined narrative since about the 1980s. From the stance of social constructivism and referring to the work of Erving Goffman, narrative was conceptualized and analyzed as

"signifying work" and "meaning construction" (Benford and Snow 613) or as "politics of signification" (Hall 1982). Furthermore, scrutinizing narrative as a cultural practice of social movements was fostered by the insight that the action repertoire of social movements also comprises the construction of "shared meanings" and interpretations (Davis 7).

Scholars of narrative in the area of social movement studies also draw basically on the sociolinguistic concept of Labov and Waletzky (Polletta and Chen 8; Polletta et al.). Davis emphasizes the capacity of narrative as a device of social movements to create relationships between the narrator and the audience. Because of this capacity, it enables the generation of solidarity and the formation of social movements as a collective actor. Salman and Assis point out that storytelling as a practice of political activism contributes to the construction of social movements as "memory communities" (Salman and Assis), because they actualize their own history and memory, and their remembrance of political successes, mistakes, and defeats. Thus, narrative presentation of previous political events is part of an ongoing learning process among political activists that has an impact on their views, values, and subjectivities and therefore on their future strategies, political positions, and alliances (Wahlström).

The social movement studies' approach to narrative inquiry is particularly linked to the analysis of "collective action frames" (Benford and Snow). Social movements are understood from this perspective as "dynamic collective actors" (Vicari 506) or "signifying agents" who produce and maintain meaning (Benford and Snow 613). Following Erving Goffman, signifying work is defined as "framing" in terms of a (sometimes contentious) practice of constructing reality (Benford and Snow 614). Frames are conceptualized as "schemata of interpretation" that enable people "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman 21). Benford and Snow adapt Goffman's approach to social movement studies by introducing the concept of "collective action frames," defined as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (Benford and Snow 614). Collective action frames are conceived of as a strategy of social movements to convince potential followers of their ideas and to mobilize them (Gupta 152). They usually consist of "diagnostic," "prognostic," and "motivational" components (Polletta and Chen; Snow and Benford).

Effective and persuasive frames very often draw on already existing and popular beliefs and ideas or "discursive opportunity structures" (Koopmans and Statham).

They resonate with "people's everyday experiences" and their perceived reality. Considering this and following the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci), the terrain on which social movements act by designing and using collective action frames can be conceived of as "common sense" that consists of the self-evident and normal-appearing interpretations of the social world. According to Gramsci, Stuart Hall, and Alan O'Shea (among others), in capitalist societies, common sense is the central terrain on which political conflicts—that is, disputes about governance, participation, and exclusion or about the organization of production and the distribution of goods—take place between civil society and the state and institutional actors. Thus, it is the arena where cultural hegemony is reproduced and contested because its attainment and maintenance is based fundamentally on enforcing and establishing one's political ideas and views of the social world as self-evident and normal-appearing everyday perspectives.[5] Operating within the realm of common sense, collective action frames also accord with "familiar stories, myths, and folktales" and "cultural narratives" (Polletta and Chen 4; Snow and Benford 210). Therefore, Polletta and Chen see narratives as "powerfully persuasive devices" with which activists aim at changing people's opinions (Polletta and Chen 1).

Narratives as Framing Devices of "Welcome Culture"

How did the volunteers use narrative during their engagement at the railway station—intentionally or without a strategic goal? The engagement was shaped by a variety of discursive-symbolic practices, such as equipping the entrance hall with signs, symbols, and even paintings, and media activities. The local press reported on the voluntary activities in numerous articles and featured individual volunteers in biographical portraits, including photographs and reports on TV. The volunteers did their own reporting as well. A small group of local activists had already set up a Facebook page prior to the events at the station because of increasing movements of migrants through the town and announcements of demonstrations by extreme right-wing groups. This page became the volunteers' main medium during their activities and attracted thousands of "likes" by December 2015.[6] The volunteers used the Facebook page to gather donations, for which purpose they posted a list of needs at the start of the page, which was regularly updated and via which donors could obtain information. They also aimed at generating publicity and rendering the volunteers' activities visible by posting short reports on their engagement, photographs

taken of one another, media articles, and YouTube clips produced by the media or a local filming group. Furthermore, they used the Facebook page to make political demands of the authority, criticize governmental migration politics, or send out calls for solidarity with refugees and action against right-wing extremism.

The activities on the volunteers' Facebook page can be understood as signifying work by which they contributed to the collective action frame that emerged during the event. The volunteers worked on a certain self-image by creating this frame: they aimed at legitimizing their engagement and attempted to mobilize donors and supporters. By doing so, they worked on their collective identity as "the volunteers from the station." In addition to other discursive and symbolic forms, the engagement's collective action frame created on their Facebook page consisted of different types of narrative. I concentrate on two different types in the following: links to narratives of popular culture and narratives of personal experiences.

LINKING VOLUNTARY WORK WITH REFUGEES TO NARRATIVES OF POPULAR CULTURE

The volunteers published a short post in the middle of September. In it, they linked a short text to a photograph taken from the entrance door of the railway company's service center in the entrance hall of the station. Someone had pasted up an even bigger sticker below the label of the railway company, Deutsche Bahn, showing the volunteers' logo. They commented on the picture as follows:

> Another day slowly recedes into night, and yet everyone down at the main train station is still busily occupied. The atmosphere is so intense that there is little desire to return home. Not only the crews at the clothing store, caterers and chemists, interpreters, infrastructure and coordination administrators, but also the Malteser assistant services, DRK [German Red Cross], voluntary fire services, the federal police force, the German rail security, taxi drivers and bus drivers, cleaning services, professional fire brigade, our reliable and engaged contact persons from the administration and, no less, the station personnel, all form something like one big family, a familiar village, an oasis of hospitality.
>
> The year is 2015 A.D. All Europe is hemmed in by borders . . . All Europe? Well, not entirely . . . The indomitable village of Middletown still holds out against inhumanity.

In this passage, the author initially presents the situation at the station from the view of someone standing in the middle of the entrance hall, describing the events as they are happening. In doing so, she rhetorically reduces the distance between the volunteers and the audience and virtually places them in the entrance hall. Furthermore, the author does not present the events from the distanced and uninvolved position of a reporter but describes them very emotionally. She emphasizes the emotional gravity of the atmosphere that keeps her and the participants from going home. Furthermore, she cheers the solidarity among the different participants, whom she defines as "family," "village," and a "hospitable oasis." She performs rhetorically and therefore reinforces the emotional involvement of the voluntary aid for refugees as described by other scholars as a major characteristic and motivation of the civic engagement during the migratory movements of 2015 (Kleres; see also Sutter).

The text ends with a passage that is marked as a citation. This passage is an adaption of a quotation from the popular comic books *Asterix and Obelix*, which starts every episode with the following sentence:

> The year is 50 B.C. Gaul is entirely occupied by the Romans. Well, not entirely ... One small village of indomitable Gauls still holds out against the invaders.[7]

By quoting the comic series in this post, the author links the volunteers' engagement to the usually cheerful residents of the small village in ancient Gaul, who resist the occupation of the Roman Empire successfully thanks to a magic potion. Referring to the comic's popular narrative, the volunteers stylize themselves as small but strong defenders of freedom against the "cruel" closure of Europe's borders.

In addition, the volunteers posted a short video clip on the 100th day of their engagement at the station; this was an adaptation of the starting sequence of the movie series *Star Wars*. Playing the movie's famous and emotive soundtrack, the volunteers' logo appears in outer space like a space shuttle vanishing into the distance only seconds later, followed by a text passage that flies onto the screen. The text in the original starting sequence of *Star Wars* at the beginning of every new episode explains the series' initial plot to the audience, which is the heroic struggle of rebels against the "dark side of the Force" and the "Galactic Empire." The text passage in the volunteers' video, referring stylistically to this narrative, goes as follows:

One hundred days—of raging war, poverty and hardship. There is an ongoing
exodus of sixty million people worldwide, and many turn away and refuse them
help: these are dark days for humanity. However, we witness everywhere volunteers
coming together in a struggle for humanity. To resist these dark forces, Middletown
has also erected a base at the train station. Thanks to the support of the local
population, for the last 100 days it has been possible to provide a daily average of
hundreds of refugees with warm clothing, food, medical aid, advice and translation
services. It is through actions such as these that a small contribution can be made
to the grand network of solidarity that helps refugees achieve a semblance of
dignity and hope—and, thus, hopefully, makes the world a place worth living in
… Many thanks must go to all those who have supported us over the last 100 days!
And greetings and solidarity, too, to those many advocates of greater humanity
throughout Europe. May the force be with you!

The author again links the volunteers' activities to a famous narrative of pop-
ular culture that tells about the apparently desperate struggle of a small group of
insurgents against an evil and allegedly superior opponent. At the same time, she
addresses the volunteers' donors as members of the "vast network of solidarity"
that aims at struggling for "humanity." By doing so, both references to popular
culture employ the subjacent myth of David against Goliath, which is deep-rooted
in Western Christian ideology. The way the authors of these texts refer to narratives
of popular culture is also striking by the fact that they do not cite or copy them
extensively. Instead, they suggest the reference by only quoting short but familiar
sentences or copying a limited set of symbols. They refer to it not explicitly but in
the way of an allusion, treating the story as already known by the audience. Polletta
and Chen argue that this usage of stories might be especially effective because it
requires the audience's "interpretive participation" and demands to work "to resolve
ambiguities" (Polletta and Chen) and "to anticipate the normative conclusion"
(ibid.). In selecting these popular narratives, the volunteers ensured that the effect
was achieved among as many recipients as possible.

LINKING VOLUNTARY WORK WITH REFUGEES TO NARRATIVES
OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Another article, posted in November 2015, was linked to photographs showing
volunteers, female refugees, and children, and it started with an indicated reference

to the TV series *Game of Thrones*. The series tells the story of a medieval fantasy world, where humankind fears the coming years-long winter and, with it, the threat of being wiped out by an army of undead, led by the so-called white walkers: "Winter is coming!"

After the reference to the TV series, the article continues with a political statement criticizing the European migration regime and border politics as cold-hearted, demanding equal rights for refugees, and diagnosing a more comprehensive political climate change to the disfavor of refugees. It criticizes the opponents of refugees as cold-hearted, contrasting their political stance with an individualizing perspective on needy and grateful refugees. The article ends with the following passage:

> We hope, with our work, not only to assist the refugees, but to contribute to a greater understanding of their situation. We wish to express heartfelt thanks to the volunteers for making available the images of encounters at the train station listed above. The image below [Au note: the image showing the female refugees with their children] was provided by John with a big thank you to all volunteers.
>
> In John's words: "I established contact with this family from Iraq and managed to talk with them at some length. The father at the train station with two infants held in his arms caught my attention. On asking him for a photograph, he led me to his wife and sister-in-law in the clothing store: Twins suddenly became triplets. The infants are three-months old, and the family has been fleeing overland for the past 40 days. Their destination was the neighboring country. I sent the photographs to the family. On Saturday night, around 12.44, I received the following mail from the father: 'Hi John am karim we are naw in neighbouring country tomorrow i will send to you photo if u want.' Thank you to all those who made this possible."

In this passage, the author expresses the volunteers' goal not only to help the refugees but also to fuel empathy for their situation. After having thanked the volunteers for providing the photographs, the article highlights one particular picture, saying it was shot by John, who provided the picture to thank the volunteers for their commitment. The author then seems to quote the message John sent together with the picture. The quote contains the narrative presentation of John's encounter with a refugee family at the station. In the climax of the story, the encounter concludes with a happy ending, as John receives an email from the family's father telling him that all have arrived safely at their destination. John ends his message thanking "all

who made this possible" and therefore reveals his evaluation of the story. In this post, I argue, the narrative presentation is used to verify the moral rightness of the volunteers' engagement and their view of the refugees. Staging the information as a narrative of personal experience fosters the involvement of the audience emotionally and thus persuades them to adopt not only the author's view of the narrated situation but also his critique of the changing political and societal mood about refugees fleeing to Europe.

There are more posts of stories about the volunteers' personal experiences with refugees, often highlighting the latter's gratefulness, be it in a written form or a video clip showing volunteers talking about their engagement at the station. The post above was shared many times and viewers commented on it emotionally, for instance, using emojis or answering it with sentences such as, "I got goose bumps. Great description" or "I have tears in my eyes." These reactions may indicate the effectiveness of narratives as persuasive rhetorical devices of collective action frames. Due to its structure, emplotment, and linguistic means, narrative may be more likely than other forms of discursive representation to create an emotional relationship and solidarity between the author or the speaker and their audience (Davis).

The volunteers achieved a high degree of public resonance and recognition because of not only their commitment at the station but also the framing of their engagement in social media and media coverage. Local politicians visited the station to thank the volunteers and inform themselves. A regional newspaper honored the volunteers, based on a vote of its readers, as the most important social commitment of the year. Subsequently, some of the volunteers were invited to public discussions or as interview partners. They became temporarily involved in institutional committees and working groups as experts and activists.

Following Speth and Becker, among others, Fleischmann and Steinhilper argue that the "welcome culture" initiatives had an impact on debates on migration politics at the local level (see Steinhilper and Fleischmann). This was also evident regarding the volunteers from the station. Some were active as advocates of their commitment during the engagement even beyond the station and, by doing so, endeavored to disseminate their views on the engagement and related topics. Although they were far away from discursive hegemony, they could gain a visible and audible position as speakers in the local political and media discourse on migration. Combining political messages with the narrative presentation of personal experiences may have contributed to this achievement.

The Collective Narrative of the Voluntary Aid for Refugees at the Station

During my research, I came to the impression that in addition to these different forms of narratives as part of the media framing, another narrative had formed in the first few weeks of the event. This one worked more in terms of a cognitive structure that shaped the view of many volunteers on the chronology of their engagement. As such, it highlighted certain events and established some causal links between them. Following Michael Bamberg, this structure could be conceived of in terms of a "master narrative" or "dominant narrative." Accordingly, it is not a narrative in the true sense of the word, but is "structured like a narrative: It entails beginnings, middles, and ends; it follows a plot or storyline; and the characters in these plots are clearly defined as protagonists or antagonists regarding the values that connect into a coherent unit" (Bamberg 1300). Polletta et al. use the phrase "collective narrative" to denote "a collection of stories with similar themes told by group members" (Polletta et al. 84) that can appear as a common theme in different stories. Because it is shared by different members of a group, a collective narrative articulates and amplifies their collective identity. Although I take Bamberg's idea of the dominant narrative as a narrative-like cognitive structure rather than adhering to Polletta and colleagues' narrow concept of story that draws on Labov's definition, the phrase "collective narrative" seems to be more accurate to signify the volunteers' specific view of their commitment, which was revealed on different occasions.

As I would argue, the volunteers' collective narrative in terms of their specific discursive representation of the event's chronology also served as a framing device and was involved in collaborations and negotiations between civil society actors and authorities. First, it revealed this in the interviews that I conducted with the volunteers, who did not usually reproduce it in the same way but picked some of its elements and applied them to the presentation of their personal experiences and interpretation. I have reconstructed this collective narrative in my own words as follows:

> People, mobilized via Facebook, came to the station spontaneously with the feeling of being obliged to help. The gathering of the many different people at the station was a spontaneous assembly; you did not know most of the other people at the station before then. Arriving at the station, you were emotionally overwhelmed

by the sight of not only the refugees but also the many volunteers and the wave of helpfulness. You had not expected that. In the beginning, the situation at the station was rather chaotic and confused. Mountains of clothing and food piled up everywhere. Thanks to the volunteers, an infrastructure developed in the first few days. At the beginning, the infrastructure was built mainly by the volunteers and was self-organized; the authorities were initially only slightly involved. It was only gradually that a very good cooperation developed between the volunteers and authorities. Now there is good cohesion among the different participants, almost like in a "family."

Focusing on the narrative's relevance concerning the relationship between volunteers and authorities, the following elements are of particular interest. First, it is of importance that many of the interviewees presented their participation in the engagement as a spontaneous and unplanned impulse. Consequently, the commitment was presented as action that was less based on political ideas or even existing political networks, but more on "common sense" or a self-evident attitude of "humanity." In her studies of narratives in the US civil rights movement, Francesca Polletta has shown how such a framing of political commitment as a spontaneous and unplanned act helped legitimize it regarding a public audience that, based on an anticommunist attitude, appeared suspicious of all organized political action. Staging the commitment at the station in this way established it not as an activity fueled by ideology but as the normal reaction to refugees in need.

