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Capstone Issue Vol. 8 2017

The AUC Undergraduate Journal of Liberal Arts and Sciences is a biannual, interdisciplinary publication showcasing outstanding undergraduate academic papers. The Journal aims to demonstrate the strength of undergraduate scholarship at AUC, to reflect the intellectual diversity of its academic programme, to encourage best research and writing practices, to facilitate collaboration between students and faculty across the curriculum, and to provide students with opportunities to gain experience in academic reviewing, editing and publishing. The Editorial of the Journal is constituted of members of the InPrint board, a registered AUUSA committee.

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Foreword

In the semester prior to graduation, every AUC student is invited to carry out an independent research project within their intended majors – Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities –, referred to as the Capstone. This project is meant to have students engage with the current academic dialogue within their fields. This year's Capstone Issue, including theses from the classes of 2016 and 2017, not only illustrates outstanding pieces of scholarship written by graduated AUC students, but also showcases AUC students' ability to go beyond disciplinary boundaries with skill, insight, and creativity. That is why all Capstones in this issue were awarded 'Thesis of High Distinction' or 'Thesis of Highest Distinction' prizes by the Capstone Awards Committee.

Additionally, all Capstones published in this issue have undergone a meticulous editing process carried out by the Editorial Board of InPrint to further improve clarity and conciseness. A systematic approach to editing was made possible thanks to the tools provided by lecturer and linguist Dr. Lotte Tavecchio. Capstone coordinator Dr. Maurits de Klepper communicated to us the selected Capstones. Dean Prof. Dr. Murray Pratt along with Managing Director Dr. Belinda Stratton provided the Editorial Board with council regarding the format of the publication. Finally, a revised layout was made possible with the community-driven $\text{\LaTeX}2_{\epsilon}$ typesetting system, mirroring AUC values.

Together, these integrative works reflect the ambition of graduating AUC students and the guidance offered by AUC faculty members and supervisors, allowing for an academic appreciation of the AUC community.

Philip Hartout, on behalf of InPrint

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The authors' appendices can be found using this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ulq72cxm9z9ziki/capstone-issue-vol.-8-2017-supplementary-materials.pdf?dl=0>.

Sciences

Automated Controversy Prediction of Online News Articles from *The Guardian*

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May 31, 2017

Abstract

During the last decade, the amount of available news resources has surged due to the emergence of the Internet and the rise of social media. Some have suggested that information retrieval via online search engines and the personalization of social media news feeds lead to so-called echo chambers in which Internet users receive polarized, one-sided information that conforms to their pre-existing beliefs and ideologies. The implementation of automatic controversy detectors in browser extensions and search engines on the Web can raise awareness about the contentiousness of news stories, evoke critical literacy, and stimulate versatile news diets. This study introduces supervised classifiers capable of binary news article controversy prediction. These classifiers are trained on a dataset of 4,847 online news articles from *The Guardian*, which have been assigned a binary controversy label based on the results of a crowdsourcing survey. Separate classifiers are trained and tested on three subsets of this dataset to provide insight into the effectiveness of employing features extracted from Facebook, Twitter and the articles' comment sections. A feature space including metadata, discussion, linguistic, sentiment, lexical and social media features is engineered in this study, as well as an optimized TF-IDF baseline feature space. The findings of this study show that features extracted from readers' discussions around the newspaper articles is essential for the performance of the classifiers. Moreover, this study demonstrates that incorporating Facebook features positively contributes to the performance of the classifiers. Both Support Vector Machine (SVM) and Random Forest (RF) classifiers trained and tested with optimized feature subspaces, consistently exhibit F_1 score improvements over their counterpart classifiers applied to TF-IDF baselines. The highest achieved F_1 score on the testing set of the complete dataset is 76.6.

1 Introduction

News media cover many controversial subjects; that is to say, issues that provoke drastically varying opinions among readers. The content and propagation of the news used to be dictated and dominated by newspapers, but presently Web 2.0 websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Wikipedia enable Internet users to actively participate in the creation and distribution of news (Brandes 2008). The fact that people have a tendency to access and share news that fits their personal beliefs and ideas (An 2014), combined with the incorporation of personalization algorithms in social media news feeds and search engines (Beam 2014), increases selective exposure and confirmation bias (Dvir-Gvirsman et al. 2016; Lazarsfeld et al. 1944; Nickerson 1998). This can create "echo chambers" that reverberate and amplify the reader's pre-existing ideologies and opinions, resulting in certain sides of multifaceted issues to be underrepresented (Dori-Hacohen et al. 2016; Pariser 2011; Resnick et al. 2013). For example, an echo chamber can form when a reader receives news without being informed by other parties of its falsehood. Facebook has confirmed instances of fake news going viral on its social media platform, which has negative consequences because people are not always aware of the potential falsehood of fake news items. To mitigate the spread of false news and to combat

selective exposure, massively shared news articles on Facebook are flagged as disputed if verified by a collective of independent fact-checkers (Hunt 2017; Weedon et al. 2017). Researchers strongly advocate the idea of automating the processes of combating false news, dismantling echo chambers, stimulating critical literacy, and search diversification; for example, through the implementation of controversy detection algorithms in search engines or browser widgets (Aktolga and Allan 2013; Dori-Hacohen et al. 2016; Ennals et al. 2010; Kacimi and Gamper 2011; Munson et al. 2013; Vydiswaran et al. 2012; Yom-Tov et al. 2014).

To contribute to the growing body of scientific research on automatic controversy detection, this study develops a supervised controversy predictor trained on online news articles that appeared in the international edition of *The Guardian*. A dataset of 4,847 news articles is used, which have been assigned binary controversy labels corresponding to crowdsourcing annotations to all the articles. The news articles in the dataset are accompanied by their associated comment sections and metadata, from which features are extracted to train various Support Vector Machine (SVM) and Random Forest (RF) classifiers. The features are categorized in five classes: metadata, discussion, linguistic, sentiment, lexical and social media. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to take other news outlets into account, these features can easily be

¹Image courtesy from: <https://swaroopb.com/conversations-with-my-ego-34413149d52f>

modified to suit other online news platforms – they are not strictly confined to *The Guardian*. This research mainly investigates the usefulness of analyzing both the discussions around *The Guardian*'s news articles on its website, and the way in which the articles are perceived by *The Guardian*'s followers on Facebook and Twitter. To effectuate this, a particular focus lies on the effect of comment section features on the performance of controversy predictors, as well as the potential of employing social media features, such as shares and likes, for controversy classification. The results of the best-found classifiers on the whole dataset are compared to optimized TF-IDF baselines, which serve as a measure of the study's relevance and contribution to the research field. Finally, separate classifiers are contrived to measure the impact of the features extracted from Facebook and Twitter, by examining the subsets of 1,003 articles that *The Guardian* shared on Facebook, and 1,331 articles that it posted on Twitter.

2 Previous research

This thesis is based on several strands of related work on controversy detection in the areas of Wikipedia, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and online news outlets. Wikipedia, the world's largest user-generated online encyclopedia, has been the most prominent medium for developing automated controversy detection algorithms (Bykau et al. 2015; Dori-Hacohen and Allan 2013; Dori-Hacohen et al. 2016; Jang and Allan 2016; Jang et al. 2016; Kittur et al. 2007; Vuong et al. 2008; Wang and Cardie 2016; Yasseri et al. 2012). Besides Wikipedia, the microblogging website Twitter has been a medium where much progress has been made within the same field (Addaood and Bashir 2016; Allen et al. 2014; Garimella et al. 2016a; Garimella et al. 2016b; Popescu and Pennacchiotti 2010).

In recent years, online news outlets as platforms for developing automated controversy detection algorithms have increasingly gained popularity. The following studies exemplify how online news outlets have been employed for controversy detection. At the beginning of this decade, Choi et al. (2010) detected controversial issues and their subtopics in news articles in an unsupervised manner based on sentiment and opinion analysis.

More recently, selecting features from the results of a crowdsourcing task, Mejova et al. (2014) compared the language use in millions of news articles from 15 major U.S. news outlets to automate controversy detection. Additionally, Lourentzou et al. (2015) jointly mined news texts and social media to identify and rank sentences in news articles according to controversy. This paper utilizes the discussion on news articles between readers to improve controversy detection. It does so in a way similar to Chimmalgi (2013), who principally studied controversy in tweets through sentiment and controversy lexicons. The findings of Mishne and Glance (2006) are also recognized; they analyzed weblog commenting patterns for detecting disputes and composed linguistic features suitable for the classification task in this research.

In this work, controversial issues are defined as issues that cause strong disagreement in views or sentiment among large groups of people (Choi et al. 2010; Dori-Hacohen et al. 2015; Mejova et al. 2014). Labelling and categorizing such issues has proven to be a difficult task (Garimella et al. 2016b; Jang and Allan 2016; Kim and Hovy 2006; Tsytsarou et al. 2010). When zooming in on the discourse on a single topic, parsing argumentative structures and extracting opinions and opinion holders is highly complex (Jang and Allan 2016; Kim and Hovy 2006). This study limits itself by looking at news story controversy on a topical level, hence, this study does not set out to clarify to which commenter or author a certain opinion belongs. Another obstacle, as thoroughly described by Tsytsarou et al. (2010) and Garimella et al. (2016b), is that controversial topics evolve over time. In the present work, no temporal distinctions can be made, since the labels of the dataset were obtained through a single crowdsourcing survey.

Early examples of research into automatic controversy detection on Wikipedia include Kittur et al. (2007) and Vuong et al. (2008), who claim that controversies within Wikipedia articles are indicative of controversial issues in the real world. Despite the fact that the accuracy of Wikipedia pages on scientific topics is comparable to their printed counterparts in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Giles 2005), users often disagree during the production of pages (Sumi et al. 2011; Yasseri et al. 2012). If the content of a Wikipedia page is deemed contentious, or if so-called edit-wars are apparent, Wikipedia editors and moderators manually add controversy

tags to the entry, upon which the topic gets displayed on the *List of controversial issues* Wikipedia page² (Wikipedia contributors 2017). This page has been employed as a ground truth for controversial topics by multiple studies that studied unsupervised controversy detection algorithms, including the previously mentioned pioneering research groups (Jang and Allan 2016; Kittur et al. 2007; Rad and Barbosa 2012; Sumi et al. 2011; Vuong et al. 2008). Other studies use the issues stated on this list as a controversy lexicon (Chimmalgi 2013; Nobata et al. 2016; Popescu and Pennacchiotti 2010), a practice also adopted in this study. In addition to the *List of controversial issues*, this study engineers several lexical features by applying Roitman et al.'s (2016) seed words controversy lexicon and a lexicon constructed through a crowdsourcing annotation exercise by Mejova et al. (2014).

Country	Perc. (%)
USA	53.55
CAN	24.48
GBR	18.32
AUS	3.65

Table 1: Nationalities of the crowdsourcing survey participants.

Crowdsourcing is a celebrated tool for identifying controversial topics. Kittur et al. (2007) surveyed Wikipedia administrators about pages holding controversy tags, to solidify the legitimacy of the application of the *List of controversial issues* and Vydiswaran et al. (2015) asked Internet users to fill out a crowdsourcing questionnaire to examine with which topics they agreed or disagreed. In the same vein, the controversy lexicon of Mejova et al. (2014) consists of an extensive list of strongly controversial, somewhat controversial, and uncontroversial words obtained via crowdsourcing annotation of news articles. Crowdsourcing was practiced to actualize the controversy labels of the dataset used in this study.

Besides comparing content to controversy lexicons, the most conventional technique for training automatic controversy detection algorithms is sentiment analysis. The relationship between sentiment and controversy is not always apparent, since a topic can spark sentiment while remaining uncontroversial (Awadallah et al. 2012). Nonetheless,

Jang and Allan (2016), and Mejova et al. (2014) have empirically attested the usefulness of sentiment as a feature for controversy detection. In this study, several features are engineered through sentiment analysis of the textual content and comment sections of the newspaper articles.

Controversy research is still in its early stages, and although several browser tools have already been deployed in an attempt to overcome online ideological polarization, confirmation bias and selective exposure, their results were unsatisfactory. To identify disputed topics in online news articles, Ennals et al. (2010) developed the "Dispute Finder" browser extension that compares text fragments in news article to a corpus of disputed claims. Munson et al. (2013) designed a browser widget called "Balancer", which indicates the political partisanship of the weekly and all time reading behaviors of its users. Participants of both studies expressed their enthusiasm for such tools, but the results of "Dispute Finder" were meager since many disputed claims were not accounted for in the corpus, whereas "Balancer" is limited to political news. Most prominent studies on controversy detection in news articles (e.g. Choi et al. 2010; Lourentzou et al. 2015; Mejova et al. 2014) have pursued the development of algorithms that are not restricted to a specific journalistic domain – similar to the objective of this study.

There are three main differences that set this work apart from the aforementioned studies. This research makes use of a unique labeled dataset of news articles from *The Guardian* and it involves the discussion sections corresponding to the articles in feature engineering, as well as data scraped from Facebook and Twitter. This study makes side-to-side performance comparisons between classifiers that take the discussion sections into account and those that only look at metadata and content. Moreover, it compares classifiers which consider social media features of shared news articles to those that do not. The inclusion of such features is a novel approach to automated controversy prediction, which sets this research apart from previous studies.

²See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_controversial_issues

3 Dataset and feature engineering

3.1 Dataset scraping

The dataset utilized in this study consists of news articles from the international online edition of *The Guardian*. All 6,384 articles published on its website between 2016-10-03 and 2016-11-25 were retrieved using a web scraper (The Guardian Open Platform 2016). The analysis of reader comments on the articles is integral to this research. Therefore, only news articles that had received at least five reader comments at the time of scraping were kept, yielding a batch of 4,847 articles.

3.2 Crowdsourcing

The 4,847 articles in the dataset went through six crowdsourcing coding sessions (Timmermans et al. 2017). The annotators, who were not controversy specialists, were asked six yes-no questions after being presented with the web title and first paragraph of an article, as well as five randomly selected comments to it. The single relevant question for this study was whether the article’s main topic is controversial, irrespective of the way in which the news is presented (see Figure 1). The annotators’ responses are transformed into binary controversy labels through executing a majority vote. In the case of a draw, the article is labeled as controversial because the disagreement about the controversy could be regarded as a meta-controversy. This decision leads to 50.3% of the articles in the dataset being labeled as controversial. Consistent agreement on the controversy was rare: in only 11.8% and 4.9% of the cases did the annotators unanimously agree to label the article as uncontroversial or controversial, respectively (see Figure 2). The fact that many of the binary labels are borderline cases, impedes classifiers from reaching high accuracy and F_1 scores. The accumulation of additional articles and more annotations from extra crowdsourcing sessions would reduce this problem, both of which this study cannot provide due to practical constraints.

Two other restrictions to this research arise from analyzing the crowdsourcing data. Firstly, all annotators came from Western, English-speaking countries (see Table 1) and *The Guardian* is a British newspaper. Therefore the controversy labels may

have been subject to cultural bias (Douglas 1978). Secondly, the quality of human crowdsourcing annotations is hard to judge (Aroyo and Welty 2014). The average completion time of single annotations is 64.8 seconds, with a standard deviation of 45.43 seconds. The completion time of 0.45% of the annotations was less than 10 seconds, and in 7.41% of the cases the annotator took longer than 4 minutes (see Figure 3). Some people may have quickly clicked through, while others probably did other tasks in between opening the survey and submitting it. By timing how long it took three people to each annotate 50 articles with full concentration, it was gauged that a reliable assessment takes about 25-40 seconds per article. Although on average the completion times seem plausible, the accumulation of more crowdsourcing data would mitigate the effect of indifferent annotators, resulting in a less noisy dataset.

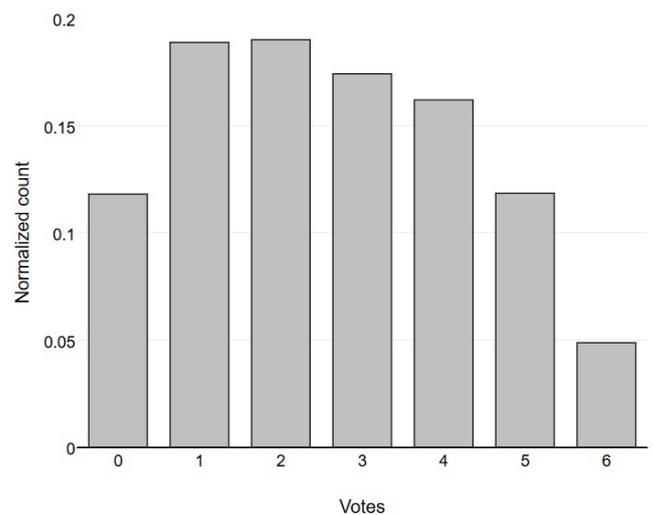


Figure 2: The distribution of the crowdsourcing annotation controversy votes.

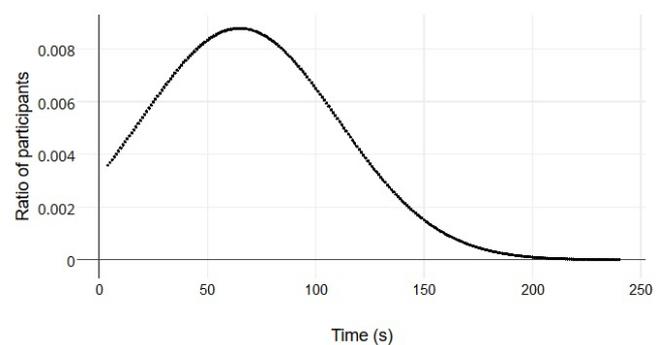


Figure 3: Time distribution of the crowdsourcing survey completion time.

3.3 Data preprocessing

The scraped web elements relevant to this research are: the content, web title and comment section corresponding to the article, and the section in which the article was published. To enable feature selection, these web elements are merged into a single data frame with the controversy labels. As a first step in preprocessing, the newspaper section names are converted to integers such that they are interpretable for a machine classifier. The articles in the dataset were published in 43 different sections of *The Guardian*, unequally distributed (see Figure 4). Secondly, the sum of comments per article is separately stored in the data frame. More than 50% of the articles received less than 150 comments, and 70 articles drew over 4,000 comments, with a maximum of 19,776 (see Figure 5). After preprocessing, the data frame is workable for feature extracting.

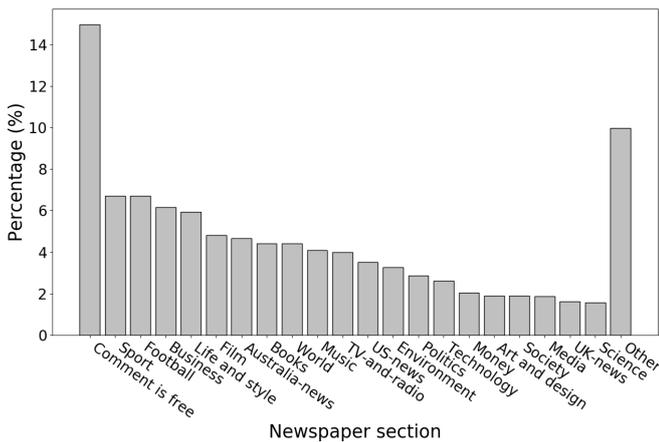


Figure 4: The distribution of the newspaper section count. Sections constituting less than 1.5% of the dataset are grouped under "Other".

3.4 Model features

This section defines the feature space used for the controversy prediction classifiers that are developed in this research. The features can be categorized into six groups: *Metadata*, *Discussion*, *Linguistic*, *Sentiment*, *Lexical*, and *Social media* (see Table 2).

3.4.1 Metadata

The only metadata presumed to potentially be a predictor of controversy is the section of the newspaper under which the article was published. This feature originated from the preprocessing of the dataset.

3.4.2 Discussion

The *Discussion* class encompasses four features. Firstly, comments on articles on *The Guardian's* website which do not fit its community standards are deleted by moderators (Community standards and participation guidelines 2009). This study hypothesizes that controversial articles prompt heated debates, which are more likely to spark foul language use and ad hominem attacks in their comment sections than uncontroversial articles. Therefore, the study conjectures a correlation between a high percentage of deleted comments and controversy, and installs the fraction of moderated comments as a feature. Additionally, the portion of comments that are replies and the percentage of comments that have responses from other users are employed as *Discussion* features in this study. Referrals to other commenters has been adopted as a feature for controversy detection in various other studies as well, albeit devised in different ways compared to this research because they were applied to Twitter (Chimmalgi 2013; Mishne and Glance 2006). Besides those features, the *Discussion* category includes the number of comments on an article, as previously adopted by Chimmalgi (2013).

3.4.3 Linguistic

The present work assumes a relationship between inquisition and controversy, and anticipates that commenters that disagree with the article or previous comments will need more words to justify their counterarguments. Thereupon, the features within the category *Linguistic* are the average comment length (Mishne and Glance 2006) and the fraction of comments that contain at least one question mark (Popescu and Pennacchiotti 2010).

Type	Description
Metadata	
MD-NEW-SEC	Newspaper section under which the article was published
Discussion	
DIS-NUM-CMTS	Number of comments on the article
DIS-FRAC-REM-CMTS	Fraction of comments removed by <i>The Guardian's</i> moderators
DIS-FRAC-REPLS	Fraction of comments that are replies to other comments
DIS-FRAC-REPLD-TO	Fraction of comments that received replies
Linguistic	
LI-AV-LEN-CMTS	Average length of comments in the comment section
LI-FRAC-CMTS-Q	Fraction of comments containing at least one question
Sentiment	
SENT-CONTENT	Sentiment score of the article content
SENT-TITLE	Sentiment score of the article title
SENT-CMTS-POS	Fraction of comments with a positive compound sentiment score
SENT-CMTS-NEG	Fraction of comments with a negative compound sentiment score
SENT-CMTS-NEU	Fraction of comments with a neutral compound sentiment score
SENT-CMTS-OVERALL	Overall sentiment score of comments in the comment section: $\frac{(\text{tot pos sent} + \text{tot neg sent}) - \text{no. neu cmts}}{\text{tot no. cmts}}$
Lexical	
LEX-CL-CONTENT	TF-IDF score of article content using the <i>Lexicon of Controversial Words</i>
LEX-CL-TITLE	TF-IDF score of article title using the <i>Lexicon of Controversial Words</i>
LEX-CL-CMTS	TF-IDF score of comments using the <i>Lexicon of Controversial Words</i>
LEX-NCL-CONTENT	TF-IDF score of article content using the <i>Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words</i>
LEX-NCL-TITLE	TF-IDF score of article title using the <i>Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words</i>
LEX-NCL-CMTS	TF-IDF score of comments using the <i>Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words</i>
LEX-LOCI-CS	Sum of cosine similarity scores greater than 0.07, between article content and topics listed on Wikipedia's <i>List of Controversial Issues</i> (LOCI)
LEX-LOCI-CONTENT	TF-IDF score of article content using the LOCI lexicon
LEX-LOCI-TITLE	TF-IDF score of article title using the LOCI lexicon
LEX-LOCI-CMTS	TF-IDF score of comments using the LOCI lexicon
Social media	
a) Post	
SMP-FB	Indicates whether article was posted on Facebook by <i>The Guardian</i>
SMP-TWI	Indicates whether article was tweeted on Twitter by <i>The Guardian</i>
b) Facebook	
FB-TOT-EMOT	The total number of Facebook emoticons attached to the posted article
FB-LIKE	Ratio of Facebook "likes" on posted article
FB-LOVE	Ratio of Facebook "loves" on posted article
FB-WOW	Ratio of Facebook "wows" on posted article
FB-HAHA	Ratio of Facebook "hahas" on posted article
FB-SAD	Ratio of Facebook "sads" on posted article
FB-ANGRY	Ratio of Facebook "angries" on posted article
FB-THANKFUL	Ratio of Facebook "thankfuls" on posted article
FB-NUM-CMTS	Total number of Facebook comments on posted article
FB-NUM-SHARES	Number of times posted article was shared on Facebook
c) Twitter	
TWI-RETWEETS	Number of retweets of tweeted article
TWI-REPLIES	Number of replies on tweeted article
TWI-LIKES	Number of likes on tweeted article

Table 2: The feature space used for the models. See Appendix A for the *Lexicon of Controversial Words*, the *Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words*, and the *LOCI Lexicon*.

Step 1: Read the following article and the comments about it

A luxury care home for people with dementia – but at what price?

Chelsea Court Place describes itself as the UK's first luxury purpose-built and designed residential and daycare home for people with Alzheimer's and dementia. Inside the building on the exclusive King's Road in London, it feels more like a private members' club or a five-star hotel than a care home, with its thick carpets, tasteful paintings and wall hangings.

There are none of the familiar smells of toilets, disinfectant or overcooked food that often rudely greet visitors to such establishments. Here, there is a private cinema, luxury spa and treatment rooms, and a library stocked with sumptuous coffee-table volumes. Its 15 elegantly furnished en suite "apartments" are set in a horseshoe shape around the central dining area, where a restaurant and 24-hour cafe for residents and visitors offer tailored food choices to suit individual nutritional needs.

Comments

- ▮ No thanks.
- ▮ More specialist, accessible, dementia care is needed. As long as they provide the level of care to justify the fee then I'm sure this place will be successful.
- ▮ Are these the new Health Services ... affordable only to BoJo, Govo and Fromage ...wow
- ▮ Hear, hear! Properly funded care. And selecting carers for empathy and providing good training is the best start.
- ▮ Granny farming is very profitable.

Step 2: Give us your personal perspective on what you have read:

6. This topic is CONTROVERSIAL

Yes, I believe this topic is controversial

No, I **DON'T** believe this topic is controversial

Figure 1: An example question of the crowdsourcing survey.

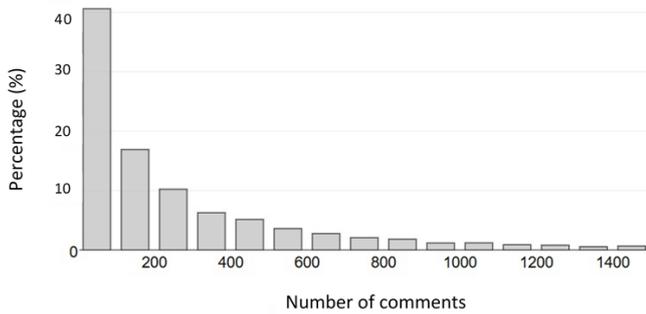


Figure 5: Distribution of the number of comments drawn per article.

3.4.4 Sentiment

The interrelation of controversy and sentiment has been verified empirically (Jang and Allan 2016; Mejova et al. 2014) and numerous studies have exploited the engineering of sentiment features for controversy detection tasks (Chimmalgi 2013; Choi et al. 2010; Mishne and Glance 2006; Popescu and Pennacchiotti 2010). In this study, *Sentiment* features are engineered using a sentiment analysis tool called "vaderSentiment", which is specifically designed for analyzing user-generated social media texts and discussions (Hutto and Gilbert 2014).. In this research, the *Sentiment* category spans the compound sentiment scores of the content and the title of the article, the fractions of positive, negative and neutral comments, and an overall sentiment score of the comment section. The overall sentiment score is defined as the sum of the total positive and negative sentiments times the fraction of neutral comments.

3.4.5 Lexical

The features that belong to the penultimate category, *Lexical*, are constructed through textual similarity comparisons between various controversy lexicons and the article's content and comment section. Lexicons of controversial words and uncontroversial words are composed in this study by combining the controversy lexicons established by Mejova et al. and Roitman et al. (Mejova et al. 2014, Roitman et al. 2016). Roitman et al. (2016) contrived two controversy lexicons. After the removal of duplicates, these two lexicons contain a combined total of 82 words. The first lexicon of Roitman et al. was established by utilizing a seed list of controversy related words such

as "criticism" and "dispute", which was complemented with synonyms of those words found in a thesaurus. Their second lexicon consists of "conjugated that" expressions (e.g. "recognize that", "confirm that"), and was constructed in a similar way namely, through finding synonyms of such expressions.

The lexicons aggregated by Mejova et al. (2014) were formed through crowdsourcing. In their crowdsourcing task, participants annotated a list of the top 2,000 most frequently used nontrivial single-word nouns that were obtained from a corpus of millions of U.S. news articles. A balanced set of 94 words upon which a preliminary group of annotators unanimously agreed, was set as a golden standard. Their final lexicons consist of words for which at least a 60% agreement was reached, generating lexicons of 145 strongly controversial words, 45 somewhat controversial words, and 272 uncontroversial words. Merged, the controversy lexicons of Roitman et al., and Mejova et al.'s lexicons of strongly controversial and somewhat controversial words compound to 270 unique words, which forms the *Lexicon of Controversial Words* (see Appendix A). Mejova et al.'s list of uncontroversial words, in its original form, constitutes the *Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words* (see Appendix A). The Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF) scores between those lexicons and the title, content, and comment section comprise six *Lexical* features.

In addition, this research establishes a lexicon of controversial topics by distilling topics from the *List of controversial issues* (see Appendix A). Wikipedia's *List of controversial issues* has repeatedly been advocated as an effective lexicon for feature engineering (Chimmalgi 2013; Nobata et al. 2016; Popescu and Pennacchiotti 2010). In this study, the issues on the list are converted to a lexicon of n-gram words to create four additional features. The TF-IDF comparison scores between those n-grams and the title, content, and comments of the news articles in the dataset form three distinct features. The aggregated cosine similarity scores between the article's content and the topics listed on the *List of controversial issues* make up the final *Lexical* feature. Per article, only the terms that scored 0.07 or higher on cosine similarity are considered, since it was empirically observed that lesser scores do not reveal any useful information.

	Full dataset (4,847 art.)	Facebook (1,003 art.)	Twitter (1,331 art.)
all feat.	Metadata, Discussion, Linguistic, Sentiment, Lexical, Post	Metadata, Discussion, Linguistic, Sentiment, Lexical	Metadata, Discussion, Linguistic, Sentiment, Lexical
soc. med. features	n.a.	Facebook	Twitter
all except soc. med. features	n.a.	Metadata, Discussion, Linguistic, Sentiment, Lexical	Metadata, Discussion, Linguistic, Sentiment, Lexical
all except social media and discussion features	Metadata, Sentiment[SENT-CONTENT, SENT-TITLE], Lexical[LEX-CL-CONTENT, LEX-CL-TITLE, LEX-NCL-CONTENT, LEX-NCL-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CONTENT, LEX-LOCI-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CS], Post	Metadata, Sentiment[SENT-CONTENT, SENT-TITLE], Lexical[LEX-CL-CONTENT, LEX-CL-TITLE, LEX-NCL-CONTENT, LEX-NCL-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CONTENT, LEX-LOCI-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CS], Facebook	Metadata, Sentiment[SENT-CONTENT, SENT-TITLE], Lexical[LEX-CL-CONTENT, LEX-CL-TITLE, LEX-NCL-CONTENT, LEX-NCL-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CONTENT, LEX-LOCI-TITLE, LEX-LOCI-CS], Twitter

Table 3: The various feature subspaces for the three subsets of *The Guardian* articles. The feature subspaces include: all features, social media features, all features except social media features, and all features except social media features and features related to the discussions. See Table 2 for the the particulars of the features.

3.4.6 Social media

The final feature class is *Social media*, which contains three sub-classes: *Post*, *Facebook*, and *Twitter*. The *Post* class contains two features: whether or not *The Guardian* posted the article on Facebook, and whether or not it posted the article on Twitter. If the article was posted on Facebook, a web scraper is used to extract a series of features from the Facebook post. Those include the number of times the Facebook post was shared by other Facebook users, the number of comments the post received, the total number of emoticons attached to the post, and the separate ratios of the different types of emoticons that were attached to the Facebook post. Due to the intricacies of Facebook’s website, and limitations to its free user API (Graph API 2014), the retrieval of the textual content of comments lies outside the scope of this study. In case that *The Guardian* shared the article on their Twitter page, a distinct web scraper is used to extract *Twitter* features. Those features consist of the number of Twitter likes, the number of replies, and the number of times the post was retweeted.

Dataset	Size			Incidence rate
	Total	Training	Testing	
Full	4,847	3,877	1,950	50.3%
Facebook	1,003	802	201	57.3%
Twitter	1,331	1,064	267	59.4%

Table 4: The size and controversy incidence rate of the training sets associated with the full dataset and the social media subsets.

4 Experimental setup

4.1 Dataset splits

In the present work, two fundamental analyses are carried out to measure the performance of several news article controversy prediction feature spaces. Firstly, an analysis of the involvement of features from the comment sections of the articles is performed. Secondly, this study investigates the merits of extracting features from Facebook and Twitter posts of articles shared on those social media platforms by *The Guardian*. Out of the 4,847 ar-

ticles in the dataset, *The Guardian* posted 1,003 articles on Facebook, and 1,331 articles on Twitter. To determine the impact of involving social media features, various estimators are trained on those data subsets. In addition, other classifiers are trained on different subspaces of the feature space described in Table 2 to measure the effectiveness of employing features from the comment sections for news article controversy prediction (see Table 3).

All three news article subsets are split up into a training set (80%) and a testing set (20%), using a random seed to guarantee the same split over multiple runs. About half of the news articles in the full dataset are labeled as controversial, whereas the controversy incidence rates of both the Facebook subset and the Twitter subset were higher (see Table 4). It therefore seems that *The Guardian* inclines towards sharing controversial news items on its social media platforms, rather than uncontroversial ones.

4.2 Baselines

Whereas most state-of-practice controversy prediction algorithms are either unsupervised or weakly supervised (e.g. Choi et al. 2010; Dori-Hacohen and Allan 2015; Jang et al. 2016; Mejova et al. 2014), the classifiers described in this research are entirely supervised; hence, no acknowledged external baseline algorithm exists. In consequence, two types of baselines are constructed in order to measure the significance of the classifiers designed in this study.

Firstly, a baseline is created to demonstrate that the results presented in this thesis are not arbitrary. Using the same feature spaces, the outputs of the optimal estimators trained on the training set corresponding to the full labeled dataset of 4,847 articles will be juxtaposed to the outputs of random counterparts. Randomness is ensured by replacing the crowdsourcing controversy labels by randomly generated labels, using the 50.3% controversy incidence rate of the original training set (see Table 4), hereby following the the practice of Dori-Hacohen et al. (2015), who also adopted random label baselines.

Besides the random labels baseline, this study constructs TF-IDF feature spaces in order to provide the means for more insightful and challenging comparisons. Two types of TF-IDF feature spaces are designed to exemplify the positive influence of in-

volving discussion features on controversy prediction. One is constructed by exclusively using the terms occurring in the content of the articles, and a second type encompasses words from the comment sections as well. To ensure that the classifiers do not gain any *a priori* knowledge about the data enclosed in the testing set, the TF-IDF baseline feature spaces only contain terms used in the articles belonging to the training sets. The associated training sets of the full dataset of 4,847 articles, the Facebook subset, and the Twitter subset, are used to create six separate TF-IDF baseline feature spaces that are represented by m by n matrices. Per data subset two TF-IDF feature spaces are constructed, one only considering the content of the articles in the training set, and the other also considering the comment sections. In the matrix representation of the baselines that only consider content, m signifies the number of unique terms occurring in the content of the articles in the baseline's associated training set. The number of articles that it contains is symbolized by n . For the TF-IDF baselines that include the comment sections as well, m represents the unique words occurring in both the content and the comment sections of the articles in the training set, and the definition of n is left unmodified. The TF-IDF baseline feature spaces are condensed to increase their effectiveness and workability.

To determine the most informative terms, semantically inconsequential words (i.e. stop words, non-English words, and logographically incorrect words) are filtered out. Afterwards, a chi-squared test is applied to reduce the feature space to the 300 most significant terms, since the results of preliminary tests showed that this number generally leads to optimal TF-IDF feature spaces. The baseline TF-IDF feature spaces will be employed to demonstrate the significance of the performance of the best classifiers trained on features from the feature space depicted in Table 2. However, before being able to analyze the results of the best classifiers, the next subsection discloses the methods applied to find them, as well as the feature selection procedure.

4.3 Classifiers

It has been recognized that SVM classifiers with linear kernels are effective methods in a myriad of text classification tasks (Zhang and Oles 2001).

However, since not all of the data in this study is textual, experiments have been carried out with multiple classifiers. In the preliminary stages of this research, Random Forest (RF) (Breiman 2001) and Support Vector Machine (SVM) classifiers with a linear kernel (Smola 2004) yielded comparable results in news article controversy prediction for all three data subsets mentioned in Table 3. In this study, a comparable method of fine-tuning hyperparameters and feature selection is adopted for both types of classifiers.

In the case of RF estimators, preliminary results showed that it is preferable not to scale features before classification. For SVM estimators, however, it was found that normalizing the features in advance yields better results. All features are vectors that can be normalized by applying the following min-max normalization transformation (where X signifies a feature):

$$X_{normalized} = \frac{X - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}}$$

Feature selection is imperative for both the RF and SVM estimators to perform well, since the feature space engineered in this study has not been evaluated before. Preliminary tests using rough grid searches were conducted to find estimators that perform fairly well on all of the data subset and feature subspace combinations represented in Table 3. Those estimators are iteratively applied to find the combinations of features that optimize performance (Guyon et al. 2002). The number of iterations in this procedure equals the length of the initial feature space, such that every possible feature combination is exhausted. Additionally, for the RF classifiers, a variance threshold was applied to the feature spaces prior to iterative feature selection. It was empirically determined that a variance threshold of $0.98 \cdot 0.02$ is optimal; higher thresholds generally led to the estimator discarding all features.

For all resulting ideal feature combinations, a hyperparameter grid is formed around the hyperparameters of the estimator that was found dur-

ing the preliminary testing phase. A grid search is executed on this hyperparameter grid to find the optimal estimator. The search returns the estimator that obtains the highest mean accuracy over 10 cross-validation folds of the training set, hereby preventing the optimal estimator from overfitting on the training or testing set.

Ultimately, all optimal classifiers are applied to their associated testing set, such that their prediction performance can be measured. The results of the classifiers are analyzed and compared in the following section.

5 Results and analysis

The classification experiments in this study provide answers to the following three questions: for controversy detection, (1) how important are the features obtained from the discussion sections in *The Guardian*, (2) how important are the Facebook features, and (3) how important are the Twitter features? The performances of diverse classifiers are evaluated in terms of their precision, recall and F_1 score. It is not possible to provide rigorous statistical confidence scores based on those one-dimensional metrics, which is a common problem in machine learning classification performance evaluation (Goutte and Gaussier 2005; Yeh 2000). Nonetheless, the metrics show that, for all three data subsets, the best classifiers applied to subspaces of the feature space depicted in Table 2 consistently outperform classifiers applied to the TF-IDF baseline feature spaces.

As mentioned before, the controversy incidence rates of the Facebook and Twitter subsets are higher than the incidence rate of the full dataset of *The Guardian* articles. Besides, the size of the subsets is much smaller: 1,003 articles on Facebook and 1,331 articles on Twitter, versus 4,847 articles in the full dataset. Therefore, the experimental results of the RF and SVM estimators classifying the social media subsets are evaluated in separate analyses.

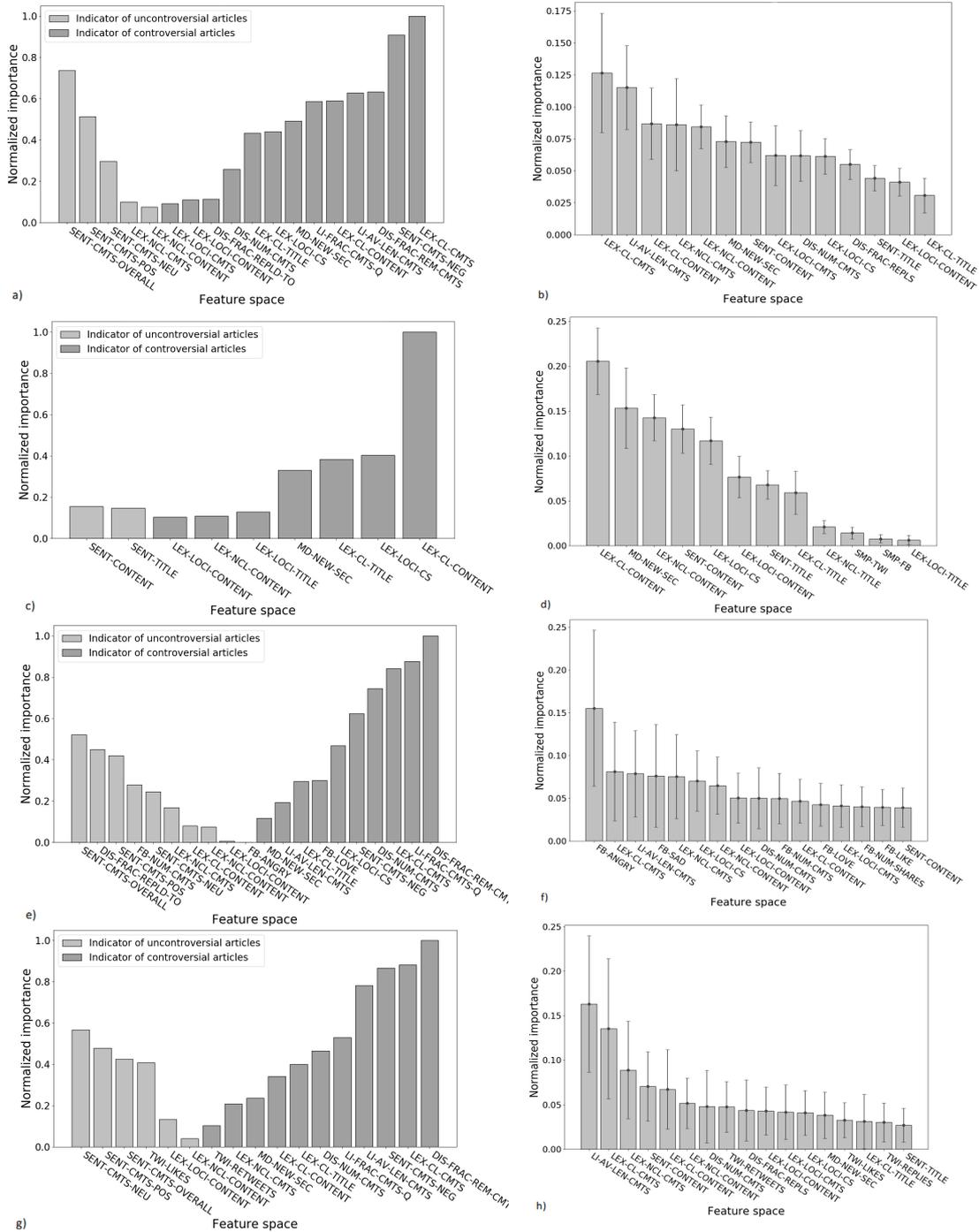


Table 7: The normalized importance of the features after selection, for the following classification tests: the SVM **a)** and RF **b)** classifiers trained on the full dataset of 4,847 articles with access to all features except *Facebook* and *Twitter* features; the SVM **c)** and RF **d)** classifiers trained on the full dataset with access to all features except *Social Media* and discussion features; the SVM **e)** and RF **f)** classifiers trained on the subset of 1,003 articles that were posted on Facebook, with access to all features except *Post* and *Twitter* features; the SVM **g)** and RF **h)** classifiers trained on the Twitter articles subset with access to all features except *Post* and *Facebook* features. Consult Table 2 for the specifics of the features.

Labels	Feature space	Clf.	Results			
			P	R	F1	
CS	All exc. fb & tw	SVM	75.4	75.4	75.4	
	All exc. fb & tw	RF	76.6	76.6	76.6	
	All exc. cmts, fb & tw	SVM	70.7	70.6	70.6	
	All exc. cmts, fb & tw	RF	74.9	74.8	74.8	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	SVM	71.1	71.1	71.0	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	RF	75.5	75.1	75.0	
	TF-IDF _{content}	SVM	60.9	60.5	60.1	
	TF-IDF _{content}	RF	63.0	62.7	62.4	
	Rand ₅₀	All exc. fb & tw	SVM	51.9	51.1	48.5
		All exc. fb & tw	RF	49.8	49.7	49.6
TF-IDF _{comments+content}		SVM	50.5	50.3	47.3	
TF-IDF _{commments,content}		RF	50.3	50.2	50.1	

Table 5: Controversy detection results on all 4,847 articles, expressed in terms of precision, recall and F₁ score. The numbers are multiplied by 100 and the items in bold are the highest in their column. The RF classifier using the crowdsourcing labels and the unrestrained feature space achieves the best performance for all metrics. Note: "fb" = Facebook, and "tw" = Twitter.

Labels	Feature space	Clf.	Results			
			P	R	F1	
CS	All exc. post & tw	SVM	77.7	77.6	77.4	
	All exc. post & tw	RF	76.9	76.6	76.3	
	Facebook	SVM	67.4	66.7	66.9	
	Facebook	RF	70.7	70.6	70.3	
	All exc. soc. med.	SVM	72.6	72.6	72.6	
	All exc. soc. med.	RF	73.6	73.6	73.4	
	All exc. cmts. & soc. med.	SVM	70.6	70.6	70.4	
	All exc. cmts. & soc. med.	RF	73.3	73.1	72.8	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	SVM	65.7	65.7	65.7	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	RF	71.7	71.6	71.3	
	TF-IDF _{content}	SVM	59.0	59.2	57.0	
	TF-IDF _{content}	RF	61.1	59.7	55.0	
	Rand ₅₀	All exc. post & tw	SVM	51.6	52.2	51.9
	Rand ₅₀	All exc. post & tw	RF	53.0	56.2	52.8

Table 6: The results for controversy prediction on the subset of 1,003 articles that *The Guardian* posted on Facebook, expressed in terms of precision, recall and F₁ score. The numbers are multiplied by 100 and the items in bold are the highest in their column. The SVM classifier using the unrestrained feature space achieves the best performance for all metrics. Note: "tw" = Twitter.

Labels	Feature space	Clf.	Results			
			P	R	F1	
CS	All exc. post & fb	SVM	78.4	78.5	78.1	
	All exc. post & fb	RF	78.4	78.7	78.5	
	Twitter	SVM	68.1	68.9	66.4	
	Twitter	RF	67.2	67.2	67.2	
	All exc. soc. med.	SVM	77.8	77.9	77.8	
	All exc. soc. med.	RF	78.0	78.3	78.1	
	All exc. cmts. & soc. med.	SVM	72.5	73.0	72.6	
	All exc. cmts. & soc. med.	RF	75.3	75.7	75.3	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	SVM	67.1	68.2	67.1	
	TF-IDF _{comments+content}	RF	73.3	73.4	73.3	
	TF-IDF _{content}	SVM	55.3	58.4	55.8	
	TF-IDF _{content}	RF	66.0	67.0	63.5	
	Rand ₅₀	All exc. post & fb	SVM	52.4	54.7	53.0
	Rand ₅₀	All exc. post & fb	RF	58.5	63.7	55.9

Table 8: The results for controversy prediction on the Twitter subset of 1,331 articles, expressed in terms of precision, recall and F_1 . The numbers are multiplied by 100 and the items in bold are the highest in their column. The RF classifier using the unrestrained feature space achieves the best performance for all metrics. Note: "fb" = Facebook

5.1 The importance of discussion features

The performances of the RF and SVM classifiers on the full dataset of 4,847 *The Guardian* articles, applying various feature spaces, are displayed in Table 5. Two baselines are evaluated in this table: randomly assigned labels and optimized TF-IDF feature spaces. From the metrics that are presented in Table 5, four conclusions can be drawn.

The first and most trivial observation is that randomly assigning labels with the same controversy incidence rate as the crowdsourcing labels results in RF and SVM estimators that are unable to classify the articles, both when utilizing the manual feature space engineered in this study and when applying the optimized TF-IDF baseline feature space. This demonstrates that the other results portrayed in Table 5 are not arbitrary. Secondly, all classification methods based on the feature space engineered in this study outperform their optimized TF-IDF feature space counterparts. Additionally, the results depicted in Table 5 demonstrate the suitability of including discussion features for news article controversy prediction tasks. Both SVM and RF classifiers perform better on all metrics when the search space for feature selection includes features relating to the comment sections. Among the classifiers, the RF estimator applied to the feature space including discussion features performed best on all

metrics, achieving precision, recall and F_1 scores of 76.6. Finally, Table 6 and Table 7 indicate that when features related to the discussion sections are omitted, RF and SVM estimators consistently perform worse on articles posted on Facebook and Twitter.

Figure 6a shows that features related to the comment sections represent the seven most important features for the SVM classifier with a linear kernel. Figure 6b demonstrates that the two most distinctive features for the RF classifiers are also comment section features.

5.2 The importance of Facebook features

The results of the experiments involving the classification of the subset of 1,003 *The Guardian* articles posted on Facebook are displayed in Table 6. The performance of four different feature subspaces are compared: the full feature space excluding the *Post* and *Twitter* features; the *Facebook* features in isolation; the entire feature space excluding *Social media* features; the feature space except *Social media* features and features related to the comments. Additional comparisons are made between these feature subspaces and two baseline TF-IDF feature spaces. One TF-IDF feature space only contains the unique terms of the content of the articles in the training set, and the

other contains both the words in the content and the comment section of the articles (see Table 6).

The SVM and RF classifiers solely applied to the subspace of *Facebook* features, outperform all their TF-IDF baseline analogues, except for the RF classifier applied to the TF-IDF feature space that contains both terms from the article content and comment sections. Moreover, all experiments outperform the random label baselines. The most complete feature space (i.e. the one containing all features except *Post* and *Twitter* features) yields a significant improvement in comparison to all other feature subspaces. An SVM scored best on this most complete feature space, achieving precision, recall and F_1 scores of 77.7, 77.6, and 77.4, respectively (see Table 6). The reason why those scores are higher than the best results of the classifiers applied to the full dataset of 4,847 articles, is most likely the higher controversy incidence rate of the training set of the Facebook data subset. This is evident from the results of the classifiers using feature spaces with randomly assigned labels, namely, the resulting scores are close to the incidence rates. A more complete assessment of this idiosyncrasy will be presented in Section 6.3.

It can be observed from Figures 6e and 6f that the most distinguishing *Facebook* features of the SVM classifier are the number of Facebook comments and the amount of Facebook love emoticons that the posted *The Guardian* article received. For the RF classifier, the most telling Facebook features are $FB-ANGRY$ and $FB-SAD$, and the number of Facebook comments (see Figure 6f). It is curious that the Facebook feature $FB-ANGRY$ is the most important feature overall for the RF classifier (see Figure 6f), whereas $FB-:LOVE$, the most important Facebook feature for the SVM classifier, is the 8th most important feature overall for the SVM classifier (see Figure 6e) and only makes up the 10th most significant feature for the RF classifier.

5.3 The importance of Twitter features

The experiments conducted on the subset of 1,331 articles that *The Guardian* posted on Twitter, are similar to the ones performed on the Facebook articles subset. The baseline comparisons are identical, and the feature subspaces for comparison are: the full feature space excluding the *Post* and *Facebook* features; the *Twitter* features in isolation; the entire feature space except *Social me-*

dia features; the feature space excluding the *Social media* features and features related to the discussion sections.

The *Twitter* features are less cogent for controversy detection than the Facebook features. In isolation, the *Twitter* feature subspace does not improve SVM and RF classification in comparison to their TF-IDF baseline analogues (see Table 7). The best performing classifier on the Twitter subset is an RF trained on the entire feature space excluding *Post* and *Facebook* features, yielding a precision of 78.4, a recall of 78.7, and an F_1 of 78.5 (see Table 7). However, this RF does not substantially improve over an RF applied to the feature space excluding *Twitter* features, since the latter achieves an F_1 score of 78.1 (see Table 7). These scores surpass the results of the classifiers predicting controversy on the full dataset, which, just as the higher scores for the Facebook subset, is due to a higher incidence of controversial articles the training set (see Section 6.3).

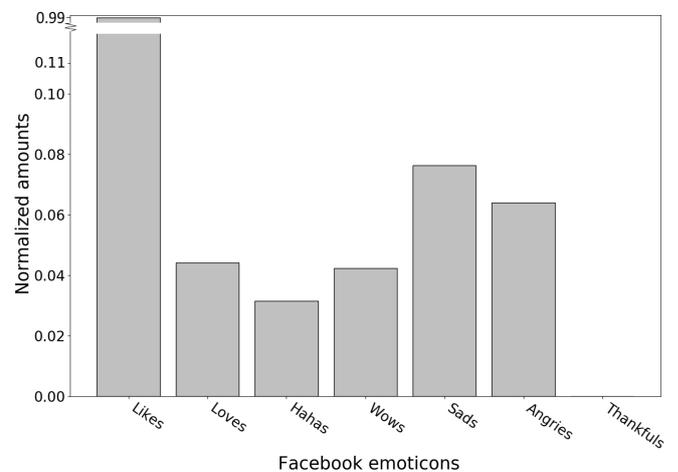


Figure 6: Distribution of the emoticons expressed on the articles posted on Facebook by *The Guardian*.

The *Twitter* feature class includes three features: the number of Twitter likes, the number of retweets, and the number of Twitter replies. Figure 6h reveals that all three features had modest positive effect on the classification of the best performing RF on the Twitter data subset. The best SVM classifier only selected the number of Twitter likes and the number of retweets (see Figure 6g).

5.4 Feature importance

5.4.1 Comment section features

Multiple inferences can be made about the importance of the features described in Table 2. Figure 6 evidently shows that some features are discriminative for both linear SVM classifiers and RF classifiers, whereas others are only suitable for one of the two. The features `DIS-FRAC-REM`, `DIS-FRAC-CMTS-Q`, `SENT-CMTS-POS`, `SENT-CONTENT`, and `SENT-TITLE` solely contribute to the performance of linear SVM classifiers, whereas `SENT-CMTS-NEG`, `SENT-CMTS-NEU`, and `SENT-CMTS-OVERALL` are exclusively effective for the RF classifiers. For the classification of the full dataset of 4,847 articles, the features `LEX-LOCI-TITLE`, `LEX-NCL-TITLE`, `SMP-FB`, and `SMP-TWI` are of minimal significance, or of no importance at all, for both types of classifiers. The features impacting both SVM classifiers and RF classifiers are `LEX-CL-CMTS` and `LI-AV-LEN-CMTS`, considering the overlap of the top five features of Figures 6a,b,e,f,g,h. A closer look at Figures 6c and 6d reveals that when the features related to the comment sections in *The Guardian* are left out, `LEX-CL-CONTENT` is the most indicative feature for both the RF classifier and the SVM classifier.

5.4.2 Sentiment features

Figures 6a,c,e,g show that for all data subsets, the sentiment features are the most discriminative for predicting uncontroversial articles; at least for linear SVM classifiers, since RF classifiers do not disclose which specific class each of its features discriminates. The *Sentiment* features display an observable disparity between the RF and SVM classifiers. The SVM classifiers only select *Sentiment* features related to the comment sections, whereas the RF classifiers solely select `SENT-TITLE` and `SENT-CONTENT`. The comment sentiment features support the prediction of uncontroversial articles for linear SVM classifiers; except `SENT-CMTS-NEG`, which is an indicator of controversial articles.

5.4.3 Lexical features

The subfigures of Figure 6 show that, out of the three controversy lexicons, the *Lexicon of Controversial Words* is unanimously the most useful for news article controversy prediction. It is difficult

to discern a notable difference in importance between the features of the *Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words* and the *Lexicon of Controversial Topics*. A curious observation is that none of the title-related *Lexical* features yield any leverage, save for `LEX-CL-TITLE`, which is indicative in all instances except one. Meeting the obvious expectations, the features related to the *Lexicon of Uncontroversial Words* are effective for discriminating the uncontroversial articles, and the ones related to the *Lexicon of Controversial Words* help to distinguish controversial articles (see Figures 6a,c,e,g).

5.4.4 Social media features

On a final note, Figures 6e,f,g,h reveal the impact of *Facebook* and *Twitter* features. The vast majority of Facebook emoticons attached to *The Guardian* articles are "likes" (see Figure 7). However, this is not the most indicative feature. Neither do the features `FB-TOT-EMOT`, `FB-WOW`, `FB-HAHA` and `FB-THANKFUL` improve the controversy prediction. Strikingly, the features `FB-LOVE`, `FB-SAD`, `FB-ANGRY`, `FB-SHARES` and `FB-NUM-CMTS` contribute most to improving the performance of the RF and SVM estimators classifying the Facebook data subset. Out of those five *Facebook* features, the most significant ones are on average `FB-NUM-CMTS` and `FB-LOVE`. For Twitter, the features that seem to have a reasonable impact are `TWI-RETWEETS` and `TWI-LIKES`; `TWI-REPLIES` does not notably contribute.

6 Discussion and limitations

6.1 Comment section features

Even though processing text in comments is complex because it is mostly written in an informal format, it has been pointed out in previous research that extracting features from public discussions on Twitter is instrumental in controversy detection (Addawood and Bashir 2016; Chimmalgi 2013; Mishne and Glance 2006). In contribution to the field of controversy research, the findings of this thesis suggest that including features from newspaper comment sections yields an improvement in the detection of controversial news articles. An RF estimator applied to the most complete feature subset including features related to the comment sections achieves an F_1 score of 76.6 in classifying news articles in the dataset of 4,847

The Guardian articles (see Table 5). The highest attained F_1 score of a similar classifier applied to a feature space that does not contain features related to the articles' comment sections is only 74.8.

6.2 Facebook and Twitter feature extraction

Additionally, the experiments on the subset of articles that *The Guardian* posted on Facebook show that including *Facebook* features contributes to controversy detection as well, achieving a maximum F_1 score of 77.4 versus 73.4 for a classifier not employing features in this class (see Table 6). Albeit minimal, including *Twitter* features also leads to an improvement in F_1 score: 78.4 in comparison to 78.0 (see Table 7). Therefore, this thesis shows that classifiers with a feature space containing *Facebook* or *Twitter* features applied to data subsets that only involve news articles shared on those social media platforms, is indeed advantageous.

One of the main hurdles to overcome with the incorporation of social media features is that newspapers like *The Guardian* generally do not post all their articles on their social media pages. Currently, such classifiers cannot be applied to the whole dataset of news articles, which poses an impractical restriction to the use of social media features. Although this study indicates the potential of incorporating social media features, alternative approaches have to be explored in future research to make such inclusions scalable to more complete datasets. Extracting the main topic(s) of the news articles and finding the discussions around those topic on social media to engineer novel features would be a fruitful research area. Multiple approaches to topic extraction from news articles have been explored already (Bun and Ishizuka 2002; Lee and Kim 2008), and several studies have been conducted on topic modeling in Twitter and mapping Twitter topic networks (Hong and Davison 2010; Smith et al. 2014). These could possibly be combined in an attempt to overcome the problem that not all newspaper articles are shared on Facebook and Twitter. Another limitation of this study is the impossibility to consider the text of Facebook and Twitter comments; hence, it is unknown whether features can be extracted from those texts that positively contribute to controversy prediction. Because of the positive effects of the features ex-

tracted from the text of the articles' comment sections, this study expects that the inclusion of features related to the text of social media comments also is advantageous. To establish whether a textual analysis of social media comments is worthwhile, future research needs to first undertake the creation of more advanced social media scrapers that enable comment scraping.

6.3 Comparing data subset results

The best precision, recall and F_1 scores achieved on the complete dataset are considered to be the most legitimate results of this study. The fact that higher scores are achieved in classifying the social media subset paints a misleading view. The higher scores do not imply that the classifiers perform better, as the results of the random labels baselines (see Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7) correlate with the incidence rates of the training sets (see Table 4). This signifies that the results of the best performing classifiers on the social media subsets are higher because they encompass more controversial than uncontroversial articles. The relative differences between the random label classification scores and the highest results for the optimal feature space are less apparent for the social media subsets than for the full dataset. This indicates that the higher results on the social media subsets are not a consequence of the classifier, but of the class imbalance. Therefore those higher scores are not legitimate, and is it better to regard the results of the classification of the full dataset as the main results of this study.

6.4 Evaluating features from previous research

The results in this study serve as a consolidation of the claim that there exists a relationship between controversy and sentiment (Jang and Allan 2016; Mejova et al. 2014), and they demonstrate the applicability of the controversy lexicons devised by Roitman et al. (2016) and Mejova et al. (2014). As suggested in other research (e.g. Chimalgi 2013; Choi et al 2010), this paper confirms that Wikipedia's *List of controversial issues* can reveal information about controversial news articles, albeit rather superficial in this case.

There are several possible explanations for why the *Lexical* features associated with the *List of con-*

controversial issues and the cosine similarity comparisons between the list and the article content contribute poorly to the performance of the classifiers in this study. It may be that the list contains too many topics for the magnitude of the dataset used in this study; the *LOCI Lexicon* contains 1,041 unweighted issues. However, since the topics in the lexicon are unweighted, it is not obvious which issues could be dropped. Another approach would be to assign weights to the topics, but this could be equally complex because of the temporal aspect of controversy, which was not considered in this study. If the debate about the *List of controversial issues* is to be moved forward, multiple approaches should be tested.

6.5 Suggestions for future research and limitations

Although the experiments in this research demonstrate that articles can be classified based on controversy with a reasonable performance, they do not specify the magnitude of controversy, nor do they assess the way in which the news was framed. Despite the fact that newspapers such as *The Guardian* generally abide by editorial codes (The Guardian's Editorial Code 2015), news sources frame their news items in different ways, with various levels of subjectivity (Groseclose and Milyo 2005; Mejova et al. 2014; Scheufele 1999). Echo chambers only form when a reader receives one-sided information about multi-faceted news issues (Pariser 2011; Resnick et al. 2013). Thus, in order to prevent the formation of echo chambers, controversy detection systems need to be equipped with software that can assess the subjectivity of news sources, and the way in which the news is conveyed.

A natural progression of this work is to generalize the results that it presents. Although the experimental setup in this study is not constrained to a specific journalistic domain, the utilized dataset solely contained articles from *The Guardian*. The inclusion of news articles from different news outlets was beyond the scope of this research but is worth exploring. The incorporation of news articles from various news sources would allow for inter-source comparisons, which could provide insights in, for example, the different formats in which news is presented and different levels of subjectivity. Besides the inclusion of multiple news sources, gathering

more crowdsourcing annotations would reduce the noise in the data. The majority of the news articles in the *The Guardian* dataset received mixed annotations, which further complicates this controversy prediction task; it most likely led to an unfavorable upper-bound for classifier performance. The collection of more annotations per article would reduce the number of unclassifiable border cases, which would result in a clearer distinction between controversial and uncontroversial news articles.

7 Conclusion

The contribution of this study to the field of automated controversy detection in news articles is twofold. On the one hand, it offers a succinct performance comparison between classifiers trained with feature spaces including comment section features and classifiers that do not apply such features. On the other hand, it juxtaposes classifiers applied to feature spaces with and without *Facebook* and *Twitter* features to assess the impact of such features. The experimental results involved RF and linear SVM classifiers and demonstrate the usefulness of incorporating features related to readers' discussions for the detection of controversial news articles. Moreover, this thesis highlights the potential of *Facebook* and *Twitter* features for such tasks and it demonstrates that the optimal subspaces of the features depicted in Table 2 consistently outperform their optimized TF-IDF baselines counterparts.

The findings of this study enhance our understanding of the relationship between discussions and controversy, and could be vital in countering the echo chamber effect. However, more research into the frame in which articles appear and the identification of news outlet subjectivity are required before such tasks can be accomplished. Another important issue to consider is the generalizability of automated controversy detections in news articles. Considerably more news outlets will have to be included in future research and additional crowdsourcing annotations need to be collected, to construct systems that can achieve more objective, consistent and more rigorous results. Nevertheless, the first strides in supervised controversy detections are made by the construction of a classifier that can confidently predict controversial articles in *The Guardian* with an overall F_1 score of 76.6.

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Social Sciences

The Adult Child Soldier:

Critical Reflections on the ICC's Case Against Dominic Ongwen and the Moral
Development of Child Soldiers

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Who can ever know what path to walk on when all of them are either crooked or broken?
One just has to walk.

- Ishmael Beah, *Radiance of Tomorrow*, 2014

Abstract

This thesis addresses the case against the former Ugandan child soldier and rebel leader Dominic Ongwen at the International Criminal Court (ICC), in which the accused's dual role introduced a victim-perpetrator complexity novel to international criminal law. While the international legal sphere paradigmatically portrays underage combatants as morally incapable victims, nothing seems to prevent the indictment against child soldiers who reach legal adulthood; therefore, questions arise as to how the moral and criminal responsibility of such individuals can be conceptualized. In light of this, the present thesis analyzes the legal narratives in the case *Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen* and the ICC's general approach to moral responsibility, and subsequently places this in relation to empirical research on moral agency and the phenomenon of child soldiering. The findings of the present study confirm the hypothesis that in accordance with the conceptualization of the mental element (*mens rea*) under the Rome Statute Article 30, 31(1)(a), and 32(2), the legal narratives at the ICC are compelled to represent polarized notions regarding the (ir)responsibility of 'adult child soldiers' such as Ongwen. This polarization stands in stark contrast to the empirical research on moral development in child soldiers, which suggests a significantly more ambiguous and nuanced reality. Although the contribution is limited to the specific circumstances of the case against Dominic Ongwen, its findings suggest that current international criminal law may be unable to fully capture the complexities of moral agency, child soldiering, and the meaning of responsibility with regard to international crimes.¹²

1 Introduction and Research Approach

1.1 Introduction and Research Aim

In January 2015, a number of soldiers traveled to the Central African Republic (CAR) to identify a man captured by United States forces known as Dominic Ongwen (Branch, 2017). Ongwen was one of the five Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) senior commanders who had been indicted by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC or Court) in 2005 (Apuuli, 2006). The conflict between the Ugandan government and the LRA began in 1987 with the establishment of the rebel group by Joseph Kony, and escalated into a bloody war in the 1990's. The LRA – an organization infamous for their cruel attacks on civilians and the mass-scale abduction of child soldiers - has been largely driven out of Uganda since 2006, and of its senior leaders merely Kony and Ongwen are said to remain alive ("History: The Lord's Resistance Army conflict", n.d.). Since 2006, the LRA has been

largely driven out of Uganda and of its senior leaders only Kony and Ongwen are said to be alive ("History: The Lord's Resistance Army conflict", n.d.). Following peace talks earlier that year, in July of 2006, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni officially promised amnesty to all former LRA fighters, allowing them to return to their local communities (Ssenyonjo, 2007). Consequently, many soldiers have deserted the LRA and surrendered; however, the primary rebel leader Kony is still at large (e.g. Baines, 2009). In the meantime, Dominic Ongwen is currently standing trial at the ICC for over 70 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity - including the conscription of child soldiers below the age of fifteen (Burke, 2016).

Though celebrated as a long-awaited achievement in international criminal law (see Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, 2015), the case against the former LRA leader reflects the multiplicity of criticisms regarding justice at the ICC. Firstly, the Court's investigations to date regarding the situation in Northern Uganda have merely focused on the LRA, and neglected the evidence indicat-

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²Cover image Courtesy from International Criminal Court. <https://www.icc-cpi.int/uganda/ongwen>.

ing that the government forces of the Uganda People's Defense Force (Updf) committed similar atrocities (Branch, 2017). This seems to confirm the frequently raised concern that the ICC's prosecutor operates in a selective and politicized manner, instead of advancing impartial international justice (e.g. Tiemessen, 2014; Branch, 2007; Branch, 2017). Furthermore, the ICC's 2005 indictment against four senior LRA commanders is said to undermine the possibility of a successful peace process in Northern Uganda (e.g. Skaar, 2012, p. 17), thereby calling into question the Court's proclaimed contribution to local transitional justice process.

Beyond such political considerations, arguably the most controversial aspect of the case *Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen* (Ongwen case, or case against Dominic Ongwen) is the fact that the accused himself had been abducted by Kony's LRA at a young age and recruited as a child soldier (e.g. Baines 2009; Branch, 2017; Burke, 2016; Van den Berg, 2016). Since child soldiers are generally protected by international law due to widespread assumptions as to their moral incapacity, Ongwen's embodiment of both an 'innocent' child soldier as well as an adult perpetrator constitutes a difficult dilemma, and has sparked much debate in academia and the media (see, e.g. Baines, 2009; Branch, 2017; Burke, 2016; Drumbl, 2016; Stauffer, 2012; Van den Berg, 2016). As noted by scholars such as Drumbl (2016), international law has created a strict separation between the realm of childhood and that of international criminal responsibility, which makes it very challenging to conceptualize the moral and legal responsibility of individuals like Ongwen. Thus, while both the prosecution and the defense in the *Ongwen* case do their utter best to construct a legal narrative that supports their respective positions, an important question remains whether these narratives of international criminal law succeed in adequately addressing the moral responsibility of former child soldiers like Ongwen for their conducts.

In light of these complexities, this thesis aims to deconstruct the legal narrative regarding moral responsibility and the mental element (*mens rea*) currently reflected at the ICC. Furthermore, it will critically evaluate how these narratives address the complex realities of mental development and moral agency in child soldiers. In order to achieve this, the present study will analyze the ICC's case

against the former child soldier and LRA leader Dominic Ongwen, and investigate how the aforementioned legal narratives can be positioned in relation to empirical insights on moral development, age, and the phenomenon of child soldiering. The research hypothesis is that the conceptualization of the mental element in the Rome Statute of the ICC, as well as the legal narratives constructed in the Court inevitably lead to polarized notions regarding the accused's (ir)responsibility. Simultaneously, the case against Dominic Ongwen might reveal, the (possible) shortcomings of current international criminal law when dealing with the complexities of moral development and responsibility.

1.2 Methodology

The present research will be conducted by means of a case study on the international prosecution of the former child soldier and LRA leader Dominic Ongwen; as his indictment at the ICC is the first to materialize the complexities of moral agency and child soldiers into the realm of international criminal law. Although this contribution is therefore inevitably focused on the specific circumstances of Dominic Ongwen, his case nevertheless reflects the harsh reality of countless child soldiers who were once victimized, but later became perpetrators within the same coercive system of violence (see, e.g. Baines, 2009). Between 30,000–60,000 children have been abducted by the LRA in Northern Uganda alone (Baines, 2009, p. 164), and an estimated 90% of all LRA rebels are in fact former abductees (Veale & Stavrou, 2007, p. 275).

Chapter I. In order to establish the necessary legal and criminological context for the present research, the first chapter of this thesis analyzes the phenomenon of child soldiering as conceptualized in international law, which is then related to questions of *mens rea* and the legal narratives in the *Ongwen* case. Specifically, the international humanitarian and criminal legal framework on child soldiers is introduced, followed by an analysis of underlying assumptions regarding the latter's victimhood and lack of responsibility. Besides the author's own reflections on the relevant provisions of international criminal law and their relation to the concept of criminal intent or *mens rea*, the arguments are substantiated by secondary literature on the relationship between child soldiers and responsibility. These insights are largely drawn from

the work of Rosen (2007) and Derluyn, Vandenhoe, Parmentier, & Mels (2015), since these scholars provide concise yet critical accounts of relevant developments in international law and transitional justice. In addition, part of the empirical research on moral development and agency in child soldiers utilized in this thesis will be consulted due to its reflection of the conceptualization of child soldiers in international law (for more detailed information on the selection of this literature, see pp. 10-11 of this thesis).

Subsequently, the mental element under the Rome Statute of the ICC is analyzed, both by directly interpreting the relevant articles in the Rome Statute, as well as by consulting the limited amount of available scholarly reflections. Lastly, the legal narratives constructed in the ICC's case against Dominic Ongwen are presented as an illustration of the dilemma arising from cases involving what is herein termed 'adult child soldiers'. The employed method of 'narrative analysis' is well-established in interpretative legal research, which will be elaborated upon later in this section (see pp. 11-13 of this thesis). The legal narratives in the *Ongwen* case were mostly identified through the decision on the confirmation of charges on 23 March 2016, the opening statement of the prosecution in December 2016, and the transcripts of the trial opening on the 6th and 7th of December, 2016. These legal documents are highly beneficial for the present research, as they capture the most crucial and recurring arguments regarding the accused's (ir)responsibility through elaborate statements of the defense and the prosecution. In addition to these primary sources, scholarly and informal reflections (e.g. newspaper articles and informed legal blogs) on specific elements of the narratives in the *Ongwen* case were consulted. However, it must be acknowledged that due to the early stages of the proceedings, as well as the inevitable selection of primary and secondary materials, an exhaustive representation of the legal narratives cannot be provided.

Chapter II. The second chapter discusses theoretical and empirical research on moral development in child soldiers, and specifically the possible implications for moral capacity in individuals such as Dominic Ongwen. However, it must be noted that this is extremely challenging due to the separation of children's moral agency from that of adults in both international law (e.g. Rosen, 2007;

Drumbl, 2016), as well as the study of morality (e.g. Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969). In addition, there is little research available on Dominic Ongwen himself, and the preliminary psychiatric evaluations which were introduced by his lawyers are not available to the public (Maliti, 2017). Therefore, moral development and morality as such will be approached from a broader perspective, based on a research trend in moral studies that has distanced itself from universal psychoanalytical notions, and instead reconstructed theories of mental and moral development in line with sociological considerations (see, e.g. Turiel, 2008). In particular, Lawrence Kohlberg's influential theory of moral development and related works are explored in the context of Dominic Ongwen's case, intertwined with diverse empirical findings on the moral development in child soldiers. The sixteen articles consulted on the subject of child soldier's mental and moral agency serve as both primary and secondary sources. These will include small- and large-scale studies, research on child soldiers in Northern Uganda and elsewhere, frameworks of psychopathology and psychology, as well as sociological, anthropological, and ethical research. Given the relatively limited availability of empirical insights in these fields, the aim is to include a broad selection of relevant studies through an extensive search of the academic databases of *Mendeley*, as well as the library of the *University of Amsterdam* (UvA). Although the application of the theoretical and empirical findings on the specific situation of Dominic Ongwen remains largely speculative, some guidance is offered by Erin Baines' (2009) unique in-depth research on Ongwen's childhood, upbringing, and life within the LRA.

Chapter III. Finally, the third chapter of this thesis critically analyses the approach of the ICC to morality, responsibility, and the phenomenon of adult child soldiers as reflected in the case against Dominic Ongwen. This will be done by further deconstructing the legal narratives employed in the *Ongwen* case, and placing them in relation to the legal and criminological conceptualization of child soldiers and moral responsibility (as addressed in Chapter I), as well as the theoretical-empirical perspectives on moral development and agency (addressed in Chapter II). As previously mentioned, the method employed is that of narrative analysis, which is a technique frequently used in socio-legal research (e.g. Olson, 2014; Wood & Kroger, 2000,

p. 15). As demonstrated by Umphrey (1999), especially primary legal materials – such as statements of the prosecution and the defense in the *Ongwen* case - can be used not only to identify the competing narratives constructed by the Court adversaries, but also to explore underlying socio-legal conflicts and complexities. In Umphrey's (1999) words, the trial constitutes "a distinctive domain for the production of legal meaning [...] a liminal legal space, one situated between - and one that mediates the relation between - formal legal rules and the unofficial world of norms, customs, common sense, and social codes" (pp. 394-395).

The final chapter of this thesis critically reflects on the conceptualization of responsibility and morality under the Rome Statute of the ICC, particularly given the complexity of contexts like that of the former child soldier and LRA leader Dominic Ongwen.

Methodological reflection. It must be noted that the design and method of this thesis distinguishes itself in several ways from more rule-based, systematic qualitative research approaches (see also Kohlbacher, 2006; Hall, 2008). Firstly, the case study focuses on the specific circumstances of Dominic Ongwen's trial at the ICC, and is therefore not necessarily generalizable to other cases or situations. However, it is important to emphasize that the aim of this research is not to make absolute claims regarding the moral agency and responsibility of former child soldiers, but rather to critically address the way in which international criminal law assesses moral responsibility - a specific phenomenon observable within international criminal law itself. Furthermore, the structure of this research does not follow certain presupposed theoretical notions or models that are subsequently tested on a particular case study; rather, data, analysis, and theory are "developed together in an iterative process" (Hartley, 2004, p. 329). In other words, this contribution consists of interwoven and alternating reflections on scholarly literature, empirical studies, legal materials and opinions specifically on the case against Dominic Ongwen, as well as the author's interpretations of legal narratives and the Rome Statute. Therefore, the final research product is inevitably limited in terms of objectivity and replicability. However, for purposes of such in-depth interpretive reflections on one specific case, the use of systematic content analyses is simply not as appropriate (e.g. Hall,

2008). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that most components of this thesis will be influenced by the researcher; this concerns the selection of scholarly literature, the application of theoretical and empirical findings to the specific circumstances of Dominic Ongwen, the interpretation of narratives in international criminal law, and above all the interplay and broader implications of all of the above. However, during interpretative research such as the present one, subjectivity is not only an inevitable element; it is also perceived as being crucial for understanding the social phenomena studied (e.g. Myers, 2009).

2 International Criminal Responsibility and the Adult-Child Dichotomy

2.1 The Phenomenon of Child Soldiers in International Law

Over the past few decades, the issue of children's roles in armed conflicts - and particularly the use of underage combatants - has increasingly come to the attention of the international community (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015; Rosen, 2007). Generally, international law has mostly focused on the extensive protection of minors, albeit with an underlying tension between a protectionist 'paternalism', and the recognition of children's autonomy (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015). This tension can be traced back historically, where the earlier Geneva Declaration on the Rights of Child in 1924, and the 1949 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions almost exclusively focused on the former's need for special protection and care; however, since then it has increasingly become acknowledged that minors are autonomous agents and "fully-fledged beneficiaries of human rights" (Derluyn et al., 2015, p. 3; Hinton, 2008). In this regard, scholars such as Eide (2006) have argued that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1990 has ultimately found a balance between these views on children's agency and rights, although others note that many questions - such as that of responsibility - remain largely unresolved (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015, p.4).

The increased international awareness for children's rights has also led to an emerging body of international law on child soldiers, predominantly focused on the former's protection and recruitment

prevention (Rosen, 2007).

Although there remains a certain ambiguity as to who is legally considered a child soldier, humanitarian and human rights actors have increasingly shaped the discourse towards a 'Straight-18' position, aiming to prohibit the use of any person under eighteen in armed combat (Rosen, 2007). That is, while the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 did not yet specifically address the issue of child soldiers, the 1977 Additional Protocols I and II (AP I or II) established the first restrictions on the conscription of child soldiers below the age of fifteen. However, the text of the Protocols does allow the enrollment of combatants between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and only AP II on non-international conflicts explicitly prohibits the voluntary recruitment of combatants younger than fifteen (Rosen, 2007). In 1990, the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) furthered the debate by defining childhood as a phase continuing until the age of eighteen. Nevertheless, Rosen (2007) argues that its provisions on child soldiers merely repeat the rather unconvincing appeal of AP I, asking states to 'refrain' from recruiting children below the age of fifteen, and to prevent by all 'feasible' means their direct participation in hostilities. In 2002, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) finally extended the restriction on the enlistment of children to the age of eighteen, though the issue of voluntary participation remains unaddressed (Derluyn et al., 2015; Rosen, 2007). It is noteworthy that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) already applied a 'Straight-18' position regarding the recruitment of child soldiers in 1999 (Derluyn et al., 2015, p. 3). Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) (hereinafter: Rome Statute, 1998) lists the conscription and use of children below the age of fifteen in hostilities as a war crime. The international ban on the conscription of underage combatants – at least of those below the age of fifteen – was solidified with the 2002 establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC or Court), the first permanent court of its kind (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015; Rosen, 2007).

Notwithstanding – and possibly influenced by – the increased protection of child soldiers in international law, there has been an ongoing discussion on the minimum age required for criminal responsibility,

both in domestic as well as international law (see Derluyn et al., 2015; Leveau, 2014; Rosen, 2007). Although Article 40 of the UNCRC obliges states to establish a minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR), and to ensure special safeguards of juvenile justice when prosecuting individuals between the MACR and the age of eighteen, it lies in the discretion of domestic systems to determine the precise MACR (Derluyn et al., 2015). Consequently, the MACR varies greatly across countries, and to date no clear international consensus on the issue has been reached (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015; Leveau, 2014). In terms of international criminal law, it can be noted that the statutes of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993, and for Rwanda (ICTR) in 1994 were silent on a possible MACR (Leveau, 2014). In contrast, the final statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), established in 2002, allowed for the prosecution of juvenile offenders between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. That being said, in practice no individual younger than eighteen was ever tried at the SCSL (Rosen, 2007). The Statute of the ICC is clearer on the issue, since it precludes persons below the age of eighteen – and thereby child soldiers below that age – from criminal responsibility under its jurisdiction (Rome Statute, 1998, Art. 26(c)). Since the Court's first conviction for the conscription of underage combatants in the case *Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo* (Lubanga case), the international criminal legal sphere has largely focused on the protection of such minors, and the responsibility of their recruiters (see, e.g. Mariniello, 2012; Druba, 2002). In contrast, child soldiers themselves are represented as innocent victims – damaged for life, and unable to be held criminally liable for their actions (see, e.g. Rosen, 2007).

2.2 The Universalization of Childhood and Criminal Responsibility

According to scholars such as Derluyn et al. (2015), Drumbl (2014), and Rosen (2007), the developments in international humanitarian and criminal law on child soldiers must be seen in line with a universalization of childhood creating "bright-line distinctions between childhood and adulthood" (Rosen, 2007, p. 297). Principally due to the historically constructed notion of childhood as a sphere of innocence in need of protection, the term 'child

soldier' constitutes for many a moral contradiction (Derluyn et al., 2015). These conceptions have heavily influenced the fields of international law and transitional justice, which in turn reinforce the normative-ideological construct of childhood as a realm irreconcilable with responsibility - an issue that has been raised by various scholars (e.g. Derluyn et al., 2015; Drumbl, 2016; Leveau, 2014; Thomason, 2016; Rosen, 2007). The dominant image of 'the innocent child soldier' can be seen as correspondent to psychoanalytical theories, or what Derluyn et al. (2015) call the "biomedical model" (p. 3), which portrays children as moral victims in need of protection from possible damages (see also Boyden, 2003; Drumbl, 2014; Rosen, 2007; Stauffer, 2016; Thomason, 2016). Accordingly, it is often argued that children cannot bear responsibility for international crimes, as they are fundamentally unable to carry the *mens rea* required to establish criminal responsibility for such heinous crimes (see: Leveau, 2014, p. 50). The requirement of such a 'subjective' or 'mental' element is a crucial principle of criminal law, embodied by the phrase *actus reus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea* (meaning "the act is not culpable unless the mind is guilty") (Van der Vyver, 2004, p. 57). As this scholar notes, the principle provides that the establishment of criminal culpability requires a blameworthy state of mind or fault element (*mens rea*) in addition to the physical conduct (*actus reus*). In this sense, the *mens rea* requirement appeals to the wrongfulness or immorality of a criminal act, thereby representing "a moral directive of the legal idea" (Van der Vyver, 2004, p. 57). However, contemporary applications of the mental element in criminal justice systems often include several forms of culpability that range from direct intent, to knowledge and recklessness, to mere negligence. In addition, the respective threshold may differ for individual crimes (see e.g. Sparr, 2005). Considering these nuances and complexities, it seems difficult to determine exactly from which age onwards children could be attributed the *mens rea* element required for criminal responsibility. What can be said is that to date, no international consensus has been reached on the issue, and so children below the age of eighteen are precluded from international criminal responsibility altogether (Leveau, 2014).

Ironically, research by Boyden (2003) found that the perceived incompatibility of children and

combat is also what leads to the frequent condemnation of former child soldiers as irreversibly pathological, ruthless killers by local communities. In contrast, Derluyn et al. (2015) argue that such local rejection and stigmatization issues arise from the fact that affected societies disagree with the dominant portrayal of child soldiers as incapable victims. In any case, international humanitarian and transitional justice interventions - often in the form of so-called DDR-programs (Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration) - mostly build upon the assumption that child soldiering transforms children into psychologically distorted individuals who are in need of treatment (Derluyn et al., 2015, p. 6). Such ideas also frequently constitute the theoretical framework for research on former child soldiers, further perpetuating the association of child soldiering with trauma-related mental distortions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (e.g. Boyden, 2003; Drumbl, 2014; Wainryb, 2011). Although counterintuitive at first, this 'pathologization' of underage combatants can be seen as correspondent to the former's preclusion from criminal responsibility in the sense that mental incapacity, such as insanity, is generally recognized in criminal law as a defense by excuse (e.g. Sparr, 2005). Since such a defense removes a person's blameworthiness due to a lack of control over, or understanding of, one's wrongful conduct, it thereby negates the existence of a real choice (Sparr, 2005, p. 61). In other words, it negates subjective element known as *mens rea*.

The victimization of underage combatants on the one hand, and their irreversible distortedness on the other, was also reflected in the narrative adopted by the ICC's trial and appeal chamber in the *Lubanga* case, through which former child soldiers were presented as pure victims damaged for life (Drumbl, 2016). However, it is unclear how this idea of "once a child soldier in fact, always a child soldier in mind, body and soul" (Drumbl, 2016, p. 242) applies to former child soldiers who have reached legal adulthood, and thus are no longer precluded from international criminal responsibility. In other words, the conceptualization of the innocent child soldier and that of the guilty perpetrator becomes difficult to grasp when both roles are embodied by the same person, such as is the case with Dominic Ongwen (see, e.g. Baines, 2009; Drumbl, 2016).

2.3 The Concept of *Mens Rea* at the International Criminal Court

The mental element or *mens rea* requirement under the Rome Statute (1998) is addressed in Article 30, which provides that “a person shall be criminally responsible and liable for punishment for a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court only if the material elements are committed with intent and knowledge”. Although the respective material elements differ for specific crimes defined in the Rome Statute, Badar (2008) notes that the text of Article 30 seems to request a so-called ‘element analysis’ whereby the standard of *mens rea* is assessed separately for each objective element of a crime. That is to say, Article 30(2)(a) defines intent in relation to conduct, which is satisfied if the individual meant to engage in the respective conduct; Article 30(2)(b) specifies intent in relation to consequence, which requires that the individual must either intend a certain consequence or be aware that it would occur; finally, Article 30(3) provides that an individual must possess knowledge of a given situation or circumstance. Scholars disagree as to precisely which modes of culpability are included in this conceptualization of the mental element (see Badar, 2008, pp. 473-474). Indeed, while Van der Vyver (2004) argues that merely *dolus directus* of the first and second degree are provided for by Article 30 - meaning the intent to bring about a certain consequence, or the knowledge that it would occur - others have argued that *dolus eventualis* - the awareness that a consequence ‘might’ occur - is also a possibility under the article (see Badar, 2008). The Court itself suggested in the *Lubanga* case that both *dolus directus* of the first and second degree, as well as *dolus eventualis*, constitute possible modes of culpability under the Rome Statute (Badar, 2008).

It is important to note that Article 30 of the Rome Statute seemingly does not demand that the objective elements were committed for a specific criminal purpose; rather, such an elevated purpose requirement, known as *dolus specialis*, is explicitly included in the substantive description of certain international crimes (e.g. Badar, 2008). Most notably, this applies to crimes of genocide under Article 6 of the Rome Statute (1998), which specifically requires an “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”. Thus, it seems as if the general conceptualization of the mental element under Article 30 fails to address

the question of a ‘guilty mind’, or the accused’s subjective understanding that his or her conduct was morally wrongful.

Arguably, individuals who lack such a moral understanding can claim mental incapacity under the subsequent Article 31(1)(a) of the Rome Statute (1998) if they are “suffering from a mental disease or defect that destroys that person’s capacity to appreciate the unlawfulness or nature of his or her conduct [...]”. While the application of mental health defenses can be controversial and ambiguous even in national legal systems, this is even more true with regard to international criminal law (Tobin, 2007). That is, since the statutes of earlier war tribunals - such as the ICTY and the ICTR - failed to include mental incapacity defenses altogether, the court chambers of the ad hoc tribunals were forced to rely on the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, and eventually allowed it as a mitigating factor only (Sparr, 2005; Tobin, 2007). Although the Statute of the ICC does, in contrast, include an insanity defense, it remains unclear when and how exactly the threshold required by Article 31(1)(a) could be reached. In this regard, Tobin (2007) argues that a ‘complete destruction’ of mental capacity is hardly imaginable in the case of an individual charged with international crimes, and so a ‘partial destruction’ requirement may be a more realistic approach to this particular defense. The text of Article 31(1)(a) of the Rome Statute (1998) itself seems to imply that a respective mental disease or defect must specifically destroy the accused’s capacity “to appreciate the unlawfulness or nature of his or her conduct”. It is further remarkable that the Rome Statute does not mention the possibility of a *diminished* mental capacity defense, which could be interpreted as ruling out the use of reduced mental capacity as a full defense (see Tobin, 2007). However, in the absence of legal precedents, all interpretations regarding possible mental incapacity defenses at the ICC remain speculative. The related issue of psychological unfitness to plead is equally not specified in the Rome Statute itself, though it is addressed in the ICC’s Rules of Procedure and Evidence (RPE) (see Tobin, 2007). Pursuant to rule 135 of the RPE, the trial chamber may - on its own initiative or upon one of the parties’ request - order a psychiatric examination of the accused, and adjourn the Court procedures in case the former is deemed mentally unfit to plead (Tobin, 2007).

A final point that is noteworthy with regard to *mens rea* in the Rome Statute is the fact that Article 32(2) on the mistake of law clearly establishes that alleged ignorance of the criminality of certain conducts under the Court's jurisdiction is not an exculpatory excuse. However, this principle is qualified in the same provision, which proceeds to state that a mistake of law may constitute a ground for precluding criminal responsibility "in case it negates the mental element required by such a crime (...)" (Rome Statute, 1998, Art. 32(2)). Similarly to the case of mental incapacity defenses at the ICC, Article 32(2) leaves many ambiguities as to its exact scope of application (for a respective discussion, see Heller, 2008). Commentators such as Eser (2002) note that although the qualification within Article 32(2) is likely to allow for certain mistake of law defenses, its formulation remains rather cryptic. In contrast, Heller (2008) argues that Article 32(2) potentially permits a wide range of so-called exculpatory mistakes of legal element (MLE), the former being a special case whereby the perpetrator misunderstood the definition of a legal element of a crime. And while this scholar problematizes the application of MLE defenses at the ICC because a 'reasonable soldier' should be expected to understand basic principles of humanitarian law, Eser (2002) involves the issue of moral judgement by stating that the formulation of Article 32(2) was "perhaps meant to open the door for mistakes with regard to normative elements and evaluations" (p. 941). In the *Lubanga* case at the ICC, the defense indeed attempted to utilize an MLE pursuant to Article 32(2), by claiming that the defendant was not aware of the legal definition of the term 'recruitment' (see Weigend, 2008). This argument was rejected by the Court on the base that this term carries a generally accepted meaning, which Lubanga was assumed to have known as a military leader. The presiding judges added that the defense could have been successful if the defendant had not been aware of the accepted or 'everyday' meaning of the term, and for this reason had misunderstood the normative element of the respective crime; However, as Weigend (2008) notes, this statement is rather confusing, since normative terms hardly have a universally accepted 'everyday' meaning (pp. 475-476). In any case, the scholarly debate on Article 32(2) again resembles the one on mental incapacity in that the opinions regarding its exact implications remain divided, and thus far the de-

fense has not been successfully invoked.

2.4 The Problem of the Adult Child Soldier – Legal Narratives in the Ongwen Case

As mentioned above, the idea that underage combatants are morally incapable victims stems from both the former's young age, as well as their horrifying experiences (see, e.g. Leveau, 2014; Thomason, 2016). The question whether child soldiers may fulfill the mental element for certain international crimes under the Rome Statute (see, e.g. Leveau, 2014), or whether they should be assigned mental incapacity as described under Article 31(1)(a) becomes legally irrelevant due to their principal exclusion from criminal responsibility at the ICC (Rome Statute, 1998, Art.26(c)). However, such questions become relevant again in the case of child soldiers who have reached legal adulthood, since nothing seems to prevent the international prosecution of individuals such as Dominic Ongwen. From a legal perspective, the accused is clearly no longer a child, and neither was he below the age of eighteen at the time of the alleged crimes (*Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case No. ICC-02/04-01/15, Case Information Sheet, 2017, p. 1 [hereinafter: *Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Case Information Sheet, 2017]). Consequently, as long as Ongwen is proven to fulfill the physical and mental elements of certain crimes under the Rome Statute, he can be convicted.

The prosecutor in the *Ongwen* case seems to follow this line of reasoning, which has become particularly evident in the confirmation of charges hearing in January 2016, as well as in the opening statement of the prosecution in December of the same year. During the confirmation of charges hearing, prosecutor Benjamin Gumpert stated that Ongwen's role as both a victim and a perpetrator is a common phenomenon in criminal law, and does not constitute a ground for exculpation (Branch, 2017). Chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda clarified this point during her opening statement on 6 December 2016, by emphasizing that the defendant's past as a child soldier does in no way negate his responsibility for the "crimes committed as an adult with which he stands charged" (*Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case No. ICC-02/04-01/15, T.Ch. IX, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 37 [hereinafter: *Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December

2016]). In both instances, the prosecution further attempted to demonstrate the accused's immorality and evil by disclosing his voluntary ascension within the LRA's ranks, his alleged enthusiasm for killing and violence, and the unseized opportunities to escape (Branch, 2017). These arguments have also been repeatedly used by the prosecution to re-assert that Ongwen is capable of understanding the difference between right and wrong, and that he is aware of the immorality of his conducts (Maliti, 2017).

One day after the trial opening in December 2016, prosecutor Gumpert attempted to counter the possibility of a mental incapacity defense under Article 31(1)(a) by stating that:

(...) the law requires a demonstration not that mental illness made him [Ongwen] think that killing civilians and raping young girls was right, but that it had destroyed his ability to distinguish between unlawfulness and lawfulness, to tell right from wrong (*Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case No. ICC-02/04-01/15, T.Ch. IX, Transcript of 7 December 2016, p. 50 [hereinafter: *Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 7 December 2016]).

During the same statement, Gumpert emphasized that Article 31(1)(a) requires an existing mental illness to have destroyed - and not merely impaired - the accused's capacity to comprehend or control his acts. According to the prosecution, Ongwen was capable of making choices, fully aware of his actions, and understood their wrongful nature (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 7 December 2016, pp. 49-51).