Second, another important element of the collective narrative is the representation of the sequence of events as a development from a chaotic and messy situation to an ordered structure. Using this representation of the event, the volunteers emphasized their ability to organize themselves without professional support from the authorities. This image of the volunteers is fostered by another element of the collective narrative which says that the authorities did not participate in the construction of the infrastructure until the most extensive reconstruction work had already been carried out by the volunteers. The creation of such a self-image may have revealed and supported the volunteers' self-empowerment.

Third, the presentation of the event as a process toward a structured order culminating in a happy ending, which includes, among other things, the harmonious cooperation between volunteers and authorities as in a family, is relevant. In this plot, the collective actor of engagement is constituted as consisting of the volunteers and the authorities. This plot of the collective narrative structuring the volunteers'

view of the event may have ideologically supported their significant collaboration with the authorities.

The collective narrative, as reconstructed here, refers mainly to the first days of engagement. Those volunteers who applied the narrative's elements during the interview used them particularly when answering my question of how the civic engagement had begun for them personally. Following Jarret Zigon, the interviews may have shown the employment of narrative as a device in "the ethical process of attempting to regain moral comfort in the world by charitably negotiating moral breakdowns" (Zigon 205). Referring to Paul Ricoeur, he argues that narrative may help a person "constitute her very identity as a moral subject" (Zigon 207). Regarding the civic engagement taking place at the station, this may be so because especially the first days of the event, the hitherto unknown and emotional experience of engagement, the physical encounter with the refugees and the personal experience of the effects of global political crises, which are often perceived only by the media, may have had the character of a liminal situation, calling into question the apparent self-evident order of everyday life. The collective narrative of the engagement may have served as a rhetorical device for the symbolic-discursive and therefore ideological restoration of this order. It also suggests that a process of self-empowerment has arisen in this situation on the part of those who evolved as volunteers during the event. The development of the collective narrative may have contributed to this process as a cognitive structure shaping the volunteers' view of the event.

In addition to the interviews, I observed the volunteers' use of some of the narrative's elements in other situations. A few months after the peak of the engagement, some of them, all former members of the volunteer team in charge of organizing and coordinating the work processes and the volunteer Facebook page, met with a small delegation from a foreign migration authority. The delegation was on a tour to several cities in Germany for a few days to exchange information with authorities about cross-border migration management. On this occasion, the delegation met with civil society initiatives helping refugees obtain information on expected future migration flows and migration routes, among other reasons. The volunteers from the station, in turn, hoped that the meeting would help draw the authorities' attention to a number of issues they considered to be important and help them get useful information. After welcoming the official delegation in the volunteers' premises at the station, one of the volunteers began to present their commitment and concerns to them. He used a PowerPoint presentation to support his talk that consisted of images of past events, some of which were published in the media and

some of which were posted on the volunteers' Facebook page. His retrospective presentation was not identical to but to some extent characterized by the sequence of the collective narrative. In addition to the pictures and in accordance with this narrative, he emphasized that many of the volunteers did not know each other at the beginning of the engagement, that the whole political spectrum was represented, and that the volunteers could help faster and less bureaucratically than the authorities could. Unfortunately, I missed the chance to ask him directly about his intentions regarding the composition and usage of the presentation. Nevertheless, I would argue that he presented the engagement during the meeting along with the collective narrative not only to inform the delegation but also to empower the volunteers and thus to legitimize them as competent actors and interlocutors. He tried to gain the delegation's acceptance to establish a less hierarchical relationship in the following conversation.

On another occasion, I observed how the collective narrative contributed to the volunteers' memory work. One year after the start of their commitment, the volunteers organized a kind of anniversary celebration on the station's forecourt. The party was visited by many volunteers and by some of the staff from the municipality and other organizations who had been involved. Some of the volunteers had set up an exhibition in the entrance hall of the station and in the passageway to the tracks. The exhibition consisted of fifteen displays with more than 200 photos, many of which had already been published on Facebook. Copies of newspaper reports about the engagement were also on some of the displays. Although the displays did not conform identically to the sequence of the collective narrative, they contained many of its elements. For instance, one presented the beginning of the engagement as a chaotic situation, followed by three more displays showing orderly food and clothing items and smiling volunteers. Another motif on these displays is that of volunteers together with the staff of authorities smiling as their picture is taken. The following display finally showed the volunteers posing together as a group after being publicly honored for their commitment. In sum, with some exceptions, the exhibition gave the impression of the commitment at the station as a kind of "special event," culminating in a "happy ending." Following Salman and Assis, the exhibition can be interpreted as a contribution to the collective identity of the volunteers in the sense of a memory community. Employing the structure of the collective narrative within the exhibition, the volunteers worked here on their own history and memory. Regarding the collaboration between volunteers and authorities, its harmonizing visual presentation in the exhibition is particularly striking.

Conclusion

Drawing on an ethnographic and discourse-analytic study of an event of voluntary humanitarian aid for refugees at a railway station in a German town, I have shown how volunteers used different narratives during their commitment. I argued that a liminal situation arose in the first few weeks of the engagement at the station in which the volunteers were able to gain the position of a broadened scope of action.

Their repertoire of action included a variety of symbolic and discursive practices of the production of meaning and, thus, the use of narratives. The volunteers created a collective action frame on their Facebook page, among other things, during their engagement. In this context, they also used narratives to generalize and establish their views on the commitment at the station and on political issues related to migration politics. First, they presented themselves as a small resistance group in the fight against an evil and seemingly overpowering opponent by linking their self-image to popular cultural narratives. Second, they linked their political demands to emotional representations of engagement by publishing narratives of personal experience to evoke emotional reactions from their audience. I have argued that by doing so, the volunteers were involved in processes of local negotiation of discursive hegemony by attempting to establish their own views and interpretations of engagement as self-evident and normal-appearing views of common sense.

Furthermore, I argued that a collective narrative of the civic engagement in terms of a cognitive structure was established among the volunteers during the engagement that served as a framing device. In doing so, the collective narrative shaped the volunteers' view of the event, especially their self-image as volunteers. I have shown how the volunteers used this kind of narrative to legitimize themselves as equal interlocutors in a meeting with authorities. In addition, using the collective narrative as a structure for an exhibition, the volunteers worked on a specific self-image contributing to the creation of a memory community of not only the volunteers but also the employees of authorities. However, I could not always identify in my observations whether the narrative practices and other practices of the volunteers' repertoire of action were applied intentionally and strategically or rather out of unconscious routine and habit.

With this article, I attempt to strengthen an approach of narrative analysis as empirical cultural analysis by proposing to examine narratives as symbolic-discursive devices of political action from a perspective of praxeology. This is accompanied by an understanding of narratives as cultural micropolitics, which unfold in complex

interrelationships with macropolitical dynamics. In the case of my study, this means, among other things, considering that current civil society engagement is developing in connection with neoliberal modes of governance that transform the relationship between the state on one hand and individuals on the other, thereby invoking them as self-responsible citizens. How these complex interrelationships can be comprehended in terms of structures, methodically and theoretically, without simply taking them for granted would have to be further elaborated.

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◼ **NOTES**

1. My study draws on several weeks of participatory observation from November 2015 onward at the station and in other initiatives for refugees in the city. I conducted fifty-one semi-structured individual and group interviews with various participants of the refugee relief, including about thirty with volunteers, as well as refugees who had stayed in the city, local politicians, employees of the railway company Deutsche Bahn, and staff and heads of local and public authorities, such as the city administration, the federal police, and the professional fire brigade. My empirical material includes parts of the media coverage on the event, the volunteers' activities in social media, and policy documents from the authorities. Further research results of this study were published in Sutter (2018a , 2018b).

2. I am grateful to the editors and to the anonymous reviewers for their thought- provoking comments and constructive criticism.

3. The pseudonym "Middletown" is used for anonymization. Some more information, including the names and gender of the persons involved, names of other places

or time specification, have been changed by the author to maintain anonymity, as this information was irrelevant to the analysis.

4. I thank Regina Bendix for giving me the idea to grasp the event as a "liminal situation" and the volunteers as "charismatic" persons.

5. For more information on the Gramscian concept of common sense, see Crehan; Gencarella; Hall and O'Shea; Hall 1986; Sutter 2016.

6. Even if the Facebook page was mainly edited by one member of the organization team, most of the other volunteers welcomed, shared, and contributed to its content.

7. Free translation of the introduction to *Asterix the Gaul*; Goscinny and Uderzo, Orion/Hachette, England, 1969.

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Narrating Migration Politics in Veneto, Northern Italy

I vote Lega [Nord] for this [reason]

because I want to be protected

I don't want these [migrants] here anymore,

who wander around com'on

I want them regular [i.e., with a permit to stay]

I don't have anything against these people

but they can't take away anything from Italians

and if they come here they have to work

if they want to [come here] . . . they don't want to work?

I won't certainly take care of them.[1]

　　　—Ordinary speaker in Veneto, northern Italy, 2003[2]

n the summer of 2003, while I was interviewing ordinary speakers in Veneto, a region in northern Italy, I noted a recurrent antagonistic stance against migrants, derogatorily called *extracomunitari*,[3] or migrants from outside the European Union, as the opening quote of this article shows. Since then, this rhetoric has become even stronger across Italy, especially after Umberto Bossi, who had been

the leader and the founder of the Lega Nord (Northern League) political party, reframed it in clear terms during a journalist's interview on June 16, 2003, in which he argued that:

> By hook or by crook clandestine migrants need to be kicked out. Only migrants with a job contract can enter [Italy]. All the other ones [need to be] out [of Italy]. A moment arrives when the use of force is necessary. The Italian Marines and Finance forces will have to line up to defend our shores and to use their cannons. This is the correct way to apply the law. No way out and no delays.[4] (Cavalera)

In this interview, Bossi's stark comments referred to the fact that many women and children were often present on overcrowded ships seeking to reach the European continent. Italy has become one of the key entry points for migrants and refugees to Europe and one of the most important host countries for them, so these migration crises have been very frequent. In the first nine months of 2015, for example, more than 487,000 migrants arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean Sea, twice the number of 2014 (Albahari 2015a, 2015b). In the process, since 2000, more than 25,000 migrants have died in the attempt to reach Italy and the rest of Europe by boat, most of them perishing in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea.[5] Since 2003, when I started to collect stories about migration and politics delivered by northern Italian ordinary speakers, the situation for migrants in Italy has worsened. Severe anti-immigrant laws have been issued, and aggressive stances have become more common, and legitimized, in everyday discursive practices, such as oral narratives. In June 2017, for example, one research collaborator said the following to me during an interview:

> We can't take all these *extracomunitari* anymore! [They] just wander in the streets, steal, and create problems for Italians. Italians should come first! There are many Italian young people [who are] without a job, without a stipend; what do these foreigners want from us? There is nothing for them here! [They] should go back to their countries or [they] should go somewhere else. But [you] will see that [they, i.e., the relevant governmental authorities] will have to find a drastic solution for all this, and very soon![6]

I have collected many similar stories since 2003, stories with an even stronger anti-immigrant stance, especially after the political elections in March 2018 and

the rapid rise of extreme right political movements across Italy, such as CasaPound Italia (literally, PoundHouse Italy).[7]

In this article, I explore northern Italians' stances on migrants and migration issues through an analysis of their narrative practices as ways to establish solidarity with the present speech participants and convey remarks subtly and "tacitly," especially when storytellers use certain "discourse strategies" (Gumperz) at particular moments of their storytelling events. In such situations, storytellers might totally or partially exclude some copresent speech participants while including others. In this way, they often create what I call "exclusionary intimacies" (Perrino 2018), that are never stable or static; instead, they are dynamic and heterogeneous (Nichols and Wortham). When racialized language emerges in these narratives, it tacitly solidifies circulating ideologies about language, politics, race, and migrant communities. In this sense, given the rapid rise of racialized stances in Italy and around the world, it has become even more critical to explore these topics from a variety of discursive angles, such as narrative practices, to gain a more solid reflexive grasp on these processes and their inevitable costs. Importantly, this article looks at political narratives as they were produced in the early 2000s when these anti-immigrant stances started to solidify among Italians. In this way, this work contributes to a better understanding of the ongoing refugee crisis in Italy and other parts of the world.

This article explores three important aspects related to the emergence of racialized language in northern Italians' political narratives: (1) the creation of exclusionary restrictions on migrants in northern Italy as a result of the strong anti-immigration agenda of Lega Nord that happened at the same time of some important language revitalization initiatives across Italy; (2) how northern Italian storytellers enact their "collective identities" (Van De Mieroop) and exclusionary intimacies (Perrino 2018) while delivering their stories about politics and around migratory issues through an analysis of narratives-as-practices instead of narratives-as-texts; and (3) how these emerging collective identities and racialized ideologies are solidified as a result of these recurrent, legitimized narrative enactments. Before turning to the analysis of three examples of narrative practices drawn from my data, I describe the article's main theoretical framework, the anti-immigrant political context that has dominated the northern Italian landscape, and finally some of the language revitalization initiatives that have coincided with an overall rising ethnonationalism across Italy.

Narratives as Discursive Practices

Narratives have always been primary modes in human communication and engagement across cultures and have been used as key analytical tools in numerous disciplines. In the past two decades, narrative studies have experienced a significant shift from a text-oriented to a practice-oriented perspective of storytelling (De Fina 2012; De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012; Schiffrin; Schiffrin, De Fina, and Nylund). In this vein, since the narrative turn in the 1980s, linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have studied narratives as performances embedded in their sociocultural context and not as isolated texts (Bauman 1977, 1986). As De Fina and Georgakopoulou write, "[a] significant consequence of the fact that stories are not told in a vacuum but by tellers to audiences in specific settings and for specific purposes is that the mechanisms through which performers contextualize meanings for their audience come to the forefront" (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012, 61). Storytelling events are thus intricate and varied, since audience members not only become part of the story but also often influence and change it in the process. In this respect, silent audiences in monologic teller-led stories are very rare cases.

Oral narratives are thus valued for their content, or the "denotational text" (originally called "narrated event" by Jakobson), and for the emerging qualities of their enactment in interaction, or storytelling event, also known as "interactional text" (Perrino 2015; Silverstein 1998; Wortham 2000, 2001), or "narrating event" (Jakobson). More specifically, while the "denotational text" refers to the coherence that the story has in terms of reference and predication about "states of affairs," the "interactional text" refers to the quality of the coherence that the interaction itself has—the roles of the speech participants, what actions are being performed, how these actions are enacted, and so forth—and not necessarily the coherence of what interactants say (Perrino 2005; Silverstein 1998). In practice, of course, narrators create more intricate relations between story and storytelling event, which are heterogeneous and hybrid. Storytelling is thus understood as a complex, multidimensional process in which speech participants' (re)enactments in interaction can reconstruct, retell, and assign various meanings to past, present, and future events. Thus, storytellers and audience members both participate in the (co)construction of their individual and collective sociocultural identities in interaction while their storytelling event unfolds.

In this respect, oral narratives cannot be studied as decontextualized, denotational texts because they are dynamically and continuously (re)configured by the

interactional moves of their speech participants (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012, 2015; Perrino 2005, 2007; Schiffrin; Schiffrin, De Fina, and Nylund; Wortham 2000, 2001). In other words, stories are in a continuous relationship with the storytelling event in which they are formed, as has been explored in various settings, such as interviews (De Fina and Perrino 2011; Perrino 2011; Wortham et al.), classrooms (Rymes; Wortham 2001, 2006), medical and therapy settings (Ainsworth-Vaughn), and the digital realm (De Fina 2016; De Fina and Toscano-Gore; De Fina and Perrino 2017; Page 2011, 2015; Perrino 2017).

In this article, I extend this orientation of narrative studies to oral narratives surrounding the politics of migration in Veneto, northern Italy, a particularly salient topic because it can reveal a gradient of stances of exclusion of newcomers while creating intimate spaces of inclusion for Veneto speakers and northern Italians more generally. Analyzing storytelling through a narrative-as-practice approach and method enables researchers to unveil "covert" (Hill 1995, 2008) interactional dynamics that would remain veiled otherwise. In these cases, political stances emerge in Veneto ordinary speakers' narratives, stances that can be widely shared and that can help solidify collective identities (Van De Mieroop) with other speech participants who might share the same views.