In contrast, the defense's narrative has partly relied on the notion that Ongwen's mental and moral capacity remained that of an abducted child who never had the chance to develop a moral compass (see, e.g. Branch, 2017, p.9). Although the defense has requested to make its official opening statement only after the prosecution has presented its case (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Case Information Sheet, 2017, p.2), the argument that Ongwen deserves international protection due to his tragic past as a child soldier had been brought forward several times before the confirmation of charges hearing (*Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Case No. ICC-02/04-01/15, Pre-T.Ch. II, Decision of 23 March 2016, p. 66 [hereinafter: *Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Decision of 23 March 2016]). However, since child soldiers are precluded from criminal responsibility based on their age (Rome Statute,

1998, Art. 26(c)), the trial chamber rejected the defense's argument due to the lack of a legal base (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Decision of 23 March 2016, p. 67). Given that the defense's second argument - duress pursuant to Article 31(1)(d) of the Rome Statute - was equally dismissed in the Court's decision on the confirmation of charges (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Decision of 23 March 2016, pp. 67-69), it remains unclear how the defense will further conceptualize its legal narrative. During the trial opening, Ongwen's lawyers claimed that preliminary psychiatric expert reports indicated that the accused lacked understanding of the nature of the charges and the wrongfulness of his actions; accordingly, the defense filed an application to adjourn the proceedings until Ongwen's psychological fitness to plead was investigated (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, pp. 3-4). However, this application was rejected by the trial chamber on the grounds that it was submitted merely one day before the trial opening, and was perceived to be an unacceptable tactical move (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, pp. 4-6). In addition to the late submission, the reports did not disclose the names of the psychiatric experts who had evaluated Ongwen's mental state (Maliti, 2017). Nevertheless, the respective psychiatric evaluations were admitted by the trial chamber as evidence; but on 16 December 2016, the sitting judges released a decision stating that the reports indicated that Ongwen was neither unfit to stand trial, nor that he lacked understanding of the nature of the charges (Maliti, 2017). And although the defense attempted to appeal both of these decisions, the respective appeals were again rejected by the trial chamber. Besides the argument that Ongwen is unfit to plead, his lawyers gave notice of their intention to rely on a mental incapacity defense under Article 31(1)(a) of the Rome Statute in August 2016; however, a respective submission has not yet been filed (Maliti, 2017).

During the trial opening, when asked by the Court, the accused indicated not to understand the nature of the charges against him; instead, he saw the former "as being against the LRA but not me [Dominic Ongwen] (...) I'm one of the people against whom the LRA committed atrocities" (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 17). On the one hand, this response could be interpreted as a claim of duress; on the

other hand, it could symbolize Ongwen's perceived lack of moral agency and responsibility in a broader sense. In any case, the trial chamber dismissed the claim that Ongwen did not understand the nature of the charges, partly due to allegedly contradictory statements made by the accused earlier (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, pp. 17-19).

Essentially, as Branch (2017) notes, both the prosecution and the defense seem to rely on a conception of a 'normal human' with a certain ability to reason and consent; what they disagree upon is how this notion should be applied to the former child soldier and LRA leader Dominic Ongwen (p.11). In order to maintain their narrative of Ongwen's moral and legal culpability, the prosecution has to construct and maintain a guilty image of the accused by "asserting his utter monstrosity" (Branch, 2017, p. 12). That is, the prosecution cannot allow Ongwen's past as a child soldier to influence his unconditional responsibility, or draw a connection between the image of 'the innocent child soldier' and the LRA leader charged with over 70 counts of heinous international crimes. This might be more feasible than the defense's task, as it will be difficult to uphold the image of Ongwen's pure victimhood given the severity of the charges against him (Van den Berg, 2016); however, as various scholars and commentators note, it seems implausible to simply detach Ongwen from his identity and experiences as an abducted child soldier (e.g. Baines, 2009; Branch, 2017; Burke, 2016; Drumbl, 2016; Stauffer, 2012). In response, the prosecution has admitted the possibility of mitigated sentencing for Ongwen, which as Branch (2017) notes already threatens the prosecutor's absolute narrative (p. 12). Given the complete irreconcilability of the two legal narratives, questions arise as to what can be concluded regarding the moral responsibility and *mens rea* of Dominic Ongwen. Is he merely an innocent and psychologically distorted victim who cannot be considered responsible, as the defense seems to imply? Or should he - in accordance with the prosecution's narrative - be perceived as a perpetrator who must be held morally and criminally responsible for his conducts? As Baines (2009) puts it, "what agency is available to individuals [such as Ongwen] who are raised within a setting of extreme brutality?" (p. 164).

3 Moral Agency and Development in Child Soldiers: Empirical Insights

In order to deconstruct the complex issues of moral capacity, agency, and responsibility in former child soldiers such as Dominic Ongwen, guidance can be taken from diverse empirical research on mental and moral development, with specific regard to children who were actively involved in armed combat. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted on the moral development in children and underage combatants, the absence of longitudinal studies, and the normative conception of 'childhood' as antagonistic to adult reasoning and behavior makes it challenging to deconstruct and reinvestigate its meaning in a more inclusive manner (see, e.g. Boyden, 2003; Rosen, 2007; Wainryb, 2011). As early as 1969, this problem was noted by the influential moral theorist Lawrence Kohlberg:

[...] concepts of moral development tell us nothing about what goes on in adulthood, what goes on in adulthood tells us nothing about moral development, and the studies of adult development and child development have nothing to offer one another in the moral domain (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969, p. 94).

Furthermore, research on morality, specifically in the context of child soldiering, is largely focused on children or adolescents who left the armed groups they were part of, and who have been involved in reintegration and rehabilitation programs (see Betancourt, 2011; Boyden, 2003; Johannessen & Holgersen, 2013; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). In light of these considerations, it is extremely challenging to conceptualize the moral capacity of individuals like Ongwen, meaning former abductees who remained within the same system of violence as they became adult perpetrators. In this sense, ethical theorist Jil Stauffer (2016) might be right in her provocative suggestion that "what we fear is that if we look too closely at it [the moral development and agency of children], we will find that we can't explain the responsibility of adults to ourselves either, at least not in the way we thought we could" (p. 10). Nevertheless, the remainder of this chapter will consider the available research on moral development in children and child soldiers and critically discuss the findings in light of Dominic Ongwen's specific circumstances. By doing so, this

chapter will attempt to gain some tentative insight into the moral capacities of former child soldiers who reached legal adulthood.

3.1 Towards More Nuanced Approaches

In recent years, various scholars have challenged the rigid adult-child dichotomy

regarding the moral agency of child soldiers, and have called for further inquiry (e.g. Boyden, 2003; Derluyn et al., 2015; Drumbl, 2014; Leveau, 2014; Thomason, 2016; Wainryb, 2011). As Rosen (2007) notes, the assumption that moral agency is simply non-existent in children is a normative-ideological, rather than an empirical construct; and while this construct merely determines child soldiers' absolute victimhood, "little attention is being paid to addressing that victimization" (Derluyn et al., 2015, p.7). Consequently, such narrow conceptions do not offer any guidance on how to draw the line between passivity and agency (e.g. Stauffer, 2016), and fail to address questions regarding the moral development of child soldiers who reach legal adulthood (see also Drumbl, 2016; Stauffer, 2016).

The closely related psychopathological paradigm seems to imply that those who were once child soldiers are by definition impaired in their mental and moral development; however, scholars emphasize that this too constitutes an oversimplification and overgeneralization of moral agency (e.g. Boyden, 2003; Drumbl, 2014). Although research has indeed indicated a high prevalence of PTSD and other psychopathological symptoms in former child soldiers (e.g. Klasen et al, 2010; Okello et al., 2007; Welless, 2004), the emergence and persistence of these is dependent on various factors other than trauma severity itself (see Johannessen & Holgersen, 2013; Klasen et al, 2010). What is more, research by Vindevogel et al. (2013) found that post-child soldiering variables were significantly more important for predicting psychological resilience in former child soldiers than child soldiering variables *per se*. Therefore, even researchers with such psychopathological backgrounds have alerted that the excessive emphasis on clinical labels neglects the variety of individual circumstances and psychological conditions of former child soldiers (e.g. Johannessen & Holgersen, 2013; Wessells, 2004). In other words, these notions fail to capture the complexity of mental and moral development in the context of child soldiering (see also Wainryb, 2011).

3.2 Age and the Complexity of Moral Development

As Derluyn et al. (2015) note, psychosocial perspectives on child soldiers have increasingly come to acknowledge the fact that child soldiering is an extremely complex phenomenon that cannot be described in simple, absolute terms. More nuanced research on the moral agency of child soldiers by e.g. Boyden (2003), Drumbl (2014), Leveau (2014), Thomason (2016), or Wainryb (2011) can be seen in line with a general shift in scholarly approaches to understanding processes of moral development. The research tradition that has developed during the last few decades is heavily influenced by the moral theorist Lawrence Kohlberg and Jean Piaget's theories of cognitive development, which has increasingly led scholars to critique overly narrow psychoanalytical and biological conceptions of children's mental and moral development (see Oswald, 2010; Turiel, 2008). Both Piaget's and Kohlberg's ideas are based on so-called stages of cognitive or moral development, whereby the great influence of social upbringing and education is continuously emphasized. That is, children are said to develop moral concepts not only through physical and emotional maturing processes, but also from interpersonal relationships and their social environment (Oswald, 2010; Turiel, 2008).

More specifically, Kohlberg's (1958) stages of moral development conceptualize moral or ethical reasoning as emerging through six identifiable stages; each stage must be successfully passed in order to enter the subsequent one. The first two stages can be placed within the so-called *Pre-Conventional Level*, whereby the first relies on obedience and punishment, and the second on self-interest. The subsequent *Conventional Level* shapes morality by conformity and interpersonal agreements in stage three, and by authority and social order in stage four. The last stages that develop within the *Post-Conventional level* include social contract reasoning that promotes general welfare and compromise (stage five), and finally an abstract, universal principles-driven moral reason (stage six). Despite the constructive nature of the six-stage model, Kohlberg's (1958) own research indicated that few individuals consistently operated on the last level, and that alterations and regressions in moral reasoning are possible throughout the whole lifespan. Furthermore, empirical re-

search based on this model indicated that children around the age of nine were mostly located at the first, pre-conventional level of moral reasoning; most adolescents and adults were found to be at the conventional level, and merely a fraction reached post-conventional stages of moral reasoning (McLeod, 2013). Despite the fact that Ongwen's exact age at the time of his abduction remains unclear (Baines, 2009), Kohlberg's model would imply that his moral development had reached pre-conventional stages before he unwillingly joined the LRA; this, in turn, suggests that his sense of morality was limited to notions of self-interest, obedience and punishment. At this level, individuals are not yet in possession of an independent moral reason, but derive their sense of morality from adults' rules and the consequences of disobeying them. What this might have meant for Ongwen's early moral development is questionable, since he never experienced anything else than the ongoing conflict in Northern Uganda (Baines, 2009). Similarly, it is unclear what the violent environment of the LRA implied for the achievement of further stages of moral development - especially given the importance of environmental factors, and the observed possibility of 'moral regression' (Kohlberg, 1958).

In light of the above, it might appear surprising that recent empirical research conducted on child soldiers suggests that the former are oftentimes capable of understanding and developing concepts of morality, exercising agency, and making moral and immoral choices (e.g. Baines, 2009; Boyden, 2003; Drumbl, 2014; Klasen et al., 2010; Leveau, 2014). Furthermore, child soldiers frequently experience and report feelings of guilt (Drumbl, 2014; Klasen et al., 2010), which is not limited to individuals who voluntarily join an armed group (Thomson, 2016). Nevertheless, these findings can be seen in line with the research tradition inspired by Kohlberg insofar as they demonstrate the crucial importance of cultural, social, contextual and individual factors when addressing questions of mental and moral development in child soldiers. That is, if "starting at an early age, individuals attempt to understand their social worlds [...] and in the process construct judgments about welfare, justice, and rights" (Turiel, 2008, p. 35), this might have implications for the moral constructions of individuals growing up in total war and violence. Accordingly, Wainryb (2011) suggests that even though

children who have perpetrated heinous acts of violence are capable of developing moral conceptions, this does not alter the fact that these conceptions may be highly problematic. In other words, war - and particularly the experience of child soldiering - are likely to affect mental and moral development, although the long-term implications of this remain largely under-researched and hence uncertain (Wainryb, 2011). However, considering these theoretical and empirical insights into the moral development of child soldiers, how likely is it that former child soldiers like Ongwen undergo a 'normal' moral development? And from which point onwards, if at all, could they be assumed to start appreciating the unlawfulness of their conducts? In light of the current state of knowledge, it seems that there is simply no one true answer to this question. The only conclusive statement that can be made is that moral growth in child soldiers is a highly complex continuum, and not solely and inherently determined by an individual's age. Rather, it must be acknowledged that the ability to comprehend and exercise moral agency might in fact transcend legal and political definitions of childhood and adulthood (see also Drumbl, 2014).

3.3 Morality and Context

Above all, the recurrent emphasis of the research on moral development and agency lies on the crucialness of sociocultural and contextual factors, instead of on adopting universal analyses or conceptualizations. In accordance with this trend, scholars including Uri Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Barbara Rogoff (as cited in Wertsh, & Tulviste, 1990) argue that the mental development of children and their identity is closely and inevitably connected to their respective cultural and social milieu. More specifically, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) social-ecological theory describes the ecology of human development as the "progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life span, between a growing human organism and the changing immediate environments in which it lives" (p. 514). However, the notion that psychological development is a continuous process, and one that is heavily influenced by one's environment, highlights an important problem raised by Boyden (2003): namely, morality itself becomes extremely difficult to conceptualize in contexts of total war and violence. In other words, what signifies 'morality' in a constant

state of fear, survival, cruelty and hatred? In this sense, a study by Dawes (as cited in Boyden, 2003) indeed indicated that child soldiers' long-term engagement in armed conflict may lead to the internalization of values that from a 'mainstream' perspective would be deemed completely immoral. In the specific case of Dominic Ongwen, these findings could be particularly applicable as he spent his entire childhood, youth, and early adulthood as a combatant within the LRA (Baines, 2009). Related to this, Veale & Stavrou (2007) describe in their qualitative research on former LRA abductees the development of so-called 'relational identity', whereby children develop social norms and values correspondent to the group they participate in. On the other hand, Boyden's (2003) empirical research on former LRA abductees suggested that moral values - such as the aversion to violence - are likely to have developed even *during* the time they spent with the rebel group in combat. These findings are consistent with Veale & Stavrou's (2007) study in that the subjects in the latter research did not fully internalize their identity as an LRA soldier, even after being socialized into the group. However, like most relevant research in former child soldiers, these qualitative studies were conducted on merely a small number of subjects who had spent a limited time within the LRA. That is, it remains unclear how the specific circumstances and conditions of *returned* child soldiers, mostly accompanied by psychological support and reintegration programs, influence conceptions of norms and morality after leaving the armed group (Boyden, 2003). What is clear, however, is that Dominic Ongwen never had the opportunity to experience such a rehabilitative post-child soldiering setting.

Corresponding to these contextual and environmental approaches, Betancourt's (2011) unique research on long-term moral development in former child soldiers relies on precisely such socio-ecological theories. Her theoretical model draws on the ideas of scholars such as Rogoff (1991), and accordingly conceptualizes moral development in former child soldiers as a constant interaction between traumatic past experiences, the psyche and behavior of the individual, and post-conflict socio-ecological contexts. This theory seems reaffirmed by various cross-sectional studies on former child soldiers, all of which emphasize the importance of social and environmental conditions for the success or failure of former child soldiers' psychological re-

habilitation (e.g. Boyden, 2003; Johannessen & Holgersen, 2013; Klasen et al., 2010; Vindevogel et al., 2013). However, it must again be emphasized that little is known about the long-term implications of circumstances under which the normative worlds of children were completely twisted and reversed (Boyden, 2003). In fact, this too could be of particular relevance for individuals such as Ongwen, as children in Northern Uganda are often purposely abducted by the LRA at a very young age, who indoctrinate the children through twisting their faith towards the rebels' purpose (Klasen et al., 2012). That is, the functioning of the LRA is to a large extent based on Kony's cult-like, 'spiritual' leadership (e.g. Veale & Stavrou, 2007), which is particularly effective given that religion and spirituality are deeply rooted in the Northern Ugandan culture (Klasen et al., 2012, p. 1108). Indeed, Baines' (2009) research on Ongwen's childhood revealed that before his abduction, he was a very shy, tender child - so shy, and so tender, that the young boy was subjected to an extensive 'indoctrination training' aimed at transforming him into nothing but a loyal LRA fighter (Baines, 2009, p. 169). In line with this account, Veale & Stavrou's (2007) research emphasizes that the "systematic breaking down of [the] (...) identity of child abductees" (p.282) is a common strategy of the LRA. This includes the destruction of any resistance through physical and psychological abuse, as well as through the indoctrination of irrational and fearful ideologies; that is, before being deployed in combat, the children are beaten, forced to commit atrocities against loved ones, disoriented, and rebuilt as a ruthless LRA soldier (Baines, 2009; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). As Boyden (2003) notes, for individuals who were subjected to such cruel treatment and extreme normative distortions, it becomes questionable whether it is at all possible "[...] to re-assimilate and sustain mainstream moral values following long-term exposure to violence (...)" (p. 355).

4 International Criminal Law and the Complexity of Moral Responsibility

4.1 Legal Narratives and the Moral Agency of Adult Child Soldiers

The complexities that become evident from the above discussion on moral development and agency constitute one of the main reasons why the case at the ICC against Dominic Ongwen is surrounded by such extensive scholarly and media attention (see p. 7 of this thesis). As Van den Berg (2016) notes, neither of the parties at the ICC have an easy task when it comes to demonstrating the guilt or innocence of the former child soldier and LRA leader who is “the first known person to be charged with the war crimes of which he is also a victim” (Baines, 2009, pp. 163-164). As much effort as the prosecution and the defense put into creating an image of evilness or victimhood, respectively – each narrative is severely challenged by the other, and each one seems to neglect some part of the truth about the complexity of moral development, agency and responsibility.

According to Drumbl (2016), this difficult dilemma in the *Ongwen* case stems largely from the inadequate conceptualization of child soldiering in international law. That is, while underage combatants are portrayed as pathological victims lacking any sense of right or wrong, Ongwen’s case has demonstrated that nothing seems to prevent the prosecutor at the ICC to indict child soldiers who committed crimes after they reached legal adulthood. As Stauffer (2016) notes, the prosecution’s narrative implies that the capacity to make right moral judgements develops somewhat automatically with age or time. However, the increasing body of nuanced theoretical and empirical research clearly indicates that such absolute conceptions of mental and moral development are far too simplistic. Rather than based solely on age, the moral development of child soldiers seems to be dependent on a complex interplay of cultural, social, and individual factors. The idea that those who were once child soldiers can simply be detached from possible mental impairments and wrongfully constructed conceptions of morality is not only inaccurate, but also “as an answer to an important moral, legal and political question [...] simply not good enough” (Stauffer, 2016, p. 11). However, the em-

pirical findings also suggest that contrary to dominant public assumptions, many child soldiers are in fact capable of understanding concepts of morality, making choices, and exercising agency (see Chapter II of the present thesis). This, in turn, stands in stark contrast to the defense’s narrative, which seems to argue that Ongwen’s tragic past as a child soldier has led to a complete destruction of his capacity to appreciate the immorality and wrongfulness of his conducts.

It is true that despite his tragic childhood, Ongwen seems to have made certain choices; as emphasized by the prosecution, the rebel fighter chose to ascend the ranks within the LRA, he chose not to seize opportunities to escape, and then chose to cynically laugh while reporting his atrocities to Kony (see: Branch, 2017). The prosecution further argues that Ongwen himself made it clear after his capture in 2015 that he understood the wrongfulness of what he had done in the bush (Maliti, 2017). At the time, Ongwen stated that “each of us sin in words, deeds, and thoughts. If I committed a crime through war, I am sorry. In my mind, I thought war is a good thing. Even up to now, I dream about it every night (...)” (Baines, 2016, p. 141). Does this statement indeed confirm the prosecution’s argument that Ongwen understands the difference between just and unjust acts, and is capable of choosing between the two? Several individuals who personally knew Ongwen during his time in the LRA asserted that he was often a good man, and that at times he could perform great acts of kindness (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 36). Yet, at other times, he apparently chose to perpetrate heinous acts of violence. Thus, it could be argued that there is at least some truth to the ‘choice narrative’ adopted by the prosecution. However, it is important to acknowledge that there were many instances in which the accused did not have a choice. For example, he did not choose to be born into a context of conflict and political instability, and he did not choose to be abducted by the LRA as a young boy; neither did he choose to be abused, forced to commit violence, and indoctrinated with an ideology dominated by fear and hatred (see Baines, 2009). But above all, he did not choose to grow up in an environment that completely negates any mainstream concept of justice and morality.

In any case, the empirical research that has been conducted so far does not allow for any con-

clusive statements regarding the moral agency of individuals such as Dominic Ongwen – that is, of former child soldiers who never left the armed group that transformed them into ruthless fighters in the first place. To be clear, it is simply unknown what the nearly exclusive exposure to violence and fear means for the mental development of such individuals, and what the implications are for their capacity to understand and employ concepts of morality. Yet, the prosecution in the *Ongwen* case seems unwilling to acknowledge this, while the defense is increasingly struggling to legally conceptualize its narrative. And although international law continues to draw a strict line between passivity and agency at the age of eighteen, it is questionable whether this truly corresponds to the realities of child soldiering and moral development, or rather reflects a constructed, universalized notion of childhood (see also Rosen, 2007).

4.2 Morality and Responsibility at the International Criminal Court

Once child soldiers such as Dominic Ongwen reach the age of eighteen, they are no longer precluded from criminal responsibility under Article 26(c) of the Rome Statute. But as in most systems of criminal law, the Statute of the ICC requires that the material elements of the crimes must be carried out with subjective intent and knowledge (Rome Statute, 1998, Art. 30(1)). As previously noted, the conceptualization of the mental element under Article 30 of the Rome Statute merely requires that the accused intended to engage in a certain conduct, intended to bring about the respective consequence or was aware that it would occur, and possessed knowledge of the circumstances (Rome Statute, 1998, Art. 30). That is, when Dominic Ongwen ordered young abducted children to bite and stone civilians (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 29), did he intend to give that order? Did he further intend to cause bodily harm or know that it would occur; was he aware of the respective circumstances? When, on another occasion, Ongwen attacked and burnt houses in the Ugandan place Koc Ongako (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 30), did he anticipate that this would lead to physical destruction and human casualties? In a sense, the answer to the preceding questions seems to be affirmative, since it was Ongwen personally who ordered or

initiated these violent conducts, and his ability to understand basic cause-effect relationships likely started developing around the age of three ("Child Development [CA Dept of Education]", 2016). The prosecution further introduced evidence indicating that the LRA fighter understood that his conducts were part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 29). As discussed previously in relation to Article 32(2) of the Rome Statute, it is unimportant whether Ongwen was ignorant of the illegality of these specific conducts; that is, provided this ignorance did not "negate the mental element required by such a crime" (Rome Statute, 1998, Art. 32(2)). It remains unclear, however, in which case a mistake of law would indeed amount to a negation of *mens rea* (see pp. 21-23 of this thesis). What is more, if the basic elements described above suffice to establish criminal responsibility at the ICC, it can again be questioned whether child soldiers – including those below the age of eighteen – could not also fulfill the mental element for certain crimes under the Rome Statute (see also Leveau, 2014). Yet, while child soldiers below this age threshold are by definition precluded from international criminal responsibility due to widespread assumptions as to their moral incapacity (see; Leveau, 2014; Thomason, 2016), in relation to Ongwen these questions seem to be irrelevant.

Of course, it could be argued that the issue of whether Ongwen is capable of comprehending the moral dimension of his conducts is taken up by the insanity defense under Article 31(1)(a) of the Rome Statute. However, as mentioned above (see pp. 20-21 of this thesis), it remains unclear under which circumstances mental incapacity could be applied at the ICC (see also Tobin, 2007). To be clear, a respective defense would require proof not only that Ongwen suffers from a mental disease or defect, but that this has destroyed specifically his capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of his conducts. And even though a defense claim pursuant to Article 31(1)(a) has not yet been officially submitted, the prosecution made it clear how improbable they deem such an argument to be successful (Maliti, 2017; *Prosecutor v. Dominic Ongwen*, Transcript of 7 December 2016, p. 49-51; see also Chapter I of this thesis). In addition, the empirical research consulted has clearly demonstrated the inappropriateness of simply dismissing child soldiers

as irreversibly pathological and mentally ill. Despite this, the legal narratives constructed at the ICC and in accordance with the Rome Statute seem to leave no space for such nuanced conceptualizations of what it means to be morally responsible. In other words, provided that Ongwen cannot be assigned complete insanity under Article 31(1)(a), it is legally irrelevant whether- and to what extent - the former child soldier can be attributed the capacity to understand concepts of morality, justice, and appreciate the wrongfulness of his actions.

During the opening statements of the *Ongwen* case in December 2016, prosecutor Bensouda stated that “having suffered victimization in the past (...) is not a justification, nor an excuse to victimise others. Each human being must be considered to be endowed with moral responsibility for their actions” (*Prosecutor v. Ongwen*, Transcript of 6 December 2016, p. 37). But if this is the case, then why does this narrative not hold for child soldiers, who are portrayed as incapable of being held responsible for their conducts (e.g. Leveau, 2014; Thomason, 2016)? Indeed, despite the assertion in Bensouda’s statement that moral accountability lies at the heart of the ICC’s proceedings, the Court’s very own Statute seems unable to adequately address the issue of whether the defendant is able to fully comprehend the immorality of what he or she has done.

The empirical research as discussed earlier certainly raises questions as to whether former child soldiers with extreme traumatic childhood experiences such as Ongwen might suffer from mental and moral impairments; but beyond this, it is also important to acknowledge that contexts of war and violence, which often correlate with the phenomenon of child soldiering, can completely alter the meaning of morality – both for children, as well as for adults (see also Boyden, 2003). In a critical reflection on the *Ongwen* case and the trial of Jewish Nazi collaborators in Israel, Drumbl (2016) highlights such victim-perpetrator complexities and the “choiceless choices” (p. 223) arising from the inhumanity of certain situations. From a slightly different perspective, Baines (2009) utilizes Erica Bouris’ concept of the ‘Complex Political Perpetrator’ to describe child soldiers like Dominic Ongwen in their role as both victims and perpetrators. She emphasizes that in malfunctioning systems of continuous war and brutality such as is the case in Northern Uganda, there exists a se-

vere lack of political and social space for children and adolescents; and through the experience of child soldiering, these young people often enter a vicious cycle of self-perpetuating victimization and violence. It is important to note that the concept of the complex political perpetrator does not necessarily negate moral agency and responsibility; on the contrary, it is precisely through the perpetration of violence, and the role of the victimizer, that such individuals may regain a sense of agency (Baines, 2009). Nevertheless, these considerations highlight the complexity of moral choice and responsibility in cases such as Dominic Ongwen’s, and reaffirm the argument that it is not Ongwen alone who should be held guilty of the crimes for which he stands trial (e.g. Baines, 2009; Branch, 2017). To be clear, Ongwen’s indictment at the ICC does not account for the fact that the Ugandan government has failed to protect its citizens for over twenty years, including young Ongwen himself; it does not acknowledge that the LRA is an organization largely dominated by Joseph Kony’s cult-like leadership, into which Ongwen was forcefully abducted; and it stands in sharp contrast to the 2006 Ugandan law that has granted amnesty to so many former LRA fighters (e.g. Baines, 2009; Ssenyonjo, 2007; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Certainly, it is the self-proclaimed mission of the ICC to ensure the accountability of those individuals having perpetrated the most heinous international crimes (“About the ICC,” 2016, para 1); and as one of the four senior LRA leaders, Ongwen likely carries some sort of responsibility (see also Baines, 2009). But beyond this, one of the Court’s primary purposes is the advancement of international peace and justice, and the construction of a future without violence and instability (“About the ICC”, 2016, para 4). These two key objectives of the international Court are connected through the idea that justice is a necessary precondition for the achievement of sustainable peace (“About the ICC”, 2016, para 4) – a notion that is in itself the subject of an ongoing academic debate (see, e.g. Clark, 2011; Meron, 2011). In any case, despite the Court’s aim to address “the gravest crimes of concern to the international community” (ICC, 2016, para. 1), currently it seems unable to address the complexities of moral responsibility for such crimes.

5 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to address the arguably most controversial aspect of the ICC's case against Dominic Ongwen – namely, the fact that the accused himself was an abducted child soldier within LRA, and is now charged with the some of the exact crimes he was once subjected to (e.g. Baines, 2009). Since child soldiers are generally protected under international law, the specific objective of this contribution has been to analyze the legal narratives constructed in the case against Dominic Ongwen, and to investigate how these can be positioned in relation to empirical research on moral agency and the phenomenon of child soldiering.

The hypothesized polarization of legal narratives constructed with regard to the responsibility of 'adult child soldiers' such as Dominic Ongwen has indeed been confirmed; that is, while Ongwen's lawyers attempt to use the defendant's past of victimization to preclude him from moral and criminal responsibility, the prosecution has adopted a narrative of the defendant's evilness and guilt based on the acts he committed as an adult. However, as the empirical insights discussed in this thesis have made evident, it remains unclear to what extent former child soldiers like Ongwen can be assigned moral responsibility for their conducts – both because of the extreme complexity of mental and moral development, as well as the difficulties to conceptualize morality within such contexts of violence and coercion. Nevertheless, an analysis of *mens rea* or the mental element in the Rome Statute indicated that it is legally irrelevant whether an accused person can be assigned moral responsibility for his or her acts – that is, provided an insanity defense under Article 31(1)(a) cannot be successfully invoked. With regard to child soldiers however, this becomes irrelevant as the Statute of the ICC principally precludes children below the age of eighteen from criminal responsibility (Rome Statute, 1998, Art 26(c)). This too stands in stark contrast to the empirical research on moral development and agency consulted, which revealed that such absolute legal conceptualizations fail to adequately capture the meaning of responsibility and moral choice in the context of child soldiering and beyond.

As the well-known writer and former child soldier Ishmael Beah once fittingly stated: "Who can ever know what path to walk on when all of them

are either crooked or broken? One just has to walk" (2014, p. 143). This powerful quote reflects not only the difficulties in conceptualizing the moral development and agency of former child soldiers such as Ongwen, but also the dilemma that international criminal law faces regarding the prosecution of such individuals. As has been demonstrated, both the legal narratives constructed in the *Ongwen* case, as well as the possible interpretations of the mental element under the Rome Statute seem incapable of truly delivering justice in this case against a defendant who was undeniably once a morally victimized child soldier, yet grew up to become an adult perpetrator.

But beyond the specific case of Dominic Ongwen, this thesis has raised more general questions regarding justice at the ICC and the appropriateness of current international criminal law. What ought to be done, when the sole permanent court of international criminal justice appears unable to address the complex realities it deals with – in Beah's (2014) words: "(...) when all paths are either crooked or broken" (p.143)? As highlighted by multiple scholars in the field, there exist various alternatives to the international criminal prosecution of former child soldiers (e.g. Baines, 2009; Derluyn et al., 2015; Veale & Stavrou, 2007). Examples of this are amnesty, truth commissions, local community dialogues, or traditional rituals like the 'Mato Oput' in Uganda (see Derluyn et al., 2015, p. 6). However, many insist that in the interest of victims and affected communities, individuals like Ongwen must be held criminally responsible (see e.g. Baines, 2009; Ogora, 2017). But even if one were to universally accept the necessity of criminal justice in situations like Northern Uganda, questions would still remain. For instance, why is it that the need for prosecution extends to some military leaders, but not to others (e.g. Branch, 2017)? What are the implications of the 2006 Ugandan amnesty law that seemingly contrasts the international indictments against the four highest LRA commanders (Ssenyonjo, 2007)? And lastly, does the ICC located in The Hague truly constitute the right judicial institution for achieving justice in such extremely complex contexts (see also Baines, 2009)? To be clear, it lies beyond the scope of this thesis to provide answers to these questions, just as it lies beyond its scope to assess the precise extent to which individuals like Dominic Ongwen can be assigned moral capacity and responsibility. However, the pri-

mary assertion of this thesis is that such complexities must be investigated, and potential alternatives must be explored.

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Humanities

Fighting Oppression on Their Own Terms:

South Africa's Black Women Take the Lead in Student Protests

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Abstract

This research paper focuses on student protests called #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and #RuReferenceList in South Africa, with regard to how they create a platform for black women's activism in the process of transformation and decolonization of universities, and in connection to resistance against rape culture and institutionalized violence. Black women's activism demonstrates agency and participation in the negotiation of black women's position in South Africa by the reclamation of space, reclamation of Africanism, and defence of the body's integrity in existing rape culture. Analysis of various photographs of black women in the mentioned protests displays the centrality of the body in protests and how it is used as a potent tool for resistance. Vulnerability of the body is discussed as being politically impactful but also precarious. The project builds on key theorists like Biko, Butler, Crenshaw, Fanon, and Mbembe and discusses the strengths and limitations in using these theories as frameworks to form cohesive student protests. The necessity of integrating intersectionality and decolonization is evident in these protests, as black women's active participation makes visible the demands to be recognized and to stop exclusionary practice in institutions and in protests. This research paper highlights the significance of protests for black women in South Africa as they provide a mode of representation, a platform to contest historically rigid ideas about women's rights that opens the discourse for change, in which the black woman is regarded pro-active in fighting her oppression.

Introduction

History was made at the heart of University of Cape Town's (UCT) campus on April 9th, 2015 when the statue of Cecil Rhodes fell. UCT students fought ferociously for the removal of the statue symbolizing the country's colonial past and oppression for exactly one month through the #RhodesMustFall movement. Not only was this movement successful in accomplishing its goals, it was also a catalyst for the series of #Fall protests to come the following years within South Africa and abroad. #RhodesMustFall demonstrated that children born after apartheid, since 1994, are still negotiating the historical pain of racial oppression, but they are determined to make change happen. The generation of black youth born after apartheid were supposed to be have been "South Africa's beautiful ones" (Molefe 32), living without the constraints the generations before them did. Yet, this group finds itself "living in the long shadow of apartheid history" (Molefe 32). At the frontlines of the hashtag movements are South African women, predominantly black women, actively participating in the discourse and actions towards transformation of South Africa's higher education. Through protesting, these women demonstrate and command the position in society that black women should have in South Africa. The South African constitution grants some of the most progressive rights in the world, not only traditional civil rights, but also equality rights in terms of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, rights to education, and freedom of speech. Protesters know their right to assembly and are making visible that the rights to education

and safety are not equally accessible to everyone.

Identities of black South African women are very specific to the context they are raised in – molded by the post-colonial and post-apartheid environment, yet experiencing the lack of transformation to the promised freedoms of democracy. Mbembe writes that transformation has become a buzzword in South Africa ("Passages to Freedom" 10) and students disillusioned with the ineffective and sluggish process are rising to protest. Moreover, students are protesting for more fervent action than transformation: decolonization of education. While both women and men are protesting for decolonization of universities, black women have an additional cause they want to make public: they are no longer accepting the intersectional oppression imposed on them. Black women are defending their bodies from rape culture through the #RuReferenceList protest, they are fighting for more inclusive and accessible higher education through the #FeesMustFall protest, and are promoting new visions for black women's position in public spaces through the #RhodesMustFall protest.

This research project investigates how black women at the frontlines of protests #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and #RuReferenceList are challenging the status quo of female agency in South Africa and how effectively they are contributing to the discourse and actions of decolonization, transformation, and rape culture. Photographs of women during these protests are analyzed, which reveal their demands and their approach for change. The photographs and the discourse surrounding the protests make visible the current po-

¹Image courtesy from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34615004>

sition of black women as protesters in South Africa and their vulnerability as a tool for resistance. Through the use of their bodies in protest, black women are resisting violence, proclaiming recognition of their bodies, and thereby claim full agency towards the efforts of decolonization.

The relevance of this research reveals the ways black women in South Africa are claiming agency in the process of transformation and decolonization of higher education and in combating rape culture at universities. Studies reveal that there are still multiple layers of oppression, violence, and discrimination experienced by women of color born after apartheid (Gqola; Hodes; Luescher; Naicker; Qambela). While there has been research done on post-apartheid black identities (Mbembe; Matebani and Msibi; Morrell) as well as the motivation and meaning of protests in South Africa (Hodes; Naicker; Koen; Lodge and Mottiar; Qambela), there has not been research done on protests as a platform for black women's resistance, specifically through the use of their bodies. Not only is this research meaningful in the South African context, it also sheds light on the greater issue at hand globally – the oppression of certain groups of people because of specific power regimes and social structures at place. The “fall” protests continue to erupt yearly, increasing in scale every year, and thus the research and investigation is highly relevant in understanding this social phenomenon.

Literature Review

Apartheid was a social and political system of institutionalized racism and racial segregation in all aspects of social life in South Africa between 1948 – 1994. Post-apartheid South Africa continues to negotiate race, class, and gender identities in the current democratic republic because the meaning of race and class are “far more complex and ambiguous now than they have ever been before” (Mbembe, “Passages to Freedom” 6). Specific identities are tied to social and economic power, which is attributed to predominantly white people in South Africa; their privilege marginalizes and excludes those who are different - people of color, who are not at the top of hegemonic power structures (Mbembe, “Passages to Freedom” 7). Transformation of education is part of the broad political process in South Africa towards democratiza-

tion and the reconciliation of colonial and apartheid history (7). Transformation or “empowerment” is a contentious post-apartheid term because it highlights the difficulty of overcoming race differences in South Africa despite constitutional equal rights (7). Student-led protests aimed at “decolonization” rather than “transformation” clearly confirms the contention found within this term.

South African student-led protests are highly referenced with post-colonial and black consciousness theory (Naicker 54). Students defined the framework of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall using Fanon and Biko, for both whom decolonization is a central focal point (Naicker 54). Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* wrote about decolonization, by which he not only meant the reversal of colonization, but the return of human dignity to the colonized people, reification of the colonized people to their full potential, and rejection of the colonizer's values that were implanted for generations beforehand. Biko, as the founder of the black consciousness movement, defined black consciousness as the return of black dignity in the consciousness of black people so that they no longer see themselves as inferior to the colonized (29). He advocated for the liberation of black people by black people, in that only by overcoming the mental oppression caused by perpetual servitude to white people and celebrating the true essence of blackness, rather than the “barbaric” blackness fabricated by colonists, will black people be true architects of their own fate (Biko 21). Both Fanon and Biko advocated for the revival of black people's pride, through which group strength is generated to resist colonial oppression. Fanon and Biko wrote in palpably masculine language directed at black men (Magaziner 48), excluding women from the discourse of decolonization (Bergner 78). Similarly, Young writes that a dominant group, for example white people in South Africa, has the power to completely change the perspective of the individual's view of their group (9). The concept of “double consciousness” is an example of an individual being affected by group belonging (Du Bois 272). Du Bois proposes that black African individuals view themselves in terms of how white people view them (272). Therefore, according to this theory, if black people want to negotiate their identities, not only do they have to overcome the oppressive and discriminating views of the dominant group, but they also must resist double conscious-

ness.

An intersectional approach aims to incorporate sources of oppression that traditional feminist, anti-racist, and post-colonial discourses have failed to include; it looks at black women not only as being oppressed by race, but also by gender, social class, sexual orientation, geographical positioning, and cultural upbringing (Crenshaw 1265). A non-intersectional approach reinforces and reiterates further layers of oppression:

The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that feminism's resistance strategies will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, likewise, the failure of anti-racism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women (Crenshaw 1252).

Therefore, one cannot analyse the cases of black women protesting currently purely through the lens of feminism or through the lens of racism, one must consider the intersectional ways in which individual black women are oppressed.

Essentializing concrete forms of oppression in additive ways such as "blackness," "womanhood," and "social classness" also constructs oppressive identities (Yuval-Davis 195). Each black woman experiences oppression differently, and to categorize black women's oppression is to render it fixed and non-negotiable. According to Collins, everyone belongs to "the matrix of domination" and in this matrix all groups experience various levels of oppression and capabilities for domination (555). For example, a white woman may be dominant in terms of her race, but be dominated by white men because of the patriarchal society she lives in (Collins 555). Race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographical position, and religion together form the matrix; these systems share a belief in the superior and the inferior, and hence in domination (Collins 553).

Resisting the matrix entails a revolution of the self in the consciousness of black women; recognition of personal, cultural, and institutional dimensions of knowledge that influence black women's image of themselves (Collins 559). The creation of black feminist thought by *black* women is also essential in combating the matrix (559). This type

of black feminist thought aligns with radical feminism in the United States, in which the process of women sharing and analysing their experiences, called "conscious-raising," is essential in understanding and thereby changing women's position (Willis 94). Because intra-group understanding fosters strength and resistance, "it is critical for Black people and other people of color to nurture each other" (Zinn et al. 295). The exclusion of black discourse in popular western feminism renders it incomplete (Crenshaw 1253), hence emphasizing black feminist thought is paramount.

Butler's notion of precarity is defined as the suffering of some groups of people more than others, who "become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (*Performative Theory* 33). For Butler, the body is a central site of resistance, capable of political agency through performance and assembly, "vulnerability" strengthening the activism of the precariat ("Bodily Vulnerability" 99). When bodies assemble in public space, they establish their rights to appear in public and demand for "more livable set of lives" (Butler, *Performative Theory* 25). This in turn makes bodies visible in public, in contrast to the invisibility of their precarious daily lives in individual private spheres. Physical violence, poverty, and humiliation as historically colonized subjects are experienced on the body and therefore the assembly of bodies through protests and the occupation of university space acts as a declaration of bodily recognition and value. This declaration of the body in public proclaims: "we are not disposable" (Butler, *Performative Theory* 25) and makes visible their precarity. Assembly theory builds on Butler's previous work on gender performativity, "there can be no reproduction of gender norms without the bodily enactment of those norms" (*Performative Theory* 31), meaning that the body is inseparable from identity formation.

Methodology

This is an interdisciplinary research project combining theories and concepts from postcolonial theory, gender studies, cultural studies, and sociology. This research is divided into two sections, the first section focusing on transformation of post-colonial and post-apartheid legacy in South African universities and how black women are taking the lead in this process through the #RhodesMustFall

and #FeesMustFall protests, the second section focusing on violence against women with regard to rape culture in South Africa and how women are raising awareness about this issue at university campuses through the #RuReferenceList protest. Photographs from the three protests are used as objects of analysis to provide insights and evidence of black women's resistance and agency in the protests, they are examined using by way of visual and textual analysis. Twitter tweets are analysed to reveal the level of activism and awareness-raising that takes place online, and to give insight into the type of discourse that occurs as a result of the protests.

Women's Firm Grip on Decolonization at Universities

This chapter looks at #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall as two key protests primarily concerned with decolonization of higher education in South Africa. The role of black women in these protests is analyzed by using photographs as case studies to examine their agency and demands. The role of the body is analyzed as a site of activism, strength, and precarity; the most important tool for resistance and for making demands for black South African women.

Transformation of South African Universities

South Africa's transition to democracy post-apartheid required the restructuring of the higher education system. Universities during apartheid were segregated by race such that there were white-only universities and black-only universities (Wolpe 278). The National Commission on Higher Education in the "Policy Framework for Education and Training" wrote that post-apartheid South African policies must aim for "a well-planned and integrated, high quality national system of higher education whose students and staff are increasingly representative of South African society" (qtd. in Wolpe 276). At UCT in 2011, black African, Indian, and coloured students comprised 51 percent of the total enrolled students, while at Rhodes University black students numbered 59 percent, and at Wits University 74 percent (Naicker 56). Permanent black academic staff was 32 percent at Wits

University, 28 percent at UCT, and 20 percent at Rhodes (Naicker 56). While the legal structures of racial equality and democracy were put in place in South African universities and changes are reflected in the student racial demographics, student protests show that transformation is not happening thoroughly enough. A student's placard during the protest #RhodesMustFall inscribed with, "In 1994, my parents were sold a dream; I'm here for the refund," reveals the disillusioned South African youth born after apartheid (Luescher 22).

Transformation of higher education is an ongoing process in South African universities with the aim to reconcile apartheid and colonial history, as well to democratize the institutions. To Mbembe, transformation

involves both moral questions of justice and equality and pragmatic and instrumental questions of power and social engineering, it epitomizes more than any other post-apartheid project the current difficulty of overcoming whiteness and blackness ("Passages to Freedom" 7).

Mbembe criticizes transformation as a policy that creates inequality, the very thing it is trying to eradicate, because it requires that the formerly disadvantaged person with the same qualities as a privileged person would be favoured to reconcile with the past (16). Instead, transformation should restore capabilities of disadvantaged groups prevented by apartheid laws by removing barriers and structures that give privilege to white people (17). Transformation goals of education at universities include, but are not limited to: democratic institutional governance, increased access to education to economically marginalized students, Africanisation of the curriculum, and race and gender equality enforcement in institutions (Fourie 275). Vice Chancellor of UCT, Max Price, in his installation address in August 2008 said, "the university community has still inadequately tackled the need for attitude shifts, culture shifts, proactive redress, to ensure that black people and women feel at home here" (Pather 1). While transformation is part of every university's agenda, the students of South Africa are not satisfied with its rate.

#RhodesMustFall

As part of the decolonization agenda in South African universities, colonial symbols and values must be removed from university spaces. "The decolonization of buildings and of public spaces is inseparable from the democratization of access," which not only means opening doors to all South Africans to higher education, but also making sure they feel that they belong to the institution and are not outsiders (Mbembe, "Decolonizing Knowledge"). The protest #RhodesMustFall deals with the controversy of removing the racist statue of Cecil Rhodes from the UCT campus, and reveals a vision for decolonization that includes active black women as agents in this process.

Cecil Rhodes wrote in his Confession of Faith: "I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race" (Flint 248). Rhodes changed laws on voting and land ownership to the disadvantage of black people (Bosch 227). His belief in racial superiority, inequality, and colonization are deep sources of pain in South Africa's history, making him a controversial figure. The presence of a statue commemorating Cecil Rhodes at UCT reminded students of colonial oppression, and its central location on upper campus was unrepresentative of transformation, moreover of decolonization. Since Rhodes "donated" the land that UCT is built on and endorsed the university (Pather 1), the statue was tied to monetary contributions.

Aside from a reconciliation of the past, democracy at the fall of apartheid promised inclusive education; the statue of Rhodes, however, commemorated a racist figure, which was not conducive for reconciliation. President Zuma said that although colonial symbols are not to be celebrated, they are part of South Africa's history and cannot be changed or forgotten: "when you read a history book and you come across a painful page, you do not just rip it out" (qtd. in Nyamnjoh 206). However, bringing down Rhodes' statue "is far from erasing history, and nobody should be asking us to be eternally indebted to Rhodes for having 'donated' his money and for having bequeathed 'his' land to the University" (Mbembe, "Decolonizing Knowledge"). The campaign to remove the statue was initiated on March 9th, 2015 when a student, Chumani Maxwele, soiled the statue with human excrement (Luescher 22). Protesters planned a

one month campaign after in hopes that the statue would fall, and in fact it did fall on April 9th, 2015 (Bosch 221). The protestors pursued the creation of real transformation in universities by bringing down the statue from the UCT campus; in doing so they made new history, but the past was not at all forgotten.

#RhodesMustFall began as protest that sought to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes from the UCT campus. It was not only a debate regarding Rhodes' place in history and how he should be honored or (dis)honored; the protest developed into speaking about broader issues students wanted to address at the university, such as the lack of transformation and decolonization of the curriculum, increasing the numbers of black academic staff, and raising awareness about artworks and statues on campus promoting institutionalized racism (Bosch 222). Hundreds of students gathered for the ceremony of the removal of the statue; Rhodes was at the center of attention, together with Sethembile Msezane; a black female student standing on a plinth with her arms raised imitating a statue (see fig.1).

Defying Colonial Symbols at University Spaces

In fig. 1, the woman identified as Sethembile Msezane is a human statue making a political statement on the campus of UCT. "Doing art means displacing art's borders, just as doing politics means displacing the borders of what is acknowledged as the political" (Rancière 149). The timing of Msezane's performance was vital in placing it beyond the borders of art, because she was captured as a competing figure in a historical moment dedicated to the removal of a statue, rather than to a performance. The performance was spread by media and thus garnered international attention. Msezane therefore not only transcended the limits of her performance beyond the physical space; her presence in this historical event infused additional political angles to this historical moment, which were not visible before - she symbolically demonstrated that the process of transformation in South Africa involves active black women's participation in discourse and in direct action.