Stance and Collective Identities in Veneto

This article is also inspired by recent work on stance, stance-taking, and the creation and solidification of collective identities among Veneto speakers. Through their storytelling practices, speech participants enact and solidify their sociocultural identities by the various stances they might take while delivering their stories (De Fina 2003, 2012; Wortham 2004, 2006; just to mention a few). While (co)constructing their identity or multiple identities, speakers might align or misalign with the other participants or with the content of the story. In this respect, Goffman's notion of "footing" and the various participants' alignment and misalignments in interaction are central theoretical tools to analyze these narrative practices (Goffman). When Veneto storytellers align or misalign with a certain political claim or racialized remark, for example, they may take a certain stance in favor of or against it. Stance (Du Bois) and stance-taking are key concepts in this article, defined as "taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance" (Jaffe 2009a, 3). Given its dialogic character, the notions of stance and stance-taking have been

widely used in linguistic anthropological research, as in the poetics of debate (Lempert), classroom discourse (Bucholtz; Jaffe 2009b), textual analysis (Irvine), and the digital realm (Chun; Chun and Walters; Koven and Simões Marques; Perrino 2017; Walton and Jaffe). By taking a particular stance while telling a story, speakers perform and inhabit multiple identities in which exclusionary intimacies vis-à-vis migrant groups might emerge (Perrino 2018) or in which collective identities (Van De Mieroop) might solidify as forms of intimate connections among speakers who share the same history, language, and sociocultural traditions.

Inspired by Tajfel's classic work on social identity in which individuals develop not only by being part of their social groups but also by being connected to them epistemically and emotionally (Tajfel), Van De Mieroop examines collective identities as they emerge in ingroup and outgroup relationships in migrant communities in Antwerp, Belgium. In her analysis, collective identities are fluid, since individuals can shift in and out of diverse memberships in many social groups to which they belong. In this way, they can enact and thus be part of several collective identities while performing their individual identities in their everyday lives. Similarly, in the data I analyze here, Veneto speakers enact their collective identities by sharing their language, history, traditions, and political views and seem to feel that these identities need to be cherished and protected. In this sense, Veneto speakers' identities are collective and "intimate." As Herzfeld has argued, "cultural intimacy," as it emerges in society, can fossilize a national identity for insiders and can thus transform into a dangerous rhetoric, since it is

> the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation. Cultural intimacy may erupt into public life. (Herzfeld 3)

As Herzfeld reminds us, by aggressively appearing in public life cultural intimacy can become stronger and more rooted in individual identities, which thus become "intimate identities," as I define them. With this in mind, Veneto people can enact intimate exclusions vis-à-vis new migrant groups, for example, when they code-switch from standardized Italian to Venetan[8] as a way of reinforcing their boundaries and defending their cultural traditions (Perrino 2015, 2018). These

exclusionary dynamics offer a window to better understand speech participants' sociocultural knowledge and language ideologies (Irvine and Gal; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity) around language revitalization, politics, and migration issues in Italy in a historical moment when migration crises have emerged in the Mediterranean Sea (Albahari 2015a) and around the world, including the United States (Santa Ana and GonzaÌlez de Bustamante). I now describe the political climate, the anti-immigrant legislation, and some of the language revitalization efforts that have characterized the northern Italian landscape in recent years before presenting my data.

The Lega Nord and Its Anti-Immigration Politics

The Lega Nord political party developed from a small movement that focused more on separating northern Italian regions from the rest of Italy, to a national political party (Giordano, 64) with Umberto Bossi as its founder and leader from 1987 until his resignation in 2012 after a family scandal. Beginning with the 2001 national political elections, the Lega Nord started a new restrictive political agenda which was focused less against southern Italians coming to northern Italy and more against migrant groups residing and arriving in Italy. Since that time, the political orientation has brought about an unprecedented number of Lega Nord followers not only from northern Italy but also, ironically, from central and southern Italy, especially after they proposed and later issued several anti-immigrant laws.

The Lega Nord's anti-immigrant politics can be seen as a reaction to the recent Italian political landscape, which has been changing very quickly, especially after the arrival of many migrants. As Albahari touchingly pointed out, given its strategic position in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy has recently become a key entry point for migrants and refugees (Albahari 2015a). Italian reactions to these flows of migrants have often been defensive and unwelcoming. Ironically, if one considers their historical background on migration matters, Italians have been migrating to various parts of the world, including Europe, the United States, and South America, especially from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1960s (Bonifazi et al.; Sciortino). Since the 1970s, Italy has become a receiver of migrants, specifically from Africa, China, Eastern Europe, South Asia, and, more recently, Syria, particularly seen in the number of refugees landing at the small island of Lampedusa, near Sicily, after traveling through the Mediterranean Sea (Albahari 2015a). These new flows

of migrants have triggered strong reactions among Italians, supporting nativist discourses about national culture and identity, as has happened in the Veneto region.

Veneto speakers' sense of collective identity has been reinforced by many language revitalization initiatives promoted in the region and across Italy, which have been occurring along with a strong political anti-immigrant agenda. The Lega Nord and its various subleagues, such as the Liga Veneta Repubblica (Veneto League Republic),[9] for example, have been very active in promoting local language use, local traditions, and historical revivals. This can be seen often in many northern Italian towns where public signage is in the local language. Furthermore, Venetan has been introduced in some educational institutions and at the primary, secondary, and university levels.[10] In many elementary schools, for example, educators use books in Venetan to socialize children with important historical facts and notions. One case is the comic book titled *Lepanto: la Gran Bataja* (Lepanto: The Big Battle) which dramatizes the historical battle of Lepanto between the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire (Morello and Nardo).[11] This comic book is written entirely in Venetan with the scope of teaching children about this famous historical battle and to have them read in, and thus practice, their local language. In a sense, these language revitalization efforts and the anti-immigration policies complement each other in creating exclusionary intimacies vis-à-vis migrant groups: they defend themselves against newcomers while elevating imaginary walls around their region, traditions, and language (Perrino 2013, 2018).

Many Italians have been strong supporters of the Lega Nord and have been voting for it faithfully. Some of my collaborators in northern Italy have confessed to me that they have voted for the Lega Nord (and will continue to do so), because this is the only political party in Italy with a serious agenda to deport all *clandestini* (undocumented migrants). In this light, anti-immigrant remarks often emerged during the many narratives I collected in Veneto.

Narrating Migration Politics in Veneto

During my fieldwork in Veneto (2003–2017), I collected stories from various social actors and from different age sets at many types of events: during ordinary conversations at lunchtime or dinnertime, during folkloristic events in towns or in smaller villages, during local festivals (called *sagre* in Italian), during formal political addresses or rallies, and during interviews with ordinary speakers, doctors,

nurses, political representatives, and political members. In this article, I examine three examples of narratives told by ordinary speakers (Examples 1 and 2) and by doctors (Example 3) in interview settings. In particular, I study how storytellers use certain discourse strategies (Gumperz), such as code-switching, deictics (such as personal pronouns), overlap, and laughter, during their storytelling events. Some narrators might use frequent shifts from standardized Italian into Venetan, for example, shifts that might index their stances on migration issues, especially if these shifts happen at certain moments of the story. As has been demonstrated by extensive linguistic anthropological and sociolinguistic studies on this topic in various settings (Auer; Bailey 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Gal; Gumperz; Heller; Woolard, just to mention a few), code-switching in multilingual communities can reveal multiple, subtle functions when exploring certain discursive practices, such as joke-telling (Perrino 2015, 2018). As I show in my three examples, especially in Example 3, code-switching is key to unveiling storytellers' stances on delicate topics such as migration issues.[12] In this respect, multilanguage narrative performances can have various functions: on one hand, they are addressed to audiences who are presumed to share the local code; on the other hand, when migrants are the targets of some remarks during the storytelling event, such shifts might unveil something else. These narrative performances are resources for expressing "covert racism" (Hill) but also enact migrants' exclusion, thus creating heterogeneous boundaries. In this way, exclusionary intimacies can exist and can be tacitly legitimized in northern Italy (Perrino 2018).

During an interview in the Veneto region in April 2003, for example, a man in his sixties explained why he usually votes for the Lega Nord, as the opening epigraph of this article states. "The Lega, see, is useful" ("la Lega vedi, serve"), he said, because people are tired of seeing *extracomunitari* everywhere. He then continued by saying (see Appendix for transcription conventions):

Example 1

	Original Standardized Italian and Venetan	English Translation
1.	[. . .] Voto Lega per questo	[. . .] [I] vote Lega [Nord] for this [reason]
2.	perché voglio essere salvaguardato	because [I] want to be protected
3.	non voglio più	[I] don't want anymore
4.	**'sti** qua	**these** [immigrants] here

5. che girano dai	who wander around com'on
6. li voglio regolari	[I] want them regular [i.e., with a permit to stay]
7. io non ho niente	[I] don't have anything
8. contro queste persone	against these people
9. ma non devono togliere	but [they] can't take away
10. niente agli italiani	anything from Italians
11. e se vengono qua	and if [they] come here
12. devono lavorare	[they] have to work
13. se vogliono	if [they] want [to come here]
14. non vogliono lavorare?	[they] don't want to work?
15. io non li mantengo di sicuro [. . .]	I won't certainly take care of them [. . .]

Although I found that it was unusual for Italians to reveal their political leanings and affiliations, this speaker explicitly disclosed why he usually casts his vote for the Lega Nord to me. He votes for the Lega Nord, he says, because he wishes to be "protected," (*salvaguardato*, lines 1–2), he doesn't want to be surrounded by undocumented migrants. By using Venetan to refer to migrants as "'*sti* qua" ("*these* ones here") in line 4, this ordinary speaker creates a distance between him (and possibly myself, the interviewer) and them, the *extracomunitari*, as if they were not part (and could not be part) of his and other Veneto speakers' everyday lives. In this way, this speech participant fosters an intimate, collective identity of values that only Veneto people can share and appreciate. In his view, undocumented migrants are not part of this collectivity and should not receive any benefits from it—jobs, special treatment, and so forth. Exclusionary intimacies are discursively encouraged in this man's narrative. Indeed, he explicitly says that he does not want to see undocumented migrants, but perhaps as a way to justify his previous remarks with me, he wants them to be "regular"' (*regolari*) with a legal permit to stay, in lines 5 and 6. At line 7, he uses the first-person pronoun *io* (I), which is optional in standardized Italian, to emphasize that he does not have anything against these people as long as they don't take away anything from Italians (lines 7–10). If migrants wish to come here (*qua*), to the Veneto region, and in Italy more generally, they have to work, this speaker continues, because if they don't want to work, he would not be able to take care of them, to pay for their food and living expenses (lines 11–15). Again, he uses the Italian optional first person pronoun *io* to underscore that "I won't take care of them," thus reiterating that in Veneto, people

could minimally accept undocumented migrants if they have a regular permit and a regular job—which is a rare probability for migrants and refugees after they arrive by ship or other dangerous migratory routes (Albahari 2015a). In this narrative excerpt, the speaker starts creating various undefined boundaries between "us" and "them," boundaries that are later reinforced in subsequent conversations. He also reinforces the collective identity that Veneto speakers share that needs to be protected from newcomers. This emerges from other narrating moments in this interview when he explains, for example, why the Lega Nord has been so successful with respect to other Italian political parties:

Example 2

Original Standardized Italian	English Translation
16. si è stufata la gente	People got tired [of this]
17. non lo dice	[they] don't say it
18. ma non li sopporta capisci	but [they] cannot stand them [i.e., migrants] [you] see
19. cioè in realtà-	that is in reality-
20. e viene fuori quella-	and that-
21. quella carica razzista	that racist charge
22. che ognuno ha	that everyone has comes out
23. e che non c'è niente da fare	and there is nothing to do [about it]
24. e allora in sede di voto	and then when one votes
25. da solo	all alone [in the booth]
26. mette il voto Lega	[one] votes Lega [Nord]
27. perché questi hanno il programma	because these ones [i.e., Lega Nord members] have the plan
28. di mandar via tutti	to kick them all out
29. di difendere eh! [. . .]	to defend [Italians] eh! [. . .]

In the first lines of Example 2, this speech participant explains that people are really tired of migrants and that even if Italians don't say anything about this, they cannot stand them (lines 16–18). By addressing me with *capisci* ([you] see), in line 18, he tries again to include me, a speaker of Venetan and an Italian national, in his participation framework, while excluding migrants. In lines 20–23, he is even

more explicit by stating that migrants trigger the racist charge that everyone has and there is nothing that can be done about it. When Veneto people cast their political vote, he continues, and they are alone in the voting booth, they vote for Lega Nord, the only political party that has a clear agenda "to kick them all out, to defend" Italians (lines 28–29).[13] In these last lines, the speaker reinforces the collective identity that is shared among Veneto people and the boundaries between them and the newcomers. In this narrative, migrants are discursively excluded because they are "undocumented" by default, because they steal jobs from Italians, and because people cannot stand them. In his view, they cannot be part of his collectivity. Although this speaker's exclusionary wishes were often explicit in his conversations with me, at other times exclusionary remarks can be more concealed, as in Example 3.

In many of my interviews and conversations with doctors and nurses,[14] I noted that they inserted many short joking remarks (*battute* in standardized Italian) when the conversation topics were uncomfortable or when they wanted to lighten up the mood of the speech participants. In the following example, I examine how racialized language is enacted by a female dermatologist and a male doctor, while they were conversing in her office during a group interview I was conducting in a hospital in the Veneto region in March 2003. This dermatologist, a member of the Lega Nord, was complaining about some southern Italians who were not willing to undress for skin examinations. She shifted to complain more, about migrants this time. She first said that Muslim women did not undress unless their husbands were present, and then she started to make more generalized grievances about African and Chinese migrants. All speech participants were fluent in standardized Italian and Venetan.

Example 3

D = Female dermatologist   M = Male physician

Original Standardized Italian and Venetan	English Translation
1. D: abbiamo avuto mussulmani	[we] had Muslims
2. **ghemo avuo** capi mussulmani	[**we**] **had** Muslim chiefs
3. D: che allora vengono qua in cinquanta	who then come here fifty [at once]
4. però va a finire che loro	but it is always the case that they-

5. per evitarli devi vederli prima degli altri	to avoid them, [you] have to see them before the other [patients]
6. un po' com'erano gli zingari una-	a little bit how the Gypsies were on[ce]-
7. adesso **semo pi boni**	now [**we**] **are better**
8. cioè una volta è venuto uno	I mean once a [patient] came
9. perché **me** ricordo anni fa **gaveimo un** problema con	because **I** remember years ago [**we**] **had a** problem with
10. con un extracomunitario che **non riuscivimo** a capire [. . .]	with an *extracomunitario* that [**we**] **couldn't succeed** in understanding [. . .]
11. D: cioè noi rispetto agli africani **se sentimo**	that is we, with respect to Africans [**we**] **feel**
12. M: sì::::	ye::::s
13. D: loro rispetto a noi credo che si sentano:::	they [the African migrants], with respect to us, I believe that [they] conside::::r themselves-
14. che **i senta come noaltri sentimo i** americani	that **they consider us as we consider the** Americans [i.e., as a land of opportunity]
15. cioè @ giova@ni[@@@@	that @ is you@ng[@@@@
[	[
16. M: si@ giovani	yes@ young
17. per quello credo che i cinesi siano quelli che meno si integreranno	this is why [I] believe that the Chinese are people who will integrate less
18. tra trent'anni	in thirty years
19. **sinquant'ani i negreti [qua**	[in] **fifty years, the little niggers [here**
[	[
20. M: @@@@@@@	@@@@@@@
21. =**noaltri** italiani poveri @@@@@@@	=**we** poor Italians @@@@@@@

In these story lines, the dermatologist code-switches from standardized Italian to Venetan at particular moments in the interaction with the other doctor, who overlaps with her frequently. Although overlap can often be a sign of disagreement and uncooperative behavior in interaction (Gumperz), in some cases it can have an opposite function, by projecting intimacy (Perrino 2002; Tannen) and a sense of solidarity and collectivity. In this case, an intimate overlap clearly emerges because it is followed by a cooperative, supportive laughter (lines 16 and 20). In terms of code-switching, at line 2, the dermatologist repeats the standardized Italian clause

"abbiamo avuto mussulmani" ("[we] had Muslims") in Venetan with "*ghemo avuo capi mussulmani*" ("[**we**] **had** Muslim chiefs") and thus enacts more intimate stances in the speech event. Topically, she negatively evaluates the cultural otherness of these people, so that the opposing first-person plural marking ("we") together with the use of the local code, Venetan, help motivate the interpretation of a regionalized "we." Furthermore, her use of the pejorative term *Gypsies* (*zingari*) at line 6, and the derogative term *extracomunitari* reinforces this exclusionary stance vis-à-vis migrant groups in Veneto. The desire of sharing a collective identity among Veneto speakers, including the speech participants of this interaction, thus becomes more palpable.