The moment that Rhodes' statue was lifted from his plinth, Msezane raised her arms bound with artificial wings to fulfill the image of a bird about to



Figure 1: Photograph of Sthembile Msezane, #RhodesMustFall protester from *Face2Face Africa*

take off. As she rose, Rhodes fell. Her arms look strong, defined with muscle, yet her body looks graceful due to her confident posture. Msezane was wearing a mask so that her eyes would be covered by feathers, disguising her identity. The details of her costume and the gracefulness of her body allow the metamorphosis of Msezane into the Soapstone Bird, the national emblem of Zimbabwe. Rhodes had incorrectly appropriated this emblem to the Groote Schuur estate (Foster) and therefore Msezane's re-appropriation of this emblem serves to reclaim African symbolism and give it legitimacy. In Zimbabwean culture, the Soapstone bird serves as an interlocutor between life and death; during the ceremony, Msezane "acted as the new interlocutor" (Foster). For Fanon, decolonization "means silencing the arrogance of the colonist, breaking his spiral of violence, in a word ejecting him outright from the picture" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 2). According to Fanon, the colonist must be removed from his power position that enabled him to exert violence, and by eliminating him from that position completely, the process of decolonization takes place. Msezane deliberately chose to embody the symbol that Rhodes failed to respect to demonstrate Rhodes' arrogance towards African culture. In the context of Rhodes' permanent removal from UCT, his elimination from the university space could be perceived as an act of decolonization. If colonial occupation itself was the categorization of different rights to different people (Mbebe and Meintjes 24), then the seizure of space, by standing on the plinth at UCT, is the reclamation of sovereignty. Msezane claims her sovereignty by declaring her space as a black person and as a woman, equal to the white man that stood there for decades beforehand.

Reclamation of university space and African culture also takes place through the metaphor of "breaking free" from colonial oppression, which is represented by chains and shackles on the wings and Msezane's arms – chains and shackles have a historical connotation of slavery and subjugation. The poles shackled to Msezane's body make her inseparable from the wings and thereby establish her as one with the bird, and in combination with the motion of flying, she is, above all, a free bird. However, her disguised face enables her to represent more than just the bird by taking focus off her individual face the focus shifts to the body. Msezane explained in an interview in *Elle Magazine*, "by uti-

lizing my body in performances I am trying to place the importance of black women back into the South African landscape" (Shezi). Therefore, the exposure of her black skin and black body in her performance serve the purpose of claiming black female agency in South Africa.

Symbolic juxtapositions present in the photograph in fig. 1 are particularly effective. There is an alive/dead binary as Msezane is a living human in flesh, while Rhodes is dead and what remains is a bronze statue. Together with the contrast of their material state is their mental state establishing the new/old binary of ideologies. Rhodes represents the old system of colonialism in which racism and sexism was acute, while Msezane represents the new system after the fall of colonialism and apartheid, where racism and sexism are actively called out. In the new system, institutionalized racist symbols are taken down and new South African representative symbols can exist, including representations of black women. The binary of man and woman breaks the male hegemony in university spaces. Part of Msezane's motivation for this performance was to make visible the lack of female statues in South Africa and thereby demonstrate that men hold hegemonic representation in public spaces (Shezi). Along with gender, the binary of race is also vital in concentrating the focus of her performance to decolonization. "The substitution of one 'species' of mankind by another" (Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* 1) is one aspect of decolonization and therefore the blatant replacement of a white figure with a black figure, represented in fig.1, is an enactment of decolonization. The gaze of Rhodes and Msezane are also juxtaposed such that Rhodes is looking imperially down, "letting his pensive gaze extend beyond the Cape Flats with its enforced relocated inhabitants, townships and informal settlements towards the North-East" (Murriss 280), while Msezane is facing the university and the students gathered around her in a less brooding manner. The human statue's narrative is therefore juxtaposed with Rhodes' in terms of imperialism and democracy, and serves as a symbolic display of change to come from the removal of Rhodes.

There is "mutual relationality" in the photograph of fig. 1, in that the statues increase each other's significance and meaning when viewed together (Murriss 280). Msezane's performance on her own without the backdrop of the removal of Rhodes would not create the same impact because it would

be regarded as an independent event, rather than a co-existing phenomenon. Likewise, Rhodes' removal from UCT would not have been framed and perceived the same way without the performance of Msezane, who generated additional discourse to the protest. Her performance brought forth and made visible the under-represented groups historically and monumentally, specifically black women in South Africa. "Recognizing gender depends fundamentally on whether there is a mode of presentation for that gender, a condition for its appearance" (Butler, *Performative Theory* 38), meaning that black South African women need a medium to appear and to be recognized. By claiming that space in opposition to Rhodes, she created a mode of representation for black women and showed that the medium can be in the form of protest art, and thus her performance demanded recognition and new interpretation of history (Bosch 222). Msezane demonstrated the possibility of black female recognition in South Africa, and in the process placed women as a focal point of transformation and decolonisation.

The performance demonstrates the lack of female figures as statues in South Africa and the legacy of colonialism in memorials, which is the critical aspect of her performance. Critical art or performance reveals the "forms and contradictions of domination" and produces a new way of looking and transforming the current political situation (Ranci re 142). Critical art approaches current politics by stipulating alternatives to the current regime (Ranci re 142). Msezane embraced "revolution as becoming" (Molefe 36), which is a form of prefigurative politics. In prefigurative movements, protesters embody the changes they are aiming to achieve and their actions are guided by core values rather than efficiency (Leach 1). Msezane's performance directly advocated for Africanism as she embodied the Soapstone Bird, and therefore is representative of the protest's values. Even though Sethembile Msezane's face and identity are covered in fig.1, her individuality and singularity as a female statue does stand out. Metaphors in art operate to merge "representational distance" and "ethical immediacy" (Ranci re 146). The metaphor in the performance – the insistence of black women's recognition – supplements her criticism of the current male dominated public spaces. Msezane bridges the gap between representational art and conceivable reality by creating an aesthetic

performance that transcends her message of transformation by physically embodying transformation herself and leaving a historical image behind. However, the aesthetic appeal of political art can be its weakness because it distracts from intention, does not lead to rebellious impulses for politics, and does not mobilise political action (Ranci re 149). What it does do, however, is form a more polemical conscience and opens the landscape of what is visible, spoken, and acted out (Ranci re 149). Msezane's performance clearly made visible the absence of black women in public spaces and fostered dialogue about this issue.

The effectiveness of the performance in fig. 1 cannot be measured in terms of political change as black statues of women have not yet been erected as a direct result of this protest. However, since the photograph of the performance spread digitally through Twitter, the image initiated a degree of subactivism online (Bosch 224). Subactivism is online political engagement through social media, usually exhibited by the modern youth who do not actively engage with politics offline (225). Subactivism is "not about political power in the strict sense, but about personal empowerment" (Bakardjieva 134), in that an individual can act according to their chosen political standards (Bosch 225). Followers of #RhodesMustFall on Facebook and Twitter had the possibility to post freely, share their views, and engage in socio-political issues such as racial identity (Bosch 225) and thereby broaden the discourse and landscape of the protest holistically. Msezane's performance, sharing the stage with Rhodes, was a contribution to the discourse.

#FeesMustFall

The legacy of colonialism and apartheid is also felt in South African universities in terms of which race has privileged access to higher education. The yearly increment of tuition fees determines who can pay the fees and who cannot, a capacity predicated on class. As class in South Africa is intricately linked to race, increased fees explicitly deny access to education to people of color, who are more likely to have lower incomes. Yearly, roughly 100,000 mostly black students, are forced to leave higher education institutions because they can no longer afford the tuition costs (Koen et al. 405). During apartheid, black people earned several times less than white people because racially discriminatory

employment policies were used. In post-apartheid South Africa, salaries remain tremendously higher for whites than for blacks, albeit not by enforced laws but due to the degree of education and training (Ratele 262). Precarity is a condition produced by social and economic stratification systems from which certain populations suffer more than others and “become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (Butler, *Performative Theory* 33). Black and colored communities in South Africa, living in informal housing and townships, without access to basic facilities and security of safety (Morrell 628), live a precariat life, because their lives are exceptionally susceptible to danger.

#FeesMustFall began as a protest against the proposed 11.5 percent increase in university fees by the Department of Higher Education for the academic year 2016 (Naicker 56). This was six percent higher than forecasted inflation in South Africa and “would have been the eighth successive above-inflation increase in as many years” (Molefe 31). In late 2015, #FeesMustFall led to national protest for free education, ending outsourcing, and a shift towards “embracing the political, philosophical, and historical intellectual traditions of Africa and the African diaspora in order to build a truly post-colonial African university” (Naicker 54). Transforming the demographics of the university to include more women and black people in high positions was also a key demand (Molefe 32). Students, workers, parents, and supporters protested on campus through campaigning for a national shutdown of all university activities until concessions were made (Naicker 55). As a result of the protest, President Jacob Zuma removed the tuition fee increment for 2016 (Naicker 55). There is controversy on the high presence of police on campus whenever students rise to peacefully protest at South African universities, because the protesters are often criminalised, delegitimised, and perceived as violent, resulting their arrest and police violence (Naicker 58). Fig. 2 is a photograph featured on Drum News of the #FeesMustFall protest at Wits University on October 4th 2016. It makes visible that black women have power in taming violence exhibited by the police by using their bodies. That day, police used tear gas and hand grenades against peacefully protesting students (Molefe 31). Women decided to take off their shirts in attempt to stop police violence on the students, which proved successful – the police halted

their attacks on the protesters (Valabhajee). The photograph demonstrates that black female body vulnerability is used as a protest tool for resistance.

Defying Police Force

Three topless women in fig. 2 communicate different emotions, all of which work together to create an image of unified resistance. Resistance is unified between the women because they are all topless and the only women singled out in the photograph. The emotional expressions of the crowd of men harmonize with the women’s; they look angry, fierce, or sad, which creates a holistic united front. It looks like the topless women are protecting the crowd of men by forming an effective human shield against the police. However, women protecting men from police brutality should not be understood as women having more power to withstand police force. Rather, it demonstrates that the vulnerability of women’s bodies can be a form of effective resistance. Vulnerability in this case is predicated on gender and race, whereby black women exposing their naked bodies are at risk of being met with scrutiny and violence. The deliberate action of exposing naked bodies to police power and making the body available for harassment or injury is precisely political resistance (Butler, “Bodily Vulnerability” 100). The topless protesting women showed that they were not feeling vulnerable at that moment and thereby claimed back sovereignty over their bodies.

The woman on the left, whose facial expression denotes anger, is identified as Sarah Mokwebo. In an interview conducted with Marie Claire magazine Mokwebo said, “the number of students injured due to police brutality since we began with the protest has mostly been women” (Valabhajee). Additionally, when students attempted to give flowers to police as a gesture of peace, the police nevertheless fired on the students (Molefe 31). Mokwebo’s contextual anger regarding the treatment of the protesters resonates more broadly with black women’s anger regarding violence and disregard of black women’s bodies in South Africa. Not only are black women in South Africa incredibly exposed to physical violence and rape (see chapter 2), black women’s bodies are sites of shaming and fetishizing. hooks writes that black women’s bodies are “almost always framed within a context of patriarchal, pornographic, racialized sexualisation”



Figure 2: Photograph of Topless Wits Protesters, from *Drum*.

("Naked Without Shame" 67), which locates them in oppressive and demeaning positions. There has been a negative response to these women protesting topless in media. For example, comedian Skhumba ridiculed the protesters by saying they shouldn't protest with "saggy breasts and silver stripes" and that if naked breasts appear in public they should be "tennis-ball firm" (Theletsane). Such comments reveal the body-shaming culture in South Africa and the continuing insistence of controlling women's bodies, in their shapes, sizes, and right to appear in public. By exposing the black naked body in a political context to cease violence, the protesters are insisting on altering the perception of it from being viewed in private as passive and inferior to being viewed in public as active, radical, and superior. The exposure of such images in media helps reconstruct black women's identities in South Africa because images of black women are no longer limited to the patriarchal and racist portrayal – there are images of black women involved in political acts.

The woman in the middle, whose facial expression denotes courage and boldness, is identified as Lerato Motaung. She does not look scared or vulnerable – she looks fierce and determined, contributing power in addition to Mokwebo's anger. This is significant because it portrays the three

women as more powerful than their male protester counterparts in stopping the police. In an environment where women suffer violence from both the police and men, to come out as fiercer is meaningful. Protesting topless is a historically recurring tool for black women in South Africa as women used to protest colonial administrators using nudity, "baring their buttocks on breast, they forced men with power to look at them on their own terms" (Msimang). Nakedness is a device used to be heard and confronted, because the very act of undressing is alarming to society. Foucault writes that sexuality and the body are repressed – individuals are confined in the way they deploy their bodies; this obedience is self-perpetuated by the conformity of society, which is a way of controlling sexuality (*History of Sexuality* 6). The "speaker's benefit" is that through the very act of discussing sex, revolt against control is produced (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 6). Nakedness in protest is resistance against "those who would strip them of their dignity" (Schutte) in that voluntary vulnerability gets transformed into empowerment. The very act of protesting naked produces revolt, and the fact that the naked protesters were not restrained by the police establishes the possibility to negotiate the position of power between the women's bodies and the police. The women depicted in fig. 2 make visible

that oppression of the body socially, culturally, and politically does not render it powerless and deploying the body as vigorous enables black women to negotiate in protest.

The woman on the right in fig. 2 is identified as Hlenghwe Ndlovu, whose despair works to reveal the precarity of the protesters. The viewer can recognize the groundless and cruel violence of the police towards the protesters based on Ndlovu's reactionary expression. What makes the women precarious is precisely the unjustified violence towards them, exposing the power differences between the police and the students. Her expression is contrasted against Mokwebo's and Motaung's, but it reflects a salient trope of the #FeesMust-Fall protest, which is black pain. The violence black students are met with for protesting for free education is painful and humiliating (Valabhajee). "Three hundred years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision" (Biko 21) are not undone in two decades of democracy. Black pain is entrenched in their history in relation to colonization and apartheid when the black race was deprived of human dignity, education, and safety (21). Black women's precarious position in South Africa is revealed in the topless protesters' words when they confronted the police, "We are your children. We are the most vulnerable people in society. Look at my black woman's body. We are the vulnerable ones. Why are you shooting us?" (Schutte). The protesters acknowledged their bodies as unthreatening and vulnerable and to police brutality; the question, "Why are you shooting at us," is supposed to prompt the police to stop and think. The protesters are highlighting their innocence by referring to themselves as children and asking the police to look at them as if they were their children. There is an "ethical appeal" to care for naked bodies due to the "fleshy vulnerability" of their state (Spiegel 798), which is what the protester is alluding to in her speech. The protesters feel a loss of faith in the police, who are supposed to protect them; this is a characteristic element of precarity (Butler, *Performative Theory* 33). However, even though precarity is associated with powerlessness, the women defied their positions and thereby demonstrated possibilities of negotiating power even within precarity.

Ignoring the Man's World in Post-Colonial Theory

Protesters of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMust-Fall built on theory from emancipatory historical figures, such as Biko and Fanon, to define the theoretical framework of their movements (Naicker 54). They ascribed to Biko's Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) notions of post-colonialism from Fanon, and Crenshaw's intersectionality (Molefe 36). Overall, theories appealing to decolonization resonated most with protesting South African students, which is evident in their demands to decolonize education. However, as Molefe explains, "none of the theories answer convincingly how to become a new person through revolution" (37), meaning that theories cannot be the pure basis of leading a life or leading a protest. All theories mentioned were written during apartheid and contemplated the prominent issues of that particular period; post-apartheid South Africa is no longer dealing with the same issues anymore. Hodes believes that the outwardly commitment to Biko and Fanon "helped to forge activist alliances," while they in effect caused division within the movement (148). Based on black women's activism in #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests, which demanded recognition of black women as equal agents, it is clear that Biko's and Fanon's theories do not entirely resonate with black women's demands, because their writings fail to include black women as agents.

The protesters were met with difficulties in proclaiming all-inclusive transformation as post-colonial theory focuses primarily on race and not at all on gender, which marginalizes and excludes women by neither addressing them nor their pertinent issues. There is an undeniable paradox regarding women's agency in the black consciousness philosophy as Biko and black consciousness were both sexist and supportive of women's participation (Magaziner 47). The language used by Biko in his book, *I Write What I Like*, is very masculine in that he alludes and calls to black men only. Biko writes how the black man has lost his "manhood," which makes him not a man (28). He sees the definition of black consciousness itself as the making of the black man – man again: "to pump life into his empty shell: to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his

birth" (29). Most jarring is the statement, "One of the most fundamental aspects of our culture is the importance we attach to Man. Ours has always been a Man-centered society" (41). Magaziner argues that the language used excludes women because it is palpably masculine and therefore limits the equal participation of women in this movement (46). Indifference to gender issues during the onset of BCM was due to prioritization of the most fundamental oppression, which Biko believed to be race above all, and that this was a "strategic" choice to eliminate any perceived vulnerability caused by the group division of black people (Magaziner 47). As a result, women's issues were pushed to the background to give the possibility of black people's liberation to take place, eliminating the risk of undermining their claims (Magaziner 57).

Similarly, Fanon writes in masculine language and places an importance on black men being real men. "A black man is not a man," Fanon writes in *Black Skin White Masks* (1). The use of man is not "universal" humankind, but refers to actual men (Bergner 6). This formulation implies that not being a man in the masculine sense is not being human (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 13). The postulation renders women invisible, as being human is judged on masculinity. Black women were not part of Fanon's discourse, his "description of colonial psychodynamics as a relationship between white men and black men... removes feminine subjectivity from the center of his analysis" (Bergner 85). Fanon wrote very bluntly that he did not understand women or have anything to say about women of color, "I know nothing about her" (*Black Skin White Masks* 138). The exclusionary practice which affected black women in Fanon's post-colonial theory was neither practiced or reproached by the protesters; instead they focused on his rhetoric regarding decolonization, prioritizing race first, just like Biko (Hodes 148). This exclusion did not stop black women from taking the lead in these protests, however.

The need for an intersectional approach resonates throughout the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall protests. Mokwebo, a protester in fig 2., said, "the revolution will be intersectional or it will be bullshit" (Valabhajee). The choice of the word "revolution" indicates her belief that the protest should not only be successful in its concrete aims, but it should change the education system at large by handling intersectional issues of black

women; "overthrow the repressive old and replace it with a liberated new" (Molefe 32). #FeesMustFall was fragmented in terms of ideology because the theory used to frame the protest did not resonate with everyone's needs (Hodes 148). Ideological disputes about the priorities of the protest reveal that groups of people involved in the protest experienced subjectivity differently. Hence intersectionality, as a method that studies oppression of individuals as intersecting with multiple power regimes rather than one overarching power structure, proposes potential for unity and cohesion between different people in a group, because no oppression is more dominant than another one. However, an intersectional agenda is complex and in the process of protesting, some matters will be emphasized more over others. Criticism of intersectionality is that it predominantly prioritizes race, class, and gender, and not other factors such as sexuality, which produces the exclusionary practice intersectionality aims to avoid (Puar 374).

Intersectionality did not provide the solution for solving the issue of power and leadership in the #FeesMustFall protest, and it was difficult to maintain the approach consistently as the protest oscillated between "intersectional and solitarist understandings between power and oppression" (Hodes 148). That is not to say, however, that intersectionality did not facilitate the formulation of a more holistic protest by providing a theoretical framework for the participation of black women. This is particularly evident in the #FeesMustFall protest where black women made visible the intersectional layers of oppression and vulnerability experienced during protest. Their gender intersected with race and class, resulting in extraordinary precarity which even the police felt compassionate for, resulting in a subsequent seizure of violence towards them.

In both protests, the exclusionary nature of Biko and Fanon writings was overcome in practice by women taking the lead and standing on the front lines of demonstrations. Msezane palpably claimed black women's agency during the removal ceremony of Rhodes' statue, which powerfully commanded the physical and mental place of black women in post-apartheid South Africa, in that black women's bodies are recognized as equal in race and gender. Even though Biko's BCM linguistically addresses black men, black pride pertains to both genders. Black consciousness "expresses group

pride and determination by the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self" (Biko 68). By writing "group", Biko includes women and thereby speaks to women as well. The status of black women in South Africa was declared during Msezane's performance, and she ascertained their legitimacy and showed the inclusiveness of black women in the contribution to transformation. During the violent police actions in relation to #FeesMustFall, the three topless women in fig. 2 formed a human shield, profoundly demonstrating the role of women in peaceful resistance. Biko defined black consciousness as a physically non-violent process, as "each group must be able to attain its style of existence without encroaching on being thwarted by another" (Biko 21). Black consciousness is an aggressive mental and emotional liberation of the mind from colonial oppression, which produces "real black people" (Biko 51). The women in fig. 2 embraced non-violent aspects of black consciousness and chose to proclaim respect on their own terms without oppressing another group.

Theories used to formulate the framework of #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall were useful in gaining popularity of the movement among the students; but in practice, the theories fell short of including students' needs. However, even though Fanon and Biko push women's issues in the background, they address race empowerment, which was absorbed by black women in this protest to gain strength. Intersectionality pushes women's issues in the foreground in these protests, but the approach proved unstable as the protesters couldn't agree on how to lead the protest. The combination of intersectionality and post-colonialism aided the students in their personal and group motivation. Disputes on how to lead the protest reveals that theories need to be adjusted to the specificity and singularity of the South African post-apartheid case.

This chapter looked at two key student protests, #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, which focused on decolonization of higher education institutions in South Africa and how black women have become prominent figures of the protests, defining the protest goals and future directions. Analysis of photographs showed that the body is central to resistance and is used to reclaim space and dignity as well as to make visible the vulnerability of black women as a group in South Africa. The black women protesters demonstrated that there is room

for women's agency and that they are capable of being equally important and active agents as men in the process of decolonization, even though their contribution was omitted from Biko and Fanon's writings.

Women's Firm Grip on Institutionalized Violence at Universities

This chapter discusses #RuReferenceList, a student protest against rape culture at universities. A photograph from the protest is analyzed to show how the vulnerability of the body is used as a tool of resistance, while a selection of tweets from Twitter are analyzed to illustrate the precarious position of rape victims and the unfavorable conditions during trials. Relations of power are discussed to explain how institutionalized violence is sustained and why changing policies regarding rape trials is particularly challenging for the protesters.

Rape and the Justification of Violence in South Africa

Not only is rape a tremendous problem in South African universities, it is a national crisis. "South Africa has the worst known figures of rape for a country that is not at war" (Qambela, "When They Found Out" 180). About 55,000 rape cases of women are reported every year, which is estimated to be nine times lower than the actual number (Seedat et al. 1011). Violence is directed significantly more towards black African women than towards other racial groups (Seedat et al. 1012).

Domestic violence in South Africa used to be treated as a private family matter where conflicts should remain within the home walls, a type of thinking that still prevails in many families today (Vogelman and Eagle 211). Societal understanding and justifications for violence against women relies upon biological reasoning in terms of sex difference, which are hinged upon essentialized gender roles and notions of hegemonic femininity and masculinity. Masculinity is characterized by aggression, sexual prowess, and dominance, whereas femininity is characterized by submissiveness, passivity, and emotion (Morrell 611).

Throughout apartheid, a man's dominant position in society was predicated upon race, class, and his geographical position (Morrell 615). In a rela-

tionship, a black man's dominance was predicated on the control of his woman and his sexual entitlement (615). The internalization and complicity of gender roles by the society is one of the main reasons why violence against women is so highly unreported by women and relentlessly pursued by men, among other reasons such as lack of confidence in the police and monetary reliance on male partners (Vogelman and Eagle 212). The strong emphasis and value of specific forms of masculinity and femininity dictates a gendered way of life, which tolerates physical violence towards women (213). The family is also a key site of domination for men and therefore such patterns are further exacerbated at home and onto future generations through children (Ramphela 395). By accepting and believing in unequal gender rights, men are tolerated as perpetrators and women treated as provokers. Challenging the norms of gender relations can only begin when the belief of dominant and submissive roles is no longer shared by both genders.

Before the introduction of black feminist thought in South Africa, gender equity was perceived as "un-African" and was equated to "modernity, (white) middle-class aspirations, and widespread lack of (male) economic advancement" (Ratele 257). According to Morrell, feminism was perceived to threaten black male hegemonic masculinity in a social and political environment where black men were already diminished of all power, leaving women as the only group they could dominate (625). Ratele believes that black feminism has the power to liberate the black man from his historical multiple oppressions and thereby eradicate the violence towards women by creating a new "progressive masculinity" (267). Intersectionality serves the purpose of integrating different sources of subordination and causes of domestic violence towards women in effort to demonstrate that modest and singular attempts to combat this crisis will prove ineffective (Crenshaw 1249). Black feminist thought and intersectionality is a source of liberation for black women in South Africa because it challenges the obligation to conform to and embody expected hegemonic femininity, allowing for the creation of more fluid forms of femininity and masculinity, such that they that do not oppress each other.

Protests against rape culture at South African universities focus specifically on changing the situation on campus by instructing men not to rape,

rather than instructing girls not to get raped (Disrupt). They are demanding for a change in the way black masculinities are enacted and black femininities are perceived. They are also demanding the university administration to address rape more seriously and change the rhetoric about rape on campus. Since rape culture is not only the result of a patriarchal norms imbedded in gender roles in society, it cannot be approached as an independent event (Qambela, "There Is No Such Thing" 41), and therefore requires critical engagement with an intersectional lens.

#RuReferenceList

On April 17th, 2016, an anonymous post on Facebook's page *RU Queer Confessions* and *Crushes* consisting of 11 male student names titled "Reference List" went viral (Seddon). There were no further details in the post regarding what the names meant, but Rhodes University (RU) students gathered that the names on the list were of alleged rapists (Qambela, "When They Found Out" 188). The Vice Chancellor of RU, Dr. Sizwe Mabizela, announced that the reference list is "unconstitutional" and negates human rights of innocent until proven guilty; he said that the release was not an action from the university administration and that it could not condone the persecution of the alleged rapists on the list (Whittles). A protest erupted due to the lack of serious attention and urgency given to this released list. Protesters demanded the university to face the endemic gender violence and rape culture and to handle allegations of sexual assault with university students indispensably, to "suspend alleged perpetrators while a process of investigation occurs" (Seddon).

The hashtag present in the protest name enabled it to spread nationally amongst South African students through Twitter and Facebook (Qambela, "There Is No Such Thing" 38). Other universities such as the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) protested in solidarity with the #RuReferenceList by protesting topless on university campus. RU students were the first to protest topless and Wits followed, showing their bare breasts with and without written exclamations such as "revolt," "my body my choice," and "still not asking for it" (Haith). Analysis of specific photographs from protests and tweets from Twitter make visible the institutionalized violence in public spaces in South Africa; such

as the university, the subsequent dehumanization of rape survivors in the rape trial process, and the protection of alleged rapists by law. In addition, the analysis of the media objects reveals the power of the protesting naked black female body in reclaiming agency, space, and respect. The photograph in fig. 3 (see below) "Still Not Asking For It" captures visual and textual elements that provide insights into black women's agency in the discourse about rape and violence and exemplifies the centrality of the black body throughout the #RuReferenceList protest.

Still Not Asking For It

The body plays a central role in the #RuReferenceList protest, offering insight into which bodies are protected and which are not. The focal point of fig. 3, "Still Not Asking For It," is also the body. If we turn to look at the woman's face, the photograph captured a specific moment in time; in that second her eyes were closed and her mouth was open. Her overall body has been caught in motion. She is active, not passive; speaking, not silent; held in the emotion of her performance. She appears to be singing and thus, in the setting of protest, it can be called performative. Nakedness is the costume of her performance and as her body radiates with confidence in being unclothed and exposed in her surroundings it affirms its strength. It seeks power by being fully exposed because black female bodies have been historically subjugated to humiliation and shame (Msimang). This woman is reclaiming the university space and demanding the protection of her body by palpably demonstrating both the vulnerability and agency of her own body.

The exposure of the black woman's breasts in fig. 3 is crucial to the photograph because it resists the scrutiny of black female bodies (Crenshaw 1271). Protesting topless was a historically recurring tool for black women in South Africa against colonial and apartheid administrators (Msimang). Several topless women at RU were arrested by the police under the premise of "public indecency" and "disobedience" (*Disrupt*). Men walked around with no shirts, inscribing "I bet you won't arrest me," on their bare chests (*Disrupt*). The male protesters thus made visible the inconsistency of "public indecency" when it comes to gendered bodies, because they were not arrested (*Disrupt*).

RU administration responded to the #RuRefer-

enceList protest with an interdict, which strengthened the laws against protesting on campus to contain the protest after students started to disrupt classrooms and women took off their tops ("Statement Law Faculty"). Even though the protest remained peaceful, protesters were expressing anger, which the police interpreted as violence (*Disrupt*). Police presence on campus was high due to the interdict and they had the authority to tame and arrest protesters. State sovereignty or democracy is a contradictory principle because it grants the right for people to assemble, but also maintains the right to dissolve the protest with police force (Butler, *Performative Theory*159). So, "does it make sense for people to rely on government to protect itself from government?" (Butler, *Performative Theory*158). The #RuReferenceList protesters experienced the paradox of assembly in democracy with the interdict. Butler believes that assemblies can only be effective if they are non-violent (157), but #RuReferenceList demonstrates that if an institution like the university, which is supposed to protect the interest of students, is making alliances with the police, even peaceful assembly is dissipated. The protester's blatant risk-taking behavior in fig. 3 establishes her resilience to authority which does not conform to the traditional rules of how bodies should or can appear in public. She displays courage because she exposed herself to a high possibility of arrest. Vulnerability of the body in this photograph is political; not as a sign of weakness, but of strength. She is transforming her vulnerability and susceptibility to violence as a black woman into a site of resistance by coercing the confrontation of black bodies. The nakedness demands people to look at her and see her as she sees herself, to recognize her body with respect and deem the integrity of her body as non-negotiable. Fig. 3 displays a powerful black woman who is not afraid and not ashamed, thus the image makes a statement that black women are not weak, not passive, and resilient to humiliation.

The photograph would not be as impactful without the text "still not asking for it" inscribed on the woman's chest. Still not asking for what? Still not asking to be sexually assaulted even if naked breasts are exposed? It speaks to the position that the black female body, clothed or naked, is not an invitation or provocation for abuse. Black women are often presumed to be playing hard to get, as though they should be relentlessly pursued come



Figure 3: Still Not Asking For It. From Kyle Oberholzer, *ENCA* 26 Apr. 2016,

“the bizarre and oppressive claims that women cannot say what they mean and mean what they say” (Gqola 117). In this case, the woman says she is not asking for it, and she means it. Moreover, the slogan dismantles the popular belief that women ask to get raped because they are provocative (Crenshaw 1270). The stereotype of the hypersexual black female stems from the myth that black women are more inclined to have sex, they are more primitive, and always seek gratification, compared to white women (Crenshaw 1271). These mythological images create narratives based on sexuality, distinguishing “good” women and “bad” women – black women being “prepackaged as bad” (Crenshaw 1271). Hence, the woman depicted in fig. 3 pronounces her opposition towards this myth by claiming her body as belonging to her and deploying it on her own terms, without control of others. If women’s silence about their subjugation to violence is complicity (hooks, *Talking Back* 128), then speaking up is a blatant refusal of social norms that enable the subordination of women’s bodies. Demanding not to be raped is also a correlating demand to not get arrested by the police. As the protest engages with narratives concerned with the discriminatory wielding of power against women and their bodies, it also speaks to how women’s

bodies are treated by the police and whether they are criminalized or not. Given that topless women were arrested at RU, the protester in fig. 3 is asking not to be.

The combination of the text “still not asking for it” and her exposed breasts is not only bold, it produces the image of a free body. Exercising gender and the body in terms of the woman’s own choices is an exercise of freedom because she asserts this right to her gender identity, making freedom part of her identity as a black woman (Butler, *Performative Theory* 61). It is as though despite the rape culture present on Wits University campus, her body remains a place of strength and resistance – hers to control and deploy. The protestor is rebellious because she wants to change the misogynist system, rather than adapt to the system to avoid sexual violence. The hegemonic rhetoric in South Africa about women’s safety focuses predominantly on avoiding certain neighborhoods and not walking alone, and encourages dressing more conservatively (Gqola 121), all of which instruct the woman to eliminate the possibility of assault. This rhetoric alienates women to specific spaces which they envisioned as safe (Gqola 121), which is not the public space. The topless protestor defies this privatized seclusion of violence by demonstrating

against it in the central plaza of Wits University. Women protesting naked against rape culture are demanding that the fight against rape culture focus on why men are raping women in the first place and how that could be changed, rather than focusing on how women could avoid getting into rape situations.

Even though the naked body plays a central role in this photograph, it was censored by the publisher. Censoring of the female breasts, even in the context of protest, shows that the naked female body is still considered taboo and indecent to the public. Grosz explains that women historically have been alienated as social agents particularly because of the denigration and control of the female body (xiv). The transparent rectangles that cover her nipples and not those of male counterparts in the same protest signifies unequal treatment of gender by media, contributing to the sexual and political suppression of women (Helppie-Schmieder 4). While the female protestor re-claimed power in relation to her naked body, some of its significance was diminished by media's repression of her body through censored representation. This censorship displays the difficulty of challenging hegemonic representations of women's bodies in media, but it makes visible the very power that naked women's bodies are exhibiting in this protest, because efforts to minimize the impact have been placed.

Rejection of Silencing Tactics on Twitter

The tweets in fig. 4, fig. 5, fig. 6, and fig. 7 inform readers about the attitudes and perceptions of the #RuReferenceList protest and reveal that women are aware of their own oppression, institutionalized violence, and the power of social media. The first tweet in fig. 4 by *nontlakanipho* expresses the unreasonable policies of reporting rape and proving the sexual encounter as not consensual. She writes, "How do you prove a rapist intended to rape you? It's not like they inform you ..." The sarcasm of *nontlakanipho* reveals her opinion on the matter of proving consent, which is nearly impossible. A woman's consent is measured on the degree of resistance to the sexual intercourse shown, following the logic that she would seek to protect herself "virtually to death" (Crenshaw 1960). *Nontlakanipho* makes visible that non-consensual sex is incredibly difficult to prove unless it results in ex-

treme physical harm. This idea regarding consent is closely tied to the definition of rape, which has to be adjusted if it relies on such evidence. The matter of consent renders many victims invisible and incapable of filing a report.

Candice in fig. 5 speaks out against the myth that dressing a specific way determines whether you actively seek to engage in sexual intercourse. She writes, "My Clothes Do NOT determine MY CONSENT." Her point takes us back to the rejection of the hyper-sexualized myth of black women and that women are not inherently pursuing sex, regardless of the clothes they are wearing. *Liso Dlova* in fig. 6 writes, "To speak up about rape culture at Rhodes Uni is to be subjected to silencing tactics, threats and violence," showing awareness that the topic of rape on campus is not an open discussion. *Rebecca Pointer* in fig 7. asks, "Why does protecting men's reputation trump protecting future rape victims from known perpetrators?" She expresses disagreement with the way RU administration is treating rape and the Reference List and feels contentious towards the protection of male hegemony. Tweeters are under the consensus that perpetrators are protected and victims are subjected to silence.

By establishing such a conversation on Twitter *nontlakanipho*, *Candice*, *Liso Dlova*, and *Rebecca Pointer* demonstrate resistance towards the patriarchal system that upholds rape culture. Twitter provided a platform to negotiate ideas, share pain, and most importantly – initiate discourse about a topic that had been silenced. Activists of the protest, survivors of rape, friends of people that got raped, and even potential perpetrators of rape were participating in the discussion. The dialogue created was an act of "conscious-raising" allowing women to share and analyze their experiences, to understand where their oppression stems from (Willis 94). The type of "nurturing" that takes place by black women supporting each other in their painful experiences is essential in changing their position (Zinn et al. 295).

It was not accidental that the protest put a hashtag on its name, as digital feminism has gained international momentum in recent years (Baer 18). There have been other successful feminist movements such as #YesAllWomen and #Aufschrei, which utilized Twitter to expose gender oppression and sexual violence gaining both national and international attention (Baer 18). Twitter can in-

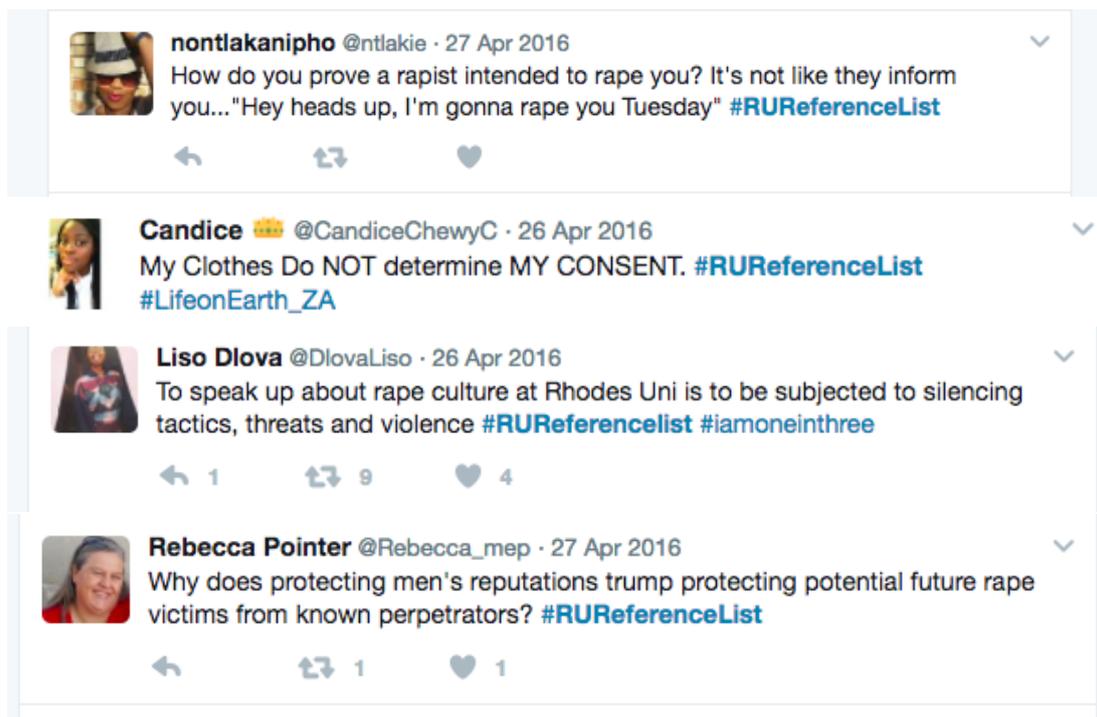


Figure 4: From top to bottom: *nontlakanipho*, *Candice*, *Liso Dlova*, *Rebecca Pointer*. From Twitter.

form the public about rape culture and violence against women in real time without the interference or selection bias from the traditional media and news, and therefore bring to attention certain issues that mainstream media ignores (Williams 342). However, while digital media enables discourse regarding sexual violence, the fact that it remains predominantly online is also its weakness. The #RuReferenceList protest did not achieve its goal removing the burden of proving rape from victims (Pather) and no genuine policy concessions from the university were made, which reveals the precarious position of the protesters (“Statement Law Faculty”).

Butler warns that neoliberal regimes locate minorities disproportionately in unstable situations to live precarious lives, while paradoxically also offering individual choice and an illusion of infinite opportunities (*Performative Theory*33). Like neoliberalism, South African institutions such as the university fail to protect the most vulnerable and precarious groups. “To be radically deprived of recognition threatens the very possibility of existence and persisting” (40). Fig. 4, fig. 5, fig. 6, and fig. 7 reveal the precariousness of the black women in South Africa because they are not adequately recognized as victims of rape culture. They make visible the black

body’s experience of violence and the bizarre standards for judgment of consent. On the other hand, the topless protester in fig. 3 demonstrates that precarity also serves as a site of activism, a mechanism that demands recognition (Butler, *Performative Theory*34). She declared that she is persistent and will not stop, despite her dangerous position; in other words, she is “not disposable” (Butler, *Performative Theory*25).

Dehumanization of Rape Survivors Through Institutionalized Violence

In court, cases of rape are treated as such: the victim is put on trial rather than the suspect (Connell 58). As women are proportionally raped more than men, Connell contends that this practice of putting women on trial upholds patriarchal norms, locating women in deeper precarity as they are not deemed the primary judges of consensual sex – men are (63). The woman alleging rape is interrogated by asking whether she was seduced by the man or was an innocent victim, a process through which the “good/bad woman dichotomy” is legitimized (Crenshaw 1266). A legitimate rape victim is measured by a narrow spectrum of acceptable sexual conduct for a woman (Crenshaw 1270). Since sexual violence directed at women is toler-

ated to the extent that it is not proven by law, rape is systematic and encourages the perpetration of violence (Connell 63). LaFree argues, "law may be interpreted as an institutional arrangement for reinforcing women's gender role conformity" (qtd. in Crenshaw 1278). Thus, gender violence is institutionalized in law, which marginalizes and belittles women and legitimizes their oppression.

Attesting to the violence of this practice, #RuReferenceList protesters in the documentary *Disrupt* revealed that the most difficult obstacle for rape victims is the added layers of pain and humiliation that one goes through by re-telling the instance and the subsequent judgment. Questions are asked regarding what they were wearing, whether they were drunk, and whether it was forceful, which all dehumanize the victim. Victims are encouraged to "be sure" of whether they were raped, as not to diminish the reputation of the perpetrator if investigation begins (*Disrupt*). The RU law faculty responded to the #RuReferenceList protest on the university website:

We are concerned that the rights of alleged perpetrators... have been infringed during the events of last week, resulting in possible irreparable harm to their reputations, their studies and their future careers. They have been publicly accused, without formal charges being levelled against them, and they have not been granted the opportunity to respond to the accusations ("Statement Law Faculty").

In both cases, at court and at the university, the suspected rapist is assumed innocent until proven guilty. While policies must be put in place to have a fair trial on all cases of rape, the current policies all seek to protect the suspect. Protesting women were outraged because this policy contributes to unequal power of men over women in rape cases, which is perceived as another setback to gender equality in South Africa (*Disrupt*). To a large extent rape is considered an independent event, an instance isolated from other social and environmental factors (Qambela, "There Is No Such Thing" 41), thus individual factors are addressed primarily, rather than looking at the greater power structures of institutions that tolerate such violence.

Power and Intersectionality

What allows for rape to exist as systemic violence? Largely, the operation of power in soci-

ety. Institutions such as the university do not operate their power independently, as Matebani says they are "microcosms of our society" (qtd. in Qambela, "There Is No Such Thing" 39). One of Foucault's key ideas is that there is no power without knowledge. Therefore, black women without the knowledge of how institutions operate and subjugate certain groups of people cannot show resistance; fighting oppression comes from knowing where it stems from. The exercise of power is a socialized phenomenon and operates on the grassroots level such that people discipline themselves and their bodies without deliberate coercion from authorities (Foucault, *Punishment and Discipline* 138). Foucault writes that "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" (*History of Sexuality* 63). Power creates dichotomies and divisions of people who are powerful and experience domination, and those who are not powerful and experience subjugation; it has a significant role in "othering."

"Othering" is a mechanism which allows the dominant person to distance himself from the experiences of the subjugated person, because their way of life and values are assumed to be different (Crenshaw 1260). Black women are excluded and subordinated from normative constructions of power in South Africa because they are situated as the "other" in rape culture. The belief that "violence occurs only in homes of others" displaces the other as a less significant minority and rape culture as a minority problem, which doesn't need to be urgently addressed as a major university issue (Crenshaw 1260). The combination of structural policies, which place women in subordinate positions by law, the procedure followed by universities in denigrating and doubting women's consent, and the police violence exhibited on peaceful topless protesters demonstrates that black women's oppression comes from multiple structures; from individuals, the university administration, and the judicial system. These multiple structures of oppression constitute rape as an institutionalized phenomenon. Distance created between marginal and dominant group is one way the oppressive behavior of the dominant group does not get confronted by those who have power to change it, hence rape is institutionally tolerated and often renders victims powerless.

In this chapter, my analysis and discussion of the #RuReferenceList protest and its media objects

demonstrated that violence against black women in South Africa is an intersectional phenomenon. It is not only caused by patriarchy, it is also hinged upon gender roles and notions of appropriate sexuality. Black women are exceptionally vulnerable to sexual violence, but they are shifting the conversation to the public and this way creating widespread awareness of this issue, empowering women to speak up. The body is presented as a site of violence, but also as a site of activism; a mechanism to break the silence about experienced oppression.

Conclusion

All protests discussed in this research paper demonstrate that black women are not merely sharing the protest platform with men; they are claiming it, and making it inclusive of their personal demands; they are extending the protests' agenda to cover intersectional issues. Contention in student protests was found in wrestling with what transformation of education actually means and thus the insistence of decolonization in its place. Msezane's performance in the #RhodesMustFall protest indicated the inclusiveness of black women in the process of decolonization of higher education as she took an active role at the climax of the #RhodesMustFall protest. She demonstrated that black women are challenging the theoretical conception of decolonization, despite the lacking presence of female agency in the theories describing decolonization. Msezane's performance brought to the forefront underrepresented black women in South Africa, creating a mode of representation for them and paving future avenues for it to take place. Representation and subsequent recognition of black women are vital, because even though they do not guarantee that women's positions will be altered, no representation nor recognition guarantees that their positions remain stagnant. Her performance commanded the position of black women in the future to be fully recognized as equal in race and gender. Lastly, Msezane's performance celebrated Africanism by placing the true meaning of the Soapstone Bird back in history from its colonial appropriation, which established her as a direct agent of decolonization.

Police violence exhibited on students in the #FeesMustFall protest exposed black women's bodily vulnerability and verified that this vulnerability

works as an effective political tool for resistance. Black women protesters confirmed that they have an important role in the #FeesMustFall protest by exhibiting power over the police and forcing them to listen. #FeesMustFall was highly framed in the post-colonial theoretic framework based on Fanon and Biko, whose theories lacked black feminist principles. However, peaceful resistance was successfully assimilated by women, demonstrated by their ability to tackle violence with the display of their naked bodies. Exclusion from the post-colonial theory was overcome by women embracing intersectionality as a guiding theory for cohesion and inclusiveness in the protest, because it incorporates the oppression experienced by black women that post-colonial theory fails to include. Women stood at the front lines of demonstrations, something probably unimaginable for both Fanon and Biko. Topless protesters revealed that this protest is intersectional and requires the efforts of men and women to work together to eliminate the differential susceptibility to violence and oppression of marginalized groups at universities. They also made it clear that the administration cannot merely appease protesters by conceding only to some of their demands, as they must also have an intersectional approach to the solutions proposed to settle the protest for good.

Vulnerability of black women's bodies as a key tool for resistance against violence and rape culture was further confirmed in the #RuReferenceList protest. The woman in the photograph, "Still Not Asking For It," revealed the precarity of her body but transformed it to a site of activism because she made the demand for recognition of her body directly on it. The protester opposed the myth that all black women are hyper-sexual by deploying her naked body in a manner that was political and not sexual. She established the integrity and freedom of her body in the protest and made a significant statement to the public via the media that black women are not silent and not complicit to their oppression. Black women that use their vulnerability to make statements about the rights of their bodies set examples for other women to feel empowered rather than remain hopeless in their oppression. #RuReferenceList protest revealed that violence against women and rape is institutionalized, to the extent that dehumanization of the victim is inevitable in terms of how the procedure of rape trials takes place and the cultural conceptions

about consensual engagement in sex. However, the fact that the protesting women have knowledge on how their oppression works is a strength for their resistance and allows for the resistance to grow with time. Even though the #RuReferenceList was not successful in the concrete aims the protesters wanted to achieve, the protest did create awareness and broke the silence that existed about rape culture at universities. Twitter provided a platform to negotiate ideas, share pain, and initiate discourse about the protest and rape culture in general. The protest is significant because by creating conversation about rape in public, rape can begin to be treated not as an independent event isolated to the homes of "others," but as an intersectional societal issue relevant for everyone and requiring the efforts of everyone to combat.

The generation born after apartheid were supposed to be South Africa's "beautiful ones" and reap the benefits of democracy; however, perhaps they are "yet to be born" and the revolutionary duty of this generation "is to make room for them to be born" (Molefe 37). Democracy in South Africa did not solve its complex race, class, and gender problems that instigate inequality in society. Democracy, however, does allow for this inequality to be contested and negotiated, which paves a hopeful future for the generations to come. The emerging agency of women in negotiating their position in society is even more promising as demands and needs will be addressed by black women for black women.

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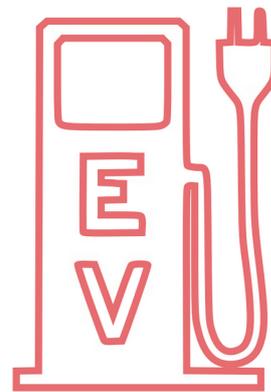
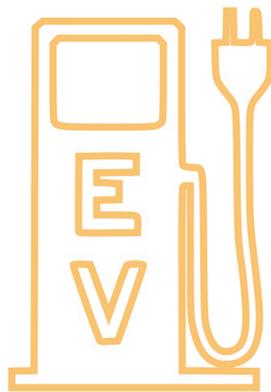
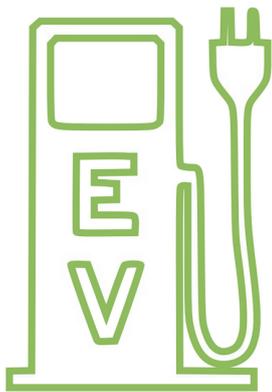
Sciences

Simulating Cascading Failure in the Charging Infrastructure of Electric Vehicles

A Novel Approach for Improving Charging Station Deployment

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adapted from EE&RE 2015

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Abstract

The deployment of future charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) is important in order to improve the charging infrastructure and ensure customer satisfaction and sufficient service provision. So far, the effect of charging station failure on other EV users has not been considered in deployment strategies. To improve the deployment, this thesis introduces two new vulnerability measures, both identifying the charging stations that have the greatest effect on other EV users in case of failure. The simulation of a particular station's failure allows to measure its cascading failure effect on other EV users. Service failure vulnerability is defined as the fraction of charge transactions that cannot to be distributed to alternative charge stations when it comes to failure. Inconvenience vulnerability measures the length of a cascade, which refers to the number of EV users being affected by the failure of a particular charging station. The higher a station's vulnerability score, the higher is the effect on EV users in case of its failure. The results show that these two vulnerability measures appear orthogonal to each other, meaning that they are statistically independent. High service failure vulnerability scores were found on the outskirts of the cities, while high inconvenience vulnerability scores were found in the city centre. These patterns were found in all considered cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht). The comparison of the new vulnerability measures with the commonly used centrality measures (node degree, betweenness, closeness and eigenvector) showed that centrality measures do not explain the differences of spatial distribution of vulnerable charging stations in terms of service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability. Therefore, this thesis suggests that policy makers and municipalities should consider both vulnerability measures in order to make considered decisions about future charging station deployment.

1 Introduction

With the rising awareness of their potential benefits, Electric vehicles (EVs) have captured the attention of car owners across the globe. Their most important benefits are the clear advantages of zero exhaust emission and less costs per kilometre compared to conventional internal combustion engine cars (Holdway et al. 2010). The Netherlands is one of the frontrunners when it comes to electric mobility and advertising EVs' cleaner air quality benefits. Using policies such as tax reduction and deployment of necessary charge infrastructure, the government tries to incentivise citizens to make the change from conventional cars to EVs (Ministry of Transport 2011). One of the policies states that each new EV user can apply for a new charging station, thereby ensuring that users have an available charge location in their neighbourhood (Amsterdam Electric 2016). Furthermore, Amsterdam prioritises EV users by providing free parking in the city centre (Amsterdam Electric 2016). These policies have been modestly successful, with 10% of the market share of new car registrations being EVs in 2015 (Netherlands Enterprise Agency 2016).

Despite these efforts and an increased EV use, the majority of people still choose conventional cars over EVs. This may be explained by limited driving ranges, high purchase costs, and an under-

developed charge infrastructure (van den Hoed et al. 2014). With the previously mentioned incentivising policies in place, in theory the current infrastructure should suffice. However, this is not the case due to the fact that EV users wish to not only charge their EV's at home, but also outside their place of residence. In order to overcome this insufficiency, research has taken different angles to improve the infrastructure by looking at different deployment strategies for charging stations and EV users' charge behaviour. In order to analyse the efforts and efficiency of implementing additional charging stations by the municipality, Spoelstra and Helmus (2015) assessed the different current deployment strategies: demand-driven versus the strategic. Deployment strategies refer to the decision making of where additional charging stations are needed (He et al. 2015). In the demand-driven strategy charging stations are implemented after the request from a new EV user, while in strategic deployment the charging stations are implemented at popular public locations. They concluded that both strategies should be used by municipalities (Spoelstra and Helmus 2015), because demand-driven deployment provides infrastructure in residential areas, while strategic deployment covers public locations such as shopping centres.

By understanding the charging behaviour of EV users, researchers have tried to comprehend

¹Image courtesy from AFDC, modified by the author. Original image: https://www.afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity_charging_station_signage.html

how municipalities could cater to the needs of EV users (Spoelstra 2014; Franke and Krems 2013). Spoelstra (2014) found that users have a routine charging behaviour. In other words, users charge their EVs not based on battery level but on convenience. Additionally, he found that users usually do not deviate from their customary charging station, which suggests that users are not willing to accept long detours to charge their EVs. In this way, EV users differ from users of conventional cars, who usually find a petrol station once their tank is almost empty. The occurrence of routine charge behaviour/convenience charging can be explained by the fact that the distribution and availability of charging stations is limited, and charging takes longer than filling up a tank (Azadfar et al. 2015).

This leads to the availability problem. In his research, Spoelstra (2014) found that EV users usually charge their vehicles simultaneously at a certain time of the day, which coincides with the common working hours. This may cause insufficient availability of charging stations at these common times. Spoelstra (2014) concludes in his research that charging station availability is not yet an issue in the Netherlands. However, with an increasing number of EV users, it may become a problem soon, giving reason to monitor the changing availability of charging stations, in order to prevent charging station shortage and dissatisfied EV users.

What has been lacking in EV research into charging availability is a measure of the effect of charging station failure on other EV users. A failure of a charging station may be seen as a malfunctioning charging station, or another EV user wanting to charge their car at the same place and time. Both cases mean that the user cannot charge their EV at the usual charging station and that an alternative charging stations needs to be found, causing inconveniences for the EV user of the alternative charging station, who now may also need to find an alternative. This effect is referred to as cascading failure. The effect of cascading failure on the charging infrastructure can be measured by treating the charging infrastructure as a complex network. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on simulating cascading failures of complex networks (Koc et al. 2013; Zeng and Xiao 2014; Zheng et al. 2007). A complex network is a network with non-trivial topological features and is usually used as a representation of a real-world

system. Several studies on complex networks focus on electric distribution networks such as power grids, in which a failure may occur due to extreme weather conditions or human errors (Zhang et al. 2011; Dobson et al. 2007; Bao et al. 2009). By simulating the failure of a charging station, it is checked where the load of the failed charging station is redistributed to and whether this leads to a failure (due to overload) at the alternative site.

There are many analogies between an electric distribution network and the charge infrastructure. The nodes in the charge infrastructure network refer to charging stations, edges refer to the connections between alternative charging stations, and its capacity refers to the amount of sockets. The load can then be seen as the current number of EVs charging at the station. A network allows for simulations of charging station failure to measure how cascading failure affects other EV users of the alternative stations. If a station fails, the load (the charge transaction on that charging station) needs to be redistributed to an alternative charging station. The failure may lead to an overload in other parts of the network.

Li et al. (2013) define a vulnerable network as a network that cannot redistribute the load to other nodes. In general, node vulnerability refers to its susceptibility to a disruptive event. In order to identify the most critical (most vulnerable) charging stations, centrality measures such as degree, betweenness, closeness and eigenvector centralities are commonly used (Albert et al. 2004; Albert et al. 2000). These centrality measures do not account for the effect on other charging stations. Therefore, this thesis defines two new vulnerability measures to account for this effect. The first measure - Service Failure Vulnerability - determines the fraction of charge transactions that cannot be accommodated by the network. The second measure - Inconvenience Vulnerability - counts the number of failed charging stations as a result of a single initial charging station failure. The higher the vulnerability measure, the more vulnerable is the charging station. By simulating cascading failure and measuring its effect on EV users, a both vulnerability measures can be calculated. For this purpose, the municipalities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht made a database of charging transactions available, which allows the retrospective simulation of the effect of cascading failure on EV users.

By determining the most vulnerable charging

stations using these vulnerability measures, this paper introduces a novel approach that aims to improve future deployment of charging stations within the charging infrastructure by municipalities and policy makers. The new vulnerability measures can give an indication of the need for additional charging stations at residential as well as public places. By deploying additional charging stations, municipalities may be able to reduce the vulnerability of charging stations and provide a sufficient charging infrastructure. This improved infrastructure may also attract new EV users.

With the implementation of these two new vulnerability measures this thesis aims to answer the following questions: 1) should municipalities consider both new vulnerability measures before deploying further charging stations? 2) in which regions should municipalities consider deploying additional charging stations?

2 Cascading Failure Model

In this thesis, cascading failure refers to the effect of the failure of a charging station on other EV users. This will be modelled by retrospectively simulating the failure of a particular charging stations for a certain month. The failure of a charging station means that a user cannot charge their EV at the usual charging station, for example because of a malfunctioning charging station or because another EV users wants to charge their car at the same time and place.

To simulate failing charging stations a unique database is used, containing the information of approximately 5.000 public charging stations, with more than two million observations of charge sessions of approximately 40.000 users. This unique database was made available by the municipalities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht and it is constantly updated with new information. As Table 1 illustrates, each charging station comes with information about its location. Furthermore, for every charge transaction the Start and End Time is recorded in the database, thereby providing all the information needed to construct a network of the charging infrastructure and to conduct this research.

The model that simulates the cascading failure of the charge infrastructure network consists of three parts: network model, reaction to failure,

and relevant measures. The development of these parts will now be further elaborated.

2.1 Network Model

In order to simulate cascading failure in the charging infrastructure of EVs, a network model is needed that connects relevant charging stations, which is a charging station that EV users would consider in case of failure of their usual charging station. The nodes of the network represent all the charging station locations within the city, and the edges of the network are undirected connections between relevant alternative charging stations. Since there is no predefined distance to a charging station that an EV user would consider, it may be derived that users would only consider close-by charging stations as alternatives (Spoelstra and Helmus 2015; Spoelstra 2014; Azadfar et al. 2015). Therefore, this thesis will compare radiuses of 400m to 600m in order to make a sensibility analysis. These radiuses will be referred to as relevance radiuses. Figure 1 shows the infrastructure network of Amsterdam, when considering a relevance radius of 500m (see Appendix A for network plots with different radiuses).

2.2 Reaction to Failure

The model that simulates the cascading failure of the charge infrastructure network consists of three parts: network The cascading failure model simulates the failure of a charging station and its effect on other EV users. In order to simulate cascading failure, the reaction of EV users to failing stations needs to be considered. Once a charging station fails (a node is removed), the user needs to find an alternative charging station where the charge transaction can be redistributed to. To check whether the charge session can be redistributed, it needs to be seen whether the failed station has any relevant alternatives (see section of network model). If not, all the charge transactions of the failed charging station fail to be redistributed, and cannot be accommodated by the network. However, if the charging station has relevant alternatives, it will be checked for each charge transaction whether the whole transaction can be accommodated by one of the alternative charging stations.

Parameter	Example	Explanation
Charge point Location Key	2397	specific ID of a charge station
Charge point city	Amsterdam	the city of charge station
Charge Point Adress	Carolina MacGillavrylaan 400	
Longitude	4.942205	
Latitude	52.35752	
Start Time	2015-12-29 17:54:00.0	start time of the charge transaction
End Time	2015-12-30 14:41:00.0	end time of the charge transaction
First Active	2012-03-25 00:22:00.0	date where station was first used

Table 1: Parameter of the data

Each charging station has a maximum capacity of EVs it can charge at the same time, which is two for most charging stations. If at least one of the alternatives has one free charge socket, there is no cascading failure within the network, since the EV user can charge their EV at one of the relevant alternatives. In the case of more alternatives being present, it is assumed that the EV user chooses the closest available alternative. If the whole charge transaction does not fit into the alternative, it is checked whether an alternative is available for the start time of the charge transaction. If so, the charge transaction that competes for the rest of the time (there must be one, since the whole charge transaction could not be accommodated) needs to now find an alternative. The EV user of the competing charge transaction now goes through the same procedure. Therefore, cascading failure occurs. However, if no alternative is available at the start time of the charge transaction a complete failure occurs. There is a failure because the charge transaction cannot be accommodated by the infrastructure network. The EV user has no relevant al-

ternative available to charge their EV. For a visualisation of the steps taken for simulating the reaction of EV users in case of failure, see the decision tree in Figure 2.

is checked whether a complete failure occurs. The number of complete failures that occurs during that month on the particular charge station will then be divided by the overall number of charge transactions of that station, to normalise the result. The normalised value is then its service failure vulnerability score. If a charging station has a service failure vulnerability score of 0, it means that every charge transaction could be redistributed over the network, even though it may have had to travel through the network. However, if every charge transaction fails to find an alternative, or the redistribution causes a failure of another EV user's charge transaction, the vulnerability score

2.3 Relevant Measures

To give measures for the effect of the cascading failure on EV users, this thesis defines two different vulnerabilities: Service Failure Vulnerability and Inconvenience Vulnerability.

Service failure vulnerability is defined as the fraction of charge transactions that fails to be redistributed to a relevant alternative charging station. It refers to the inability of the network to accommodate charge transactions within the network in case of failure. In the above section on EV users reaction to a failure, it is assumed that a complete failure occurs if an EV user must traverse more than the distance of the relevance radius in order to find an available charging station for this particular charge transaction. For every charge transaction of the month, it

is 1. To summarise, the service failure vulnerability score only measures whether the network can redistribute the failure of a charging station somewhere in the network, even though it may cause inconveniences for other EV users.

The inconvenience vulnerability is defined as the number of EV users who may be affected by a failure of a specific charging station may affect. In other words, the inconvenience vulnerability score is the maximum number of cascades the failure of the specific charging station may cause. As explained in the section on EV users reactions to a failing charging station, cascading failure causes inconveniences for other users. Even though this

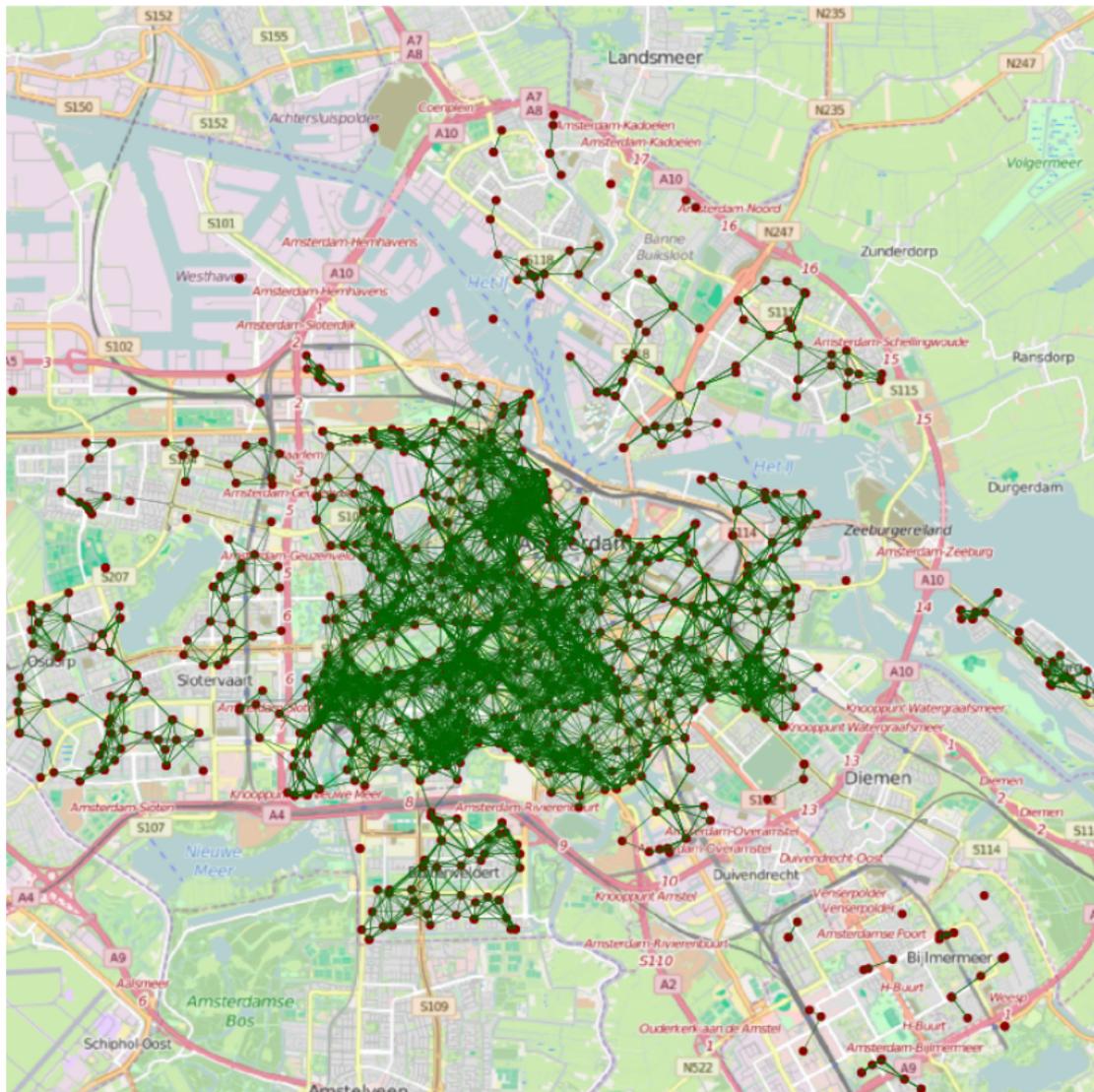


Figure 1: Infrastructure network of Amsterdam (relevance radius 500m). Each node represents one of 764 charging locations each edge represents a connection to a relevant alternative.

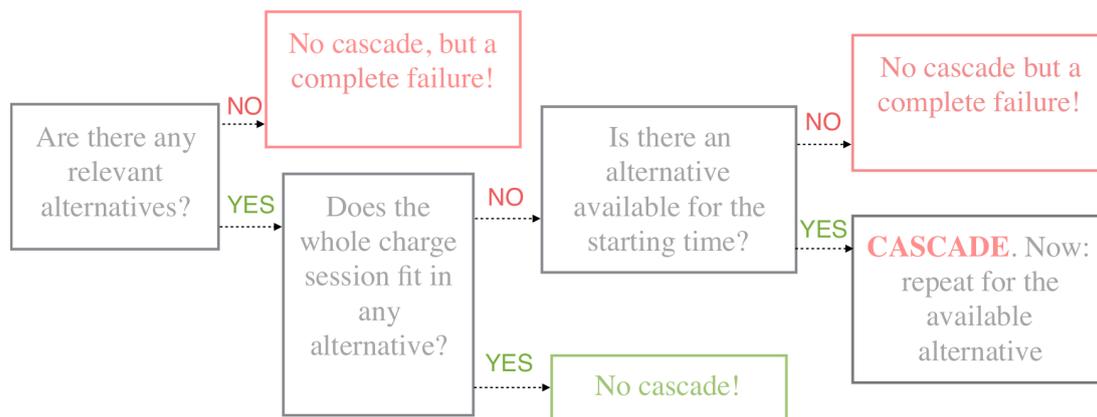


Figure 2: Decision tree for simulating EV users reactions to failure.

measure does not indicate whether the network is able to accommodate the failed charge transaction, it demonstrates how many users have the inconvenience of deviating from their usual charge station. To summarise, the inconvenience vulnerability score measures the maximum number of EV users a failure may impact, without taking into account whether or not the charge transaction can be accommodated by the network.

In order to determine whether these two new vulnerability measures are related to other network vulnerability measures, they were compared to the centrality measures commonly used in complex network research (Albert et al. 2004; Albert et al. 2000). These centrality measures are node degree centrality, betweenness centrality, closeness centrality and eigenvector centrality. The node degree centrality measure gives an indication whether the vulnerability measure is related to the number of alternatives a charging station is connected to. The betweenness centrality refers to the number of shortest paths from all charging stations to all others that paths through that node. The closeness centrality measure of a node refers to the sum of distances to all other nodes. In other words, it measures how closely the node is located to all other nodes and the node with the lowest closeness centrality measure is located most central and has the shortest path to any other node. Lastly, the eigenvalue centrality considers a charging station vulnerable if many other vulnerable charging stations are connected to it. Thereby, it gives a vulnerability measure in respect to the connectedness of the neighbours.

3 Simulation Results

In this section, the findings for the city of Amsterdam will be discussed in detail and compared to the findings of Rotterdam and Utrecht (see Appendix F and G). Amsterdam is chosen as the case study, since it has the best developed charge infrastructure with the most charging stations.

Charging stations with their corresponding vulnerability scores for both vulnerability measures were plotted (Figure 3 and 4). This was done to get an initial understanding of where the most vulnerable charging stations are located with regard to service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability.

When looking at the distribution of charging stations with high vulnerability scores in terms of service failure vulnerability, it becomes apparent that these charging stations are located in the outskirts of the city (Fig. 3), while charging stations with a high inconvenience vulnerability score are located in the city centre (Fig. 4). Furthermore, it can be seen that for the service failure vulnerability measure there is hardly any variation in vulnerability scores. Most charging stations have a vulnerability score of 0, while 16 stations have a score of 1 (Fig. 3). Hardly any stations have a value in between. In contrast, the inconvenience vulnerability measure has a variety of vulnerability scores (Fig. 4).

The histograms with the count of the charging stations per vulnerability score, shows indeed that the inconvenience vulnerability measure has more variety (Fig. 5 and 6).

So far, findings have only been discussed for a relevance radius of 500m. The question arises

whether this distance is indeed a good representation of the network's behaviour. Figure D1 and D2 in the appendix show very similar distributions for the vulnerability scores for both vulnerability measures. Further, Figure B1-B2, as well as C1-C2, only have minor differences, suggesting that the charging infrastructure is insensible to changes of the relevance radius. Therefore, 500m is a reasonable choice, and its findings represent the behaviour of the network with only minor deviations.

The differences in spatial distribution of the two vulnerability measures suggest that the two vulnerability measures are not related (Fig. 3 and 4). Vulnerable charging stations in terms of service failure are located mostly on the outskirts of the city, while vulnerable charging stations in terms of inconvenience vulnerability are mostly located in the city centre.

Indeed, when calculating Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability, only a weak negative correlation of -0.19 was found (Fig. 8). This result is significant at the $p = 0.05$ level; however, it explains very little variance of the relation between these two values. In an effort to understand the difference of their spatial distribution, the two vulnerability measures were compared to the four commonly used centrality measures in network analysis, namely node degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector centrality. The correlation matrix is visualised in Fig. 8.

By looking at the maps (Fig. 3 and 4), it may be expected that the two vulnerability measures are related to node degree, since it seems that charging stations on the outskirts of the city have fewer alternatives than charging stations in the city centre. Surprisingly, only a weak negative correlation (-0.31) between service failure vulnerability and node degree centrality was found, while a moderate correlation (0.48) was found between inconvenience vulnerability and node degree, which explains almost 25% of the variance (Fig. 8).

4 Discussion

The findings suggest that the two vulnerability measures - service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability - are orthogonal to each other, which means they are statistically indepen-

dent. Since node degree and closeness degree were found to have a strong correlation (0.65) it is not surprising that the closeness centrality measure also has a moderate correlation with service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability (-0.36 and 0.37 respectively). Furthermore, a weak (negative) correlation between the betweenness centrality measure and the inconvenience measure (service failure measure) was found (Fig. 8). An even weaker correlation was found between eigenvalue centrality and the two vulnerability measures. A correlation score of -0.06 was found between eigenvector centrality and service failure vulnerability, and a score of 0.14 between eigenvector centrality and inconvenience vulnerability (Fig. 8).

When looking at these findings, the question arises whether these findings are Amsterdam specific or whether other cities have similar results. Again, only a relevance radius of 500m will be considered, since the distribution patterns are very similar for all different radiuses (Figure F3, AF4, G3 and G4). Looking at the maps of Utrecht and Rotterdam, with charging stations plotted according their vulnerability scores (F1, F2, G1 and G2), similar patterns compared to Amsterdam were found. For both cities high service vulnerability scores were found on the outskirts of the city, while high inconvenience scores were found in the city centre.

Interestingly, Rotterdam has very few charging stations with a high inconvenience vulnerability score; 5 is the highest score found (Fig G2). In turn, Rotterdam has the same number of charging stations with the highest service vulnerability score as Amsterdam (17 charging stations with score 1) (Fig. G1), while Amsterdam has almost 200 more charging stations (475 in Rotterdam compared to 764 in Amsterdam).

Utrecht has only three charging stations with a service failure score of 1 (out of 244 charging stations) (Fig F1), and only one charging station with a high inconvenience vulnerability score of 9 (Fig F2).

Even though a weak negative correlation was found, this does not suffice to explain the variance of the occurrence. Further, by looking at the city maps with their charging stations plotted by vulnerability score, it becomes apparent that the spatial distribution of the two vulnerability measures are

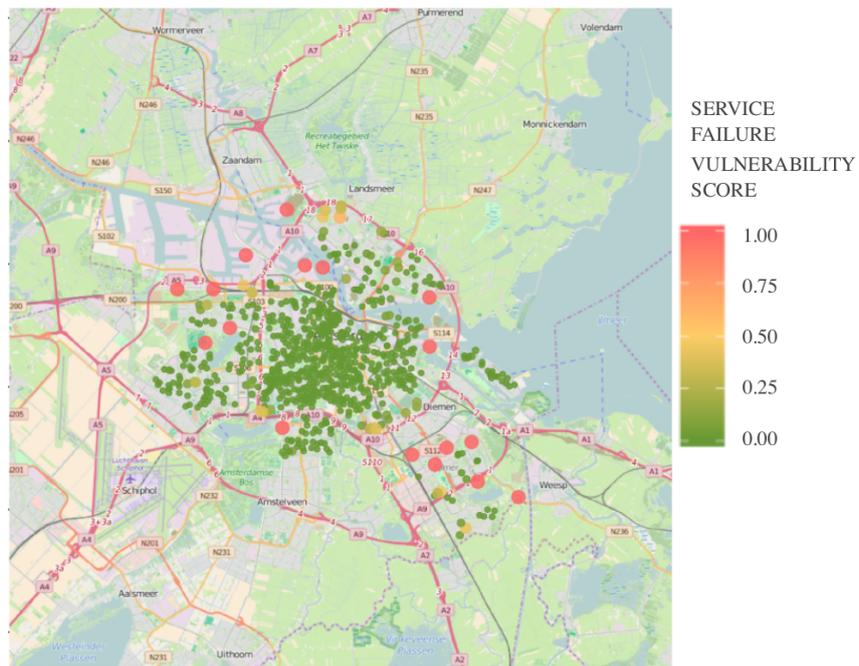


Figure 3: Service failure vulnerability scores in Amsterdam, December 2015 (relevance radius 500m). each circle represents one of 764 charging station. Their service vulnerability scores are represented by colour and shape. Dark green indicates a low vulnerability score and dark red indicates a high vulnerability score. The size of the circle is proportional to its vulnerability score.

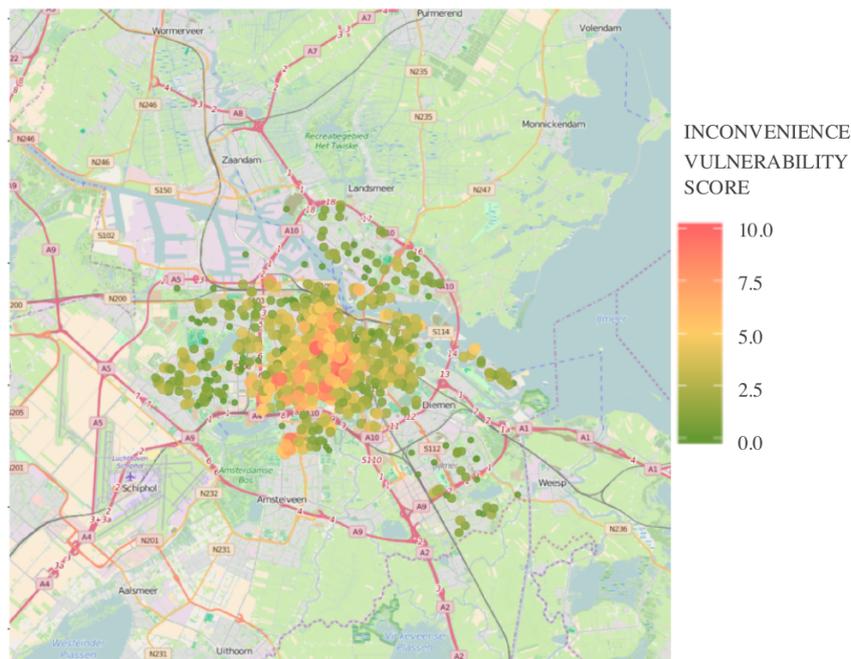


Figure 4: Inconvenience vulnerability scores in Amsterdam, December 2015 (relevance radius 500 m). each circle represents a charging station (764). their inconvenience vulnerability scores are represented by colour and shape. dark green indicates a low vulnerability score and dark red indicates a high vulnerability score. The size of the circle is proportional to its vulnerability score.

unrelated to each other. High vulnerability scores in terms of service failure vulnerability were only

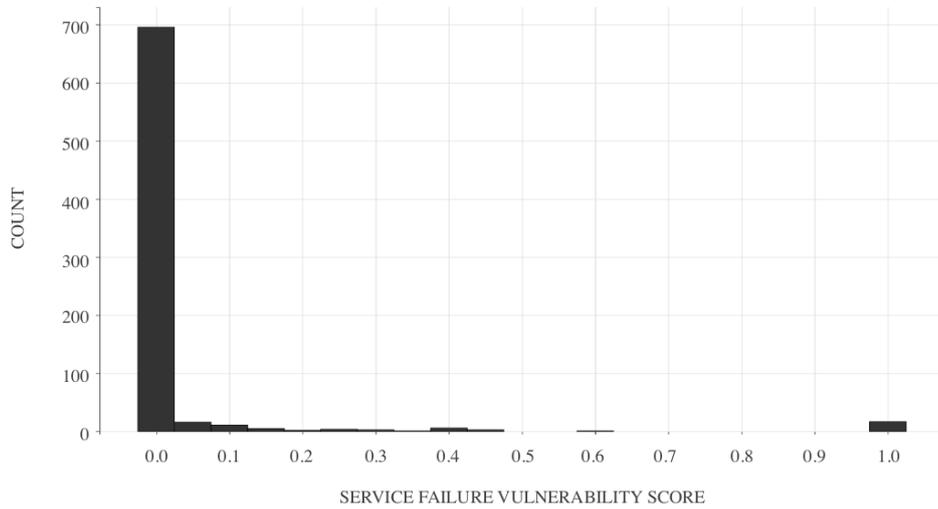


Figure 5: Histogram of service failure vulnerability scores in Amsterdam, December 2015 (relevance radius 500m)

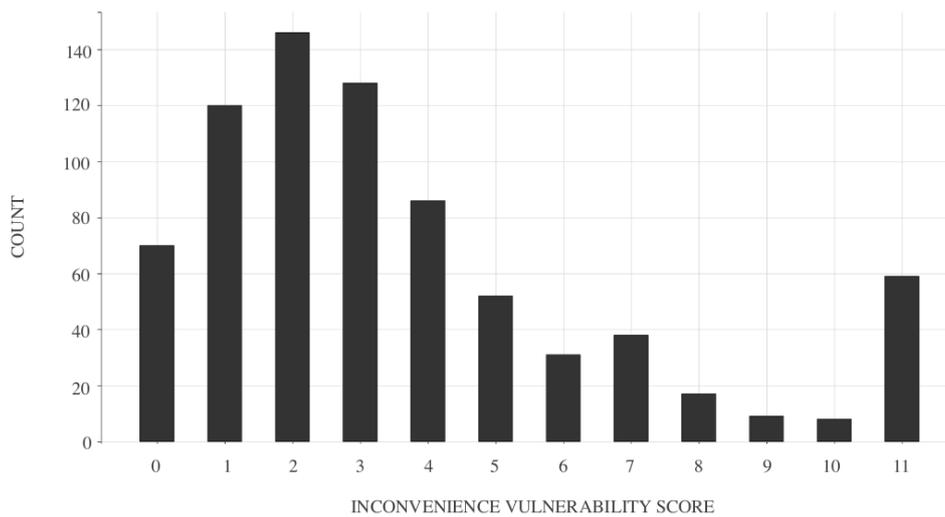


Figure 6: Histogram of inconvenience vulnerability scores in Amsterdam, December 2015 (relevance radius 500m).

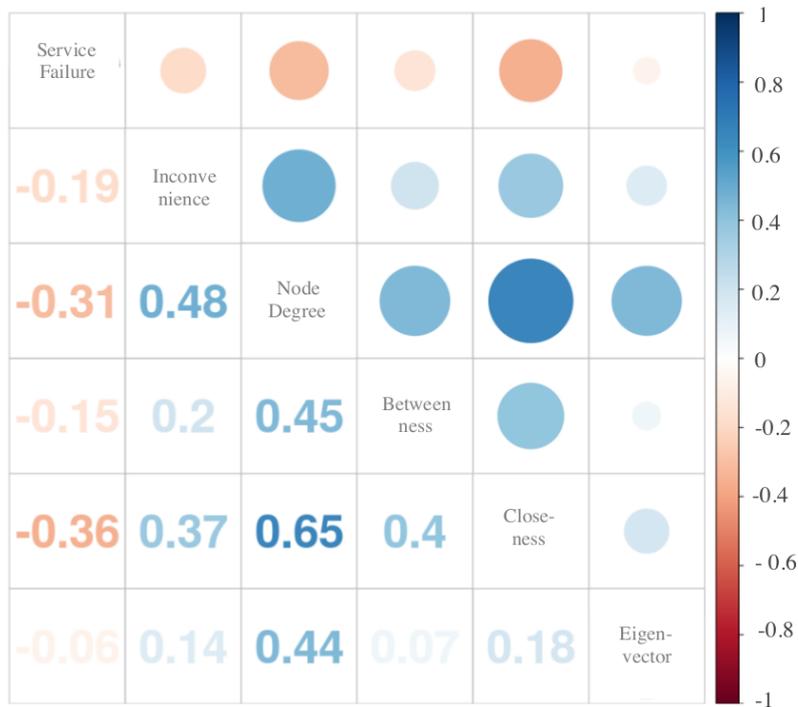


Figure 7: Correlation plot between centrality measures and vulnerability measures in Amsterdam, December 2015 (relevance radius 500m). Correlation coefficients are shown numerically (bottom left) and correlation coefficients are represented by colour and shape (top right). Darker blue indicates stronger positive correlation and darker red indicates stronger negative correlation. The size of the circle are proportional to the correlation coefficients.

found on the city outskirts, while high vulnerability measures in terms of inconvenience vulnerability were found in the city centre. The findings were similar in all three cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht) and it appeared to be related to the density of the network infrastructure.

To determine whether the differences of spatial distribution of the two measures could be explained by other measures commonly used in complex network analysis, the two vulnerability measures were compared to node degree centrality, betweenness centrality, closeness centrality and eigenvector centrality. The results show a weak to moderate correlation between the two vulnerability measures and node degree, as well as between the vulnerability measures and closeness centrality. Indeed, this gives an indication that charging stations with a high service failure vulnerability are located in less dense areas, while charging stations with a high inconvenience vulnerability are located in dense areas such as the city centre. However, only little variance is explained by these findings, which suggests that it does not suffice to check for network density in order to identify charging stations with high vulnerability scores for either of the new vulnerability measures.

For the correlation between betweenness centrality and the two vulnerability measures only a weak correlation was found. That finding is not surprising, since the cascading failure simulation does not give a measure to charging stations that are affected by another charging station. The model only gives a score to the (hypothetically) failed charging station. If this model of the cascading failure simulation would have measured the likelihood of a charging station being affected by another charging stations' failure, the betweenness centrality measure would potentially have a higher correlation. The very weak correlation scores between either of the two vulnerability measures and the eigenvector centrality measure suggests that almost no relation can be seen between the vulnerability score of a charging station in relation to the vulnerability scores of the neighbouring stations. Overall, the comparison to the centrality measures shows that if checking for the most vulnerable charging stations in regard to failure, it does not suffice to check for commonly used centrality measures.

These findings suggest that due to the orthogonality of the two new vulnerability measures

and the dissimilarity to other network centrality measures, it is now possible to answer the first question: should municipalities consider both new vulnerability measures before deploying further charging stations? Since no other measure gives an indication for the weaknesses of the infrastructure network in terms of failing charging stations, the answer is yes. It is highly recommended to consider the findings of both vulnerability measures before making decisions about future charging station deployment.

This suggestion also leads to the second question: in which regions should municipalities consider deploying additional charging stations? The two new vulnerability measures give insight into very different effects of failure on EV users. The service failure vulnerability measure is a way of measuring whether the charge transactions of the failed charging station can be redistributed to alternatives. The results of the service failure vulnerability indicate which charging stations do not have alternative charging stations in case of failure to accommodate the charge transactions. On the other hand, the inconvenience vulnerability measure gives an indication about how many EVs may be affected, by determining how many EV users would need to deviate from their usual charging station. In order to make a considered decision it is recommended to monitor the changes of vulnerability scores over a period of time, in order to be able to determine the most vulnerable parts of the charging infrastructure.

The spatial distribution of the vulnerability measures gave clear indications of which areas are most affected by the different effects of charging station failure on EV users. Only on the outskirts of the city, charging stations had high service failure vulnerability scores. In contrast, the most vulnerable charging stations in terms of inconvenience vulnerability were found in the city centre. The city maps in the results section give a visual overview about the corresponding vulnerability score of charging stations. However, the question about the need of additional charging stations is not answered yet.

The findings of this thesis may help to point out the weaknesses of the charging infrastructure. On the one hand, municipalities need to make sure that EV users are provided with a sufficient number of charging stations, in order to allow them to charge their EVs whenever they need to. On the

other hand, it is important to keep EV users satisfied, to attract more new EV users. Therefore, it is suggested that municipalities implement additional charging stations in the areas where charging stations are vulnerable in terms of either one of the two vulnerability measures. Since the two measures appear to be orthogonal, both measures should be taken into account before deploying additional charging stations.

Although the study has successfully demonstrated the effect of cascading failure on EV users, it has a number of important limitations that need to be considered.

Firstly, even though suggestions about future charging station deployment could be made, it is important to state that municipalities also need to consider other factors than just the effect of charging station failure on EV users before deploying additional charging stations. It would not be economic for municipalities to deploy an additional charging station in an area where this additional station would only be used in case of the failure of the other station, or in areas where the other stations are already hardly used. The two different measures should be seen as a tool for municipalities to make considered decisions about further deployment of charging stations, in order to improve future charging station deployment.

Secondly, in this simulation, the user of a failing charge station is assumed to have total knowledge about the availability of the surrounding charging stations and can then choose the closest available station. Obviously, this is not the case in real life. The EV user would not know which stations is available within his/her relevance radius and may try to charge at several other charging stations before finding an available station. Alternatively, the user may decide not to charge at all and wait until the next day. The simulation does not accommodate those specifications.

Thirdly, actual statistics of how often a charging station failure occurs is not taken into account. By considering the number of new EV users and the frequency of charging station malfunctioning, it may be possible to better predict the occurrence of charging station failure.

A natural progression from this work is to implement different reactions of EV users to failure and compare those results to the findings of this thesis. Currently, the simulation assumes that an EV user chooses the closest alternatives within a pre-

defined radius. In order to get a better idea which alternative the user would choose, it may be important to take the walking distance and time as a measure of the best alternative. Alternately, it could be assumed that the user of the failed charging station chooses an alternative, based on the charging station they have used before. These different strategies may give a better prediction.

Furthermore, a tool for EV users with which the user could see which alternative charging station is available at the time he/she wants to charge the EV. This may be in the form of a software application (app) or implemented in the charging stations itself, suggesting to which alternative the user should go. That may reduce the inconvenience vulnerability score of charging stations and improve user satisfaction.

5 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to design vulnerability measures to compute the effect of charging station failure on EV users, to make suggestions about future charging station deployment. Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the two newly defined vulnerability measures give insight into the weaknesses of the charging infrastructure for EVs.

This thesis extends the present knowledge of the charging infrastructure network of EV's due to its insights into the effect of charging stations failure. It makes several noteworthy contributions to the improvement of the charging infrastructure. Firstly, it introduces a novel approach of simulating cascading failure in the charging infrastructure and measuring the effects on EV users. Two different vulnerability measures - service failure vulnerability and inconvenience vulnerability - have been computed using the simulation model of this thesis. The service failure vulnerability indicates which charging stations fail to accommodate their charge transaction in case of failure. Inconvenience vulnerability measure gives an indication about how many EV may be effected by determining how many EV users would need to deviate from their usual charging station.

Secondly, suggestions for future charging station deployment were made based on the spatial distribution of charging stations with high vulnerability scores. It is recommended to implement ad-

ditional charging stations on the outskirts of the city, in order to reduce service failure, and in the city centre in order to reduce inconveniences for EV users in case of charging station failure. However, these measures should be seen a tool to determine the weaknesses of the charging infrastructure network, rather than the only measure that needs to be considered for decision making. By monitoring the vulnerability measures over time, it may be possible to monitor changes of the network and predict future weaknesses. This prevents EV user dissatisfaction and may attract new EV users.

Thirdly, the newly introduced vulnerability measures were found to be unrelated to commonly used network centrality measures, which suggests that the new measures should be considered by municipalities.

The key strengths of this study is its real-world data. All findings are based on simulations with real-world data by retrospectively looking at it. That allows to draw conclusions and give precise suggestions where improvement is needed. Data from three different cities - Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht - were used to determine their charging stations' vulnerabilities, which revealed similar patterns in all of them. It can be concluded that the simulation approach taken in this thesis may be applicable to other cities as well.

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Social Sciences

An analysis of the consequences that methods currently recommended for NGDO advertising have on viewers' perception of poverty and development in the global south

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Abstract

Whilst considerable attention is paid to the way in which non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) handle public donations, the way in which they handle public discourse goes largely unscrutinised. This can be problematic, given that NGDOs are assumed to be an authority on poverty and development in the global south and that their advertisements permeate our daily lives via various media platforms. This research examines the effect of methods recommended by literature on effective NGO (non-governmental organisation) advertising – shocking, guilt-inducing images and messages, and an indication that poverty is easily solved by viewers' donations – when used in NGDO video advertisements. In order to do this, the aforementioned recommendations were analysed using critical literature, contemporary poverty and development theory, semiotic theory, and data from two focus groups of Amsterdam University College students. These focus groups were shown one advertisement which was closely aligned with the recommendations made in literature on effective NGO advertising, and three others that strayed from these recommendations to varying extents. From this analysis, a number of research questions were addressed: (1) *How are poverty and development portrayed in NGDO video advertisements and what conclusions do viewers draw from their interpretation of these materials?* (2) *How do these conclusions compare to poverty and development experts' opinions on poverty and development?* (3) *What changes could NGDOs make in their video advertisements to better reflect poverty and development experts' recommendations for the reduction of poverty?* It was found, that the methods recommended in literature on effective NGO advertising are at times not only ineffective and entirely in contradiction to expert opinion on poverty and development, but also damaging and counterproductive. In future, NGDOs should instead produce advertisements that are positive, informative, and focussed on encouraging viewers to become politically engaged in the bringing about of the structural change required to overcome poverty in the global south.

Introduction

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), of which many address poverty and development in the global south, are responsible for the allocation of vast sums of charitable donations every year. Amounting to \$358.38 billion and £10.6 billion in the USA and UK respectively in 2014 (Giving USA, 2015; CAF, 2015), these donations mean that NGOs represent a significant potential for social change. NGDOs (non-governmental development organisations), however, also wield considerable power through their channels of communication. And whilst members of the public and the media pay much attention to whether or not NGDOs handle public donations responsibly, scrutiny of the way in which they handle public discourse is largely limited to the academic arena. Given the way in which NGDO advertisements permeate our day-to-day lives via advertisements in magazines, on the television, on the radio, and on billboards, and the vast numbers of people living in poverty today, the messages that they are communicating should not go unscrutinised.

Critics suggest that NGDO (Non-Governmental Development Organisations) advertisements deliver an oversimplified portrayal of poverty and

development which contradicts expert knowledge and recommendations. They also admonish current representations for having damaging consequences on viewers' attitudes towards the situations and people they are shown. This research compares the depiction of poverty and development in NGDO video advertisements to the understanding of poverty and development expressed by experts and academics in the field, and examines the effects of the former on viewers' understanding of these issues. The following questions will be addressed: (1) *How are poverty and development portrayed in NGDO video advertisements and what conclusions do viewers draw from their interpretation of these materials?* (2) *How do these conclusions compare to poverty and development experts' opinions on poverty and development?* And briefly: (3) *What changes could NGDOs make in their video advertisements to better reflect poverty and development experts' recommendations for the reduction of poverty?*

In order to answer these questions, this research makes extensive use of literature from a range of disciplines, including international relations, development studies, sociology, psychology, and communication studies. This can be roughly divided into literature in favour of and against

how NGOs currently portray poverty and development, literature on poverty and development themselves, and literature on semiotic theory. To build upon this, the researcher attempted to collect qualitative data from both the producers and viewers of NGO video advertisements. Email surveys were intended to provide information on the motivations of NGOs to use certain images and messages and what they hope to achieve with them; unfortunately this did not materialise. Moreover, a focus group with students from the Amsterdam University College provided information on how viewers interpret the information relayed to them in NGO video advertisements. Through a combination of literature and qualitative data, this research aims to produce a holistic image of the differing perspectives on the real causes, perceived causes, and solutions of poverty in the global south. From this, a number of recommendations will be made in order to improve the effectiveness of NGO video advertisements in reflecting the realities of poverty in the global south and contributing to a better public understanding of these issues.

Literature Review

Three bodies of literature are relevant to this research: on NGO advertisements, on poverty and development, and on semiotic theory. Whilst the media and public focus largely on NGOs' economic dealings, there is a considerable body of academic literature on the subject of how NGOs can and do intentionally frame issues in ways that they consider beneficial to their cause. This body can be divided into literature which supports current methods – this tends to be advisory research aimed at increasing “effectiveness”, which is usually measured in terms of donations – and that which condemns these methods as problematic.

In order to give context to the way in which NGOs frame poverty and development specifically, two further bodies of literature will be introduced. Academic articles by experts on these issues will provide a counter representation of poverty and development as a basis for comparison. These two contrasting representations will then be examined within wider semiotic theory in order to better understand how and why NGO advertisements are able to shape public understanding and why it matters.

“Effective” NGO materials

Literature in support of the methods currently used in NGO advertisements tends to be in the form of studies into how they can be made more effective. This “effectiveness” is usually measured in terms of donations, for which organisations fiercely compete (Chang & Lee, 2009). The result is a number of widely accepted recommendations, including the use of shocking, guilt-inducing images and messages, and the simple presentation of the causes and solutions to poverty in order to prevent overwhelming the viewer. In a study of the advertising materials of several organisations, Nathanson (2013) found extensive evidence of these methods being used in practice.