The dermatologist continues at line 14 with more code-switching from standardized Italian to Venetan when she claims that Africans might think about Italians as Italians think about Americans—that is, they might consider Italy a land of opportunity. She code-switches again in line 19 when she utters a racial slur about Africans taking over Italy in fifty years and jokes about the fact that Italians might be mixed or even overrun by Africans, whom she refers to with the racial slur *negretti* ("little niggers"). The fact that she adds the diminutive suffix –*etti* to her racial slur is part of the joking effects she might want to convey by perhaps softening the blunt effect of the slur. She ends her story by making a prediction for the future at line 21 when she says that "**we** poor Italians" ("*noaltri* poveri italiani") will soon be the minority. By uttering this final statement, she subtly hints at the fact that there might be too many Africans in Italy, a tacit racialized remark that, added to the more explicit ones, makes her narrative even more disconcerting. She shifts from the role of being a professional dermatologist to a more intimate person with the other speech participants, the other doctor and myself, thus creating a collective identity that, in her view, only Veneto speakers can share. By code-switching from standardized Italian to Venetan, coupled with bursts of laughter, the dermatologist repositioned the other speech participants as insiders who might share her nativist ideologies. By using these discursive strategies (Gumperz), she creates fluid states of inclusion and exclusion among the speech participants: she includes the other doctor and me in her participation framework while excluding the migrant groups, who are not cooperative in medical examinations, who wish to be like Italians (but who are not), who will never be able to integrate in Italian society (especially the Chinese communities, as she argues), and who are described with a racial slur at the end of her story. Throughout her narrative, the dermatologist creates a divide between "us" and "them" (Gumperz) by emphasizing that Chinese migrants will

never be able to integrate while Africans might do so in fifty years, but for now are at the bottom of an imaginary scale. Her exclusionary stances reach a climax when she makes her final nativist racial slur in line 9, a slur that is supported by the other doctor, who cooperatively overlapped with her and laughed at the joke at line 10. As these narrative excerpts demonstrate, political exclusionary intimacies are (co) constructed by the present speech participants, and thus legitimized in the Veneto region and in northern Italy more generally.

Conclusion

As Italy has become one of the main key entry points for migrants and refugees arriving in Europe, and as restrictive political agendas against these newcomers have been emerging at a fast rate, it is important that researchers focus their attention to some of the everyday discursive practices, such as ordinary speakers' narratives about politics and migration, to have another perspective on the long series of continuous injustices that have been committed in the Mediterranean Sea (Albahari 2015a) and around the world. As I have shown in this article, Veneto speakers' sense of collective identities, which emerges in their narrative practices, is reinforced by the Lega Nord's strong anti-immigrant agenda coupled with numerous regionalized language revitalization initiatives.

In the three narrative excerpts featured in this article, certain interactional moves and discursive strategies become visible to analysts thanks to a narrative-as-practice–oriented perspective. By looking at both the denotational text (the content of the story) and the interactional text (how the storytelling event unfolds), this discursive practice acquires more complexity and patterns can emerge while the story is being delivered. In this respect, as I showed in Example 3, audience members are not passive speech participants; rather, they can actively influence and change the story by adding minimal responses, bursts of laughter at particular moments of the storytelling, code-switching into Venetan, or overlapping with the storyteller—the dermatologist in this case. In this example, both speech participants take a stance against migrants, first by complaining about these patients' habits when they visit their offices for skin examinations, and then by recirculating language ideologies based on how Africans desire to look like Italians, while Chinese will never be able to integrate in Italy, as the dermatologist's stance revealed. Sadly, this rhetoric has been circulating across Italy since the late 1990s, as many of my

collaborators confirmed during my interviews and playback experiments with them. In 2017, for example, a man argued that "there are so many Chinese [migrants] in our country today, but [they] haven't understood that [they] will never become really Italian"[15] (see also Pagliai). Example 3 demonstrates that discourse strategies such as code-switching, deictics, laughter, and overlapping in storytelling events change the participation framework of the interaction, thus creating various degrees of exclusionary intimacies (Perrino 2018) in which a sense of collective identification can emerge. These interactional moves align participants with ideologies of who is considered Italian—that is, speakers of Venetan who can understand and share this code—and who is not—that is, the migrant groups or other Italian speakers who cannot fully understand this local code. In reality, migrants and Italians from other regions might be fully fluent in Venetan, of course. However, the mere fact of producing the problematic remarks in Venetan metapragmatically (Silverstein 1993) frames those remarks as something that not everyone should understand.

In this way, northern Italian and Italian identities are reinforced while excluding and deprecating migrants by assigning them undifferentiated national labels, such as Chinese and Africans in the third example, and by grouping people into the derogatory category of *extracomunitari* in the first and second examples. Thus, speech participants in storytelling events enact stigmatizing moves that reinforce a divide between the "we" of Venetan/Italian speakers, insiders, or locals, who have deep roots in Italian history, traditions, and politics, and the migrant "others," outsiders, who have been targets of anti-immigrant politics and discrimination.

By inhabiting these roles, by speaking Venetan or by code-switching from standardized Italian to this local language, Veneto speakers feel entitled to share a collective and intimate identity among them, and thus create their exclusive, cultural intimacy (Herzfeld). Thus, Veneto collective identification can emerge for various pragmatic ends, such as forms of solidarity among migrants in shifting in and out of their cultural associations and groups (Van De Mieroop), sharing common market values in defense of a national image and reputation (Kohler and Perrino), or, as in the cases explored here, revalorizing their regional language, culture, and history and elevating imaginary boundaries against possible intruders. The idea of a Veneto collective identity reinforces people's aspiration to become autonomous from the Italian state and just be European, as it has recently happened in other areas in Europe, such as Catalonia in Spain, and Scotland in the United Kingdom. Veneto speakers can thus develop a strong sense of defense of their identity, since it is part of their heritage, as many of them claim, and cannot be

amalgamated with other identities—an ethnonationalist rhetoric that has become more common around the world. That is how, through these narrative practices, exclusionary ideologies can exist, be reinforced, and be legitimized in Veneto.

Appendix: Transcription Conventions

::::   syllable lengthening
-    syllable cut-off
.   stopping fall in tone
,   continuing intonation
?   rising intonation
@   laughter
[overlap
[…] omitted material
[ ] transcriber's comments
Bold: Venetan (the local language of the Veneto region)
Italic: Bivalent forms
Regular font: Standardized Italian

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▪ NOTES

1. The original Italian version of this opening quote is part of Example 1 in the section "Narrating Migration Politics in Veneto."
2. In this article, all translations from Italian or from Venetan (the local language spoken in the Veneto region) to English are mine unless otherwise stated.
3. The Italian term *extracomunitario* (masculine, singular) was first used in Italy in the 1980s to indicate the legal status of migrants, as people who are not citizens of the European Union (once called Comunità Europea, European Community, hence *extra-comunitario*, "from outside the European Community"). More recently, it has been used derogatorily to indicate undocumented migrants. Although its negative connotations are evident today, this term is commonly used to indicate migrants coming from developing areas, especially Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and more recently, the Middle East. Italian politicians, journalists, writers, and scholars commonly use this term to indicate migrants from these areas.
4. Original Italian version: "O con le buone o con le cattive i clandestini vanno cacciati. Entra solo chi ha un contratto di lavoro. Gli altri fuori. C'è un momento in cui occorre usare la forza. Marina e Finanza si dovranno schierare a difesa delle coste e usare il cannone. Ecco il regolamento giusto per attuare la legge. Nessuna scappatoia e nessun rinvio" (Cavalera).
5. Many migrants rely on human traffickers to embark on these dangerous journeys, while fishermen and coast guards take an indifferent stance on sinking ships, arguing that it is not their responsibility to engage in rescue operations given the ambiguous character of the laws of the Mediterranean Sea (Albahari 2015a).
6. Original Italian version: "non ne possiamo più di tutti questi *extracomunitari* che non fanno altro che vagare per le strade, rubare e creare problemi per gli italiani.

Prima vengono gli italiani! Ci sono tanti giovani italiani senza lavoro, senza uno stipendio, cosa vogliono questi stranieri da noi? Non c'è niente per loro qui! Che se ne tornino a casa loro o che vadano da qualche altra parte. Ma vedrai che dovranno trovare una soluzione drastica a tutto questo e molto presto!" (Female collaborator, Veneto, June 2017).

7. CasaPound Italia is a neo-Nazi political movement founded in Rome in 2003. The founders of CasaPound Italia were inspired by the US expatriate poet Ezra Pound (hence the name bestowed to this political movement), who spent a long time in Italy during World War II, supporting and promoting fascist ideologies. While the founders of this movement were fiercely criticized by the poet's daughter for this use of her family name, they nonetheless decided to keep the name as representative of their growing political movement (*http://www.casapounditalia. org/*, last accessed July 31, 2017).

8. Venetan, also called Veneto dialect, is spoken by 3.4 million people in Italy alone, without counting other millions of Veneto speakers around the world who still use it as their mother tongue. Linguists usually subdivide Venetan into four subgroups: "dialetto trevigiano-feltrino-bellunese" (dialect of Treviso, Feltre, and Belluno) or "dialetto Veneto centro-settentrionale" (dialect of the center-north of the Veneto region); "dialetto veneziano-lagunare" (dialect of Venice and surroundings) from the town of Chioggia to the town of Caorle or "dialetto del Veneto orientale" (dialect of the east of the Veneto region); dialetto padovano-vicentino-polesano (dialect of Padova, Vicenza, and Polesine) or "dialetto del veneto centro-meridionale" (dialect of the center-south of the Veneto region); "dialetto veronese" (dialect of Verona) or "dialetto del Veneto occidentale (dialect of the west of the Veneto region). The Venetan language explored in this article belongs to the first group (Treviso) and the third group (Padova).

9. Similar political movements were created in other regions, such as the Movimento Friuli in the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region in the 1980s and 1990s (Holmes 1989). They were not as successful as the subleagues of the Lega Nord, such as the Liga Veneta Repubblica, which was the main founding member of the Lega Nord. Since then, similar political movements have been mushrooming across Europe as well, challenging the continent as a real "union" (Holmes 2000). See the recent cases of Catalonia in Spain in 2017 and Scotland, after the Brexit vote, in 2016.

10. See *http://corrieredelveneto.corriere.it/belluno/cronaca/18_marzo_05/dialetto-veneto-entra-media-lezioni-111-alunni-vicentini-20087548-208d-11e8-b9db-31561b61aa5f.shtml* (accessed April 20, 2018).

11. The Battle of Lepanto (or the Battle of the Three Empires) was a naval battle that happened on October 7, 1571, when a fleet of the Holy League, of which the Republic of Venice and the Spanish Empire were the main powers, defeated the fleet of the Ottoman Empire near Lepanto, the medieval Italian name of the Greek town of Naupactus. It was a very important battle for resettling geographical borders. The Republic of Venice was one of the leaders of the Holy League along with other powerful European Catholic maritime states, such as Spain and Austria.

12. Although code-switching takes many forms and involves different units, such as intersentential versus intrasentential, I explore certain sociocultural and pragmatic functions of code-switching.

13. Although the strong anti-immigrant stances in the above transcript were collected in 2003, many Veneto speakers, and Italians more generally, have continued to reinforce this ethnonationalist ideology until the present time. On June 21, 2018, for example, it was claimed that the Lega Nord leader, Matteo Salvini, who is now part of the leading government as one of the main ministers, called for "mass cleansing, street by street, quarter by quarter" across Italy (see *https://www. independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/italy-matteo-salvini-video-immigration-mass-cleansing-roma-travellers-far-right-league-party-a8409506.html*, accessed June 29, 2018).

14. During my fieldwork in northern Italy, I conducted many interviews in several hospitals whose name and precise location remain private (the names of my collaborators are private to protect their identities). In March 2003, I conducted research on Senegalese migrants in northern Italy as part of a project on the transnational ties affecting Senegalese ethnomedicine in West Africa. I interviewed doctors, nurses, and patients in northern Italian hospitals to explore how Senegalese patients interacted with Italian doctors. I did this as a way of comparison with my other field sites in Senegal, West Africa.

15. Original Italian version: "ci sono così tanti cinesi nel nostro paese oggi, ma non capiscono che non diventeranno mai veramente italiani!"

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ARTICLE *Rita Sanders*

Unity and Stability?

Legacies and Remembrance of the Great Patriotic War in Russia's Exclave of Kaliningrad

> I don't like a couple of things which concern the government. I don't know how to deal with it. But I just do my things, I do my job and I try to be at a maximum distance from politics. That's it.
>
> —Katya, forty-eight years old[1]

I n present-day Kaliningrad,[2] it is difficult to investigate public political narratives because at first it seems that the only thing people say about politics publicly is that they try their best not to say anything at all. Consequently, I had to adjust my fieldwork, and usually I could only record an interview after I had confirmed that my questions would not touch on any political issues.[3] Against this backdrop, I was astonished when, in 2016, I saw thousands of people with signs showing old photographs taking part in a procession on the occasion of May 9, the Victory Day commemorating the surrender of Nazi Germany. Though it was unlikely that the participants were demonstrating against the political establishment, the procession differed remarkably from those state-sponsored events in which various groups are required to take part and wave flags. It seemed that the participants had put their hearts into it.

After World War II, the Prussian city of Königsberg became Kaliningrad, and the city experienced an almost complete population exchange as people came to the city and the surrounding area in several waves and established families. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the subsequent Eastern enlargement of the European Union led to the region becoming an exclave, and this stimulated the arrival of more migrants. Against the background of large-scale territorial, political, and economic changes after 1991—in Kaliningrad and elsewhere in Russia—politicians seemed eager to evoke a sense of unity among the people and stability in the state. Commemorating the Great Patriotic War is particularly expedient in this context, all the more in the city of Kaliningrad, which owes its existence to the successful fight against fascism.

In this article, I investigate people's narratives on legacies and remembrance of World War II in Kaliningrad, previously Königsberg. In doing this, I embed those narratives in official narratives on World War II and its meaning for the state's stability and unity. Second, people's stories are related to (quasi-)oppositional activities like the procession on May 9, which is called immortal troop (*beccmertnyj polk*) and in which ordinary citizens are invited to participate while showing signs with photos of relatives who lived during World War II. Though the immortal troop march was only introduced five years ago in Kaliningrad, it proved to be extremely successful as—according to the organizers—more than 10,000 people took part in 2016 and 2017.

I argue that the immortal troop has become a state-sponsored event that generally meets its objective as, in principle, people support and retell official narratives that are meant to foster patriotism. Though the organizers want people to reflect on other stories, specifically those that tell about their ancestors' suffering and helplessness, most participants prefer to present their relatives as heroes in the fight against fascism. By including people's narratives on Kaliningrad's materiality, which alludes to its predecessor, Königsberg, the legacies of World War II become more complicated and diverse. Some people relate their family's fate to the people who lived in their houses in Königsberg before the war. These stories particularly stress the city's peculiarity and ultimately question the state's unity and stability.

In the following, I briefly introduce state-driven narratives on the legacies of the Great Patriotic War by explicating my theoretic approach. Thereafter, I depict the immortal troop march and relate it to various political narratives that tell about the city, its German heritage, and its role in the Russian state. My arguments are based on long-term fieldwork, which I conducted in the Kaliningrad region between 2015

and 2017. Aside from participant observation and informal interviewing, I collected more than sixty life stories.