Several recommendations are made for the portrayal of poverty in NGO advertisements. Chang and Lee (2009) found that negatively framed messages – “without your donation” there will be a negative consequence – lead to higher advertising effectiveness than positively framed messages – “with your donation” there will be a positive effect. They further recommended that negative framing should be combined with a negative image to increase persuasiveness, finding that this can “more concretely illustrate miserable outcomes when help is not given” and evoke feelings of sympathy and responsibility to help (Chang & Lee, 2009, p. 2989). A study conducted by Chang in 2014 also addresses this feeling of responsibility, recommending a combination of guilt-arousing stories and egoistic appeals – that is, emphasising that the giver will gain as opposed to an altruistic appeal which emphasises what the recipient will gain – as the most effective method for increasing donation intentions. Finally, it is recommended to use shocking advertising content – that which attempts to surprise an audience “by deliberately violating norms for societal value and personal ideals” (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003, p. 269) – as a successful means to capture the audience's attention (Parry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2003). In the context of NGO advertising, such images tend to be of emaciated children with flies in their eyes, or women dressed in rags and picking through garbage (CCIC, 2008).

Within this portrayal of poverty, there are also specifications for portraying the victims them-

selves. Shanahan, Hopkins, Carlson and Raymond (2012) found negative emotional response, perceived social responsibility, and willingness to donate to be higher when using a blameless victim – as opposed to a victim whose plight was self-inflicted – and a narrative that cued an empathetic response. Adding to the ideal victim profile, Bennet and Kottasz (2000, pp. 356-358) found that appeals for disaster relief evoked greater willingness to donate when images indicated “deservedness”, such as of “poverty and vulnerability, pitiful starving children” and ideally “deserving people striving to help themselves...but totally destitute”. It is important also that these victims are real rather than actor portrayals, as the former has been found to garner stronger emotional responses, positive attitudes, perceived social responsibility, and proclivity to donate (Shanahan & Hopkins, 2007). Finally, it is recommended that advertisements focus on individuals rather than large groups of unidentified people, who “fail to spark emotion of feeling and thus fail to motivate action” (Slovic, 2007, p. 80). Therefore, general literature on “effective” NGO advertising recommends highly pessimistic portrayals of poverty and its victims.

For portrayals of development, on the other hand, NGOs are recommended to use a more optimistic spin. Aldrich (2004, p. 138) states that a strong proposition which is short and easy to understand is key to successful television advertising for NGOs, and recommends “the formula that a small amount of money equals a huge outcome”. In fact, Aldrich (2004, p. 144) considers “a cause which can be expressed succinctly which motivates people to give it money” as key and everything else “just a mechanic which enables the charity to ask for money”. In a similar vein, Chang and Lee (2009) recommend presenting statistics in a short-term temporal frame in order to avoid “exaggerating effects on the severity of the charitable issues” and in turn making viewers pessimistic about the likelihood of the situation improving, and reducing donations. Poverty and its victims should thus be presented as dire and helpless respectively, but also as easily solved and rescued through viewers’ donations

These methods – shocking, guilt-inducing portrayals of helpless and blameless victims which im-

ply simple solutions – are justified in literature and by NGOs in various ways, even when recognising that they may be problematic. As far back as 1989, the United Nations Association (as cited in Coulter, 1989) claimed that:

We tried to make advertisements far more positive – and get away from the ‘starving baby’ image. But no-one dipped their hands into their pockets. The only thing that does it is guilt: you have to shock people.

More recently, Bennet and Kottasz (2000, p. 358) recognised that such representations can be patronising, demeaning, and stereotyping for subjects, but nonetheless concluded from their study that “[disaster-relief] campaigns should employ unashamedly emotive advertising imagery” because this is most effective in raising large amounts of money quickly. Additional justifications are revealed by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), in a report of discussions held with fundraising and communications staff from various organisations in 2008:

- horrific situations are factually represented and making them look more positive would not be truthful
- showing such images leads viewers to say that these conditions must change
- once people become supporters they can be provided with additional information about the complexity of the situation
- current methods are effective and efficient, whereas complex explanations do not relay urgency or appeal to donors.

We see, therefore, a prevalence of the opinion that NGOs are justified in using the methods which they deem most effective in raising donations regardless of the damaging side effects. It is also interesting to note evidence that consumers, whilst disapproving of for-profit organisations use of shocking images, also find them to be justified in NGO materials due to the altruistic purpose (Dalton, Madden, Chamberlain, Carr & Lyons, 2008; Parry et al., 2013).

Critical literature

Having described the “unorthodox” (Chang and Lee, 2009, p. 2911) methods used in NGO advertising and explained why they are employed and how NGOs justify their use, the next section will summarise the main criticisms of these methods. These criticisms include: ignoring root causes and oversimplifying solutions, robbing subjects of their dignity, undermining attempts to educate the public, leading the poor to be blamed for their situation, and creating a feeling of hopelessness by portraying the same situations repeatedly.

Whilst research on how to produce “effective” NGO advertisements greatly encourages messages to be succinct and easy to understand, critics consider this to be a damaging oversimplification. Oversimplification occurs both in the portrayal of poverty and in the portrayal of development. In order to reach as many people as possible in a short time, advertisements simplify, stereotype, and depoliticise situations to avoid controversy (Rutherford, 2000, p. 81). Advertisements often fail to mention, therefore, the historical, cultural, economic, political, and ecological context in which poverty has developed and continues to exist – for example colonisation, unfair trade agreements, and corruption (Clair & Anderson, 2013; Dalton et al., 2008). This neglect undermines efforts to create a broader understanding of the underlying, structural causes of poverty and injustice (CCIC, 2008). Wright (1993) also denounces the recommended emphasis on the deserving poor and the glorification of the ethic of giving as he calls it, on the basis that these methods promote an impression that national problems can be solved by individual effort, reinforce ideas of dependency and lack of ability of the subjects, and fail to address structural causes or long term solutions.

To give an example, Clair and Anderson (2013) found that United States based NGDO Heifer International makes a clear attempt to present the eradication of poverty as easily achievable through gifts of livestock. This is in line, of course, with the aforementioned recommendation to present simple solutions to poverty (Aldrich, 2004). The exclusive use of images which portray happy people in sunny settings, however, hides those that are too sick, too hungry, or otherwise incapable of en-

trepreneurship. Furthermore, success stories fail to address issues such as resulting deforestation and the problematic absence of refrigeration for animal products (Clair & Anderson, 2013). In order to be able to provide a concrete solution, organisations tend also to focus on one aspect of an issue rather than looking at it in its entirety (Rutherford, 2000). Nathanson (2013) found this to be a common theme; organisations would construct money as the sole solution and thus focus on the desperate need for things that money can buy – food, shelter, education.

Another major criticism, which is connected to the practice of oversimplification, is that recommended methods for the portrayal of poverty and those experiencing it humiliate subjects and lead to victim blaming. Critics argue that images of human suffering – “people half-naked, crying, sick, desperate” – are disrespectful because they undermine human dignity and should therefore be avoided (CCIC, 2008, p. 3). Lister (2004) places great importance on this issue, arguing that for many the lack of respect and loss of dignity is what makes poverty so difficult to bear, and that when people in poverty are treated with respect it can increase their self-confidence and agency. Another issue is that portraying helpless victims means ignoring their resourcefulness and participation in development; Nathanson (2013, p. 114) notes that “success is measured in sponsorship dollars, not what those in the developing world have accomplished without our help”. Research by Obermiller (1995) actually suggests that appeals which focus on how a situation can be improved may be more effective than appeals which emphasise the severity of the problem, when awareness and concern for the issue are high. Thus, the move towards promotion of dignity and local accomplishments in NGO advertising might also benefit fundraisers in the long run (Nathanson, 2013).

In addition to humiliating subjects, the recommended portrayals are considered to be counterproductive in the sense that they contribute to victim blaming. The combination of oversimplification, focus on only one aspect of an issue in order to offer concrete solutions, and use of stereotypes, are all part of what Rutherford (2000, pp. 81-82) refers to as “privatising”: “the conversion

of the collective crisis into a personal problem and of the social issue into a moral ill". Research suggests that focussing on individual victims and particular instances of hardship – in the absence of context – increases the likelihood that the poor will be held responsible for their situation (Iyengar, 1990). This argument was supported by participants in a study by Dalton and colleagues (2008, p. 497), who expressed the view that whilst more educated individuals might be aware of the cultural and historical factors that are obscured by advertisements, others could jump to the conclusion that those in poverty are to blame for their situation. When background information is given about general trends, on the other hand, and poverty is expressed as a collective outcome, viewers assign responsibility to societal factors (Campbell, Carr & MacLachlan, 2001).

Dehumanising imagery can also lead viewers to consider people in developing countries as very different to themselves and promote racism (CCIC, 2008). The repetitive presentation of highly similar negative images and messages implicitly encourages negative stereotypes of developing countries as places of "extreme poverty" and "a desperate hand-to-mouth existence", and high confidence in viewers that their assessments of poverty and development are correct (Carr & Atkins, 2003, p. 284; VSO, 2002, pp. 3-6). These deep-rooted stereotypes lead people in the global south to be conceived as the "Other" and as objects of pity, which creates social distancing and an implicit sense of superiority and inferiority in both the global north and the global south (CCIC, 2008; Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010; VSO, 2002). Furthermore, when depicted donors are white people from the global north whilst recipients are people of colour, images intended to arouse guilt and sympathy can also fuel racism and the belief that the poor are entirely dependent on the knowledge and financial aid of the global north to progress (CCIC, 2008; VSO, 2002). It is interesting to note a study by Dalton et al. (2008, p. 500) which found that amongst a group of students in New Zealand, the sense of obligation to help others weakens with distance from 'home', "almost as if geographical distance was synonymous with emotional distance".

One might consider that the recommendation of problematic practices arises from a problematic approach to development itself. Former Chief Executive of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO, 2002), Mark Goldring, has said that NGOs sacrifice the long-term building of a balanced view of the global south in favour of the short-term gains of raising awareness and funds for their work. NGOs tend to focus on addressing the symptoms of poverty through fundraising rather than promoting greater political awareness, engagement, and activism in order to tackle the structural issues at the root of the problem (Langlois, 2008; Littler, 2008). Hulme and Shepherd (2003) too, criticise the current money-centric approach which conceptualises the poor "as a single homogenous group whose prime problem is low monetary income", and leads to many of the most in need being neglected.

This is indeed visible in the first body of literature reviewed, with many studies focussing entirely on donations as a measure for "effectiveness" (see amongst others Aldrich, 2004; Chang, 2014; Chang & Lee, 2009; Shanahan et al., 2012). Furthermore, Shanahan and colleagues (2012, p. 70) state that their results aid "the quest for the most effective 'victim' to focus on", which one might consider to place overbearing emphasis on garnering donations regardless of the experience of the individual and larger group being portrayed. Furthermore, evidence suggests that there has been an approach of "consciousness-raising can come later...what matters now is the money" (Coulter, 1989) and "whatever works" attitude towards fundraising amongst some communication managers (Thompson & Weaver, 2008). Finally, the repetitive use of images showing the same level of misery and hopelessness gives viewers the impression that things are not getting better and can undermine support for long-term development programmes (CCIC, 2008).

Development and poverty theory

The next section of the literature review will outline the main arguments present in academic literature on poverty and development specifically, in order to provide a counter representation with which to compare the representation by NGO video advertisements. It is important to note that there is

no one expert or academic line of thought or argumentation, but rather that there is a great variety of opinions just as in any other discipline. When looking at the current arena, however, there are two prominent theories that stand out: the multidimensionality of poverty and the need for sustainable development. These two arguments are notably related in their move away from previous money-centric approaches, and in their emphasis on a more holistic understanding that takes into account the views and experiences of the poor themselves (Bardy, Rubens & Massaro, 2015; Riddell, 2012).

Multidimensionality of poverty

In recent years, analyses of poverty that are focussed on income and consumption have become heavily critiqued for failing to accurately reflect the experience of those in poverty and dismissed as unhelpful in identifying strategies for poverty alleviation (see amongst others Chatter, 2016; Chowdhury & Mukhopadhyaya, 2014; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Riddell, 2012; Sachs, 2012; Wagle, 2005). Riddell (2012, p. 220) has furthermore suggested that purely economic measurement assumes that all manifestations of poverty can be assigned a monetary value and be easily measured, and that individuals can “escape” poverty if only they are given access to basic goods and services. There has been a shift, therefore, towards an almost unanimous understanding of poverty being multidimensional: “that it is composed of a number of different elements and cannot (and therefore should not) be explained or measured by one attribute only” and that economic wellbeing is both a cause and effect of social and political wellbeing (Riddell, 2012, p. 218; Wagle, 2005).

This theory is rooted in Amartya Sen’s (as cited in Chowdhury & Mukhopadhyaya, 2014, pp. 269-273) ground-breaking “capabilities approach” which argues that an individual’s capacity to convert income and commodities into desired outcomes differs based on their access to goods and services such as public transport, education, or health care. It also attempts to broaden our understanding of poverty with greater reference to what people themselves consider important. Research suggests that factors such as personal se-

curity, education, health, social inclusion, honest governance, and freedom from fear and violence for example, are valued no less than income (Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Riddell, 2012). The necessity for this broader understanding has now been recognised by the United Nations Development Programme (2010) in their creation of the Multidimensional Poverty Index, which covers various aspects of health, education, and living standards; and by the World Bank (2000, p. 1) in their admonition that “Poverty is the result of economic, political and social processes that interact with each other and frequently reinforce each other in ways that exacerbate the deprivation in which poor people live”; and is widely addressed in academic literature.

One important aspect of multidimensionality is social exclusion which influences the capacity to acquire the resources needed to avoid poverty and can range from political (e.g. from voting) to economic (e.g. from the labour market) to social (e.g. from social networks which are important for sending children to better schools) (Wagle, 2005, p. 302). Within this, it is important also to consider gender inequality, which research suggests negatively influences women’s receiving and control over assets, educational and employment outcomes, and self-reported well-being and life satisfaction (Chatter, 2016; OECD, 2012 and Veenhoven, 2011, 2012 as cited in Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Riddell, 2012). One particular study, in Bangladesh, also found women to be physically worse off than men; recommending better access to low-cost medical support, personalised family planning services, and advice about maternal health as possible solutions (Chowdhury & Mukhopadhyaya, 2014, p. 283). Other issues include stark social and economic discrepancies between skilled and unskilled jobs, the impact of poor health on economic and other potentials, the effect of inequalities on political stability and peace, the effect of conflict on development, the effect of international financial flows, and the impact of natural disasters and absence of warning mechanisms (Chowdhury & Mukhopadhyaya, 2014; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Riddell, 2012; Wagle, 2005).

Lang and Lingnau (2015) argue that a clear and comprehensive understanding of poverty is essential to effectively reducing it. And, based on the

consensus that poverty is multidimensional, assistance which addresses one or even many manifestations of poverty will never result in the eradication of poverty on its own (Riddell, 2012). Instead, solving multidimensional poverty requires advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning aimed at adjusting the social, economic, and political structures and inequalities that impede development (Hickey & Bracking, 2005; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Langlois, 2008; Riddell, 2012). The acknowledgment of multidimensionality also raises the ethical question of whether poverty alleviation strategies should “aim narrowly at saving lives” or rather should aim to produce “human flourishing” or at least basic well-being and agency (Riddell, 2012, pp. 221-222). Finally, Riddell notes that whilst it is often judged that “the quicker the impact, the better the aid”, the key factors that contribute to development, such as the processes critical to social and political change, can take considerable time to make an impact (Riddell, 2012, p. 236).

Sustainable development

A second common theme in contemporary literature, which reflects the multidimensionality of poverty in some ways, is the need for development to be sustainable. There is a widespread understanding and consensus that worldwide environmental objectives need a higher profile due to the central and threatening role human activity is playing in fundamental earth dynamics today, and the potential devastating effects for human life and wellbeing (Sachs, 2012). Resulting crises already include global warming, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss due to deforestation, and fossil fuel depletion; effects for the human race the increasing frequency of extreme climate events and the growing burden of high and volatile food prices (Sachs, 2012, p. 2207).

Sustainable development, however, does not refer solely to ecological protection, but to a system of four components that are variably labelled as: economic (development), ecological/environmental (sustainability), social (inclusion), and institutional/good governance; which are highly interrelated and complementary – even more so in the global south (Bardy et al., 2015; Sachs, 2012). Interpreting only one of the first

three components is problematic because its success inevitably depends on the realisation of all three; they in turn depend on the fourth condition of good governance at all levels – local, national, regional, and global (Sachs, 2012, p. 2208). A good example of this is the indicator “hours spent collecting water”, examined by Koolwal and van de Walle (2010 as cited in Bardy et al., 2015), which has knock-on effects of women having less time for earning money, growing food, and family care, and children potentially missing school – there are ecological, social, and economic aspects (Bardy et al., 2015, p. 27).

Issues to consider under the umbrella of sustainable development extend far beyond environmental challenges, therefore, encompassing issues of social inclusion and fairness, the preservation of human and natural resources, and the struggle for decent employment leading to social unrest (Sachs, 2012). Addressing these issues and achieving sustainable development requires a global mobilisation to invest time and capital into the research, development, and policy change necessary for combining improving living standards with ecological imperatives (Bardy et al., 2015; Sachs, 2012). Other crucial aspects in realising sustainable development according to Sachs (2012) and Bardy and colleagues (2015) are the investment of a small part of consumption spending into long-term survival, and effective, properly functioning institutions, respectively.

Semiotic theory

The first three sections of this literature review have focussed on providing the information and arguments necessary for a comparison of two different perspectives of poverty and development. This section is slightly different because it seeks not to outline arguments directly related to this comparison, but rather to add a second layer of analysis which provides a framework for understanding the way in which these perspectives are produced. This framework is that of semiotic theory, which analyses the relationships between signs, objects, and meanings. Literature from both the pro and contra pools of current NGO advertising methods draw on semiotic theory to construct certain understandings of poverty and development. As Lister (2004) argues, poverty must be understood not only in

material terms, but also as a social relation between 'the poor' and the 'non-poor' which is largely defined by the discourse, attitudes, and actions of the latter. Two main semiotic theories can help to explain this; outlined below are the ideas of framing theory and the power of representation.

Framing theory

The following explanation of framing theory is taken from a review article by Benford and Snow (2000) which synthesises a wide range of literature from many different authors. As Benford and Snow (2000, p. 613) explain, framing theory stipulates that social movements are not carriers of existing, naturally developing ideas and meanings, but rather that their actors are actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for themselves and others (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 613). Their signifying practice is understood by the verb "framing" and leads to the production of "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organisation (SMO)" – collective action frames (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614).

Framing involves a number of core tasks, of which the first is diagnostic; in order to solve a problem, a social movement must first identify its source in order to focus blame and responsibility which can lead to the construction of boundaries between good/evil, protagonist/antagonist (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 616). The outcome of diagnostic framing processes restricts the range of possibilities open in the second core framing process which is prognostic – identification of a solution or strategy (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 616). The final core task is motivation framing, which provides a rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 617). The salience of frames to their targets of mobilisation has three dimensions: centrality – how essential the associated beliefs, values, and ideas are for the targets, experiential commensurability – to what extent they resonate with the targets' personal, everyday experiences, and narrative fidelity – the extent to which they resonate culturally with the targets (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 621-622).

Frames are produced by overlapping discursive, strategic, and contested processes (Benford

& Snow, 2000, p. 623). Discursive processes articulate the frame by bringing together certain events and experiences and then accent and highlight some issues, events, or beliefs as more salient (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 623). Strategic processes are goal oriented, producing frames for specific purposes and may involve a combination of bridging previously unconnected frames; idealising, embellishing, clarifying, or invigorating existing values or beliefs; extending frames to larger spheres of interest; and transformation through the changing of old understandings and meanings or generation of new ones (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 624-625).

Power of Representation

Theories of power, representation, and othering are rooted in the ground-breaking ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault who argued that there is no such thing as an absolute truth but rather that societies construct "discourses" – systems of representation that are specific to historical contexts and institutional regimes. These discourses produce knowledge and meaning by providing (and thus restricting) the language with which a particular topic can be discussed. By constructing object and subject, discourses have the power to shape and influence our conduct and thus make themselves true (Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013, pp. 29-35). Power, therefore, should be understood not only in economic and physical terms "but also in broader cultural or symbolic terms, including the power to represent someone in a certain way" (Hall et al., 2013, p. 249).

Firstly, the 'non-poor' are able to construct 'the poor' as the Other through language and images with fundamental implications for how the latter are treated; Lister (2004, p. 101) explains this term "Othering" as follows:

The capital 'O' denotes its symbolic weight. The notion of 'Othering' conveys how this is not an inherent state but an ongoing process animated by the 'non-poor'.

Note the characteristic of being "an ongoing process" – humans are capable of reconditioning

themselves. Secondly, once a discourse has identified the Other, it becomes a powerful tool for reproducing inequality because it regulates thought, emotion, and action, and maintains societal boundaries (Schwalbe et al., 2000).

The process of Othering, in turn, is closely related to stereotyping – “a discriminatory form of labelling, which attains a taken-for-granted quality and serves to portray particular social groups as homogenous” (Lister, 2004, p. 101). Both processes are related to the maintenance of differentiation, power, order, and control by the dominant group – by the more over the less privileged, the normal over the abnormal, the ‘good’ over the ‘bad’ – and difference becomes essentialised and naturalised (Hall et al., 2013; Lister, 2004; Schwalbe et al., 2000). As a result, it becomes easier to blame the Other for their situation and to legitimate privilege, exploitation, and oppression (Lister, 2004, p. 102). Thus, the process of classifying or categorising people, be it in attempt to communicate or clarify complex phenomena, or to generate sympathy for victims by detailing individuals, can lead to stereotyping, paternalistic elitism, and victim blaming (Lister, 2004; Wright, 1993).

Methodology

This research will essentially compare the understanding of poverty and development garnered from NGDO video advertisements, to the perceived reality of poverty and development as expressed by experts and academics, in order to offer recommendations for future advertisements and further research. As such, it assumes as a methodological starting point that the terms “poverty” and “development” and our understanding of them is constructed, in line with the semiotic theory outlined above, and investigates how and to what effect this construction takes place in NGDO materials. In order to do this, attempts were made to collect two forms of qualitative data which could build upon existing literature: questionnaire answers from NGDOs themselves and a focus group discussion centred on the viewing of NGDO video advertisements with a group of university students.

Questionnaires

In order to better understand the motivations behind NGDOs using certain types of images today, this research sought to have a number of organisations complete a simple questionnaire. In the hope of building a fair and holistic image, NGDOs using a range of different approaches were selected based on the content of their websites. Organisations were also selected from a variety of different countries, although all NGDOs were necessarily Anglophone, as translation work is beyond the scope of this research. Selection was also restricted to organisations of at least medium size, as smaller organisations do not have separate fundraising departments.

The selected organisations were contacted via email or online contact form to enquire as to whether they would be willing to participate in a short questionnaire for the purpose of a bachelor thesis on NGO advertising methods. The aim was to have responses both from fundraising departments and from leading figures in each of the organisations. The email included a link to a short online questionnaire that included questions about the goal, methods and justification for them, and perceived impact of video advertisements. Unfortunately, in spite of many organisations being contacted over a period of several weeks, only one NGDO worker completed the questionnaire. The vast majority stated that they lacked the time and/or resources to do so.

Focus group

A focus group methodology was used to gather qualitative data on viewers’ interpretations of and responses to NGDO advertisements. This type of data collection was deemed appropriate because the group interaction has been found to be effective in raising thoughts and feelings on certain topics and exploring why individuals think a certain way (Parry et al., 2013). Furthermore, focus groups have been found to produce qualitative data which provides “rich and holistic descriptions, which have strong potential for revealing the complexities of ordinary events” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was in line with the aim of this research, therefore, to create a holistic picture of the real and perceived causes of poverty in the global south.

Two focus groups were conducted for the purpose of this research and the data collected was indeed greatly beneficial to this research. The focus groups led respondents to go beyond their initial reactions, which could also have been collected via a survey, and to delve much deeper into their thoughts, including (perhaps) the subconscious. The researcher found that the group interaction allowed participants to generate much more information about how they were interpreting the advertisements, as it seemed that hearing others speak would trigger the realisation of their own assumptions, or of understandings which they assumed to be universal, but perhaps were not so.

Participants were drawn via convenience sampling from the Amsterdam University College due to their accessibility. It is important to note that due to their being university students, participants in the focus group were not a representative sample of the population that views video format NGO materials. The sample fell above the average level of education, and has above average practice in engaging critically with material. They were, therefore, more likely to question the portrayal of poverty and development in the global south that they saw in the materials shown to them. In order to minimise the effect of higher education, students were drawn from a restricted population participating in 100-level natural sciences or literature courses. This was intended to reduce participants' existing awareness of poverty and development issues. The researcher appealed to professors to disseminate a sign up form amongst their students and also visited lectures to do so herself. Selection from an English university once again avoided issues of translation, and was assumed to ensure a level of fluency in English that would allow for unstilted conversation.

The first focus group was made up of six students and the second of four (for details see Appendix A). During each focus group, participants were shown a series of four NGDO videos ranging loosely from less to more informative/more to less in line with the recommendations made in literature on "effective" NGO materials (for more information see Appendix B). All of the videos were from the last year, in order to accurately represent the methods used today. After each clip, participants

were invited to reflect on the content of the video with minimal input from the researcher save for the following guiding questions:

1. What are your initial reactions?
2. How did this video make you feel?
3. How did it make you feel about poverty/about development?
4. What do you think the NGO is hoping to achieve with this video?
5. What do you think about the situation of the people depicted in this video?
6. Do you feel the need to act in response to what you've seen in the video? If yes, in what way?
7. Which of the advertisements do you think is most effective?
8. How would you define "effectiveness" in this context?
9. Which is most effective for donations/encouraging political action?

In spite of a neutral set up, the dynamic of the two focus groups was slightly different. In the first group, participants showed some awareness of the structural causes of poverty, but showed limited personal interest in the issue. Only one participant had volunteered in a developing country in the past and indicated a desire to do so again. In the second group, on the other hand, all four participants indicated a personal interest in development. One participant had volunteered in a developing country in the past, two had grown up in developing countries, and all indicated a desire to be involved in poverty alleviation in some form or another in the future. The second group indicated considerably greater awareness of the current situation in the global south and of the historical and contemporary causes of poverty. How this materialised in their discussion will be made apparent in the findings and analysis of the data.

Findings & Analysis

This section will synthesise the various perspectives outlined in the literature review together with data collected from the focus groups, in order to create a holistic image of the portrayal of poverty and development in NGDO advertising and how it compares to expert opinion on these issues. The word “portrayal” is an important one here and used frequently, so it is crucial that the meaning is clear. A portrayal is a representation of something, meaning that it is not the thing itself. As such, it may be that the portrayal of a person, place, or situation does not accurately reflect the original. This may be intentional, or it may simply be that the producer and viewer of the portrayal interpret it differently. It is also possible, therefore, that a portrayal is interpreted by viewers in a way that is unintentional or unexpected for the person who produced it. Another important term in this research, is “effectivity”, as this of course is what NGDOs desire of their advertisements. Effectivity, however, can be defined in many different ways and indeed the interpretations of this word vary between the various bodies of literature used in this research, and also amongst the focus group participants. Thus, rather than restricting the definition from the outset, this term will be addressed in full in the section “What is ‘effectivity’?”.

The four advertisements shown to the focus groups, were selected as a range of different portrayals ranging from portrayals in line with literature on “effective” NGO advertising, to portrayals in line with the opinions of poverty and development experts. The first advertisement which participants were shown, referred to from hereon in as the “sick children advertisement”, used emotional music, shocking images of crying, malnourished, hospitalised children, and tells viewers that they could save lives through a 10 dollar donation. The next, from now on the “animal sponsorship advertisement”, used upbeat music and sunny images of various animals telling viewers why they make good livestock. Thirdly, participants were shown the “climate change advertisement”, in which a young boy tells viewers about the effect of climatic disasters on his day-to-day life and schooling. And finally, they were shown the “monopoly advertise-

ment”, in which a black woman and white man play a heavily rigged game of monopoly.

Producing advertisements and constructing subjects

Let us first consider how, why, and for what purpose NGDOs construct poverty, and development. Foucault (as cited in Hall et al., 2013) would argue that there is no absolute truth of poverty and development, but rather that there are various historically and institutionally specific discourses. These discourses are constructed by the dominant group, which in the context of NGDO video advertisements is clearly the NGDO. In the global north, these organisations are markedly more economically and culturally powerful than the communities that are targeted by their campaigns. Resource and language barriers, together with physical distance, prevent the communities themselves from having the same opportunities to influence discourse on poverty and development in the global north. Furthermore, NGDOs have symbolic power because they are assumed by the general public to be an authority on poverty and development as a result of first-hand experience. Thus, NGDOs are endowed with the power to construct poverty and development through the language and images of their advertisements (Hall et al., 2013; Lister 2004), and through this shape and influence people’s conduct (Hall et al., 2013). Literature on how to produce effective NGO advertising, although not explicitly referring to the concept, actively encourages the construction of poverty and development in certain ways in order to mobilise viewers in a way that benefits the organisation.

This then, is why NGDOs are able to construct meanings; the next questions are how and why. If we consider NGDOs to be a type of social movement in that they are groupings focussed on specific political or social issues, framing theory states that they actively produce and maintain meanings that inspire and legitimate certain activities (Benford & Snow, 2000). Inspiring and legitimating certain activities is one of the central aims of NGDO advertising, of course, as organisations tend to be dependent on public support in order to achieve their objectives, whether they seek to inspire donations, political engagement, or reflection and further re-

search on certain issues. Thus, NGOs construct – or “frame” – poverty and development in ways that they consider to be beneficial to their cause. This framing involves three core processes: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivation framing (Benford & Snow (2000). These processes are only visible in the advertisements to varying extents, however. The sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements, for example, exclude the first core framing process – which is diagnostic – and focus solely on prognosis (identifying the solution) and motivating viewers to react. The climate change and monopoly advertisements, on the other hand, focus on diagnosis (identifying the source of blame) and give limited information on what the solution would be. Both approaches have their drawbacks, as will be revealed by the focus group data.

The “reality” of poverty and development

If meanings of poverty and development are constructed, it is interesting to compare the portrayal by NGO video advertisements to the understandings that have achieved widespread consensus amongst poverty and development experts. The framing recommended by literature on effective NGO advertising is very specific. First and foremost, images of poverty should be shocking portrayals of extreme misery (Chang & Lee, 2009; Parry et al., 2013); this is clearly visible in the sick children advertisement, which shows crying, malnourished, and hospitalised children. NGOs argue that these images factually represent horrific situations and that it would be deceitful to make them look more positive (CCIC, 2008). It is important to consider, however, that viewers do not see these advertisements in isolation. We are exposed to NGO advertisements of this kind from a young age and research suggests that the continuous use of highly similar images has contributed to the general public having a high confidence in negative stereotypes of developing countries as places of extreme poverty (Carr & Atkins, 2003; VSO, 2002). That is to say, viewers believe that everyone in developing countries are in the same dire situation and that this is natural (Hall et al., 2013; Lister, 2004). These statements are supported by data from the focus groups.

Participants noted that the sick children advertisement showed but did not explain poverty. In the first focus group, one participant expressed the belief that the advertisement restated stereotypes and gave a very limited view on poverty, but the second group was much more critical. The latter noted the similarity of NGO advertisements (P2.3), and lack of background information (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). They also felt that such advertisements show countries in a negative light without giving any context (P2.2), and that “you have kind of an impression that there is nothing happening in that country except from poor kids dying” (P2.1, P2.3). One participant even indicated that advertisements such as this are dishonest (P2.1). Altogether, therefore, the participants felt that advertisements such as the sick children advertisement used for the focus group give a negative impression of the global south, in line with the argument found in critical literature of highly similar images encouraging negative stereotypes. Such stereotypes are not accurate, of course, as even in developing countries there is variation in levels of affluence and often a wealthy elite. NGO advertisements such as the sick children advertisement may show footage of real situations, but the overall impression that the widespread use of these images gives to viewers is misleading.

Another criticism is that NGO advertisements oversimplify poverty and development. Literature on effective NGO advertising recommends a succinct expression of the cause and the formula that “a small amount of money equals a huge outcome” – poverty is easily solvable (Aldrich, 2004). Good examples of this are the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements, which give no context as to why people are living in poverty, but rather focus on showing the problem and telling viewers what they can do about it – making a donation or sponsoring an animal respectively. In the sick children advertisement, this was almost impossible to miss due to the repeated mention of the “only 10 dollar” donation figure which could save lives, which several participants picked up on (P2.1, P1.5, P2.2). Several participants expressed the view that the problem they were being shown was too great to be solved by the 10 dollar donation requested (P1.1, P1.2, P1.4), in spite of recog-

nising the NGDO's intention to convince viewers that they can really make a difference (P1.1, P1.2, P1.5, P1.6, P2.4) and that all that is needed to solve the problem is money (P1.1, P1.2, P1.5, P1.6). This once again reinforced the idea that highly negative images and messages may be counterproductive. In the animal sponsorship advertisement, the message of development being easily achievable through donations was implicit but nonetheless picked up on by the focus group participants (P1.1, P1.2, P1.4, P1.6), with two participants commenting that the idea of a goat alone solving the problem could be simplistic (P1.2, P1.4). Other participants felt that the animal sponsorship advertisement did not talk about poverty or development (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3), although it gave a lot of information about the animals (P2.1, P2.2).

This money-centric approach of NGDOs who frame poverty as easily solvable through donations is criticised by Riddell (2012) and Hulme and Shepherd (2003) on the basis that it leads to the poor being conceptualised as a single homogenous group whose prime problem is low monetary income and who can escape poverty if they are given access to basic goods and services. Dominant academic theory, on the multidimensionality of poverty and the need for sustainable development, also clearly contradicts the money-centric approach of NGDO advertisements such as of the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements. Experts argue that poverty encompasses much more than economic factors, highlighting the importance of taking into account social and political factors and considering the way in which they impede individual's capacity to convert income and commodities into desired outcomes (Bardy et al., 2015; Sachs, 2012; Wagle, 2005; World Bank, 2010). Economic, social, and political factors reinforce and exacerbate each other, meaning that assistance that focusses on the manifestations of poverty – as the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements do – will never result in the eradication of poverty altogether (Riddell, 2012). The eradication of poverty – experts concur – requires advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning aimed at structural change (Hickey & Bracking, 2005; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Langlois, 2008; Riddell, 2012). A sustainable development, furthermore, must encompass economic, en-

vironmental, social, and institutional components as success in any category is dependent on the others; this requires global mobilisation of research and capital (Bardy et al., 2015; Sachs, 2012).

It is clear then, that the understanding of poverty and development that viewers gain from NGDO video advertisements such as the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements contradicts experts' understanding of the same issues. No mention is made in those two advertisements, of the underlying structural issues that are causing children to be in such dire situations or have led people to need donations of livestock. Furthermore, the solutions offered by the NGDOs in those two advertisements only address the manifestations of poverty; thus, according to expert opinion, their strategies will never eradicate poverty completely. The climate change and monopoly advertisements were slightly different, in the sense that they explicitly addressed larger issues – climate change and structural inequality respectively, which also happen to be two of the issues discussed extensively in contemporary literature on poverty and development. This difference was also picked up on by the focus groups. One participant commented that the climate change advertisement showed what the boy was doing “instead of just him dying”, and therefore gave a better understanding of poverty (P1.6). Another participant made a comment, that:

It also challenges the view as a non-changing poverty, because some advertisements tend to show us poverty and it is always the same and it's just a fact, like in those countries people are poor you know. But then here it shows the hurricane, like it really shows that things can change for bad or good but you can help to change them for good. (P1.2)

The participant explicitly acknowledged that the repetitiveness of negative images leads viewers to view the global south as a place of homogenous misery, therefore, and identified the climate change advertisement to counteract this effect. Other participants also expressed the opinion that the climate change advertisement showed the reality of daily life in the global south better than

the sick children advertisement (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). Where the sick children advertisement reinforced negative stereotypes and the animal sponsorship advertisement although avoiding such depictions, did not counteract them, the climate change advertisement offered an alternative perspective that questions deep-rooted stereotypes.

The climate change advertisement was less effective, perhaps, in countering existing misconceptions, as participants in the first focus group still interpreted it to suggest that if poor people are provided with a few basic things, they can develop themselves (P1.1, P1.2, P1.6). One participant even commented that in this sense the advertisement was similar to the animal sponsorship advertisement (P1.1), and the group in general felt that the advertisement was in principle asking for donations, just like the sick children and the animal sponsorship advertisements. This came as somewhat of a surprise, as the researcher interpreted the climate change advertisement to really focus on inherent disadvantages of countries in the global south and the complexity of poverty and development beyond economic factors. It was chosen as an example of an NGDO video advertisement that portrays these issues fairly in line with the understanding of experts. In line with the researcher's expectations, the participants in the second focus group very much interpreted the climate change advertisement to inform viewers of issues of unequal capability (P2.1, P2.2, P2.4), the effects of climate change (P2.2, P2.4), and was "putting everything into a really complex and big perspective" "in a really nice way" (P2.2, P2.4). It is important, here, to note the background of the participants in the second focus group: as mentioned, all four of the participants indicated a personal interest in poverty and development; two had lived in developing countries (P2.2 and P2.3) and one had volunteered in a developing country (P2.4); two had studied environmental sciences (P2.1, P2.2). As such, it is possible that they were able to gain more information from the advertisement, and were able to better understand the message, because they had a previous understanding of the topic.

The monopoly advertisement set itself apart in that it focussed almost solely on explaining why

poverty exists, without showing poverty or offering a solution. The participants described it as explaining a complicated problem (P1.2, P1.4), portraying Western power and multinationals as tainting or creating a ceiling to the development of other countries (P1.2, P1.6), and portraying inequality as holding development back (P1.4). Participants in the second group felt that it got to the root of the problem rather than just showing consequences (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). The portrayal of poverty and development in the monopoly advertisement was clearly aimed at showing the structural inequalities that are advantageous for the global north and prevent the global south from developing. This was explicitly identified by the majority of participants. Some participants found issue with the portrayal of the global north and global south but certainly no one found it to imply that development is simple. In fact, participants found it to be so complex that they felt powerless to act in anyway in response to the advertisement. This issue will be elaborated on later.

In the context of the debate between presenting issues succinctly, and not oversimplifying them, it is interesting to note that the focus group participants actually expressed a preference for the advertisements that were more informative and gave instances of poverty some context. Participants argued that that NGDOs should provide background information on the issues that they present (P1.5, P2.1, P2.3), that this would increase the appeal of advertisements to the viewer (P1.1, P1.4), and that it would increase viewer response (P1.5, P2.1). In fact, the second group was adamant that it wanted information on the situation and that this is necessary to make people involved and committed with a cause (P2.1, P2.3). One said:

"I do want to [be told the history], otherwise it's just an appeal to pity; I don't want to spend money just because I feel bad for them. (P2.1)"

The denunciation of appeals to pity was particularly interesting in light of literature on effective NGO advertising heavily recommending emotional rather than informative appeals; this will be discussed further in a later section. At the same time, however, several participants also expressed the view that organisations should not show the whole problem but rather focus on one

specific thing and go into greater depth on that issue (P1.1, P1.5, P1.6). This actually contradicts the opinion of poverty and development experts that development strategies need to address all facets of poverty in order to be effective. Notably, these opinions were expressed in the focus group that had less personal interest and awareness of poverty and development issues. This might suggest that if the general public were better educated in what is necessary to eradicate poverty, NGDO video advertisements could better reflect expert opinion without reducing their appeal to viewers.

What is “effectivity”?

An important question to consider in light of this comparison, is what it means for an NGDO video advertisement to be “effective”. Literature on how to produce effective NGO advertising focusses largely on donations as a measure of effectiveness (see amongst others Aldrich, 2004; Bennet & Kottasz, 2000; Chang, 2014; Chang & Lee, 2009; Shanahan et al., 2012). However, the methods recommended in the very same articles, did not encourage donation proclivity in the focus group participants. The sick children advertisement was most in line with the recommendations made by literature on effective NGO advertising, and yet only one participant indicated any desire to donate money after having seen it (P2.4), a few others felt that the video may be effective in encouraging donations from other viewers but the response was largely negative. The participants, in fact, saw much greater potential for encouraging donations in the animal sponsorship advertisement, which contradicted most of the recommendations made in literature on effective NGO advertising, by using upbeat music and sunny images, and not showing any misery at all. In fact, after having seen all of the advertisements, several participants stated that the animal sponsorship advertisement would be most effective in raising money. It is possible, therefore, that the methods recommended by literature on effective NGO advertisements, may not actually be most “effective” in raising money. The reasons for this will be elaborated upon in the later sections of this discussion. More important, for the time being, is also to consider whether this definition of effectiveness is the one that NGDOs should be adopting.

Based on dominant poverty and development theories, effectiveness would perhaps be better measured in terms of encouraging political engagement amongst viewers. As previously mentioned, money-centric analyses of poverty are critiqued in contemporary poverty and development theory (see amongst others Chatter, 2016; Chowdhury & Mukhopadhaya, 2014; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Riddell, 2012; Sachs, 2012; Wagle, 2005). Riddell (2012) and Wright (1993) criticise the focus on economic poverty indicators and “the glorification of the ethic of giving” for promoting the ideas that individuals can escape poverty if given access to basic goods and services and that national problems can be solved by individual effort. Most notably, poverty and development experts focus on the necessity of addressing the root causes of poverty rather than the symptoms. A parallel can be seen between the problems that Riddell and Wright identify, Aldrich’s (2004) recommendation that NGOs tell viewers that a small amount of money will have a huge outcome, and the sick children advertisement telling viewers that 10 dollars can save a life (see Appendix B). By focussing on donations as a measure of effectiveness, therefore, NGDO advertisements are directly contradicting the advice of experts on what it takes to overcome poverty and develop countries in the global south. Structural change cannot be brought about by economic means alone, but rather requires advocacy, lobbying, and campaigning aimed at adjusting the social, economic, and political structures and inequalities that impede development (Hickey & Bracking, 2005; Lang & Lingnau, 2015; Langlois, 2008; Riddell, 2012). This highlights a fundamental problem in existing literature on effective NGO advertising, and throws into question the usefulness of the recommendations within it. In order to bring about the change in practice required of countries in the global north, NGDOs would be better off encouraging viewers to become politically engaged with such issues. Instead of asking for donations they could ask, amongst other things, for viewers to sign petitions, lobby politicians, and adopt more environmentally friendly practice at home and at work.

Both the climate change and monopoly advertisements addressed larger issues and did not ask for donations. The climate change advertisement did appear to aim at something more than merely encouraging viewers to donate, and seemed also to be successful in this. Participants indicated that after having seen this advertisement they would do research (P1.2), see if they could go and help (P1.2, P2.3), and try to be more environmentally friendly (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3, P2.4). In response to the monopoly advertisement, which was similar, some participants in the first focus group indicated that they may discuss it with other viewers or visit the website (P1.1, P1.3) but overall they felt little proclivity to act. The second focus group, in which the participants all had a personal interest in poverty and development issues, stated that the monopoly advertisement had no effect on them other than to make them slightly more aware of issues, they felt the goal of the advertisement was to raise awareness. Above all, this advertisement led many participants to expressed confusion as to the purpose of the advertisement (P1.1, P1.2, P1.3, P1.5), as it did not tell them what they could do about the situation and every single participant in both groups expressed that they felt helpless to change it; “it’s a bit abstract, it stands above you” one participant commented (P1.6). The monopoly advertisement had a similar effect upon the focus group participants as the sick children advertisement, in terms of making them feel that they were powerless to change the situation, because they could not see how to influence these great structural issues. Notably, climatic disasters are also a huge problem, but the climate change advertisement indicated ways in which viewers could act, and perhaps because of this did not make them feel helpless.

Asked which of the advertisements they considered to be most effective, every participant stated the climate change advertisement. Asked what they meant by “effectiveness” one participant focussed on donations (P1.6) while others had a broader definition that encompassed making viewers involved with a cause and making them want to do something about it (P1.3, P1.5, P2.4) and a couple focussed on making people think:

“Yeah it makes you think, it’s not about, probably not like everybody is going to act on it but ev-

erybody is at least going to think about it. (P2.3)”

It’s also not running to the computer and sending 10 dollars, it’s just about sustainable thought. (P2.1)

Indeed, the majority of participants in the second focus group felt very strongly about the need for NGDO video advertisements to inform viewers about the context of poverty (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). The participants’ unanimous agreement that the climate change advertisement was most effective, in spite of varying understandings of effectiveness, speaks in bounds.

Driven by (negative) emotion

Research on producing effective NGO advertising recommends the use of shocking images to capture the audience’s attention; and negative images and narratives that illustrate misery and evoke guilt to encourage feelings of sympathy and responsibility to help (Chang, 2014; Chang & Lee, 2009; Parry et al., 2013). Critics have taken issue with such images on the basis that they are disrespectful and undermine human dignity (CCIC, 2008). These methods were clearly visible in the sick children advertisement which showed many images of crying, malnourished, and hospitalised children; spoke in past, present, and future tense of children dying; and described a child as “tiny” and “vulnerable”. The first focus group showed an awareness of the sick children advertisement deliberately evoking viewers’ emotions, describing it as “deliberately made depressing” and showing “the worst parts” (P1.1), “a deliberate attempt to make everything very pathetic and make people feel guilty” (P1.3), and “trying to make you feel for it” by showing an individual child with a face and a name and saying “you could help him” not “you could help them” (P1.6). Rather than this framing evoking a sense of responsibility to help, however, the majority of participants in the first focus group stated that they would change the channel if they saw an advertisement such as this one on the television (P1.1, P1.3, P1.4, P1.5), precisely because of the sadness and guilt it evoked (P1.1, P1.5, P1.6). One participant also stated that the images she was shown made her want to reject both the images and the advertisement (P1.2).

In the second focus group, all participants

agreed that the sick children advertisement aimed to make them feel bad, but there was a strong divide in opinion over the effectiveness of this framing. One participant was highly positive, stating that:

I think what they're doing is good, trying to show the worst parts in order to make sure that people know what's going on, and try to raise money through that. (P2.4)

The majority of the second group, however, stated no emotional engagement, repeatedly noting feelings of extreme fatigue and irritation towards the video, feeling manipulated, and stating that there are far too many of the same type of advertisement (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). They were highly critical of the video for being too pathetic and expressed a general objection to advertisements based on appeals to pity (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). P2.3 said that "we do feel bad about it but nobody actually realises it when they see the video". P2.1 and P2.2 agreed with her that "you see so many videos like that, that in the end you don't pay any attention". This one participant who was positive about the sick children advertisement, had volunteered in a developing country before and repeatedly stated that she had seen such situations first hand (P2.4). It was also notable that the participants described the video as insulting and disrespectful; as was also argued by the CCIC (2008). By and large, therefore, the shocking and negative images used in the sick children advertisements did not evoke feelings of responsibility to help in the focus group participants as only one participant indicated a desire to donate. If anything, for this audience the attempt to evoke guilt and pity through shocking images was counterproductive.