Narratives of Unity, Victory, and Stability

When listening to Russian politicians, unity and stability seem to be of utmost importance, or as Bacon (775) concludes by analyzing Putin's narratives, "The normative motifs of Putinism can be enumerated straightforwardly—stability, unity, social consensus, centralisation, a strong state, sovereignty, patriotism, [. . .]. Of these, national unity and long-term stability, are paramount." Moreover, for Bacon, "the narrative's 'back story' of territorial fragmentation, excessive regionalism and a weak state offers explanatory context for its emphasis on unity and stability" (ibid.). This backstory has been located differently at various times and by different speakers, but most often the story refers to the Soviet period up to the end of World War II and beyond or to the times of perestroika and the subsequent chaotic 1990s.

Carleton investigated changing film narratives about World War II over fifteen years and observed that their stories about the war are conceived from their endings, thus "all events ultimately lead to Berlin 1945" (Carleton 145). By devising a teleological path to the victory and thus legitimizing the huge loss of lives, victims could be implicitly erased by subsuming them under the rubric of heroic fighters against fascism. In doing this, the individual fate falls prey to the imperative of jointly achieving the victory, or as Carleton expresses it in regard to those films produced during Putin's sovereignty:[4]

> In stark contrast to the 1990s, when identity was more often an exercise in negation (not Soviet, not totalitarian, not socialist), here is a narrative of unsurpassed unity: the people unite with the state/system into a single fist to smash the Germans; the Soviet peoples, with Russians at their fore, themselves unite; the classes (workers, peasants, intelligentsia) unite; just as there is unity of economic, political, military and cultural fronts. All work in the same direction, for the same goal, under the same flag. And they achieve it. (Carleton 144)

Seen that way, the Soviet state's unity was essential for annihilating evil. Remarkably, this story in particular has resurfaced since the late 1990s, implying that the state's unity is vital for overcoming the disturbances of perestroika and

glasnost. These disturbances comprised, among others, statements of veterans who brought up serious deficits within their own troops and narratives of the victims of Stalinism (see Carleton 141–43). Historic rehabilitation came to a halt in the late 1990s and, after a short period of "aphasia" (Oushakine), in which a coherent system for explaining the fate of the nation was still missing, the unity-guaranteed victory and the long-term stability narrative became cemented. The festivities of May 9, 1945, resurfaced in light of this.

The unity narrative implies the wipeout of the state's self-inflicted victims, but also erases the perpetrators. Ultimately, this might have resulted in a nation's self-conception as "victimized by alien forces" (Thompson 163), a condition that is also attested to by Wertsch (2008a), who captures the narrative template concerning World War II as the "expulsion of foreign enemies." The template, which underlies all military conflicts, goes as follows. There was a peaceful time, and then Russia was suddenly attacked by alien forces. As a result, the country's civilization is on the verge of extinction, but finally and against all odds, Russia defeats its enemy by means of exceptional heroism (Wertsch 130–31). Carleton (145) concludes: "Moreover, if reduced to self-defense against foreign aggression, the story of the war delivers an irresistible us-versus-them template, codified in absolute good/evil colors."

In the following sections, I explore how people use and alter these narrative templates. To this end, I combine narrative analysis with insights from research on memories and schema theory. My analysis leans on the work of Wertsch (2008a, 2008b) who refers to folklore (Propp) and psychology (Bartlett; Ross) to explore schematic narrative template which are conceived as related to people's identity, as emotionally charged, and as rather resistant to change (Wertsch 2008b, 142, 151). Moreover, how people perceive, experience, and tell about the world around them is affected by those stories, memories, and schemas that have already been framed by others and are culturally shared. Consequently, as Wertsch formulates it, "information—especially information that contradicts these schemas—is routinely, distorted, simplified, and ignored" (Wertsch 2008b, 142; see also D'Andrade; Strauss and Quinn to schema theory in general).

The Immortal Troop in Kaliningrad: Unity of Heroes and Sufferers?

Merridale asks how people could cope with the inconceivable number of people who died during the 1940s.[5] Traditional rituals of commemoration and mourning

were disregarded or forbidden, and for family members of those who fell victim to purges, it was advisable to destroy all personal material that could give a testimony of that person. "Many memories did not merely rot but were actively suppressed. Historical and even personal records, were distorted to deny their validity" (Merridale 11). During the times of glasnost and thereafter, people started to place personal items of their dead relatives in front of official memorials (see Gabowitsch) and Merridale (5–6) showed that even before the 1980s, people used the official parades of Victory Day to commemorate their relatives, although they might not have fit the stereotyped heroic fighter against fascism.

Remembering the Great Patriotic War in Kaliningrad is different because the city did not exist at that time. People do not share a localized memory of the war years that could stimulate official forms of commemorating, as is shown for other Russian cities (see Judkina et al.). Instead, the focus is officially on the liberation of Königsberg and this places emphasis on the victory. During Soviet times, the Kaliningrad region was a military zone attracting personnel from various parts of the union. Those who recently migrated to city tell that the Victory Day is celebrated in an abundant and emotionally charged way in Kaliningrad, as exemplified by the following statement:

> I like Kaliningrad, I like the architecture and the history is very interesting. It's a previous German city, and now it's Russia. What I found really amazing, when we came here, in our first year was how they celebrate the Victory Day here, it's on another level. In Siberia, where we lived, there was no war. [. . .] But here [in Kaliningrad], the war has left strong emotions. Well, all historical places are here.

Many people in Kaliningrad are concerned with the festivities of May 9, and one young man told me that he felt miserable because, for the first time, he had no solemn feelings on that day because most of the war's participants are dead. The immortal troop project addresses the challenge of continuity and asks the descendants to take part. In 2012, some journalists introduced the immortal troop for the first time in Tomsk, which was followed in more than 100 other cities throughout the Russian Federation in 2013 (Bilalutdinov 131).

In Kaliningrad, the first immortal troop took place in 2013. The main organizer up to now in Kaliningrad works at the local television channel and learned about the initiative at an early stage. In particular, he liked the aim of the project to keep alive the memory of the Great Patriotic War by means of activating people's

personal stories. Because many of the immortal troop's initiators—like the one in Kaliningrad—work for the media, the project quickly gained attention. The event came to be accompanied by various websites that gather the personal stories of one's ancestors and provide information on how to participate in the procession. People are requested to make signs that display photographs of their ancestors who lived during the war and to participate in a procession on May 9 to present their relatives and thus make them immortal. In Kaliningrad since 2015, the immortal troop begins directly after the military parade. The procession appears to be a state-sponsored event, although at least the Kaliningrad organizer strives to underscore that his project works independently from the state (see Bilalutdinov on the gradual incorporation of the project by state actors).

In 2016, I watched the immortal troop for the first time; one year later, I marched along. In 2017, the official parade—which precedes the procession—started off with a welcoming speech where a city official drew attention to the fact that the last veterans are sadly passing away. He added that the Victory Day would never be forgotten because every family has ancestors who fought for that victory, and it is important to the whole country. The speaker concluded by saying that we have to tell our children of the victory's honor and glory. At least half of the spectators around me held signs with their ancestors' photographs on them; after we watched the first military display, we went to the starting point of the immortal troop, where several thousand people were gathering. Almost all held signs displaying pictures of their ancestors, mostly men dressed in uniform, and most used the format recommended by the organizers on the event website. My accompanying friend displayed two of her great-grandfathers, one on each side of the sign, and every time someone took a photograph of her with the sign, she insisted on a second photo showing the other great-grandfather.

Generally, the participants seemed to mirror the city's population in terms of age, gender, and social status, meaning that the immortal troop is not restricted to a certain generation or educational background. Most people were in attendance as part of a group of friends or relatives but were open to communicating with others. I listened to several incidents where people were asked about their ancestors on the sign, which was obviously the right way to introduce oneself during the march. Many people showed the Ribbon of Saint George,[6] but only a few Russian flags and hardly any other symbolic items were to be seen. Only very few official groups, like one youth division of seamen, were taking part. Along the way, there were not many spectators and because most of them were also showing signs, I felt no difference

between those who marched and those who watched. Our procession was not accompanied by any messages through the loudspeakers; instead, people were singing classic songs of the 1940s or chanting "for the victory," for special divisions and generals, and for Stalin, whereupon the people around replied, "hurrah!" At the end, there was no particular ceremony, but people laid the flowers they had brought with them at the memorial of the 1,200 guards in Kaliningrad's victory park,[7] whereupon the procession dissolved, and some stayed to have *shashlik* at one of the booths in the victory park.

The march's organizer in Kaliningrad wants to detach the immortal troop project from any political message (see also Bilalutdinov on the initiators' objective to separate the project from politics). He is critical about the participants' behavior, as is noted in the following statement:

> We had such a problem that some young guys came [to the march] just waving flags. I looked at them and said: "Hey, what are you doing? What do you need the flags for? And where are your grandpas?" "I have a grandpa, yes" [replied one of them]. "And why did you not bring him with you on a sign? You have to wave with the memory, with the memory and not with a flag!"

His conception of "memory" is not as unpolitical as it might appear at first because ultimately he wants people to generally reflect on the harms and horrors of the war, as he explains:

> For what do we need the memory? We need it because people should not make such big mistakes. That's it. Well, in actual fact it's frightening what happened [during the war]. When we explain to the people that a war, well, for instance, my grandfather was lost—maybe the young generation won't do such things again. […] When you remember what your grandpa, what your great-grandpa did, well, you might rethink: Is it worth, well, to listen to what they tell you on television or what they write in the newspapers, or shouldn't you better draw your own conclusions? But this is very important.

His statement obviously opposes state discourses on the war, especially as he remarks that people should be alerted to not repeat their relatives' mistakes and not engage in any war activities, which alludes to Russia's current-day policies in Ukraine (especially because of his subsequent statements on the credibility of the

media). Thus, he aims to establish the memory of suffering to prevent any further war. How do the participants conceive of the procession's political message?

Generally, people seem to support the organizer's intentions, and often, people utter the emotionally loaded statement that "the most important thing is, that there will never be any war again." However, the same people stressed that only since the Crimean crises have they become true patriots of the state and its president and, along these lines, May 9 has become more important to them. Therefore, they participated in the procession of the immortal troop. In so doing, they seek to affirm to themselves and demonstrate to the "West" that they will resist "Western" aggression just as they did during the Great Patriotic War. Next to the fear of a potential war, many in Kaliningrad are enraged and disappointed about the "West," which treats Russia—in their view—inappropriately harshly by imposing sanctions and other measures.

The organizer's intention to establish a memory of suffering opposes decades of state memory policies. For Merridale, the monument of the unknown soldier, which was erected in every corner of the union, demonstrates the Soviet approach to commemoration by enforcing an exclusive and selective memory. She writes: "Commemorations of the unknown soldier took no cognisance of the huge loss behind the lines, the deaths of elderly and very young people, the continuing haemorrhage brought about by police repression, the victims of epidemic disease and cold" (Merridale 13). Thus, it was the objective of the numerous monuments and parades "to suppress, ignore, evade or otherwise mask horrors by displacing private memory with public ritual" (Carleton 141). Alternatively, to say it with Assmann's (1995, 2002) concept, any communication about the war and thus any communicative memory was actively suppressed by imposing a cultural memory in terms of rituals, fixed texts, and monuments almost immediately after the war, although, on the conceptual level, the transition from communicative to cultural memory should take about forty years.

Accordingly, the immortal troop's participants seem to prefer to publicly present their ancestors as heroes and true patriots. The procession's patriotic overtones arise, for instance, when the participants exchange information about the rank and division of their relatives, rather than about any event of hardship. My friend might not be an exception in that she placed photographs of two of her great-grandfathers on the sign, both of whom held good positions in the Soviet army, although she did not have a personal relationship with them. On the other hand, a grandfather she grew up with who also lived during the war was probably not chosen by her because

he does not match the image of the heroic soldier against fascism. People seem to strive to adapt their memory (or at least its public presentation) to state-driven narratives that seek to detach the war from suffering.[8] That way, they ultimately support state discourse on unity and stability.

Furthermore, the wish to experience unity arises in the appraisal of Putin's participation in the procession as one among equals, as expressed similarly by participants and the organizer, who formulates it as follows:

> Well, in actual fact, the crux is that we shouldn't laud that especially someone from the very famous people took part in our activity because Putin anyway has the same grandpa as do I. Therefore, it's not important that Putin and I are different people, but our grandpas were equal at that time. This year we had even a little change in our statutes,[9] saying that the march should not be identified with any concrete [prominent] participant because the memory is important.

It is not this speaker's intention to acknowledge any differences. Though it was the initiators' wish to detach private memories from the official militaristic and uniform parade, their efforts have not established a space for diversity. On the contrary, the initiators and the organizing person in Kaliningrad see their critical stance in the realm of insufficient unity (see also Gabowitsch). Certainly, processions of this kind often strive for an image of unity and are designed to achieve this goal. Ultimately, it seems difficult to criticize the state discourse on people's war memories by ignoring their diverse stories as victims, perpetrators, sufferers, and heroes.[10] Such findings lead many authors on Russia (e.g., Sezneva 2000) to conclude that people do not question or counter state narratives and that oppositional efforts are ultimately doomed to failure. On the example of Memorial—a nongovernmental group devoted to "reassessing the historical memory of the nation" (Thompson 157)—Thompson, for instance, discloses its failure: "Thus in my opinion, the ways in which Russians narrate and commemorate past traumas remain largely unchanged in spite of the changes in the political and economic system" (ibid. 162).

The procession's unity does not indicate that there are no internal differences or that people would not discuss the past in different terms under other circumstances. Personal engagement with one's family history, also initiated by the immortal troop project, has very well recalled diverse narratives that might serve as "hidden transcripts" (Scott), which are presented in the following section.

"This Is Not Russia"

Public presentations of counternarratives on the Great Patriotic War cannot really challenge the state's claim on unity, but in people's daily conversations about the country, this unity seems to be threatened. For instance, it is conventional to say that one was in Russia when commenting on one's trip from Kaliningrad to Moscow or any other Russian city. People often explicitly mention that Kaliningrad is so different from the rest of Russia that it is actually not Russia. Kaliningrad is perceived as different because it is territorially separated from the rest of Russia and, more important, because it was built on the ruins of Königsberg.

Bacon explains that a solid plot is embedded in a net of coherent subplots; for the case of Russia he concludes,

> Russia's public political narrative particularly demands the existence of subplots since its emphasis on unity and stability requires that a relatively wide range of opinion can fit within it. Subplots sit within the narrative; they are not alternative stories told by those opposed to the regime, but are told by the regime itself. (Bacon 780)

However, if the subplots become disconnected, they have the potential of instability and counternarrative (ibid. 781). Sezneva (2000) investigates official "narratives of origin" in respect to Kaliningrad and found that state officials seek to stretch Kaliningrad's temporality into almost mythical times by omitting historical events to find the correct balance between people's request for acknowledging Königsberg and the Russian state's unity. To use Bacon's concept, certain subplots of Kaliningrad are part of state narratives. However, people's everyday narratives about the city and its history partly transgress the subplot structure and counter it.

How people talk about the city and its relation to the rest of Russia is most importantly affected by the period during which they have been living in the city. Those who were born in the city usually report at length about how they played in the Prussian ruins, as indicated by the narrative of a woman who came to Kaliningrad in 1964 at the age of two:

> When I was in the sixth, seventh grade—I was eleven, twelve years old—and we lived near the Southern railway station. At that time the cathedral was pure, it was not preserved and half-destroyed, bombed out. We hung out there, we

played there, and I knew the whole basement and all that was above and all secret corridors. There were such thick walls and there were secret corridors. We knew all of them. [. . .] We loved to play on those sites with German buildings. [. . .] But, of course, we were very proper Soviet kids.

Her narrative is typical in that she tells about thick walls and secret passages within them. Often, people also tell about curious old things they found in the ruins, and some stories include tests of courage. These experiences of adventure and mystery, and the many people telling these stories, provides a basis for an intimate relation to Kenig, as Kaliningrad/Königsberg is usually called by its long-term residents. The schema on Kenig is first not a narrative but has been built through patterned experiences in a particular environment, namely, the remains of Königsberg (see Bloch on the relevance of nonverbal experiences for schemas). However, by sharing these experiences by talking about them, people have developed a narrative template, which they can fill in with their personal modifications and which in daily conversations does not have to be elaborated on as people assume that the basic story is known to everyone.

The city's materiality has inspired various narratives that tell about its sophisticated construction, including the drainage system of the streets and the arrangement of roofs to decrease wind. One such example deals with the construction of a military academy, as illustrated during a conversation between Igor and his wife, Vera:

> IGOR: I was at a military academy and the square, you know, where the soldiers march. There was, at that time, also a military academy for the Germans. And when I realized that this square, at that time, before the war, was heatable, it was heatable so that the soldiers did not have to sweep away the snow during the winter ...
>
> VERA: . . . and did not have to stand on the cold ground, on the cold concrete and to march . . .
>
> IGOR: . . . the snow falls, you turn on and the snow thaws.
>
> VERA: This means care for the people, you know.
>
> IGOR: This is another culture. For me, this was really another culture.

Such a statement clearly opposes official subplots and even resembles those of veterans who openly criticized the Soviet army during the time of glasnost,

which culminated in the expression that "Hitler took care of his soldiers, but Stalin?" (Schleifman 20; see Volkov on autobiographical narratives by Soviet soldiers stationed in the German Democratic Republic).

Some of those who came to the city directly after the war report how they lived together with a German family in one household. One woman told me that she was baby-sat by the teenage daughter of a German family and how they mourned when they realized the Germans had to leave the city. These narratives have been transmitted to the next generations and have created memories of the city, the Germans, and the war. They predominantly counter state narratives, which seek to avoid the perspective of the previous German population, for instance, by circumventing a publication on Kaliningrad's first settlers (see Sezneva 2000). Thompson writes about the ultimately unsuccessful work of Memorial by concluding that people in Russia are largely unable to change perspectives and see others as victims because they are still too traumatized. At least for the case of Kaliningrad, such an assessment seems too one-sided, as a Kaliningrad memory partly includes the one of its previous settlers and builds on the things they left behind.

The narrative template "expulsion of foreign enemies," formulated by Wertsch (2008a), does not rightly capture most people's narratives on the legacies of the Great Patriotic War for Kaliningrad. At this place, Germans rather than Russians were expelled and "Russian civilization" was not attacked (as stated by the template); conversely, Russian people experienced the leaving of "German civilization" that most of them admired. This seems to be the narrative template for many people in Kaliningrad who tell about buildings, streets, and old things. Hardly anyone would formulate such a template because, if asked directly for their political viewpoint, almost everyone would be eager to support state-driven narratives. This might be why the above outlined template about Kenig, which shines through people's personal narratives, seems to be generally tolerated by state officials. However, this tolerance seems to abate, as the following section depicts.

The Old City, Past Traumas, and "Germanization"

Those who came to the city after the break-up of the Soviet Union usually notice what many people say about Kenig, but they evaluate it very differently and transform it in various ways. Most often, it seems that they adopt the memory

on Kenig with some qualifications, as expressed in the following quote from a middle-aged woman who migrated from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad two years before this interview:

> They [the residents of Kaliningrad] very much love Königsberg. And I really like it. And I, for whatever reason, feel that I in particular love Königsberg, not Kaliningrad, but in particular Königsberg. [. . .] And of course, you want that this history will be preserved. [. . .] They [the residents of Kaliningrad] are such patriots. I did not meet such patriots there [in Vladivostok]. For them Königsberg is the best city in the world. There won't be any better city. Moscow is rubbish, the whole Russia is rubbish.

Many migrants seem to appreciate the old houses and streets and what people say about them, but others do not see any differences from other Russian cities and express that the war took place a long time ago, most old buildings were destroyed, and now the third generation of original inhabitants [*korenye zhitely*] live in the city. Some stories explicitly counter the foregoing narrative about people's intimate and patriotic relationship with Kenig's mystery, sophistication, and beauty. The extenuated version assumes people's complicated relationship to a foreign place where they were forcibly resettled after the war and where they did not feel safe and at home, as exemplified in the following statement from a middle-aged woman who migrated to Kaliningrad fifteen years before this interview:

> I felt astonished about many things because when I still lived there [in her home town in central Russia], I was used to the house being clean and beautiful. In the house, you can rest, this is kind of the basis. And when I came here [to Kaliningrad], I realized that the house is the place where people sleep and that's it. It might happen that they don't take of their shoes. They themselves are very beautiful and well dressed but their houses. [. . .] I have the impression that those people who were born here and those who came here after the war, they saw how those people who had lived here were chased away. And it seems that this has left such a deep impression on them that they are—unconsciously—afraid that they also will be chased away. That's why they cannot take it as theirs.

Other statements were more extreme in their tone and conclusion that Kaliningrad/Königsberg does not belong to its residents and ultimately not to Russia

itself because of its German past. This is exemplified by the following quote from a young woman who came from Central Russia to Kaliningrad four years earlier:

> They [the long-term residents] say: "Our Kaliningrad is unbelievably beautiful!" [And I answer:] "Your Kaliningrad is not unbelievably beautiful because your Kaliningrad—that's *khryshevki* [the blocks of houses built under Khrushchev]." [. . .] We live here. It's possible that it will be ours forever. I don't know. This is "big politics" and pretty far from us. [. . .] Kaliningrad is a great city, a good city, a beautiful city, but it's completely foreign for me, I see all this [the old buildings, streets] when I go around but this is not Russia, this is not at all Russia. And this won't become Russian because its roots are not Russian. Well, that's it.

Her statement denies Kaliningrad's residents the Kenig heritage by linking Königsberg exclusively to its previous German population. Obviously, such a statement also threatens official narratives on state unity. Finally, the last type of narrative addresses the perceived discrepancy between Russian people and a Prussian territory equally but also blames Kaliningrad's residents for their lack of patriotism and loyalty to Russia. This is exemplified by the following statement from a middle-aged man who migrated to Kaliningrad from Novosibirsk two years before:

> I wonder why people in Kaliningrad have such a feeling of being special. Well, this particular geographic location gives them the feeling of being something special. But when you start to think about why and in which respect are they special. You won't find anything, right? [. . .] They resettled in Kaliningrad and theirs, anything Russian, doesn't exist here, but the German things are not native to them. That's why they don't have anything that is culturally theirs. [. . .] And this is connected to a real problem. Have you heard of *Germanizatsiya* [Germanization]? The love to one's city, this is one thing, but the love to one's city's German part, this is already something else—again, not the love to one's own but to something foreign. That's why it's here of course, interesting to think about the topic of patriotism. Are people in Kaliningrad patriotic? Yes, they love their home/homeland [*rodina*]. But what kind of home/homeland is it? It's a home/homeland with German culture.

The notion of Germanization was introduced by a journalist in 2016;[11] it has become an umbrella term for various stories ranging from the residents'

complicated relation to history up to their lack of patriotism. Moreover, the debate around Germanization shows that recently, state officials seem to have confined the subplots about Königsberg that were part of their own discourse until the political relation with the West worsened. Accordingly, those who feel accused usually express their lack of understanding by pointing out that their commitment to the remains of Königsberg does not have any impact on their patriotic feelings to the Russian state, as exemplified in the following quote from a person organizing guided tours:

> I don't like those things that were completely pumped onto television artificially in the Kaliningrad region about *Germanizatsiya*, about all this. As long as I work in this—during our excursions, we talk about what was at the German times. And? Shall we become less Russian from that? I understand that this is a political order and I don't like that.

Others combine their Russian tradition and the preservation of the city's historical heritage.

> Well, culture is universal and when it happened just like this that we live here, then we have to address this culture with our pure Russian tradition: We have to handle it and to make something out of it that we can include into our culture. Well, this is my opinion.

The previous two statements show that people do not intend to oppose official narratives. On the contrary, they rather seem surprised that their position is now criticized by the state discourse on Germanization. As has been shown, Germanization is not only an official narrative but is talked about by ordinary people.

Narratives of World War II's Legacies in Kaliningrad

Kaliningrad was built on the ruins of Königsberg right after the war. Those who came to the city from various places in the union during Soviet times tell about the remains of the Prussian city, how they lived in them, and how they interacted with secret passages and thick walls. These narratives form the intimate basis for people's memory of Kenig as a particular place that culturally only partly belongs

to Russia. The same people who admire the city's hybrid character demonstrate for the state's unity on the occasion of Victory Day.

A couple of years ago, some journalists initiated an alternative march to the official militaristic parade on May 9, which is devoted to the remembrance of people's individual fates during the war. Though the initiators in Kaliningrad seek to stress the negative aspects of war by focusing on how people suffered, the participants wish to present their relatives as heroic fighters against fascism. That way, the "oppositional" movement supports the most powerful state-driven narrative, which states that only unity guarantees victory and long-term stability. Official narratives around the Great Patriotic War are widespread and seem to absorb any individual variation, at least in terms of its public presentation.

Most of the analysis on public political narratives about Russia deals with official or oppositional accounts. This article has shown that neither state nor oppositional narratives fully mirror what people say about political issues in regard to their city. Moreover, in a suppressive state like Russia, it is all the more problematic to directly address politics. It seems to be generally appropriate to take into consideration what people say about the mundane materiality around them and not confine analysis to how people talk about issues that politicians talk about.

The residents of Kaliningrad relate differently to the legacies of World War II for their city. Those who grew up there often tell exciting stories about its mythical past. Those who came later debate the residents' relationship with a foreign place by either focusing on presumed past traumas or by blaming them for lack of patriotism. The latter point is taken up by the local official debate on Germanization. Against the background of Russia's currently complicated relationship with the West, it seems that state officials have reframed their narratives about the city by cutting off those subplots that relate to Königsberg. However, by addressing the stories about Königsberg as counternarratives, state officials risk splitting the city's residents and ultimately threatening the envisioned unity and stability.

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■ NOTES

1. All interviews in this article were conducted by me in Russian. The interviews were taped, transcribed by an assistant or me, and translated by me. All names have been anonymized.
2. The city of Kaliningrad is the administrative center of the Kaliningrad region—a Russian exclave situated between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic Sea. Today, the city has almost half a million inhabitants.
3. Interviewees explicitly mentioned that they were not going to comment on the politics of Vladimir Putin and other officials and, moreover, that they did not want to be asked to the recent conflict between East and West. Therefore, I confirmed that I would be interested in cultural issues and their everyday lives.
4. Putin first came into office in 2000. Between 2008 and 2012, Dmitry Medvedev served as the president of Russia. In 2012, Putin came back into office.
5. The numbers have been discussed controversially. Directly after World War II, the number of victims in the Soviet Union was estimated at seven million, Nikita Khrushchev put them at 20 million, and some post-Soviet sources estimate up to 40 million victims (Merridale 5–6).
6. The Ribbon of Saint George was "reinvented" by a Moscow journalist in 2005. The ribbon consists of orange and black stripes, signifying the fire and fog of war. It dates back to the eighteenth century, when it was used as a military decoration. After World War II its use was restricted to veterans. After 2005, it became widely used to demonstrate one's patriotic stance (see Gabowitsch et al. 26).
7. The memorial contains the graves of 1200 soldiers of the Guards Army, which took part in the liberation of Königsberg in April 1945. The memorial was the first Soviet memorial to be opened, on September 30, 1945.
8. During the first years, the procession was criticized on social media for its emphasis on suffer and its lack of patriotism and heroism (Bilalutdinov 136).
9. In 2012, the troop's initiators in Tomsk published their status, saying that all sorts of political influence like banners and flags were prohibited. This also implied the

exercise of influence by politicians (Bilalutdinov 129–30). The statutes are availabe at http://www.moypolk.ru (accessed July 9, 2018).

10. In this context, Gabowitsch and colleagues (38) hint at another paradox: although initiatives like the immortal troop seek to individualize the memory and liberate it from state influence, they nonetheless operate with state-driven sources (e.g., for researching family histories) and usually use the same militaristic language (indicated by the label immortal *troop*).

11. Several broadcasts shown on local television in Kaliningrad were devoted to the notion of Germanization. Moreover, the notion has become very widespread in social media since 2016 (see an article in the local newspaper that was published in November 2016, http://kaliningrad-city24.ru/news/culture/germanizatsiya-v-kaliningrade-mif-ili-realnost, accessed April 9, 2018).

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Resistance or Thuggery?

Political Narratives of Urban Riots

The Concept of Narrative and the Case of Urban Riots

Narrative approaches are currently experiencing a renaissance in political science research. The concept of narrative lies interdisciplinarily in the tradition of literature studies, narratology, cultural studies, anthropology, history, and philosophy (e.g., Bal; Czarniawska; Koschorke; MacIntyre; Polkinghorne; Somers), showing there is no coherent research program in the social sciences. Initially, political scientists hesitantly used the concept of narrative in a handful of studies (e.g., Patterson and Monroe; Stone; Yanow). In the past decade, there has been growing interest in the role of narrative in politics. However, narratives continue to be conceptualized in different ways. In international relations research, it is often used as a synonym for discourse, myths, and ideology, closely resembling a poststructuralist approach (e.g., Neumann). Policy analysts conceive of narrative in terms of frames, arguments, and scripts (e.g., Fenton and Langley). However, following literature studies (Koschorke), linguistic anthropology (Silverstein), and sociology (Somers), we suggest that the major promise of narrative is to understand it as an intermediary term, moving past substantialist notions and overcoming the agency-structure dichotomy. Narrative

is a *modus operandi* and a *modus operatum*: there is always an element of agency in storytelling and meaningful structures in the form of deeper cultural narratives (Kreiswirth 303). This implies a processual and relational notion of narrative as established in practice-oriented research in political science (Wagenaar).

Narratives are configuration devices through which ordinary actors order and make sense of reality. A complex world is made meaningful by creating stories. As Jerome Bruner (4) once famously remarked, "we organize our experiences and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths." Hence, narrative is a mode of knowing and acting in the world, meaning that language is not a purely technical repertoire we use in communication to make rational arguments. Accordingly, narrative is central to core political categories such as claims of political authority, democratic legitimacy, identity construction, and collective sense-making. Consider the case of the G20 summit in Hamburg in 2017, where the local government told a story involving criminal protesters, peaceful police officers, and the high political relevance of the G20 for the solution of global problems. The protesters, on the other hand, told a conflicting story about peaceful civil obedience, excessive police violence, and a democratically illegitimate G20. These contrasting characterizations of the protesters demonstrate how the narrative dynamics in political storytelling cannot be neutral.[1] Although such cases are obviously relevant for studying competing political narratives, the focus of analysis in most of the studies lies on elite discourses and the struggle for control of the media narrative between executive political forces on one hand and nongovernmental organizations and protest movements on the other. In this article we take a closer look at two prominent cases of urban riots, which are not related to major political events such as summits but seem to erupt spontaneously, therefore becoming more difficult to explain. In the past fifteen years, a series of riots in urban areas (Antwerp 2002, Paris 2005, London 2011, Stockholm 2013, Ferguson 2014, Baltimore 2015) have resulted in unexpected mass violence and police intervention. During and after these events, the contestation of facts concerning responsibility prompted the question: are the perpetrators and their actions fundamentally irrational, criminal, and illegitimate, as many political analysts and leaders have suggested, or, as some critics have argued, should these incidents be conceived as desperate attempts to address social injustice? These pertinent questions have not led to increased research efforts in political science, which focuses on elites and established institutions. This is regrettable because continuing cases of urban riots underscore the intersection between elite and everyday narratives in the public sphere.