The animal sponsorship and climate change advertisements, both gave participants a much more positive emotional reaction, and appeared to make participants more likely to act. The animal sponsorship advertisement, which showed no shocking or negative images, only healthy happy looking animals and one clean, healthy-looking child holding a rabbit. The emotional reaction to this advertisement was also starkly different to the sick children advertisement, with participants commenting

that it made them feel good, positive, and happy (P1.1, P1.4, P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). The majority of participants suggested that viewers become desensitised and bored of the sick children advertisement's approach and that organisations need to try new things and videos could be much more effective (P1.1, P1.3, P1.4, P1.5, P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). After watching the animal sponsorship video, they said that it was much better because the novel approach would make viewers less likely to change channels and more likely to go and find out more about the campaign (P1.1, P1.4, P1.6). Several participants indicated desire to sponsor an animal after seeing the video and the majority considered it to be more effective or appealing than the sick children video. This suggests that a more positive approach could be more effective in gaining (and keeping) viewer attention, therefore, and prompting action.

The climate change advertisement was less upbeat than the animal sponsorship advertisement and did show images of children living in poverty but did not show extreme misery or sickness. It showed a young boy at school, talking about the effect of extreme weather including cyclones, floods, and droughts; and the lack of clean water on his daily life. While participants still considered the climate change advertisement to play on viewers' emotions, the feelings they described were less of guilt and more of hope and compassion. The second focus group, which had been highly critical of the sick children video, very much preferred the climate change advertisement and described it as more positive, more hopeful, less pitiful (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3), resolving all their points of criticism on the sick children advertisement, and making them involved emotionally (P2.1, P2.2). One participant commented:

They don't have to show us videos of them dying or anything. They just had to show us that, yeah they do have schools, they do have this, but we have it so much better. (P2.2)

This was a clear criticism, once more, of the types of images used in the sick children advertisement. Participants in the other group also commented that it was not a pathetic video (P1.2) and

that it was sad, but not trying to play on viewers' guilt or force an emotional reaction (P1.6). Several participants referred in particular to the child's wish to be rich ("so rich that I can buy food and I will still have some money left") (P1.4, P1.5, P2.2, P2.3), noting the difference between his and their own interpretation of what it means to be rich, and finding it touching, endearing, and saying that it was the main reason why this video had the greatest effect on them. This advertisement was unanimously agreed upon to be the most effective and participants indicated greatest inclination to act in response to this advertisement.

The emotions evoked by the monopoly video were entirely different. The first focus group expressed a range of emotions including anger at the situation and discomfort, irritation, confusion at the portrayal (P1.1, P1.2, P1.3, P1.5, P1.6). Participants in the second focus group, on the other hand, expressed feeling revengeful, disgusted, and angry at the situation (P2.2, P2.3) and found far less issue with the portrayal. This, once more, appeared to be linked to the participants varying levels of personal interest and knowledge of poverty and development issues. Participants in the first focus group, which was overall less aware, expressed anger at the West and Africa being portrayed as opponents (P1.2, P1.6), described the advertisement as showing "their [the NGDO's] view of it" (P1.4), and very much asserted that the situation depicted had nothing to do with them. The participants in the second, more aware, focus group, on the other hand, considered the monopoly advertisement to show a real situation and difference in opportunity and praised it for this (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). They showed a prior awareness of the economic, political, and historical factors contributing to poverty and were fairly negative about current development aid from the global north, which they referred to in first person plural. Above all, although the participants saw the white man and black woman to represent the global north and global south just as the first group did, they explicitly stated that they were not offended by it, with one participant commenting, "Well history is history. You can't really change it." The participants' level of prior awareness of poverty and development issues, therefore, seemed to greatly influence their reaction to the monopoly advertisement and

the response of the participants with greater prior knowledge was considerably better. Crucially, however, every single participant experienced feelings of helplessness due to not knowing how to change the situation they were shown and thus few indicated any desire to act in response to seeing it.

Another recommendation by literature on effective NGO advertising is to use negatively framed messages about continuing poverty, meaning to focus on what will happen without viewers' donations rather than what could happen with their donations (Chang & Lee, 2009). The sick children video complied with this recommendation to some extent, making it clear that children were dying constantly and would continue to do so, but also suggesting that viewers could "save lives" by donating. This negative focus is considered to be counterproductive by critics, on the basis that the repetitive use of images showing the same level of misery and hopelessness can be detrimental in the long run because it gives viewers the impression that situations are not improving (CCIC, 2008). Furthermore, Obermiller (1995) concluded from his research that appeals which focus on how a situation can be improved can be more effective than appeals which emphasise the severity of the problem, when awareness and concern for the issue are high.

After having seen only the sick children advertisement, two participants argued, in line with Chang & Lee's (2009) conclusion, that videos of laughing or happy people would not make viewers give money (P2.4) or want to help (P1.6). One participant argued directly against this, however, saying that alongside a message of "this is possible because of you" such positive images could be equally if not more effective than the negative ones (P1.1). After having seen also the animal sponsorship video, another participant noted the clear difference in message framing, saying that:

The first one was like, "you have to do this otherwise children are going to die", and this one was like, "do that and that will improve the way someone lives", and that's way more positive. (P1.2)

As previously mentioned, participants found the animal sponsorship and climate change advertisements to be much more positive and hopeful than

the sick children advertisement; they also indicated greater intention to act in response to them, and judged them to be more effective. These opinions were shared by those who initially stated that happy advertisements would not be effective. Several participants referred to the boy going to school in the climate change video showing that development is already happening and is working which, “a positive message” which would make viewers feel that they would be doing something good by supporting the organisation (P1.1, P1.6). The sick children video, on the other hand, was criticised by participants for making it seem that nothing good is every happening in developing countries. The animal sponsorship video had a positively framed message – what the animals can/will do. A key difference, therefore, was the framing of development.

It should be noted that participants did not consider appeals to emotion to be inherently bad. In fact, several participants stated that it is important to emotionally engage viewers (P1.1, P1.6, P2.3). Where the focus group data contradicted the recommendation made by existing literature on “effective” NGO advertising, was the subject of the types of emotions that advertisements should evoke. The participants’ responses to the four advertisements indicated that positive images and messages are actually more effective at engaging viewers and encouraging them to act. For them, it was not the video that stirred up the most sadness and guilt that was most effective. In fact all of the participants considered the climate change video to be most “effective” – according to their varying definitions of the word. What distinguished this video, was its ability to emotionally engage viewers but also make them feel positive and hopeful about the situation improving. Two participants referred to the need to find the right balance. One saying that:

[The climate change advertisement] found the right balance between the big picture of climate change and the emotional part with identifying to just one child. (P1.2)

And another that the climate change advertisement was neither too pathetic nor not pathetic enough (P2.3), met with murmurs of agreement from the others.

Driving “us” apart: the victim profile

Research on effective NGO advertising has found most effective the portrayal of blameless, deserving, and helpless victims as individuals rather than in large groups of unidentified people (Bennet & Kottasz, 2000; Shanahan et al., 2012; Slovic, 2007). In line with this, the sick children advertisement showed children sick with waterborne and infectious diseases, and made a point of focussing on and naming individual children. Several participants in particular picked up on the latter strategy (P1.2, P1.6, P2.1). After seeing the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements, the first focus group noticed a difference in focus. Several participants made a distinction between saving people (in the sick children advertisement) and helping or enabling people to save themselves (in the animal sponsorship advertisement) (P1.1, P1.3, P1.4, P1.6). The phrase “saving people” indeed implies a complete helplessness of the people living in poverty, that they are “totally destitute” as is recommended in literature on effective NGO advertising (Bennet & Kottasz, 2000). Research has shown, however, that focussing on individual victims and particular instances of hardship in the absence of cultural, historical and other contexts increases the likelihood that the poor will be held responsible for their situation (Dalton et al., 2008; Iyengar, 1990). Furthermore, Wright (1993) argues that the recommended emphasis on the deserving poor promotes an impression that and their problems can be solved by individual effort when in reality they are national, structural problems. When poverty is expressed as a collective outcome and background information is given, on the other hand, viewers are more likely to blame societal factors (Campbell and colleagues, 2001). This would suggest that the recommendation to provide simple messages actually works against the recommendation to portray blameless victims.

The contradiction can perhaps be explained by semiotic theory, which states that framing involves three core tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivation framing. The sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements did not show the first of these core processes, making no mention of the source of blame or responsibility for people being in poverty. Both went straight to the second core

framing process of identifying a solution or strategy – donations from viewers for medicine and animals respectively. They fail, in other words, to give any context or explanation of poverty and thus leave viewers' to carry out the diagnosis and identify a source of blame and responsibility themselves. When the only information given is that there are people that are in poverty, and the only possible solution proposed is external help, it is not so surprising perhaps, that viewers jump to the conclusion that those individuals who cannot help themselves are to blame for their situation. The climate change and monopoly advertisements, on the other hand, quite clearly showed the diagnostic framing process, assigning blame to climate change and structural inequality respectively. With this context, viewers should be less likely to blame the poor for their situation. The focus group participants did not necessarily indicate different levels of victim blaming in response to the four advertisements, it was notable that in the first focus group, which had less personal interest and prior knowledge of poverty and development issues, some comments were made that did tend towards victim blaming:

It's also obviously their fault to a certain degree that they still are in poverty, I mean they are not aided by how they are treated most of the time but it's also not true that they're like trying their hardest most of the time. (P1.6)

Also they sometimes have problems with the government which is really corrupted and everything, so that's not only the bankers, the Western world, it's also themselves. (P1.2)

The first group was also far less accepting of the role that the global north has had to play in continuing poverty in the global south. This could have been a result of their lesser knowledge of historical, cultural, and economic context.

Another issue with the repetitive use of highly similar, dehumanising images of people in extreme poverty, is the creation of deep-rooted negative stereotypes of people and countries in the global south. This in turn leads people living in the global south to be constructed as the "Other"; creates social distance and a sense of hierarchy between

the global north and global south; leads to the belief that developing countries are dependent on the global north to progress; and fuels racism (Carr & Atkins, 2003; CCIC, 2008; Krumer-Nevo & Benjamin, 2010; VSO, 2002). Several of these arguments were supported by the focus group data. Participants considered the sick children advertisement to give a highly negative portrayal of countries in the global south (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3) and suggest that countries in the global south are dependent on the global north (P1.2, P1.5, P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). Other comments on the sick children video included that "it feels like their life is below yours, beneath yours" if 10 dollars can easily save a life there (P2.2) and that they felt they should because they are white (P2.1, P2.3).

Three of the participants in the second focus group made a highly interesting observation, which relates to the creation of social distance. They suggested that the similarity of the music, voice over, and effects in the sick children advertisement, to the way in which poverty is portrayed in movies, made the situation shown seem like a production and therefore made it difficult to register the reality of such situations, that they seemed "fake" (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). One participant stated that "we do feel bad about it but nobody actually realises it when they see the video" (P.3). The climate change advertisement, on the other hand, which showed a young boy's day-to-day school life, made these participants feel that poverty is real (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3). Other participants felt that the climate change advertisement "removes the 'us' and 'them' part" because it shows that in spite of being poor the boy is just like children in the global north, and commented that this is "quite powerful" (P1.4). Another agreed that this advertisement allowed viewers to relate to people in poverty, unlike the sick children and animal sponsorship advertisements (P1.5). And a third participant explained this by the fact that the group was already aware of climate change and its effects on themselves. This made the situation of the boy similar to their own except that he was poorer and more affected by climate change, which the participant believed would make people want to donate (P1.6).

The focus group participants were altogether much more positive about the climate change ad-

vertisement, which they found to be more relatable and create less social distance between themselves and the poor, and also considered this advertisement to be most effective. This correlation can be explained using framing theory, which states that three factors influence the salience of frames to their targets of mobilisation. The second of these factors is: to what extent the frame resonates with targets' personal, everyday experiences (Benford & Snow, 2000). The images shown in the sick children advertisement are starkly different to the everyday experiences of the people living in the global north, such as the focus group participants, who are targeted by these advertisements. The one participant who did indicate willingness to donate in response to the sick children advertisement had volunteered in a developing country and asserted several times that she knew such situations were real because she had seen them first hand (P2.4). This makes sense within the context of framing theory, as the sick children advertisement resonated with an experience that she had had in the past. Similarly, the climate change advertisement showed a young boy going to school and talking about wanting to be rich, things which viewers in the global north could easily recognise from children that they see or meet every day. The focus group data would suggest, therefore that the salience of NGDO advertisements to viewers' daily lives is more important than the shock factor of images.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this research. Firstly, a number of issues prevented the creation of a truly holistic image of different perspectives on poverty and development, and the effect of NGDO on understandings thereof. A truly holistic image would have incorporated data from people experiencing poverty and development in the global south, and from the producers of NGDO video advertisements. Unfortunately, the first of these was beyond the scope of this research, and the second was attempted unsuccessfully (see "Methodology"). Future research could try to fill these gaps. Furthermore, the focus group data collection could have been improved in a number of ways. The animal sponsorship advertisement

confused the majority of participants and in retrospect seems to be aimed at an audience that is already aware of the concept of animal sponsorship and was therefore not suitable for a focus group of mixed backgrounds. Fortunately, once the concept was explained the participants were still able to engage in a discussion about this advertisement. It would have been helpful, therefore, to have a preliminary testing of the advertisements for comprehension and clarity. A more elaborate future research could also improve on this study by creating a set of four videos that are uniform in a number of control variables such as organisation, campaign, and length.

Secondly, it is important to consider limitations to the generalisability of these findings. As the focus group participants were all aged 18-22 and attending higher education, they are not an accurate cross section of the people that view NGDO video advertisements. In fact, the participants themselves suggested that their higher education may make them more critical of such materials (P1.2, P1.5) and several had a personal interest in poverty and development in the global south and therefore considerable prior knowledge (P2.1, P2.2, P2.3, P2.4). This does not mean, however, that the data gained from the focus groups was not valuable. The overarching negative response to the sick children advertisement seemed more to be a result of the participants having seen many highly similar advertisements in the past, which would be the same for other members of the general public. Furthermore, in light of critical literature calling for advertisements to be more informative, it is interesting to see how viewers' awareness of background and context shape their interpretations of different advertisements, and their proclivity to act.

Conclusion

In the previous section we have seen, therefore, that NGOs have the power construct poverty and development through the language and images used in their advertisements; that the portrayals of poverty and development in NGDO video advertisements contradict contemporary poverty and development theory; and that the methods recommended in literature on effective NGO adver-

tisements have various problematic consequences. These findings have brought us to question the legitimacy of existing recommendations for producing effective NGO advertisements. Now let us return specifically to the research questions.

It was found that advertisements which adhere to the recommendations made in literature on effective NGO advertising – shocking, negative images and messages to induce sympathy and guilt – may not be as successful in gaining the attention of viewers, emotionally engaging them, or encouraging proclivity to act, as this literature suggests. When an advertisement of this type was shown to two focus groups of students from the Amsterdam University College, the participants indicated irritation, fatigue, and passivity. One reason for this, could be the high saturation and frequency of such advertisements in today's society. Furthermore, the methods recommended by literature on effective NGO advertising have a number of damaging side effects, such as undermining the dignity of the people portrayed, constructing people in the global south as "Other", and the poor being blamed for their situation, all of which were detected in the responses of the focus groups.

The methods recommended in literature on effective NGO advertising also make for a portrayal that directly contradicts contemporary poverty and development theory. This is to some extent a result of NGDOs deliberately framing these issues in favour of appealing to viewers and to some extent a result of viewers interpreting portrayals differently to how they are intended. To give an example, in advertisements that adhere to the recommendations made in effective NGO advertising, development is deliberately portrayed as easily achievable in order to persuade viewers that their donation can make a difference. This was detected by the focus group participants in the first two – more in line with recommendations from literature on effective NGO advertising – advertisements they were shown. Other methods, such as showing helpless victims in extreme misery, are intended to increase the appeal of advertisements but due to their repetitive use convince viewers the global south is a place of widespread homogenous poverty that can be solved through individual effort and monetary donations. Again these effects were

confirmed by focus group data. These interpretations conflict with the admonition of poverty and development experts, that poverty is multidimensional and that sustainable development requires structural change, which requires political action.

From the interpretations and responses of focus group participants to the three advertisements that deviated from the recommendations of literature on effective NGO advertising, this research is able to make a number of its own recommendations as to how future NGDO video advertisements could better reflect expert opinion and appeal more to viewers. Firstly, advertisements should present viewers with the results of all three core framing processes, i.e. why people are in poverty, what the solution is, why viewers should do something about it, in order to prevent viewers misinterpreting the situation or feeling that nothing can be done about it. A lack of information is one of main reasons for viewers jumping to negative conclusions so it is important to ensure that advertisements are clear and in-depth. As such, educating the public could also be beneficial for increasing donations in the long term. Secondly, negative advertisements lose their impact over time so NGDOs should try instead to evoke feelings of positivity and hope by showing what is possible and what progress is already being made. Thirdly, NGDO advertisements should not focus solely on garnering donations but rather should also try to encourage greater political engagement in viewers, as this is needed to bring about the structural change necessary to eradicate poverty. And finally, it is not enough for advertisements to avoid the damaging portrayals recommended in literature for effective NGO advertising, but rather new advertisements need to work to counteract the misinterpretations resulting from their predecessors and reduce the perceived social distance between people in the global north and global south.

To conclude, the framing of poverty and development in NGDO video advertising should not go unscrutinised as it has a significant impact on viewers' understanding of these issues. Given that NGDOs are assumed to be an authority on poverty and development in the global south, one might assume that they are a key source of information for members of the public who do not study or take

a personal interest in issues of poverty and development. As such, the numerous negative consequences of the framings recommended in literature on effective NGO advertising are a considerable cause for concern. Future research should look further into the general public's current perception of poverty and development in the global south, and how this can be improved. It should also look into how NGOs could produce advertisements that are effective in encouraging viewers to engage in political advocacy and lobbying, as opposed to merely garnering donations. Given the vast number of NGOs today and the significant force that they represent in the eradication of poverty, it is of utmost importance that their potential is not utilised in ways that are counterproductive to their causes.

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Crowdfunding or Crowdfunding?

The Role and Value of Crowdfunding from the Perspective of Visual Artists and Institutions in the Netherlands

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Abstract

After the budget cuts in the Dutch arts and culture sector in 2011, crowdfunding has increasingly been forwarded as an option to fill the gap that the government cuts had created. Crowdfunding, a method of generating money from a 'crowd' of backers, is praised by consultants and experts in the field for the promising statistical results it has delivered. However, it can be questioned how financially valuable this method really is for the Dutch arts and culture sector in particular. This research provides an evaluation of the financial significance of crowdfunding for visual artists and institutions in the Netherlands, based on a thorough study of academic literature available on crowdfunding, interviews with representatives of important parties in the debate (crowdfunding platform *voordekunst* and public fund Mondriaan Fonds), and interviews with Dutch visual artists and institutions who have completed a crowdfunding campaign on *voordekunst*.

It concludes that crowdfunding should be considered primarily as a marketing method rather than a valuable financing system. Crowdfunding requires a significant time investment for a relatively small amount of money, can only be used incidentally and consequently does not offer structural financing, and is not suitable for every artist or every project. Hence, crowdfunding does not significantly contribute to an artist's or institution's annual budget, and not everyone can financially benefit from it. However, many artists and institutions expressed enthusiasm about how crowdfunding has increased the visibility of themselves and their projects, and in some cases their network of fans and followers. *Crowdfunding* might thus be a more suitable name for the process than *crowdfunding*. It is important to consider and promote crowdfunding as marketing method primarily, so that artists and institutions will have a better understanding of what they get involved in, and so that the government is aware that crowdfunding does not offer a way in which private money can replace public money entirely.

Introduction

Crowdfunding has received increasing attention in the Netherlands over the last five years as potentially providing a new, effective financing system for the arts and culture sector. This method of funding relies on the principle that a large number of backers (the 'crowd') donate to a specific project that an institution or individual aims to realize (Bekkers et al. 1). In 2015 in the Netherlands, 128 million euros were collected through crowdfunding, and backers contributed to more than 3.500 projects and entrepreneurs (Douw&Koren: b, n.p.). These results have created a predominantly positive view on the method that is based on the amount of projects supported and the amount of money raised – and the amounts indeed seem promising. However, from these 128 million euros, only about 13% (9.7 million euros) was collected for creative projects, and from the total of 3.500 crowdfunded projects, only 856 were creative (ibid.). This evokes the question whether crowdfunding indeed is or could be an effective alternative financing method for cultural institutions

and individual artists.

Little academic research has been done on crowdfunding in general, and even less on crowdfunding in the arts and culture sector in particular. The research available on the situation in the Netherlands consists mostly of statistical reports on the annual proceeds of crowdfunding conducted by crowdfunding consultancies and experts (Douw&Koren: b; Akker et al.). More in-depth academic research has mostly been done for Bachelor or Master theses. The few published academic articles on crowdfunding focus mostly on the perspective of the backers; investigating why people donate to campaigns (Bekkers & Wiepking: a; Bekkers & Wiepking: b; Bekkers et al.). As crowdfunding is gradually becoming a more familiar concept to many people and is being increasingly used, now seems the right time for an evaluation of what crowdfunding actually means for the arts and culture sector, and what the consensus on this system is amongst artists and cultural institutions. This research is provisional as it does not include statistical data that would provide more generalizable results, but rather underlines the need to consider

¹Title page image: Jongeleen, Jeroen. *Geenstijl* / [...]. 2016. Displayed in the exhibition *Hacking Habitat*, Utrecht (February – June 2016). Photo by Marlies Augustijn. Painted letters on a wall: *Ik kan niet wachten tot de dag aanbreekt en de gemiddelde belastingbetaler gaat bepalen wat kunst is en wat niet ('I cannot wait for the day to arrive that the average taxpayer will decide what is art and what not')*. The quote is taken from online discussion forum *GeenStijl* ('No Style'). It testifies to the sharpness of the public debate about budget cuts on culture and the extension of state control.

meaning and value and listen to individuals when writing about crowdfunding, before actually considering other aspects such as highlighting the possibilities it could theoretically offer, or discussing the yearly percentages on proceeds and amount of projects.

This project researches the extent to which crowdfunding functions as a financially significant and valuable system for visual artists and institutions in the Netherlands, and aims to add insights to the existing literature by exploring the meaning of crowdfunding from the perspective of cultural institutions and individual artists.

Valuable in this context can also be read as 'significant', or 'meaningful'. It is thus questioned whether visual artists and institutions feel that crowdfunding *works*; for example, in that it can generate the amount of money they need for a project, in that it is suitable for actors to use, and in that it fulfills the promises on which it depends. As a preliminary answer to this question this research proposes that crowdfunding is not necessarily considered to be financially valuable. Firstly, a crowdfunding campaign involves a lot of work in return for only a relatively small amount of money. Secondly, the method can mostly only be used incidentally and consequently does not offer structural financing. Therefore, it is important to realize that crowdfunding is not an alternative for public funding, and that the government should continue a funding policy for the arts and culture sector. However, it seems that crowdfunding *is* considered valuable as a marketing method. Crowdfunding could function very well for artists and institutions to increase their name and reputation, and to increase their network of fans and followers.

In order to narrow the research down to a feasible proportion, this project centres around the specific case of the Dutch online crowdfunding platform *voordekunst*, which focuses on the arts and culture sector, and discusses artists and organisations that completed a crowdfunding campaign on this website within the last three years. The campaigns and opinions of two artists and one institution are investigated as detailed case studies. First, Marie Lexmond, a senior artist who did a crowdfunding campaign to finish her installation work *Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts* that the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven agreed to display.

Secondly, Nienke Jorissen, a young artist who coordinated the crowdfunding campaign of *De Belofte 10* ('The Promise 10'), a one-year project for starting artists who together made an exhibition for *Kunstliefde*, a space for visual art in Utrecht. Finally, Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture, an institution that realized a crowdfunding campaign for the completion of Levi van Veluw's installation *The Relativity of Matter*.

The case studies do not include crowdfunding campaigns for restoration, renovation, or preservation purposes. Rather, they exemplify campaigns held for the financing of artworks that were (partially) yet-to-realize because this project aims to find out how crowdfunding could work for objects that do not yet exist. Moreover, the case studies focus on the visual arts, and exclude other art forms such as music and the performing arts. The visual arts can be distinguished by the production of unique and lasting objects. Since different art forms produce different types of products, the perspective of the artists and institutions on crowdfunding could be different for each sector within the arts. This necessitates separate research into the various sectors.

This project first provides a brief overview of the financing of the arts by private individuals and the government in the Netherlands throughout recent history. It then discusses crowdfunding and the related terminology in more depth, and introduces the Dutch crowdfunding platform *voordekunst*. A major part of the project is dedicated to providing a thorough overview of the literature available on crowdfunding. Optimistic claims with regard to crowdfunding in relation to the arts and culture sector are studied through various academic lenses that critique the claims directly or indirectly. The final part of the project consists of the three case studies about the two visual artists and one institution who applied crowdfunding, in order to investigate how the theoretical framework relates to practice. A comparative analysis between theory and practice finally provides an overall conclusion on the current consensus about crowdfunding amongst visual artists and institutions in the Netherlands.

Financing the Dutch Arts and Culture Sector

Dutch Philanthropic History

The Netherlands have a rich history of philanthropic giving, whereby private support of the arts and culture sector has always been relatively extensive. From the late Middle Ages, poor relief was provided by religious elites, for example the local clergy and noble men (Bekkers & Wiepking: b, 2). Without the help of wealthy individuals, many cultural institutions and museums would not have existed today.

Since the Golden Age (roughly the 17th century), Maecenae are key players in the financing of the art world (Bekkers & Wiepking: b, 3). A Maecenas is traditionally a patron who supports one or more individual artists financially, usually over a long period of time, thus enabling the artists to create and exhibit their work (Steenbergen 78). Around 1900, the world economy was flourishing, which brought wealth to a growing group of entrepreneurs, merchants, stockbrokers, lawyers, and bankers in the Netherlands. In addition, the Dutch Indies colonies ('Nederlandsch-Indië') created the 'new rich': more merchants, stockbrokers, and bankers, but also real estate agents, planters, ship owners, and manufacturers. These new urban elites desired a broader cultural offer that was more public than the events in private societies or salons organized by the traditional elites (Steenbergen 48). Since the government barely supported the arts because of their limited budget due to minimal tax revenues, the new elites did it themselves (ibid). Moreover, giving money to culture resulted in prestige - more than giving money to other causes (Steenbergen 45). The new rich started investing in the foundation of various cultural institutions. In these years, now famous institutions as the Stedelijk Museum, the Rijksmuseum, the Concertgebouw, the Tropeninstituut, and the Scheepvaartmuseum were founded, (partially) financed by the private sector. This could also be called a form of patronage, which broadens the traditional definition of the Maecenas to include supporters of museums and cultural institutions.

Moreover, private art collectors could take on the role of Maecenae (Steenbergen 55), as they

were important in the support of the arts and culture sector. They increasingly founded their own museums, and were also very important for existing museums as they donated (parts of) their collections to these museums. Sometimes, they provided funds for the museum or supported living artists directly.

Transition to a Welfare State

In the early 20th century, the Dutch government started implementing laws that would provide social security to its citizens, such as benefits for injured or ill employees, arrangements for the elderly, and arrangements for those in need of general assistance (Bekkers & Wiepking: b, 2). These laws formed the foundation of the welfare state system that is still partly present today. In this system, the government believes that it holds responsibility for the care of its citizens and for the provision of most public goods and services. Governmental financial support for museums, cultural heritage, and individual artists gradually increased, and philanthropic giving became less essential.

This gradual increase started in 1932, when the Dutch government made a post on its annual budget available for commissions and purchases of contemporary art, for the purpose of decorating government buildings (Kuyvenhoven 344). In 1935, the Voorzieningsfonds voor Kunstenaars ('Sustenance Fund for Artists') was instituted for artists in need. However, it was not until the Second World War that a clear art policy was developed. During the war, the National Socialist government made large amounts of money available for culture, as it believed that art could be great propaganda (Kuyvenhoven 345). After the liberation, the new Dutch government continued the generous art policy; now in a democratic, non-exclusionary manner. Art and culture were considered of value to society as they could play a role in combatting ignorance and undesirable behaviour (D. Elshout 995). The government continued to commission and buy art, and in 1949 implemented the *Contraprestatie* ('Counter Achievement') programme, which was followed up by the *Beeldende Kunstenaars Regeling* ('Visual Arts Program') from 1956 to 1987. These regulations enabled artists to acquire an income from the government in exchange

for services or artworks.

Other important regulations that have been implemented for individual artist are the *Wet Inkomensvoorziening Kunstenaars* ('Law Provision of Income for Artists', or WIK, 1998-2005), and the *Wet Werk en Inkomen Kunstenaars* ('Law Labour and Income for Artists', or WWIK, 2005-2012), which were both meant for artists who graduated from an art school but who did not yet earn enough money to cover their living costs ("Wet" 1). The WIK and WWIK offered an income that was 70% of the social security ('bijstand') level. However, artists in the WIK and WWIK regulations were allowed to earn an extra income, 125% of the social security level, which was and is not allowed for individuals receiving money from social security (*ibid.*). Thus, these regulations were very favourable for artists in the Netherlands. Many cultural institutions were supported by the government through generous subsidies. The many museums that had come into being through private initiatives of collectors were made into public museums financed by the government after the collectors' deaths.

From the 1980s, various culture ministers in the Netherlands emphasized that the art and culture sector should start operating more commercially. In 1982, Elco Brinkman became minister of culture, who argued that more attention should be paid to public interest (D. Elshout 996). In the 1990s, state secretary of culture Rick van der Ploeg introduced the concept of cultural entrepreneurship into the cultural debate. However, there was a very strong and persistent consensus amongst all members of the government that subsidies for art and culture were important. Consequently, even in times of budget cuts, the culture post remained relatively unscathed (D. Elshout 995).

Neoliberal Politics and Cultural Entrepreneurship

The economic crisis that hit the world in 2008 forced the government to adjust its welfare policy. The government started looking for supplementary sources of funding for public goods and services in the nonprofit sector. Since the cultural sector was considered as providing 'non-essential' public goods and services, as opposed to health care, education, and social services, the government found

it appropriate to give non-profits greater control in this field (Bekkers & Wiepking: b, 4).

In this context, Halbe Zijlstra, state secretary of culture, was the first to argue for cutbacks in the budget for arts and culture and in doing so changed the tone of the cultural debate drastically. Consequently, the budget for culture was no longer 'sacred'. Cuts were officially formulated by the first government of prime minister Mark Rutte at the end of 2011 (D. Elshout 995), after which the government set its focus on "the public, marketing strategies, private involvement, market forces, collaboration, close ties with city and region, [and] less oversupply" (D. Elshout 998). The four key standards became: cultural education, innovation and talent, entrepreneurship, and internationalisation ("Kunst en Cultuur" n.p.). Thus, increasing the involvement of the public in the arts and culture sector and extending the general support for arts and culture have become the ultimate goals.

The government provides money for the culture sector directly, but also through municipalities and provinces. The municipalities and provinces receive a budget from the government, of which 30% of the public money for culture is provided directly by the government, 60% by the municipalities and 10% by the provinces (Hamer & Daalmeijer 17). In 2013, the year the announced budget cuts were implemented, the government economized about 200 million euros on culture (Hamer & Daalmeijer 18). The cultural budget went from 991 million euros in 2010 to 746 million euros in 2013, which is a decrease of 24% (Vinkenburg 97). The major cut, 127 million euros, was made on the budget for the *Culturele Basisinfrastructuur* ('cultural base infrastructure', or BIS), which includes 84 institutions and 6 funds that are supported directly by the government (*ibid.*). The budget for protection of monuments and national heritage remained and still remains relatively unscathed. Municipalities have cut their expenditures for culture from almost 2 milliard euros in 2011 to about 1.7 milliard in 2015 (Hamer & Daalmeijer 18). Provinces have spent 328 million euros on culture in 2011, compared to 254 million euros in 2015, which is a decline of 74 million euros (*ibid.*). The cuts have led to the bankruptcy of several cultural institutions, financial struggles for many libraries, schools of music, and art insti-

tutions, and the abolishment of the favourable income regulations for artists (ibid.). Artists are now only considered for regular social security regulations, or those for self-employed individuals.

The current situation is slightly different, as current minister of education, culture, and science Jet Bussemaker has undone some of the cuts implemented in 2013. Nevertheless, the budget for culture today remains smaller than it was in 2010. In 2010, 0.36% (991 million euros) of the total national budget (272 milliard euros) was spent on culture (Vinkenburg 94), whereas in 2016, this is estimated at 0.28% (747.6 million euros out of a total of 262.1 milliard euros) according to this year's cultural budget plan of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, and the 'Miljoenennota' (the national total budget plan).

The cultural budget today is mainly spent on the BIS (510.3 million euros out of the 747.6 million euros) ("Rijksbegroting 2016" 96). The rest is spent on posts like monument care, investment in housing of subsidized museums, and research, but this part of the budget is of less importance in this project. For the visual arts in particular, the BIS provides support to a range of museums with state-owned collections or collections that are considered of national importance, three post-academic institutions such as the Rijksacademie ('National Academy'), and six presentation-institutions such as the Witte de With in Rotterdam and De Appel in Amsterdam, which do not own a collection but organize innovative exhibitions of international appeal ("Kunst en Cultuur" n.p.). The BIS also includes six cultural funds, such as the Fonds Podiumkunsten ('Fund Performing Arts'), the Nederlands Filmfonds ('Dutch Film Fund'), and the Mondriaan Fonds ('Mondriaan Fund'). The Mondriaan Fonds is the national fund for visual arts and cultural heritage. The cultural funds receive money from the government but have to decide themselves which projects they are to fund and how they divide their money. In addition, as mentioned above, the arts and culture sector receives money from municipalities and provinces. Private companies, art collectors and private funds such as the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and the VSBfonds remain important financiers of arts and culture.

How Crowdfunding Fits In

The development of Dutch politics from strongly welfare-based to more neoliberal has given rise to new initiatives that fit the ideals of cultural entrepreneurship, expansion of general support for the arts, and reacting to market forces that the Dutch government propagates. Artists and cultural institutions are stimulated to be less dependent on the government and more open to what the public wants. The main example of a new initiative that arose is crowdfunding, often called the 'nieuwe mecenaat' ('new patronage'). As described in the first section of this chapter, the now propagated system of the consumer or enthusiast paying for what (s)he consumes and/or loves, is very similar to the system that was in place around 1900. However, the new patronage should stimulate giving beyond the elites, and encourage participation of a broad public.

The government seems positive about initiatives such as crowdfunding, through which the private sector becomes more important as the financier of cultural projects. This is evident from several regulations that are meant to stimulate philanthropic giving: the first regulation is the Geefwet ('Law of Giving'), implemented in 2011, which enables backers of Algemeen Nut Beogende Instellingen ('Institutions for General Benefit', or ANBI's) to deduct 125% of their gift from their taxable income (Hemels 2). A donation has to be more than 1% of the backer's bar income (income from work, housing, considerable interest, savings, and investments together minus possible deduction posts). The maximum amount that can be deducted is 10% of the bar income. The second option the government offers is periodical gift deduction. If a private person states in a contract that (s)he will donate structurally to an ANBI for five years, this donation can be completely deducted from his or her taxable income (Hemels 1). There is no minimum or maximum donation amount for this regulation.

The Ins and Outs of Crowdfunding

Rise of a New Concept

The term 'crowdfunding' was introduced by technologist and web developer Michael Sullivan in

2006 (Harms n.p.). Sullivan had created a website called *Fundavlog*, a community for video bloggers where users could donate money to video producers using a fund button. The amounts of money donated per user were very small, which encouraged many users to simply tip the producers if they liked their videos. Sullivan named this process crowdfunding; a system that depends on reciprocity, transparency, and, as the word entails, funding from the crowd (Sullivan n.p.). The term has kept its initial meaning, as today crowdfunding still relies on the principle that a large number of backers ('the crowd') donates money to a specific project that an institution or individual aims to realize (Bekkers et al. 1). Each individual will provide a small amount of money, and all these small amounts together will add up to a large sum (Belleflamme et al. 1).

The development of the internet and the rise of Web 2.0 have enabled online crowdfunding to develop. The world wide web has undergone significant changes since its inauguration. Social networking sites, (video)blogs, and wikis have grown steadily, which enables interaction and active media-use instead of mere passive viewing. Web 2.0 thus indicates a new set of ideals related to the internet, such as transparency, participation, and openness (ibid.). Online crowdfunding would not have existed without the possibilities that Web 2.0 offers. Today, crowdfunding is mainly done online and thus directly associated with online activities.

Key Terminology

There are three main actors involved in crowdfunding: the founder, the backer, and the platform. The founder is the project creator: the individual or institution in search for money (Davidson & Poor 291). The founder always states his funding goal and determines the period of the campaign. Backers are the supporters of the project, the people who donate money (ibid.). The platform is the place where the founder creates the campaign for his project and where the backer can donate his money to. The platform is a website listing crowdfunding campaigns which "facilitates monetary exchange between funders and fundraisers" (Bannerman 6). Some of the biggest crowdfunding plat-

forms are *Kickstarter*, *Indiegogo*, and *Go Fund Me*. In the Netherlands, there are several crowdfunding platforms that focus on projects within the arts and culture sector. Some platforms only support a niche branch, such as *CineCrowd* for film or *Onderstroom* ('Undercurrent') for design. Other platforms encompass the whole arts and culture sector but are only for projects in a specific region, such as *Tilburgvoorcultuur* ('Tilburg for culture') for projects made in or for Tilburg, and *Sponsorkunst* ('Sponsor art') for Amersfoort and its surroundings. *Voordekunst* ('for the arts') is the only national platform for artistic and cultural projects. It supports projects in the (sometimes overlapping) categories of visual arts, music, film, photography, media, theatre, dance, publication, design, and heritage.

Crowdfunding comes in four different models: donation-based, reward-based, lending-based, and equity-based. Reward-based crowdfunding is most prominent in the arts and culture sector (Ridgway 8; Davidson & Poor 303), and is also used by the Dutch platform *voordekunst* where the case studies for this project were selected from. In this model of crowdfunding, founders offer backers non-financial rewards tied to the amount of funding they choose to give, in order to attract more backers to fund their project. Rewards are usually related to the project and in the arts and culture sector could be for example films, books, invitations to exhibitions, or an exclusive meeting with the founder.

Finally, crowdfunding can be distinguished in 'ex post facto' and 'ex ante'. In ex post facto crowdfunding "financial support is offered in exchange for a completed product" (Kappel 375), whereas in ex ante crowdfunding financial support is given upfront to assist in achieving a founder's unfinished project (ibid.). Ex ante crowdfunding is of importance in this research, as the campaigns that will be discussed were held for the financing of artworks or projects that were (partially) unfinished.

The Dutch Platform Voordekunst

Voordekunst was initiated by Roy Cremers. In 2010, he worked for the Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst ('Amsterdam Fund for the Arts', or AFK), when the organization asked him to look into methods that would stimulate cultural entrepreneurship and increase the general support for arts and cul-

ture. Cremers realized that *Kickstarter* had been successful for a year and understood the historical context of philanthropy in Dutch culture (Casander: a, n.p.). On November 4, 2010, a pilot platform was launched to immediate success, subsidized by the AFK and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, that presented the campaigns of four founders.

Now, *voordekunst* is one of the best-known crowdfunding platforms in the Netherlands, and has gained a trustworthy reputation amongst potential founders. The website of *voordekunst* displays a counter that constantly provides the amount of money that has been donated to projects since 2010, and the number of backers that have contributed. On 21 May 2016, 10.567.639 euros had been donated to projects by 105.600 backers (Voordekunst n.p.). In 2015, the average target amount of the founders lay between 6.000 and 7.000 euros (exact numbers are yet to be calculated) (Casander: b, n.p.). Out of 712 completed projects, 573 were financed successfully (about 80%), and the average donation of a backer lay between 50 and 60 euros (exact numbers are yet to be calculated) (ibid.).

Voordekunst works with a small selection procedure to decide which projects will be listed on their website (Voordekunst n.p.). An artist or institution with an idea for a project must describe their project and why they want to do a campaign on *voordekunst*. During the interview on 8 April 2016, Casander explained that projects are not selected based on their quality, but the team of *voordekunst* evaluates whether a project fits the platform and whether it is a realistic plan (a, n.p.). It sporadically happens that a project does not fit the arts and culture theme of *voordekunst*, mainly when it is not primarily aimed at creating culture. Whether the plan can be realistically executed depends on the target amount the founder asks and the network he already has. These should be in proportion, otherwise *voordekunst* will suggest to adjust the plan. Yet, if the founder is convinced that he will succeed, *voordekunst* will still allow the founder to start a campaign (ibid.). In 2015, 900 projects applied, and 712 projects appeared on the website (Casander: b, n.p.).

To start a campaign at *voordekunst*, a founder

has to pay a subscription fee of 100 euros (121 euros including VAT) (Voordekunst n.p.), in order for *voordekunst* to cover some of the costs for advice before the campaign and the taxes that the platform has to pay over the donations. The minimum target amount a founder has to ask in his campaign is 1.000 euros (Casander: a, n.p.). According to Casander, *voordekunst* believes that the amount of work a founder has to put into the campaign is not in proportion with a lower target amount than 1.000 euros (ibid.). During the campaign, *voordekunst* advises the founder about his promotional video, the explanatory text on his campaign-page, and his rewards for the backers. *Voordekunst* does in principle not mingle in the project of the founder, but does advise the founder on how he could bring his message strongly across to the public. This could slightly influence the project but the essence is that founders create a campaign for the project as they envision it, and make an audience enthusiastic about it (Casander: a, n.p.). *Voordekunst* does initially not help to promote the campaign of a founder. However, once 60% of the target amount is reached, the platform will help the founder by spreading the campaign in its own network (ibid.).

A campaign can end in three ways (Voordekunst n.p.):

1. The campaign is successful. In this case, the founder has to pay 5% excluding VAT over the target amount to *voordekunst*. If the founder has raised more money than the target amount, he also pays 10% excluding VAT over the money that was raised extra.
2. Less than 80% of the project is financed. In this case, the founder does not receive any of the money he did raise and the money is transferred back to the backers. The founder does have the possibility to contact his backers and ask them if they could still transfer the money to his personal bank account.
3. Between 80% and 99% of the project is financed. In this case, the founder has the possibility to motivate why he could still finance his project with less money. If *voordekunst* and the backers agree with the motivation and the backers do not retract an amount of money that would bring the covered financing under the 80% limit, the founder still receives

his money and his project is considered 'successfully' financed.

The main aims of *voordekunst* today have remained the same as they were at the start: stimulating cultural entrepreneurship and increasing the general support for arts and culture. The website of *voordekunst* mentions that the platform is aimed at realizing cultural projects by mobilizing the 'crowd' that, after all, consists of the future viewers of the projects (Voordekunst n.p.). Casander emphasized that the main aim is not, as might be the prevailing idea, to provide artists with a new way of financing that can replace subsidies (a, n.p.). Casander explained that the discussion on cuts in the budget for arts and culture was initiated right before the launch of *voordekunst*. Many culture-lovers and Dutch musicians, actors and visual artists protested against the announcement of the cuts, for example in the manifestation 'Nederland Schreeuwt om Cultuur' ('The Netherlands Cry for Culture'). Since the launch of *voordekunst* happened to be planned in the middle of these turbulent times, it became instantly popular which made it possible for the platform to become so successful. However, the launch during this period also meant that crowdfunding immediately became known as *the* solution for the stop of subsidies, and crowdfunding became mainly associated with money (Casander: a, n.p.). According to Casander, *voordekunst* now attempts to encourage people to focus on the social aspects of crowdfunding again (a: n.p.).

Voordekunst stimulates cultural entrepreneurship in various ways. It encourages potential founders to think about marketing and the promotion of their practice, and consequently about their target audience and how to reach them (Casander: a, n.p.). The founder is advised to focus on a different target group every week, starting with friends and family, and widening it to for example the neighbourhood and companies. The founder should spread the campaign via online social networks, but also contact potential backers directly, via telephone or in a personal meeting. A founder has to build relationships with backers and maintain them. Entrepreneurship is also stimulated in that the founder has to create a realistic budget and thus has to think about his practice as a 'busi-

ness'. Besides the budget having to cover the costs for the project, the budget has to take the costs for *voordekunst* and the possible costs for the promotional video and the rewards into account (ibid.).

Increasing the general support for your project should be the most important goal of the founder, according to Casander (a: n.p.). A founder's online project page on *voordekunst* indicates the amount of money raised, but also the amount of backers that have contributed. *Voordekunst* tries to change the idea amongst artists that asking money from their supporters is 'begging' to the idea that supporters are usually happy to support the artist with a small amount. Casander indicated that about 60% of the target amount comes from the direct network of the artist, for example from friends and family (ibid.). A new audience will only start donating when they see that a campaign is successful. The idea is that through crowdfunding, the new audience will become part of the direct network of the artists. Thus, when the artist starts a new crowdfunding campaign, his direct network will be bigger as the new audience is now included in the 60% (Casander: a, n.p.). In this way, an artist could increase the support for his practice.

When looking for sponsors and additional funds, the amount of backers can also be of value, as it shows how much support a founder has for his project. *Voordekunst* collaborates with various public and private funds that support the arts and culture sector, such as the AFK and the VSB-fonds. Casander explained that *voordekunst* introduces projects to funds, if *voordekunst* thinks that a project fits a certain fund (a: n.p.). The rule is that funds cannot contribute more to a campaign than 50% of the target amount, as a significant amount of the money should come from 'the crowd'. If a fund contributes to a crowdfunding campaign, the founder can no longer apply separately for the fund.

When discussing the category of the visual arts on *voordekunst* in particular, Casander admitted that it seems harder for projects in this category to be successfully financed (a: n.p.). Until now, about 1.9 million euros have been donated to visual arts projects by about 22.000 backers (Casander: b, n.p.). Casander suggested that it can be hard for visual artists to do crowdfunding because they some-

times lack knowledge about marketing and promotion (a: n.p.). Whereas musicians, theatre makers, and designers are used to constantly performing for audiences or thinking about their target audience; art education lacks marketing advice. Moreover, it can be difficult for a visual artist to determine the concrete product he wishes to make, what he wishes to raise money for, as the creative process often takes long and the visual artist is not always sure of the outcome yet (Casander: a, n.p.). For a musician, the end goal could be a cd, which is easier to explain and very concrete. Visual artists can make their goal more concrete to potential backers by creating appealing rewards that relate to the project (ibid.).

Casander emphasized that crowdfunding is not suitable for everyone (a, n.p.). A founder should do it because he wants to, not because he desperately needs money and cannot find another way to fund his project. Also, young generations seem to be more open to crowdfunding, as they are not used to being mainly funded by the government's subsidies (Casander: a, n.p.). In addition, backers tend to support projects by younger founders as they see the young generation as the future. Older generations on the other hand, sometimes do not see the plus-value in increasing the public's support for their work (ibid.). As crowdfunding is not suitable for everyone and artists cannot crowdfund the entire budget they need for their practice, Casander concluded by saying that funds remain an important method of financing (ibid.). She also emphasized again that crowdfunding is primarily a promotional instrument, not a financing instrument. Crowdfunding and governmental support thus need to coexist, one cannot replace the other. *Voordekunst* aims for crowdfunding to be increasingly associated with marketing, and believes that if this happens, crowdfunding can still gain in popularity as a valuable *addition* to public subsidies (ibid.).

Crowdfunding in the Dutch Art World: a Theoretical Approach

Key Optimistic Claims

The threats of severe cuts on the cultural budget that Halbe Zijlstra presented in 2010 forced the arts and culture sector to reconsider its financing strategies. In April 2011, Johan Idema, cultural advisor and entrepreneur, initiated the national brainstorm platform Koers Kunst ('Course [of] Art'), initiating a debate on the course the art world should now take in order to renew and improve. Crowdfunding, among others, was presented by Andries Mulder, former CEO of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam ('Conservatory of Amsterdam') and the Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst ('Amsterdam Fund for the Arts'), as having the potential to create improvements (Mulder n.p.). The focus in the presentation of crowdfunding on Koers Kunst was on the financial value of crowdfunding. Mulder argued that crowdfunding could be an alternative for or modest addition to generating finances from funds, also stating that ideally, the national government would double every euro that is donated through crowdfunding (ibid.). Furthermore, he argued that the arts and culture sector would benefit from a national crowdfunding platform because it would be accessible, transparent, and democratic (ibid.).