Whereas ethnologists, folklorists, and anthropologists almost always take the space of the everyday as the focus of analysis, many political scientists have yet to give the sphere of the everyday equal analytical weight vis-à-vis elite discourses. Here we combine both perspectives and study the competing, conflictual political narratives of elites and "ordinary" protesters. From an anthropological view, a political science approach to narratives might remain too macro-oriented. However, the objective of such a perspective is different because political science aims to identify general patterns of political storytelling in dealing with urban riots. In contrast to a purely micro-oriented view on riots, we take a comparative perspective on different cases of riots by, for example, using previous work on the case of London riots (Gadinger, Jarzebski, and Yildiz 2014b). Finally, a political science–oriented view on narratives puts more emphasis on issues of power, legitimacy, and conflict do than many other disciplines (e.g., literature studies) using this concept. The research agenda of studying political narratives thus follows three theoretical premises. First, narration in politics should be understood as an interplay between storytelling actors and audiences in a dynamic and fragile process of collective sense-making; second, narratives entail power relations and assign different moral characters to plots while mobilizing collective emotions; and third, narratives organize a stream of polyphony and order discursive struggles around metaphors (Gadinger, Jarzebski, and Yildiz 2014a). Such a narrative perspective implies a different view on urban riots than many political scientists currently adopt.

As Steven Wilkinson has rightly argued, analyses of riots have hitherto mostly focused on causal push factors, such as economic, political, or demographic factors, and not enough on understanding state responses to riots, variations of violence, and why some people choose to riot. Analyses at the intersection of political science, sociology, and cultural studies exploring the micro dynamics behind these violent upheavals remain rare (but see Fassin; Kustermans; Moran and Waddington; Mucchielli; Schneider). While established macro-structural explanations are necessary, part of the puzzle is still missing: the everyday reality of relevant political actors on the ground. This insight is essential because macro approaches remain detached from actors' lived experience and their expressed grievances, strategies, and tactics in challenging "the actual order of things" for their "own ends" (Certeau 26). Riots are complex political phenomena whose outbreak is symptomatic of deeper societal problems. Although it is not immediately obvious amid their destruction, as Matthew Moran and David Waddington (8) argue, these

dynamic and fragmented expressions of protest have political significance. We therefore submit that urban riots are particularly relevant cases to demonstrate, on one hand, the power of storytelling in politics in elite and everyday discourses and, on the other hand, the fragile nature of defining political reality between different competing narratives.

In our narrative analysis, we focus on two of the most infamous urban riots of the past two decades: Paris in 2005 and Baltimore 2015. On the surface, these incidents begin under uncannily similar circumstances. A young minority male is killed during police interaction, resulting in moral calls for justice that unexpectedly erupt into violent riots. We argue that the cause of and resolution to these riots lie in performative moments of narrative sense-making that force policy makers to defend decisions by tapping into the language of the everyday and relatable cultural goods while testing otherwise stable normative principles. Moreover, these moments provide an otherwise missing voice to repressed groups who use emancipatory and resistance-based language to articulate their decision to resort to civil disobedience. At their core, these episodes of urban violence and rioting show how governments and rioters attempt to legitimize their actions by (un)consciously crafting coherent, compelling narratives. The cases show that different cultural and everyday political practices have major implications for resolving collective urban violence. In the French case, we observe a discursive culture that is less prone to discuss difference, particularly regarding ethnicity and religion. The US case shows that acknowledgment and statements of empathy can calm tensions and result in a temporary détente. As such, these situational differences vividly illustrate how everyday oppression such as racism or socioeconomic inequalities can be effectively addressed or worsened through storytelling practices of both "ordinary" actors and powerful elites.

The Promise of Narrative Analysis: Conceptual Background and Research Methodology

The conceptualization of political narratives implies linking insights from narratology and humanities with theoretical knowledge from political science research and sociology. As mentioned already, we focus on three dimensions to demonstrate the relevance of storytelling in the political realm.

STORYTELLING ACTORS AND THE USAGE OF NARRATIVE FOR COLLECTIVE SENSE-MAKING

Narrative approaches conceptualize actors as "storytelling animals" (MacIntyre 216) or as *Homo narrans* (Koschorke 9–12). However, narrative approaches have little to do positivist approaches that hold that the social world operates according to essential laws and truths. Most famous among these approaches are rationalist game theories that dominate economics and other social sciences. Instead, narrative research forms part of an interpretive movement in political science (Yanow), which, contrary to the positivist tradition of political language research, emphasizes the instrumental and the constitutive meaning of the social construction of political reality. Narration requires agency in at least two ways: on one hand, narrative involves humans as characters in the enrollment of a plot; that is, actors have a distinct role in a story as, for instance, the heroes or villains (Polkinghorne 19–20). Actors are also characterized by distinct traits. While following established patterns, they are individualized and transformed into characters (Bal 8). On the other hand, narratives cannot exist without the voice of a narrator; that is, narrative is never neutral, and narrative constructions of the world are attempts to make sense of reality (Patterson and Monroe 316). Storytelling is subjective and linked to practical judgments of selective interpretation, personal experiences, and sequencing of events (Somers 616).

Although narratives require sequential ordering of events, the events themselves need not be real (Patterson and Monroe 316). Furthermore, narratives are attempts at collective sense-making. We are never the sole authors of our own narratives. Storytelling is embedded in cultural practices of everyday life and involves an audience, which plays an active role in the dual relationship of performances as folklorist theory has emphasized (see Briggs). As Czarniawska (5) argues, "in every conversation a positioning takes place which is accepted, rejected or improved upon by the partners in the conversation." In other words, when narrative is the "main device for making sense of social action" (Czarniawska 11), it is also a political device that generates legitimacy and mutual agreements. Searching for a common understanding through narrative is a fragile process of retelling stories. Narratives are conditional and joint achievements. Narrators and their audiences adjust stories when losing credibility and thus legitimacy. As Hendrik Wagenaar (212) describes: "The audience will judge the story's coherence, plausibility and acceptability. If it fails on any of these counts, it will suggest adjustments or suggest a different story altogether."

Thus, narratives guide and manipulate their audiences. "By defining reality," Ronald Krebs (10) argues, "narratives do not stand opposed to reason, but rather make rational decision-making possible. They are the vehicle through which human beings formulate understandings of self and other (identity) and of what self and other want (interest)." As Eric Selbin (3) puts it: "stories allow us to imagine the transformation of our lives in our world." In contingent and highly controversial situations, the act of storytelling enables actors to "share news, information, and much more: to guide, to warn, to inspire, to make real and possible that which may well be unreal and impossible" (Selbin 3). In other words, they produce (de) legitimacy through shared and oppositional stories. This is because stories are far more adaptive to different policy positions and audiences than mere interests. Despite this makeshift construction and provisional nature of narrative, all groups, communities, or collectives—be it families, organizations, peoples, or nations—depend on collectively shared stories as social bonds (Eder). A continuous and active retelling of stories is important for legitimacy and social order, but there is a variety of other cultural noncommunicative practices that are also important, such as forms of silence and silencing in daily life (Seljamaa and Siim).

POWER, PLOTS, AND EMOTIONS

Storytelling entails power relations. Narratives are organized in configurations, or "plots." These plots are rooted in a range of practical choices of actors: strategic purposes, moral judgments, aesthetic preferences, or claims of power and authority. This means there is always a close connection between the moral meaning of a story and its plot as well as its ending. Stories are seldom told just for fun; they almost always have an underlying purpose (Wagenaar 214). Indeed, as Bochner and Riggs (202) explain, stories often share similar meaningful characteristics and structure:

> 1. People depicted as *characters* in the story 2. A *scene*, *place*, or *context* in which the story occurs 3. An *epiphany* or crisis of some sort that provides *dramatic tension*, around which the emploted elements depicted in the story revolve and toward which a resolution and/or explanation is pointed 4. A *temporal ordering* of events 5. A point or *moral to the story* that provides an explanation and gives meaning and value to the experiences depicted.

To argue that narratives are always part of power relations does not just refer to the material capacities of the storyteller. Instead, storytelling is embedded in cultural practices of communication and related to distinct opportunities of articulation. Not everyone can tell stories at all times. "Successful" storytelling seeking to reach a wider audience implies the use of powerful metaphors, figures of identification, and often "tricks." Maarten Hajer (40) argues that the right mixture between narrative, conflict, and drama determines whether policy facts have news value and reach a wider audience: "No representation without dramatization." Stories also function as "affective triggers insofar as emotions and narrative are deeply intertwined (Mayer 7). Stories can trigger emotion, a phenomenon with which we are all familiar. One example of an influential narrative is Donald Trump's narrative of "make America great again," which he used to present himself as a necessary hero combating villains at home and abroad. Most shockingly, he presented immigration from Mexico as an existential threat to the United States. Trump claimed Mexico was illegally sending "bad people," such as murderers and rapists, to denigrate the United States and transform it into a criminal cesspool. Although these accusations are simply without reason, they trigger collective emotions, stabilize fragile identities, and cement moral judgments of different groups.

One of the main characteristics of narratives is that linguistic constructions of causal relationships are usually simple by design; they ignore or reduce complicated elements such as possible errors, unintended consequences, increasing effects, or contradictions. Therefore, political narratives frequently persist despite contradicting information. There is nothing political decision makers fear as much as the loss of a credible good story they told and people believed (Wagenaar 215). The dimension of power is crucial when a narrative is configured and sequenced in a beginning, a middle, and an end, also known as emplotment. Emplotment "gives significance to independent instances, not their chronological or categorical order" and "translates events into episodes" (Somers 616). Selecting the beginning of a story is already an intrinsically power-imbued action because it decides which information disappears and which events are kept alive (Koschorke 62).

POLYPHONY, METAPHORS, AND THE EVERYDAY

Storytelling is relational, and narratives tend to overlap. A narrated world is a nonlinear stream of multiple narratives, most suitably described as "polyphony." Narration is a collaborative and unpredictable practice in which narrators and

audiences come to a shared understanding. There is more than one narrative told at any single point in time. Narratives are always both telling/presentation and told/presented; that is, they involve time and sequence. Narration can be understood as a dialogical communicative process involving the dynamic interaction of two temporal strands, the present and the past (Kreiswirth 303).

The UK riots in 2011, for example, are an apt case to show what polyphony means in political discourse. To make sense of this puzzling event and the ensuing violence, both the British government and protesters used the powerful metaphor of a broken society, albeit in very different ways. While the government used it to legitimize a harsh law-and-order narrative by claiming that criminal young people have broken a societal contract, the protesters (unsuccessfully) mobilized a narrative of moral blame for the Conservative-led government, which has re-inforced inequalities and structural racism in society (Gadinger, Jarzebski, and Yildiz 2014b). As this example shows, the struggle around metaphors reveals the contested nature of competing political narratives between the government and the governed to justify or criticize the political order. To analyze these activities in the stream of polyphony, Certeau suggests concentrating on the creative capacities of individuals in their everyday practices. One ubiquitous social activity in which all ordinary actors engage is storytelling. According to Certeau (23), storytelling has the exceptional ability to create room for resistance to perceived oppressive forces; as such, "stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use." The relationship between everyday life and narrative is not primarily a structural matter of convincing others through ideological positions but transpires in an open "space for recording forms of action and for the rehearsal of potential activities" (Highmore 127). For Certeau, "it is in the stories of our everyday being, in our trying to live well with the challenges of being that we may engender some insight or percipience" (Lewis 506). This derives from humans' unique ability to narrate, a result of the need to reflect, create, and formulate. This capacity to invent solutions to everyday problems equips ordinary actors with meaning, hope, and storytelling tools. However, narratives based on the same context or discourse can also be used to dominate ordinary actors. Narratives, then, are a flexible, dual practice that can used to both creatively overcome repressive barriers and enforce the very structures that sustain them.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: STUDYING POLITICAL NARRATIVES IN THE EVERYDAY

A narrative analysis switches between the process of narration and the surrounding narrative structures dialogically. An ambitious narrative analysis should therefore not only consist of a mere description of different stories around a problem but should also point out how these narratives affect the respective social order in terms of power relations (Kreiswirth 301). An empirical study on narratives can start from different methodological entry points and adopt different approaches (Wagenaar 216). This contribution is oriented toward an approach that focuses "on the work that stories do in a particular political or administrative context" (Wagenaar 218). Instead of just focusing on policy and elites, we seek to incorporate the perspectives of those involved in the construction of a specific event. This is accomplished empirically by following the "long tradition of using newspaper articles as sources of socio-historical data, particularly in the study of social protest and conflict, revolutions, and social movements" (Franzosi 95). In addition, we seek to undercover the narratives by examining online sources such as tweets, YouTube videos, and other unconventional online sources. In line with previous research (e.g., Hülsse; Yanow), the identification of guiding metaphors is a promising way to start analysis. They are first indicators of different narratives and thus the first available object for interpretation. They need to be contextualized within the configuration of the narrative (i.e., through moral judgments and actor characterizations). A reconstruction of narratives that starts by contextualizing metaphors and images can add layer upon layer of interpretation. Following Rainer Hülsse (404), we are not interested "in the thinking behind metaphors," the terrain of cognitive linguistics, "but in the reality that follows from the metaphor use, hence with the effects of metaphors on social reality."

Metaphors demonstrate that reality is constructed not only by what is said but also by how it is said. Effectively, their dependence on cultural references and knowledge can lead to different understandings and uses by diverse groups. There is a difference between complex conflicts that are metaphorically constructed as forces of nature, as mechanical process, or as human and social occurrences. During the 2015 European refugee crisis, public discourse in Germany often referred to immigration as a "flood" or an "avalanche." This configuration left little room for individual human fates and conceptualized the many refugees as a homogeneously faceless mass. This storytelling practice plays a role in the negotiation of power relations, responsibilities, and options for solving a specific issue. In the following

narrative analysis, we similarly start with identifying guiding metaphors used to make sense of these puzzling events. The next methodological steps include the moral assignment of roles in plots and the effects of narrative constructions on power relations in discourse.

Riots or Uprisings? Political Narratives in Paris and Baltimore

In the following narrative analysis, we analyze "text" as understood in media and cultural studies. This micro-oriented analysis includes statements by politicians and ordinary actors in the press by examining quotes in newspapers, YouTube videos, tweets, and other social media outlets. This grants us access to everyday speech acts in way that easily lends itself to uncovering significant narrative patterns. Although it is a given that these sources often have their own framing devices and agendas, the advantage of a narrative analysis is that it takes these perspectives into account as storytelling actors. This constitutes the messy, complex "social reality" in which storytelling takes place and is therefore part and parcel of a narrative approach (Etherington 81).

The Paris Riots

In 2005 in the Parisian suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois, fifteen-year-old Zied Benna and seventeen-year-old Bouna Traoré were certain they were being followed by the police. While hiding in an electric transformer, they were mortally electrocuted. After this incident, two stories of the events emerged. Local youth were convinced that the boys were chased into an electrical substation by the police. However, Nicolas Sarkozy, then minister of Interior, presented a story in which police were exonerated of responsibility. Sarkozy claimed "the police had not been physically pursuing" the teenagers, spoke of rampant local delinquency, and saw no reason to blame officers.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE: CLEANING THE SUBURBS WITH A *KÄRCHER*

The government's response to the rioters begs for contextualization within the French electoral landscape. Since his appointment, Sarkozy had advocated for

a tough approach against crime through a restoration of "law and order." As a probable contender for the 2007 presidential election, the success or failure of his political strategy had important implications. In June 2005, he had already suggested achieving this goal by cleaning out the *banlieue*s with a *Kärcher* (a high-pressure hose). Shortly before riots broke out in Clichy-sous-Bois, Sarkozy infamously declared: "You've had enough of this pack of riff-raff! Well then, we are going to get rid of it for you!" (Hugues). At the beginning of the disturbances, he referred to the rioters as *racaille* and *voyous* ("scum" or "thugs") (*Le Monde* 2005a). After a few days, Sarkozy substantiated his law-and-order narrative by declaring a zero-tolerance policy toward urban violence, vastly increasing police presence throughout the country.

Sarkozy's law-and-order narrative consisted of three central elements that exacerbated frustrations in Clichy-sous-Bois. First, the characterization of rioters as scum and the continued use of the *Kärcher* metaphor suggested a powerful moral judgment vis-à-vis the protesters. Second, Sarkozy mobilized the criminal gang narrative by linking unstable areas to gang culture, drug dealing, and the "dictatorship of fear," and not unemployment and failed schools (Mucchielli 749; Schneider 137). Third, he stated that riots had made "offending their main activity to resist the ambition of the Republic to restore its order, the order of its laws, throughout the country" (Sarkozy). This third element was linked to the French secular tradition of *laïcité*, whereby public displays of religious particularities are often discouraged, particularly in the realm of politics. Sarkozy emphasized the threat of extremists and promised to deport non-French rioters. In doing so, the *Kärcher* metaphor became emblematic for drastic policy measures. In addition, responses from local authorities, such as police unions, resulted in inflammatory rhetoric justifying certain measures being taken by the government (Burke). Indeed, Sarkozy's law-and-order stance received almost universal support from police representatives (Schneider 146–47).

Sarkozy's disciplinarian narrative was criticized by the opposition, particularly left-wing politicians and commentators through outlets such as *Le Monde*. To counter this, Sarkozy was incidentally set to meet with the families of two youths killed as police teargas grenades landed in front of a local mosque. The families canceled, saying that "there is no way we're going to see incompetent Sarkozy. What happened in the mosque is really disrespectful" (*Le Monde* 2005b). During the riots, the country's tough-talking, anticrime Interior minister occasionally seemed isolated. This was due partially to the escalation of violence from localized conflict

to a national outburst of rage in reaction to his provocative statements on "cleaning out" the *racailles*.

THE RIOTERS' CALL FOR HELP

The narrative configuration among rioters took on a defensive tone. There was a shared feeling that there was no choice but to take to the streets against a society that humiliates, excludes, and devalues them. Although the indignation experienced after the deaths was raw, disgust with the French establishment among young, impoverished *banlieue* dwellers peaked after Sarkozy's reactionary statements. Those statements soon became a symbol of everyday denigration and prejudice.

A common thread among protesters was therefore the need for revenge against the establishment— that is, politicians, police, and schools. As one protester reflected, "we won! We kicked Sarko where it hurts" (Duval Smith). Another rioter from Clichy-sous-Bois added, "there was a feeling of vengeance that unfortunately won us over at the time. We thought: 'they killed two of our own. Someone must pay'" (Mir; translation ours). Feelings of revenge were also directed at schools. Rioters felt the French education system had long deserted them to live a life of poverty and exclusion. The institution perceived most negatively was the police, considered most responsible for the deaths and the mosque grenade. Many expressed anger at the daily disrespect and abuse from police forces through identification practices, jeering, and discrimination:

> whenever we see someone around here run, we're forced to run with them . . . the way the police treat us, the youth, that terrifies them . . . they see that the cops are killing us out here, how they break us down, how they tease us . . . the police come from where the French reside. When they come here, they tell us: "Put your hands on the car, you clown." Then they say we're scum. (Chemin; translation ours)

A narrative of solidarity arose based on feelings of social exclusion. A Clichy-sous-Bois resident recalled, "we all identified with what happened because we're black and Arabs. We have the same struggles" (Manac'h; translation ours). This asymmetrical dynamic resulted in metaphors representing a just uprising: "it was perceived by most to be a series of riots; for us it was revolution" (Legrand and Bouanchaud; translation ours). Another rioter from Lyon added, "this social revolt . . . was pure anger and a call for help. One becomes a bit bitter after never

being heard" (Thomasset and Quille; translation ours). The common desperation experienced is summarized succinctly:

> Burning and breaking things was a way to gain attention . . . it was a way to be seen and recognized . . . and finally have the extraordinary possibility to define the current media agenda. . . . It was a way to emphasize that 80 percent of people living here are living below the poverty line. (Manac'h; translation ours)

This feeling of solidarity was an opportunity to remind the public that the most involved are French citizens (Roy). Their experiences are marked by an inability to succeed in a country where a foreign surname can cost a job opportunity. This results in a hopeless state of limbo in which the benefits of French citizenship cannot be enjoyed by all, creating frustration among many who felt abandoned (Koff and Duprez 716). A former rioter explains this divergence ten year after the events as follows: "We just wanted to pass on the following message: 'We're French. We're like you'" (BMFTV; translation ours).

The final narrative strand was the feeling of necessity to revolt among *banlieue* dwellers. The riots were an opportunity to shine light on the pervasive issues affecting them to finally change things for the better. Many expressed no remorse in partaking in the riots (Legrand and Bouanchaud; translation ours): "No, I don't regret anything. We really had to react because the police were not doing anything about the injustice." Another rioter shares this impression: "of course I'm proud because I was able to express myself. Look around you. Do you really think if there hadn't been any riots, something in this city would've changed?" (BMFTV; translation ours).

The Baltimore Riots

The protests that arose in Baltimore in April 2015 following the death of twenty-five-year-old African American Freddie Gray became part of the now famous Black Lives Matters demonstrations against police brutality across the United States. Although violence, looting, and arson had played a role in all incidents, the events in Baltimore were the first in an urban setting. Shocking the nation, narrative interpretations supported diverging understandings. Most pertinently, representations of protesters split between thuggery, on one hand, and expressions of resistance against structural discrimination, on the other.

ANARCHIC THUGGERY: DISCIPLINING THE "PURGE"

After a week of mostly peaceful protests throughout Baltimore, rumors spread throughout social media and law enforcement officials that a "purge" involving gangs was being planned after Freddie Gray's funeral. The purge—inspired by the 2013 dystopian film *The Purge*, in which the state suspends all laws for one day a year—led Baltimore city officials to order police to gather in riot gear near a school next to the Mondawmin Mall.[2] As students left classes, they were confronted by militarized police. The mall and all public transportation stops, which the students depend on to go home, were blocked off. As police continued to refuse to allow students to access public transportation, students pushed back against the police by throwing bricks. This disputed event marks the beginning of the Baltimore riots. That same day, violence escalated and resulted in vandalism, arson, and looting in West Baltimore. State and local officials declared a state of emergency and a city-wide curfew by that evening.

The rich insight provided by the moral charge of the "purge" metaphor in the immediate run-up to the riots is worth exploring in more detail because it resulted in most of the rioting in the city. Indeed, this metaphor dramatically captures the panic among state officials, the media, and Baltimoreans while establishing a narrative structure legitimizing steps taken by all levels of government: "It was a metaphor for, 'Let's go out and make trouble'" (CNN). The purge metaphor ultimately evoked fear through its imagery of anarchic, violent rioting reigning over the streets as experienced just months before in Ferguson, Missouri.[3] Although responding to shaky evidence, law enforcement officials focused on stopping a shadowy group of gang members from creating havoc on the streets of Baltimore.

Considering that violence escalated very quickly once police in full riot gear arrived, there was no need for mainstream media outlets to verify the validity of the purge claim, thereby making the inevitability of a criminal purge even more credible. It is perhaps not particularly surprising that elected officials from the mayor, the governor, to the president along with mainstream media outlets expediently developed a specific role for the violent perpetrators: "thugs" (Block). By using a term that evokes criminality, the narrative of a justified police response and its accompanying brutality grew increasingly potent. Despite Baltimore mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake's immediate expression of regret for this characterization, Maryland governor Larry Hogan and President Barack Obama doubled down on this term (Fabian). As such, a morality play featuring role characterizations between good (the state/peaceful protesters) and evil (rioting criminal thugs) quickly formed.

Connected to this dichotomy were therefore ongoing calls for discipline against thugs. A viral video, garnering nearly universal praise in both social media and mainstream media outlets, featured footage of a Baltimore mother beating her son for rioting in west Baltimore. Titles such as "Mother of the year" and "Hero Mom" quickly spread through social media and new outlets (Becker). Through role configurations such as the hero mom, a moral charge was applied to the incident, which removed blame for the riots on structural issues and highlighted instead deficiencies in the African American community. Calls for discipline through arrests, roundups, and other penal measures quickly gained traction as a just measure to take care of this criminal behavior (Stolberg). Arguments seeking to analyze the reasons behind the outrage, such as structural racism and widespread distrust between police and African Americans, were quickly dismissed or ignored as misguided attempts to justify recklessness (Thompson).

THE UPRISING: AN EXPRESSION OF OUTRAGE

Although this justificatory dichotomy can be visualized through the narrative based on the purge metaphor, another powerful, competing narrative configuration was developing as violent protesters were written off as petty criminals and thugs. To counteract what was becoming a hegemonic understanding of the events, many activists and observers sympathizing with the rioters adopted the narrative of an uprising to explain why violence had broken out. Marking the beginning of this narrative configuration was a call for action by pastor Jamal Bryant during the funeral of Freddie Gray, where he emphasized that "somebody is going to have to pay," adding that if "you're black in America, your life is always under threat" (*Al Jazeera*). Hours after the ceremony, rioting broke out, and the narrative incited by the purge had become the accepted interpretation of the unfolding events. However, the day after the Mondawmin Mall incident, a Twitter user received much attention upon proposing "would be nice if we could get #BaltimoreUprising trending instead of 'riots.'"[4] By the following day, the hashtag gained traction throughout the internet and solidified a counternarrative to what had been actively buttressed by both the government and media alike (Moyer). Using the uprising narrative, the configuration of the oppressed revolting against the oppressor as the only effective way to vocalize their immiseration became clear.

The uprising narrative was based on three plot elements: historical distrust between the Baltimore African American community and police, the desperation

of voicelessness, and structural economic and racial inequality. The distrust first manifested itself among those who witnessed rioting firsthand and found media reports and the government's reaction either distortionary, offensive, or flat-out false (Cave). A Baltimore teacher from the school near Mondawmin Mall described that "riot police were already at the bus stop on the other side of the mall, turning buses that transport the students away, not allowing students to board. They were waiting for the kids . . . Those kids were set up, they were treated like criminals before the first brick was thrown" (Scocca). A participant in the riots discussed unfair police practices as a reason for getting involved:

> They gave me five years, no parole, for a gun that wasn't even mine. They put a gun on me. That's the type [of] shit that the Baltimore City Police Department do . . . and people are tired of it. These young kids are tired of it . . . So therefore, yes, they're rioting. They're looting. (Vice News)

An interviewed protester adds that the rioting "will definitely let people know what living in the city of Baltimore is like. But it will also let the Baltimore City Police know that it won't be tolerated anymore" (Vice News). Protesters who opted for violence as a means to voice their frustration also received understanding from those who supported the uprising narrative. One peaceful Baltimore citizen articulated as follows: "I get it. There's a lot of anger that's turning into rage, and people don't know how to channel the energy . . . they don't know what to do. They've seen people riot. They've seen peaceful protests. We don't know what else to do" (Vice News). A nineteen-year-old protester echoed this sentiment: "I'm going to be violent. All of that peace, I'm done with peace. I tried to be peaceful. These are our streets[,] not theirs. They're killing us" (BBC). Ultimately, then, part of this configuration is that violence, looting, and arson became a means to an end when there was no other outlet to express recurring grievances.

Perhaps the most dramatic grievances in the Baltimore riots were the protesters' constant reminder of the economic and racial inequalities that plague the city and country. Various metaphorical images throughout the riots added to this narrative. For instance, upper-end supermarket chain Whole Foods posted pictures on social media accounts of stores providing free food and water to National Guardsmen, proudly claiming that they were making "sandwiches for the men and women keeping Baltimore safe. We are so thankful to have them here and they're pumped for Turkey & Cheese" (CNN Money). On Twitter, an adherer to the uprising narrative

responded by commenting "LOL @wholefoods feeding the National Guard in a city where most kids can't eat if schools are closed is the PERFECT American metaphor."[5] The irony of military personnel receiving free food from a luxury supermarket chain while children throughout the city went to bed hungry was a rich illustration of the inequality experienced every day. It is no coincidence that rioters chose to attack and loot the very power structures most oppressing them: the police and corporate capitalism.

Conclusion

As we argued, riots should be not seen as simply irrational moments of erupting violence but as politically significant conflicts. This means examining how these actors make "meaningful use of the things and structures which they encounter" in their everyday lives (Smith 32). For marginalized groups, rioting is often a final desperate way to reclaim their voices and participate in political discourse. The comparison of two prominent cases provides some major findings. First, security-driven narratives can be identified in governments' responses to riots. Evidence of this lies in the declaration of a state of emergency, an indelible trademark of post-9/11 security policy. A narrative perspective, however, unpacks how these declarations and resulting state actions were justified through linguistic techniques. Cleansing metaphors are particularly present in these cases. In the French case, Sarkozy repeatedly reused the *Kärcher* metaphor to illustrate the abrasive measures the government would adopt to solve issues affecting the *banlieue*s. The Baltimore case featured similar metaphorical imagery, although it was initiated by an unidentifiable source. The fear of an impending "purge" by anarchic "thugs" justified a rollout of a militarized police throughout the city and led to further tensions.

Second, the language used by political leaders and the resulting actions seen in both cases influenced only how protesters interpreted the events and molded the emplotment of each respective narrative and shows how the language was geared at particular audiences in the public. In the French case, Sarkozy's metaphors of waste and law-and-order narrative inflamed tensions. Indeed, there was a strong perception of state contempt toward minority communities and a refusal to accept any responsibility among officials. The clearest representation of this disrespect occurred during the mosque incident in Clichy-sous-Bois and Sarkozy's dismissive reaction, marking the beginning of the violent clashes between *banlieusards* and

law enforcement. Former President Barack Obama and Baltimore city officials initially seemed to draw similar judgments but shifted their tone as time went on. After labeling those involved in the riots "thugs," Baltimore mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake apologized for the use of the term and sought to strike a more compassionate tone. Although Obama used the same term, in the end he pointed to the structural issues causing widespread frustration in Baltimore and beyond: racism, economic inequality, the war on drugs, and historic distrust between minorities and police (Vincens).

Finally, the role of broader public debate on the riots had long-standing effects on their resolution and perception. The French illustration shows that despite protesters' feelings of discrimination based on ethnicity and religion, debates on differences played little to no role in the public sphere. Moreover, support for rioters among intellectuals and educational institutions such as universities was largely negligible. As a result, there was no grassroots movement demanding recognition for perceived injustice, nor were there significant artistic discourses on the events. After the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, French intellectuals like Gilles Kepel reminded the public of the political ignorance of the deeper causes of the riots in 2005 and the teargas attack as a persistent symbol for mistrust against the state. Likewise, the French yellow vest riots in late 2018 are again a sign of the explosive discrepancy between social injustices perceived among citizens and political leaders' apparent insensitivity toward widespread grievances. On the other hand, recent events throughout the United States provoked a broader public debate on the causes and led to the powerful Black Lives Matter political movement. The moral claim of the widespread metaphor "Hands up, don't shoot!," which originated in the Ferguson riots and was later used during the events in Baltimore, and "I can't breathe," the infamous dying words of Eric Garner, provided protesters with powerful imagery that clearly criticized police actions much more effectively than the French narratives. Moreover, the emotional trigger of film footage provided an accessible online platform for evidence of widespread police violence and racism. It has consequently had a significant impact on public discourse on civil rights. It can be concluded that historical, cultural, and political context in the United States allowed for more space for discussion on civil disobedience. The Trump administration's response to future riots will be critical. The recent dispute around NFL players who choose to kneel during the national anthem in protest against racial injustice and Trump's harsh critique of "unpatriotic" behavior signals a stronger polarization of political narratives in the near future.

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▪ NOTES

1. In this article we use the term *protesters* instead of *rioters*. Although it is obviously legitimate to call a protester lighting a car on fire a rioter, we consider the term *protester* much more neutral and seek to avoid the criminalizing language of executive forces that delegitimizes certain forms of civil protest. We use the term *riots* for the events as a whole because this term is normatively less problematic due to obvious elements of erupting violence such as the burning of cars.

2. Baltimore Police Twitter, April 27, 2015, https://twitter.com/BaltimorePolice/status/592711198241595395, (accessed March 21, 2016). The tweet read: "Please see the attached credible threat to law enforcement: http://tinyurl.com/k47zzhq."

3. On August 9, 2014, riots erupted in the city of Ferguson, Missouri, following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown Jr., an eighteen-year-old African American man, by a white police officer. The shooting resulted in widespread unrest throughout Ferguson, where protesters used the now famous slogan "Hands up, don't shoot." Police forces responded with a major militarization of Ferguson, garnering media attention throughout the country and the world.

4. Yung Sociology, https://twitter.com/yungsociology/status/592823905670266880, April 28 2015 (accessed March 21, 2016). The tweet reads: "Would be nice if we could get #BaltimoreUprising trending instead of 'riots'."

5. Are0h, https://twitter.com/are0h/status/593094618411065344, April 2015, accessed November 11, 2015.

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