Today, there is still great optimism about crowdfunding. As mentioned in the previous chapter, while *voordekunst* is optimistic about the role of crowdfunding; the platform focuses on mobilizing the crowd, establishing connections between founder and backer, and increasing the social support for art and culture as the positive aspects of crowdfunding, rather than its financing role.

Optimism is also evident from various crowdfunding experts, whether or not related to the art world, and crowdfunding consultancies. Last year, consultancy bureau Douw&Koren published a guide which outlines why museums should start working with crowdfunding. According to this guide, crowdfunding has five key positive effects. An innovative way of financing projects is mentioned as the first positive effect, followed by creating new target audiences and partners, increasing in-

volvement and participation of the crowd, increasing the support for art, and boosting your image through marketing (Douw&Koren: a, 9-10). It is also mentioned that crowdfunding could become a structural part of the marketing and financing policy of the museum (Douw&Koren: a, 13). Furthermore, the existing statistical reports sketch a hopeful image of crowdfunding as a means of financing the arts and culture sector (Douw&Koren: b; Akker et al.). The Douw&Koren report *Crowdfunding in Nederland 2015* ('*Crowdfunding in the Netherlands 2015*') provides promising statistics on the amounts of money raised through crowdfunding and the amount of successfully financed projects. The report labels crowdfunding as financing as well as marketing system (Douw&Koren: b, 3). In the research report *Samen Mogelijk Maken* ('*Making Possible Together*'), people's associations with crowdfunding were investigated based on the responses of 1.277 people between 25 and 54 years old, mainly with an education level of HBO (university of applied sciences) or higher. All respondents indicated being open to donating to cultural or creative projects (Akker et al. 10), and crowdfunding was mostly associated with financing rather than marketing by the respondents (Akker et al. 5). When the respondents had to indicate what they associated with crowdfunding they mentioned 'Making possible together' (45%), 'Financing' (31%), 'Collecting money' (28%), 'Creative projects' (21%), 'Innovative' (18%), and 'Investing' (14%) (Akker et al. 13).

Another positive sound about crowdfunding could be heard on 11 February 2016, when two panel discussions on the role of crowdfunding in the cultural and creative sector took place in Amsterdam (Kleverlaan n.p.). Eight experts from the crowdfunding and cultural world were present to discuss the current financing options for artists. The experts that attended were: Roy Cremers, CEO of *voordekunst*, Roelof Balk, CEO of *Fonds Cultuur+Financiering* ('*Fund Culture+Financing*'), Vicky Fasten, advisor for starting creative entrepreneurs, Joost Heinsius, crowdfunding expert in the arts and culture sector on European scale, In-Soo Radstake, CEO of crowdfunding platform *CineCrowd*, Tasso Heijnen, crowdfunding advisor, Willem Schrijver, representative of Belgian crowd-

funding platform *Kisskissbankbank*, and Koen van Vliet, crowdfunding expert in the arts and culture sector on Dutch scale. Although everyone agreed that crowdfunding has not yet reached its fullest potential, the overall consensus was very optimistic and hopeful.

From these sources and some additional statements made in academic texts, three key optimistic claims with regard to crowdfunding and the arts and culture sector can be deduced:

1. Crowdfunding creates a 'nieuw mecenaat' ('new patronage'), in which the artists can rely on the 'crowd' instead of on one individual or fund (Kleverlaan; Belleflamme et al.; Douw&Koren: a)
2. Crowdfunding not only allows the artist to rely on the crowd, but encourages engagement between the artist and the crowd, which in turn decreases the elitist appeal of art (Berg & Idema; Bekkers et al.; Douw&Koren: a; Douw&Koren: b; Akker et al.; Belleflamme et al.; Bannerman)
3. Crowdfunding is a democratic way of funding cultural production, making money accessible to any artist and enabling the public to freely decide who to support (Davidson & Poor; Bannerman; Douw&Koren: a)

However, what have academics and critics written with regards to these claims? Findings of various academic researchers indicate that these claims do not (entirely) hold and that critical remarks can also be made about crowdfunding. In the remainder of this chapter, the three optimistic claims will be critically evaluated from three different perspectives.

Perspective One: Artistic Versus Business World

The first perspective compares the artistic world with the business world and considers whether arts and business are mutually exclusive or not.

It seems promising that through crowdfunding, an artist can rely on the population for his funding. However, the artist has to mobilize this crowd himself, which requires image-building and marketing. These concepts seem to be more associated with a business and entrepreneurial mindset than with an artistic one. According to Davidson and

Poor, crowdfunding seems only useful for particular types of artists. They argue that crowdfunding empowers charismatic or extraverted individuals (Davidson & Poor 290). Research by Feist concludes that “having a greater than normal desire to remove oneself from social interaction and being overstimulated by novel social situations (introversion) is frequently observed in highly creative people, especially in the arts and sciences” (300). Combining Davidson and Poor’s research with that of Feist, it can be concluded that most artists, who are apparently generally more introverted than extraverted, might not benefit from crowdfunding.

For a crowdfunding campaign, in which one is forced to solicit people for money both within and beyond the friend and family circle, peer-to-peer communication is very important (Akker et al. 5). This refers to direct contact between the founder and backer (face-to-face, but also via telephone and social media). Extraversion could be seen as a very important asset to accomplish this peer-to-peer communication. Moreover, peer-to-peer communication could potentially involve the need for surface acting; a need to project emotions that one does not feel (Davidson & Poor 300). Artists who indeed experience the crowdfunding process as involving surface acting are less likely to enjoy crowdfunding (ibid.). Extroverted people find the direct interaction with their potential backers pleasant and will not experience this need for surface acting. However, as mentioned above, most artists are not extroverted people.

Since crowdfunding campaigns are mainly held online, and a large part of the peer-to-peer communication is done through social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), strategic online self-representation seems to be of key importance. Again, this seems to privilege an extroverted, entrepreneurial type of person, which does not necessarily relate to artists. As Marwick argues, Web 2.0 technologies “idealize and reward a particular persona: highly visible, entrepreneurial, and self-configured to be watched and consumed by others” (13).

For the crowdfunding artist, extraversion, surface acting, and visibility play a much larger role than for the artist with a patron. The latter only has to please one or a few individual patrons, whereas

the crowdfunding artist must interact and convince a large group of people. In neoliberal states, such as the Netherlands, the necessity for individuals to have an entrepreneurial mindset has become inevitable. Since patronage and government support have significantly decreased, artists are forced to become self-branding entrepreneurs in order to be successful. However, as suggested above, the question is whether all artists can do this. According to Marwick, “the ideal neoliberal citizen is an entrepreneur” (13), which might suggest that a neoliberal, business-oriented, politics does not fit the art world.

Another way to approach the possible boundaries between art and commerce is to consider the ‘hostile world’ view, which argues that “there is a split between a sacred area of cultural value and the profane world of money and prices, a split between culture and economy” (Cosler 213). According to Cosler, there are still many artists who support the hostile world view, though in moderate versions. Some artists argued for example, that “a focus on money showed lack of refinement” (Cosler 214). However, money is exactly what crowdfunding campaigns focus on, in order for the founder to justify the amount of money he asks from his potential backers. Since each campaign states the founder’s target amount, the amount of money that would be necessary to complete the product; these campaigns do not conceal what it costs to make an artwork. Commensuration, the process of making art equal with a sum of money, is often seen as undesirable by artists because it risks for the artwork to move into the realm of the commodity (Cosler 215). A commodity is something which is exchanged in the market for money or other commodities (Wood 383), and is usually associated with mass production and monetary value, whereas the artwork is seen as a unique piece.

Perspective Two: Participatory Culture

Secondly, one could study crowdfunding as being part of participatory culture. According to Jenkins, participatory culture involves active media spectatorship and thus encourages people to be involved with online projects (3). As optimistic claim two described, online crowdfunding encourages engagement between the artist and the crowd, based on

passive investment: investment with a promise of compensation but no direct involvement in the decision-making process, or provision of time or expertise for the initiative (Belleflamme, Lambert & Schwienbacher 8). This seems very different from the system of patronage, in which the artist was usually tied to the patron's demands. Also for earning subsidies, the artist often has to satisfy many standards in order to be eligible in the first place. In this sense, crowdfunding appears to be a very positive system: the public can engage with an artist which makes art more understandable and accessible, thus less elitist.

Yet, it could be questioned if engagement truly never becomes a form of interference. Engagement also means that an artist should reach out to potential backers, and possibly listen to their advice and wishes as he needs money *from* them. To some extent, this can be eye-opening and make the work more likely to be appreciated once it is finished. However, artists should not have to become 'crowdpleasing' and feel limited in their independence and artistic freedom (Schuyt & Bekkers 125). Participatory culture involves a blurring of the lines between producer and consumer (Jenkins 3). For visual artists using crowdfunding, it should not be the case that the 'consumers' (the backers) become producers, influencing the work of the artist to a large extent.

Ridgway proposes a future model of crowdfunding that would actually blur the lines between consumer and producer even more, and increase the seeming influence of the backer. She suggests that "the amount that we contribute to the crowdfunding campaign [should be] a certain percentage of collective authorship in the project that will be financed" (Ridgway: a, 7). This would make the cash-giver feel that he is acknowledged as making the project possible, which would consequently create a greater desire in society to contribute to campaigns (ibid.). However, this would also mean that the artist's independence is even more confined.

Another problem related to participatory culture is that of social capital. Participatory culture seems to rely on the premise that the crowd has the means and capability to contribute to and engage with any (online) media project and will also do this, and positive claim two could hold if this is the

case. However, it seems unlikely that the majority of individual citizens will browse crowdfunding platforms and self-select the projects it finds appealing. Firstly, because online media do not provide egalitarian access; they are not easily understandable for anyone (for example older generations) (Kreiss et al. 255). Secondly, not everyone has the will to participate in donating to arts and culture.

Instead, it is the social capital of the founder that mostly determines if a large and new crowd will indeed contribute to and engage with his project. According to Bourdieu, social capital refers to the possession of a durable network ('connections') that could convert into economic capital, which refers to money (242). The increase of social capital creates a snowball effect; the more social capital you possess, the more you can also benefit from the (social) capital of your network. Thus, if an artist does not have much social capital to begin with, he has to rely on his small and familiar circle of friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues, what researchers have ironically referred to as "the 3Fs" – friends, family, and fools (Bannerman 12; Belleflamme et al. 2).

This brings about the problem of indebtedness. Since the founder asks and receives money from his network of close relationships, he will feel indebted to them, more than he is likely to feel towards strangers. Especially when the founding artist has received donations from backers who are befriended artists, this founder is likely to feel 'obliged' to contribute to campaigns of these befriended artists as well. Crowdfunding then simply becomes a "series of paybacks" (Ridgway: a, 4), in which the debt is resolved with reciprocity. Instead of the artist being able to expand his network and engage with a larger crowd, they enter in a mutually dependent relationship with their colleagues and friends.

Yet, even if an artist does have much social capital, crowdfunding can still be difficult. Booth agrees that having 'fans' is necessary for a successful crowdfunding campaign (150). However, mobilizing fans in an effective way that makes them engage and participate is not easy. According to Booth, "[c]rowdfunding through fandom works through recognition of participation" (161). Fans will only donate money if their past importance

for the founder is acknowledged, and if a future concern for the founders' fans is expressed (Booth 151). The founder could, for example, refer to fan work from the past and reward donating fans with exclusive meet-and-greats, which establishes their role in the future. The use of community-based language, addressing the fans as one coherent group, is also important (Booth 158). Fans will consequently be happy to spread the campaign further in their own networks, which helps the founder increase his network. However, this requires a large fan base to begin with and the effective mobilization of the fans.

Moreover, the mobilization of a large group of potential backers could possibly create a new concern that should be taken into account: crowding-out. This effect means that the more money has already been given to a project, the less money new potential backers are likely to donate (Akker et al. 22). The possibility for this effect to arise suggests that a balance should be found between an enormous group of backers versus a small circle of acquaintances.

In 2011, the Dutch government started to interfere less in culture, which was reflexive of neoliberal politics, and crowdfunding was viewed as a viable alternative to grant-giving foundations (Ridgway: a, 2). The necessity for individuals to find private funding increased. Artists have been forced to make an appeal to the participation of individual citizens and have to a large extent become dependent on their engagement. However, the exemplary notion of participatory culture by the public for the public, the public making possible artistic projects that can in turn be viewed by the public, as for now seems an unattainable ideal. First, in the Netherlands, the funding of the arts used to be mostly the state's responsibility. Consequently, contemporary citizens are not used to support the arts financially as for example in the United States, where private funding is already deeply rooted in society (ibid.). The Netherlands do not yet have an open "culture of giving" (Steenbergen 44). Even though the Netherlands have a rich philanthropic history, donors today "receive little public recognition in the media and are often portrayed simply as being rich rather than as people who contribute to the public good" (Steenbergen 188). It seems

that giving today is slightly viewed as something the wealthy elites do, instead of something that everyone can do to help society. Steenbergen argues that an open culture of giving can only come about if there is a "culture of asking", being able to ask people for money without feeling embarrassed (44). However, as mentioned in the previous section, soliciting people for money can be difficult for artists.

In addition, Dutch neoliberal politics seem to have created the sense that all individuals have to take care of themselves, which makes it even more unlikely that a significant part of the population will become philanthropists. Citizens are likely to feel that they have contributed to the state already with their tax money, and might not be keen on using 'surplus income' to contribute to crowdfunding campaigns for artistic projects (Ridgway: b, 105). The report *Geven in Nederland 2015* ('Giving in the Netherlands 2015') composed by various researchers from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, endorses this view, as it has concluded that in 2013 that only 6% of the total amount of donated money (not necessarily donations through crowdfunding) was given to arts and culture (Bekkers, Schuyt & Gouwenberg 13). The total amount of money donated to arts and culture was 281 million euros, of which only 57 million euros were provided by private citizens (households) (Bekkers, Schuyt & Gouwenberg 14).

As mentioned in the first chapter of this project, the Dutch government has implemented some regulations in their policy with the goal of stimulating philanthropic giving, such as the Geefwet and the possibility to deduce the donations of periodical gifts from income tax. However, it can first of all be questioned whether these laws are even suitable for increasing donations to crowdfunding campaigns, and secondly whether the implementation of laws will actually increase people's philanthropic behaviour.

Crowdfunding relies on the principle that many people donate small amounts of money to one campaign. However, the Geefwet only applies when a large donation is made, which makes it impossible for many backers of crowdfunding campaigns to use this law since they generally donate small amounts of money. The option of periodical gift de-

duction is based on continuous giving to the same nonprofit organization, instead of giving to different institutions but also individual artists. Thus, these government regulations do not seem fit for increasing donations to crowdfunding campaigns.

Moreover, the laws, the Geefwet in particular, do not seem to be very effective. Since the implementation of the Geefwet in January 2012, donations to arts and culture from Dutch households have not increased between 2011 and 2013: both in 2011 and 2013, only 11% of Dutch households contributed money to culture (Bekkers & Franssen 2). Of the wealthy Dutch citizens, 33% donated money to culture in 2011, which only very slightly increased to 36% in 2013 (*ibid.*). However, results from more recent years should be collected to make a decisive statement.

A careful conclusion to this section is that citizens seem unlikely to donate more money because the government implemented advantageous laws. It is the Dutch culture of giving and ideas on financing arts and culture that should change in order to increase private donations, to crowdfunding campaigns in particular. The idea that private citizens should give money to cultural projects so that society as a whole can ensure the survival of the arts and culture sector is not yet established. As long as this ideal of participatory culture, involvement of all citizens in arts and culture in this case, does not exist, it seems that crowdfunding cannot live up to its fullest potential. Furthermore, if we reach a point where individual citizens are willing to engage and participate more, the independence of the artists should be warranted. Backers or 'fans' should then be solicited in an effective way for them to contribute financially.

Perspective Three: Is Crowdfunding Democratic and Fair?

Finally, the assumed democratic aspect of crowdfunding could be further investigated. As key optimistic claim three describes, crowdfunding is generally believed to be a democratic system. This works in two ways; first, people can decide for themselves to which project they want to donate, instead of being dependent on government decisions on the allocation of taxes. In the case of crowdfunding for artistic and cultural projects, the general public becomes the gatekeeper of the cul-

tural world. Thus, a layer of elite control, for example from the side of the government or individual patrons, is removed and replaced with distributed decision-making about which projects are considered interesting or relevant and should be executed or finished (Bannerman 18). Thus, online crowdfunding could be seen as paving the way to a relatively classless society (Bannerman 9). Secondly, from the side of the potential founders, crowdfunding can make money accessible to more people; more artists in this case. Whereas funds are often looking to support 'high-art' projects, crowdfunding is also open to 'grassroots' projects and supports those who might not find any start-up capital through other channels (Bannerman 4).

However, there are several remarks that can be made about this positive view. First, it could be questioned how new communication technologies as online crowdfunding are really 'paving the way to a classless society'. Web 2.0 is praised as creating an environment without any hierarchy, consequently opening up a world of wealth to regular people, who can use the tools of the web to become very rich (Marwick 7). However, Davidson and Poor argue that "new media technologies more often than not reflect existing stratification rather than erase it" (290), thus 'offline' hierarchies and norms in their view remain the same online. One's offline status and reputation will play a major role in determining the success of an online crowdfunding campaign. Backers might base their choice to donate to a particular project on its popularity or their relationship with the founder, instead of on the value or content of the project, which is what funds focus on (Ridgway: a, 5). Crowdfunding can thus result in a simple popularity contest, where some projects become highly popular whereas others disappear in obscurity (Bannerman 20), which is not democratic. Crowdfunding can also be undemocratic with regard to the idea that the online platforms might not provide egalitarian access to potential backers, as mentioned in the previous section on participatory culture.

The assumption that offline hierarchies and norms remain in place online not only affects choices of backers, but also undermines the idea that crowdfunding makes money accessible to more people. If crowdfunding is mainly a popu-

larity contest, then 'less popular' projects, or less popular *founders*, will automatically receive less money. Moreover, as already mentioned in the second section of this chapter, extroverted individuals will benefit more from crowdfunding than introverted individuals. The need to be extrovert in order to ask people for money will not disappear when the founder goes online, and will thus affect the number of people starting a crowdfunding campaign. Moreover, in the panel discussions on crowdfunding, Roy Cremers, CEO of *voordekunst*, mentioned that artists should only consider crowdfunding if they actually see the 'fun' in the whole process (of marketing) (Kleverlaan n.p.), which also suggests that crowdfunding is not suitable to every artist.

Bannerman goes as far as to question whether crowdfunding is a form of exploitation of the artist (9), which would be unsuitable to a democratic system. Crowdfunding requires a vast amount of time-investment for which the founder does not receive any income in return. Often, artists cannot simply upload their projects to websites because most websites require an admission fee or work with a selection process, such as *voordekunst* does to an extent. Although the selection process of *voordekunst* is relatively easy and the admission fee not very high, these measures could create a threshold to participate for some artists. Furthermore, not all artists will gain anything for their efforts if they do not have a successful campaign. Depending on the crowdfunding platform, some artists only receive their donations if they have reached their target amount. These measures indicate again that money through crowdfunding is not as easily accessible to anyone as often argued. Moreover, the measures suggest that "the crowdfunding model encourages financial risk carried by individuals rather than through state-support" (Ridgway: b, 110). If crowdfunding keeps growing, there is a possibility that the financial risk that public organizations traditionally helped carry through stable and predictable pools of funding will be transmitted to private artists and institutions.

This leads the discussion beyond the democratic degree of crowdfunding itself, towards considering whether it is 'fair' in the first place that it seems increasingly necessary for artists to use methods

as crowdfunding, and towards considering what the role of the government should be in funding the arts and culture sector.

Ridgway discusses that the rhetoric of crowdfunding success might lead people to believe that crowdfunding can take over funding from the public sector, to a point where public funding might be seen as redundant by the population as well as by the government itself (Ridgway: b, 100). This is a situation that should be avoided, as governmental support is still essential in many ways, and without it, the arts and culture sector has little chance to survive.

In the first place, a trustworthy government is an essential partner of the new Maecenae, as Steenbergen argues (25). If private persons feel that they only finance where the government falls short, they won't feel inclined to participate in philanthropic giving (Steenbergen 25). Moreover, she argues that "[p]rivate individuals should be able to expect that the government provides sufficient financing to art institutions to cover their basic running costs; private benefactors are there to ensure that additional projects allow art to excel" (Steenbergen 187). This indicates that crowdfunding is really an additional method that can generate money for 'grassroots' projects that cannot or will not be financed in another way. The government should therefore help finance running costs that will not be funded through crowdfunding, such as the maintenance of museum buildings. In addition, the arts and culture sector also needs money for projects that are not necessarily popular amongst the public (yet), and it could be considered the task of the government to spread these new forms of art and culture.

That government funding remains important recently became very evident when the 'Raad voor Cultuur' ('Culture Council') and the 'Sociaal Economische Raad' ('Socio-Economic Council') published their findings in January 2016 on the condition of the labour market for the arts and culture sector. This report described that the jobs in the arts and culture sector have decreased with 12,3% due to the economic crisis, which has led to unemployment and forced many artists to work as self-employers (Hamer & Daalmeijer 6). In the arts and culture sector, unemployment is compar-

atively high. The number of new and running social benefits ('uitkeringen') per 100 insured persons is twice as high as in the economy as a whole (Hamer & Daalmeijer 39). Moreover, in the arts and culture sector, the amount of self-employers is 42%, which is significantly higher than in other sectors (Hamer & Daalmeijer 24). Of the total number of visual artists, even 90% is self-employed (Hamer & Daalmeijer 30). The financial situation of these self-employers is very poor and unstable. The demand for labour is lower than the offer, thus people in the arts and culture sector often work for low rates or even for free. A visual artist in 2013 on average earned €13.990, which is far below the average gross-income of €32.500 of a Dutch citizen (Hamer & Daalmeijer 42). Moreover, the self-employers often cannot appeal to several financial aids, such as the disablement benefit, and do usually not build up a pension. In the report, many representatives of the arts and culture sector indicated that with the abolishment of the WWIK, an effective additional income for starting artists disappeared (ibid.).

Apparently very little employers in the arts and culture sector today offer jobs on a structural salaried employment base (Hamer & Daalmeijer 31). Jobs as visual artist, composer, illustrator, scriptwriter, and photographer are rarely offered on salaried employment base. Consequently, crowdfunding receives much attention as a great new financing method. Crowdfunding is used in all sectors, for all kinds of projects. However, there seems to be a focus on crowdfunding for generating significant financing only in the arts and culture sector. At the moment, crowdfunding is still incidental, and cannot ensure a reasonable and stable living. The latter seems to be what artists need, as appears from the Culture and Socio-Economic Council's report. This evokes the question whether it is fair that most artists do not have a stable basic income. If being an artist is considered a regular job, as being a lawyer, doctor, hairdresser or receptionist are, should it be so difficult for artists to generate an income? Should the government provide even more funding to compensate artists for this? In September 2015, the 'Burgerinitiatief Basisinkomen 2018' ('Citizen Initiative Basic Income 2018') was launched online. This initiative aimed

to raise 40.000 signatures to have the Dutch Lower Chamber discuss the idea of implementing a basic income for every Dutch adult individual from 2018 onwards (*Basisinkomen 2018* n.p.). On May 12, 2016, 48.029 signatures had been raised, which indicates there is enthusiasm for such an initiative (ibid.).

However, it seems that two changes in mindset have to come about in order for the government to be able to successfully implement any sort of income regulation, for artists in particular. According to stand-up comedian Zoë Coombs Marr, popular opinion on artists is that they use ordinary citizen's tax money to pay for their daily living costs, whereas they do not do anything all day (n.p.). Funding is considered a way to get rich easily. However, she argues that "[b]eing an artist is a job. Like any job, it requires training, skill, and hard work. Like many businesses, it occasionally requires funding. Like some jobs (apiarist, web coder, consultant) no one understands what the hell it *is*, hence that delicious outrage when it's funded" (Marr n.p.). The costs and works that are involved with being an artist are often not acknowledged, which would be necessary to receive the citizens' support for increased public funding. In addition, artists themselves sometimes still tend to place themselves above regular business. Musician Amanda Palmer writes: "The first rule of Art Club? Don't talk about how you run Art Club – that is, don't talk about your risks, your losses and definitely don't discuss your eccentric shortcuts or the expenditures that ultimately win you a customer base. [...] The mostly-unspoken rule that artists aren't supposed to talk about their businesses reveals plenty about how we tend to think of "art" and "business" as mutually exclusive" (Palmer: a, n.p.). Artists themselves might thus have to become accepting of seeing themselves as having a regular job, in order for the money-related side of their profession to become clear to the general public.

Crowdfunding in the Dutch Art World: Findings from Practice

Overview of Findings

This chapter outlines the views and opinions of various visual artists and institutions in the Netherlands who started a crowdfunding campaign on *voordekunst*. To collect opinions of founders on *voordekunst*, emails were sent to the founders of twenty projects² that satisfied the criteria set for this research: their campaigns were not older than three years, their campaigns were held particularly for the financing of artworks that were (partially) yet to realize, and their projects fell within the category of the visual arts. Remarkably, the founders that met these criteria were mainly individual artists or artist collectives, but only very few institutions. Three very general questions were emailed to the twenty selected founders, to avoid pushing the founders' answers in a certain direction:

1. Why did you choose to finance your project through crowdfunding?
2. What was your overall opinion on doing this crowdfunding campaign?
3. How do you feel about crowdfunding as financing system for the contemporary visual art world?

Fourteen founders replied to the email. Seven founders (Lexmond, Volkova and Shevelenko, Smeets, Peven, and Van Dis, Van den Elshout, Schurink, De Belofte, Van de Griendt, and Van den Bout), specifically chose crowdfunding because they needed money for a project, and sometimes were not able to find other parties to finance it, for example publishers or 'regular' (public) funds. Van Engelen and Teunis, and Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture mainly indicated that they thought crowdfunding would be a good way to cre-

ate a network of people that would follow their project (Engelen & Teunis n.p.; Byvanck n.p.). Two founders, Eisses and Bolhuis, turned to crowdfunding because they needed money at short notice, and applying for funds would take too long (Eisses n.p.; Bolhuis n.p.). Rooijackers chose for crowdfunding because of the good and trustworthy reputation of *voordekunst* (n.p.), and Power of Art was made enthusiastic in a workshop they followed with *voordekunst* (Vries n.p.).

On the second question about the founders' overall opinion on doing their own crowdfunding campaign, most founders answered moderately positive. Eight founders (Lexmond, Van Engelen and Teunis, Eisses, Schurink, De Belofte, Van de Griendt, Marres, and Van den Bout) liked doing the campaign, but they also clearly indicated that they had to invest a lot of time and effort. Moreover, Schurink mentioned that it involves spending much time on social media, which she had never used before, and that she found it difficult to 'sell' a product to the people (n.p.). Eisses pointed out that doing the campaign could bring you money, but also costs a lot (n.p.). Three founders were mainly positive: Van den Elshout, Power of Art House, and Bolhuis. They mentioned that they found crowdfunding fun, exciting, transparent, and a good investment in increasing their network. Finally, three founders had a mainly negative experience: Volkova and Shevelenko, Rooijackers, and Smeets, Peven, and Van Dis. Volkova and Shevelenko said that their campaign took a lot of time and energy that they would have rather invested in creating the artwork (n.p.). Rooijackers described his campaign as involving a lot of hawking and almost spamming to get his target amount together (n.p.). Smeets, Peven, and Van Dis finally, said they experienced their campaign as involving a lot of work for very small proceeds (n.p.)

The final question on crowdfunding as financing

²The contacted founders and their projects on *voordekunst* (the first fourteen responded, the last six did not): Bruno van den Elshout (*New Horizons*); Marie Lexmond (*Yellow Interior in 11.620 parts*); Marieke Bolhuis (*Broken Safety*); Marta Volkova and Slava Shevelenko (*The Altai Dreams*); Steven de Peven, Bart Eysink Smeets and Meeus van Dis (*Green Brown*); Power of Art House (*Street Art Project: Moving People*); Merel Sophie van Engelen and Jim Daniël Teunis (*Kunst in Meervoud*); Marijke Schurink (*101 Vrouwen Versierd*); Gwen van den Bout (*Sense of Place*); Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture (*The Relativity of Matter*); Tijs Rooijackers (*Woensel Supertoll!*); Jeannette Eisses (*HEEL-spreekuur: kom binnen en heel*); De Belofte 10 (*Expo Medio Prosper*); Martijn van de Griendt (four projects: *VOOR JOU XXX STELLA*, *Forever Young*, *Exit Wounds (as if)*, and *Ik ben 17*); Stefan Cools (*De Vlindermobiel*); Mijntje Strengholt and Roney George (*Behind the Wall*); Jop Vissers Vorstenbosch (*I Can't Paint in Airconditioned Rooms*); Oranje Zuid Breda (*De Koninginnen*); Jermick Wawoe (*From Art to Fashion*); Robin van Gelder, Sebastiaan van Lunteren and Joost Stoof (*De Laatste Winkel*).

system for the contemporary visual art world was again mostly answered with reservation. Twelve founders explained that they did not have a negative feeling towards crowdfunding but emphasized that it should be seen as an 'extra', and that it is not suitable for every project or for every artist. Lexmond, De Belofte, and Bolhuis expressed a concern towards how structural crowdfunding is (Lexmond: b, n.p.; Jorissen: b, n.p.; Bolhuis n.p.). They argued that one cannot keep asking for money from his or her own network. Even Van de Griendt, who completed four crowdfunding campaigns on *voordekunst* successfully, stated that there is a limit to how many times you can ask your 'fans' to support you financially (n.p.). His success demonstrates that crowdfunding does have to potential to work structurally, but also Van de Griendt now questions whether he should start a fifth campaign (n.p.). As a positive aspect, some of these eleven founders (Rooijackers, Power of Art House, and De Belofte) explicitly mentioned that crowdfunding has the potential to make more people familiar with your work. Only Van Engelen and Teunis expressed an unreserved positive opinion towards crowdfunding as financing system (n.p.). They said that crowdfunding is a contemporary method to realize projects without being dependent on subsidies. Volkova and Shevelenko, finally, were mainly critical. They emphasized that crowdfunding is an incidental method because you cannot ask the same people for money every time (Volkova & Shevelenko n.p.)

The overall consensus on crowdfunding amongst these fourteen respondents is thus moderately positive. However, many of the critiques addressed in the previous chapter are also expressed by these founders. The following descriptions of the three main case studies will elaborate more on the positive and negative aspects of crowdfunding, and were selected from the fourteen respondents based on the variety amongst them and amongst the answers they gave to the questions in the email. The chosen case studies represent a senior artist (Marie Lexmond), a young artist (Nienke Jorissen for De Belofte), and an institution (Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture), who all expressed different thoughts and opinions

on crowdfunding, and whose amounts of money raised differed significantly.

The Senior Artist: Marie Lexmond

Marie Lexmond (1957) is a visual artist who graduated in Textile and Conceptual Art from the Fontys Art Academy in 2002. She is fascinated by textiles and fabrics and likes creating site-specific installations. The project for which she pursued a campaign on *voordekunst* is called *Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts*³. The information in this section is entirely based on explanations and statements that Marie Lexmond provided in a personal interview.

Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts was a site-specific installation, made for Het Oog ('The Eye'), a special room with open roof in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Lexmond created a kitchen in this room, containing a table, chairs, a kitchen unit, cutlery, a bookcase, and a plant, completely covered in yellow dishcloths (see figure 1, 2, and 3). This installation was a silent sign of support to women who have experienced (sexual) harassment, as women who live with traumas related to harassment sometimes apply striking strategies to survive, such as an excessive strive for neatness or perfection, which Lexmond's installation aimed to express.

With her crowdfunding campaign, Lexmond aimed to raise enough money to finish her installation, and to earn back the money she had already spent on it herself. Lexmond's target amount was 7.000 euros, and the final amount she collected was 7.005 euros, from 29 backers. Her campaign started early September 2015 and lasted till late October. *Yellow Interior* had been on display in the Van Abbemuseum from 3 October 2015 till 13 March 2016.

Lexmond started her crowdfunding campaign because she needed more money for her project. She explained that in the year before the exhibition opening, she had applied to various public and private funds: The Art of Impact, the Mondriaan Fonds, the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie, and Stichting Stokroos, but none of the funds granted any subsidies to Lexmond. The Van Abbemuseum had given her 10.000 euros for the production costs but this was far from enough. Lex-

³The campaign can be found here: <https://www.voordekunst.nl/projecten/3677-yellow-interior-in-11620-parts-1>.

mond had calculated that the entire project would cost 100.000 euros if she would take payment of people who helped her creating the work, her own salary, and material costs into account. She then decided to cancel some of her initial plans, found volunteers willing to help her with the production of the work, and decided to give crowdfunding a shot.

Lexmond explained that she did not find the crowdfunding process a particularly fun experience. She said she found the marketing process difficult, even when she had friends to help her with her newsletters and other communications. Lexmond expressed that ideas as 'I should not *ask* (for money)', and 'I should not *beg*' are deeply rooted in her mind. She feels that these ideas are very prominent in professions that are not favoured by the masses; the 'left-wing' professions. In business circles, networking and negotiating money seems much more accepted, whereas in health care, education, and art-related professions, this is not the case. Lexmond believes this is caused by the type of people (modest) who work in the latter professions.

Most of Lexmond's backers were mainly friends, and there were only three or four whom she was not acquainted with. This means that by far the most backers came from her pre-existing network. Lexmond expressed that she strongly believed that business circles could offer possibilities for increasing ones network but that this was not the case for her. She tried hard to find support with companies and organisations that suited her project, such as relief organizations for women, female networks (for example for lawyers or surgeons), and textile companies. However, according to Lexmond, most responded very negatively to her request. Finally, a befriended couple offered to complete Lexmond's target amount were she not to reach it. In the end, the couple donated almost 3.500 euros to her campaign. As Lexmond received most of the money from her direct network, she did not feel that she had brought a new audience closer to her and her work. Lexmond expressed disappointment in the fact that it was so difficult to reach a new audience, and admitted her failure in reaching that goal.

She considered the theme of her work, sexual harassment of women, as a possible explanation for the lack of success. Lexmond complained of

living in a society where most people would not be willing to give their money to the arts, specifically arts that address sensitive topics. Lexmond argues that art is very valuable for mental health, but that little people seem to realize this. On a positive note, Lexmond did feel that she had become a bit more visible as an artist because crowdfunding increased her use of her mailing list and social media.

As Lexmond only started the crowdfunding campaign after she received the results of the fund applications, her campaign started when she was in the middle of her process of creating the work, and continued even while the exhibition had already started. This made the process very busy and stressful. Therefore, Lexmond found the amount of money raised not in proportion with the amount of work and stress the campaign caused her. Moreover, the preparations for the campaign took about a month, in which Lexmond had to go through the process of filling in online forms on the website of *voordekunst*. Lexmond experienced this online process as very complex, even though she stressed that *voordekunst* was very helpful.

Rather than being forced to resort to crowdfunding, Lexmond would like to see the government play a bigger role in the financing of the arts and culture sector in the future. She believes that right now, the burden comes down to the artist. Therefore, she is in favour of a basic income for all artists. Lexmond herself works forty to fifty hours a week, as a nurse, a social worker for women, a psychotherapist, and a visual artist. The money she earns with the first three professions provide her with an income that she also uses to finance her artworks. A basic income would give artists more freedom to focus on their art practice and give them a foundation to create works.

Although Lexmond expressed some aspects that she did not like about crowdfunding itself, she concluded by saying that she would consider doing another crowdfunding campaign. However, in that case she would make sure to do it before the production process, and possibly have someone who enjoys working with money and who likes to do marketing to organize the campaign. The fact that she would consider doing another campaign indicates that her opinion towards crowdfunding itself

is not completely critical. Lexmond is mainly critical about the current Dutch art policy as a whole, and the way people in the Netherlands generally think about art.



Figure 1: Lexmond, Marie. *Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts*, view from outside. 2015. Dishcloths installation. Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo by Marie Lexmond.



Figure 2: Lexmond, Marie. *Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts*, overview. 2015. Dishcloths installation. Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo by Peter Cox.

It can be concluded that Lexmond's views and experiences relate to some of the critical remarks made about crowdfunding in the previous chapter. In light of the first perspective (artistic versus business world), Lexmond strengthens the idea that marketing and asking for money is difficult for artists. In light of the second perspective (participatory culture), the idea that crowdfunding comes down to activating one's own network and the idea that it is difficult to reach people beyond this network were indeed true in Lexmond's case. Finding only 29 backers willing to donate, of whom one backer donated almost half the amount, is not the

core idea behind crowdfunding. In Lexmond's case, donations seemed to depend on reciprocal giving, which causes that money merely circulates in the circle of colleagues and friends. In light of the last perspective finally (is crowdfunding democratic and fair?), Lexmond's example clarified that indeed not all projects might be 'crowdfundable', and that crowdfunding requires a massive amount of work for relatively little proceeds, which could both be seen as undemocratic. Furthermore, Lexmond definitely did not feel it is fair that artists have to resort to crowdfunding, and felt that the government should indeed do more to support them.



Figure 3: Lexmond, Marie. *Yellow Interior in 11.620 Parts*, close-up of table. 2015. Dishcloths installation. Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Photo by Marie Lexmond.

The Young Artist: Nienke Jorissen and De Belofte 10

Nienke Jorissen (1988) graduated in Photography from the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht ('Art Academy Utrecht', or HKU) in 2014, and she wanted to display the beauty of everyday objects by depicting them in a non-conformist, almost surreal, way. She coordinated the crowdfunding campaign of De Belofte 10 ('The Promise 10'), a one-year project for starting artists. The campaign that De Belofte 10 organized on *voordekunst* is called *Expo Medio Prosper*⁴. The information in this section is entirely based on explanations and statements that Nienke Jorissen provided in a personal

⁴The campaign can be found here: <https://www.voordekunst.nl/projecten/3081-expo-medio-prosper>.

interview, unless in-text references indicate otherwise.



Figure 4: The artists participating in De Belofte 10. TBRL: Goof Kloosterman, Thera Clazing, Danilo Fernandez, Marloes Elbertse, Sonia Laan, Dennis ter Wal, Mariska Kerpel, Sander van Noort, Nienke Jorissen. 2015. Photos by Sonia Laan, De Belofte.

De Belofte is an annual project organized by Kunstliefde, a space for visual art in Utrecht. This project gives recent art school graduates a chance to organize an exhibition of their new work. Jorissen participated in the tenth edition of the project, hence De Belofte 10. *Medio Prosper* was the name of the exhibition that De Belofte 10 realized in 2015, consisting of nine young visual artists (see figure 4, 5, 6, and 7). The title *Medio Prosper*, which could be translated as ‘halfway to success’, referred to the phase in which the young artists found themselves: between now and the future.

De Belofte 10’s crowdfunding campaign aimed to raise money for the production of a catalogue, but mainly for covering the artists’ material costs of their artworks. Their target amount was 2.500 euros, and the final amount they collected was 2.715 euros, from 57 backers. All nine artists contributed to the organization of the crowdfunding campaign, but Jorissen could be seen as the coordinator. The campaign started on March, 16, 2015, and finished on April 15, 2015. The exhibition *Medio Prosper* took place from 23 May to 21 June 2015.

As De Belofte is essentially a learning process for young artists, starting a crowdfunding campaign was very suitable to the project. Moreover, Kunstliefde provided De Belofte with a small budget, but this was not enough to cover the costs of creating the exhibition. Jorissen said that the decision to start the campaign was thus based on a combination between the desire to learn new skills, and the wish to collect more money for producing the artworks. De Belofte 10 was the first Belofte group who chose for crowdfunding. In previous years, the

artists had used their own money to finance the production of their artworks.

As the coordinator of the campaign, Jorissen took charge of the process; she made all the arrangements with *voordekunst*, and wrote most texts for the Facebook page and newsletters. She said to have enjoyed doing the campaign because it introduced her to marketing processes, and taught her that *asking* for money does lead to people *giving* money. Jorissen found the business side of crowdfunding quite fun. She did not experience crowdfunding as ‘begging’, and did not find it difficult to ask her family and friends for money. She did stress that some artists within the group did find it awkward to send emails to their network, and did not forward any emails that Jorissen made. According to Jorissen, artists are generally introverted, hermits almost. They are social people, but prefer to work alone and focus entirely on their art. In order to do both art and business, an artist has to divide his time differently, which many artists do not like, or which they are simply not trained to do. Jorissen suggested that this is in part due to the educational programs of the art academies. Jorissen herself had been offered little courses or workshops in which entrepreneurship was the central theme. If the HKU discussed cultural entrepreneurship, it was mainly in the form of a general presentation of the financing options that exist, such as funds, loans, and crowdfunding. Any core practical issues remained undiscussed, such as how to write a project proposal, or how to write a fund application. Jorissen also stressed that she and other artists invested less time and effort in the entrepreneurship classes that *were* offered than in the main visual art courses. Thus, there is a lack of offers from the school, but possibly also a lack of interest from the students.

Fifty-seven backers contributed money to Belofte’s campaign. Most backers (28) contributed 25 euros, followed by 13 backers who contributed 50 euros. The highest amount (150 euros) was contributed by three individual backers. The VSB-fonds contributed 500 euros to the campaign. Jorissen stated that most of the backers were family and friends of her and the other artists. In addition, some people from within the network of Kunstliefde, members for example, contributed to

the campaign as well. Since the target amount of De Belofte was not very high, and there were essentially nine founders of the campaign, there was no need to actively promote the campaign beyond their direct networks. Jorissen questioned whether it would have been easy to reach an audience beyond their own network. She believed that in Dutch society, giving to artistic or cultural projects is not a norm. Jorissen said that in North America, it is rooted in society that companies contribute to art and culture, which is not so much the case in the Netherlands. As going beyond one's network seems difficult, Jorissen thus believes that for a successful crowdfunding campaign, one already needs to have a network to begin with. Besides having a network, the quality of the bond you have with this network is essential, according to Jorissen. She said that there were some artists who did not have a particularly strong bond with their family, which resulted into them raising less money for the campaign. Jorissen indicated the dependence on friends and family as a disadvantage of crowdfunding because it means that you cannot rely on crowdfunding too many times. As Jorissen appealed to her own family and friends to donate to the campaign, she did not feel that she significantly widened her network. However, she was able to increase her mailing list thanks to new contacts via Kunstliefde, which made her feel that her work had become more visible.

Jorissen was very positive about the way *voordekunst* helped her and the other artists with the campaign. She said that *voordekunst* was always willing to help them with questions about the process, and that the selection procedure was not too difficult because *voordekunst* applies a low threshold as it is open to many different projects. Jorissen did indicate that the process preceding the actual campaign required significant time investment. There is an abundance of information on crowdfunding available (online) which forces one to spend a lot of time doing research to create a sound understanding of the mechanisms. Also, preparing the online campaign page on *voordekunst* (including an attractive text and a video) and deciding on which rewards to allocate for the donations were time-consuming. During the campaign, much time was spent on communicating the project through

social media and mailing lists. In the meantime, the artists were also in the production process of their own artworks. This made the period busy, but, according to Jorissen, it remained fun.

Jorissen believed that part of the success of the campaign can be explained by the fact that she and the rest of the team focused on themselves as young artists. They presented their campaign as something to help young artists with the start of their career. Jorissen thought that many people would be sensitive to this approach, and also argued that some projects might be less suitable for crowdfunding than *Medio Prosper* because crowdfunding is mainly there for art or artists that are already socially appreciated or accepted. However, according to her, it is not necessary that all art is broadly appreciated, or sometimes, appreciation only follows years later. It would thus be a shame to only make art that would be considered 'popular'. She also said that artists often do not yet know where their project is going to go when they are in the process of creation. This is a problem for crowdfunding because it requires a very clear description of the project and the future use of the backers' money.

This indicates that Jorissen believed that crowdfunding alone cannot finance artists or the art sector entirely. However, Jorissen stated that the advantage of starting as an artist in times of crises is that they do not know better. She explained that she never got used to receiving high amounts of subsidies, or to being able to depend on regulations such as the WIK and WWIK. At the moment, Jorissen works as a babysitter for two to three days a week, does some commercial photography assignments, and sells an artwork every once in a while. She clearly cannot live from her art (yet) but she is not worried or bitter about it. According to Jorissen, a basic income would be a nice addition to the financing of the art world, but not an indispensable one. She is very realistic in stating that if the government does not have enough money it simply cannot spend it, and she is happy with her situation as it is now.

To the question whether she would crowdfund again, Jorissen answered hesitantly. She explained that the campaign with De Belofte felt comfortable because she was with a group. She did not ask

money for her personally but for the bigger cause of the group exhibition. Jorissen would only consider doing crowdfunding for a project of her own if she felt completely confident about the idea, or if the project was already finished and she would need money for an exhibition or something similar. She thinks that her work is rather conceptual and might not appeal to a broad audience. Therefore, she questions whether it would be 'crowdfundable' in the first place and believes her views and ideas should be very clear. Moreover, she stated that she would wait at least a few years with a personal campaign as she just did the campaign with De Belofte and she feels that she cannot ask money from her network of family and friends again yet.



Figure 6: Jorissen, Nienke. Photo from the series *Hinterland* on display in *Medio Prosper*. 2015. Photograph. Kunstliefde, Utrecht. Photo by Nienke Jorissen.

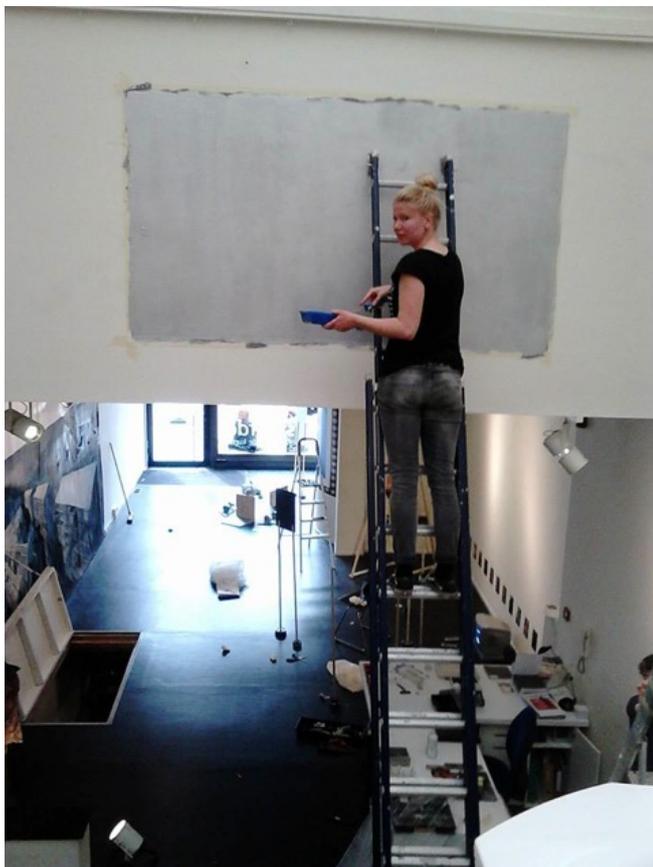


Figure 5: Setting up the exhibition *Medio Prosper*. 2015. Photo by Luuk Huiskes, Kunstliefde.



Figure 7: Fernandez, Danilo. *For All the Times You Weren't There* on display in *Medio Prosper*. 2015. Performance and installation. Kunstliefde, Utrecht. Photo by Luuk Huiskes, Kunstliefde.

In conclusion, Jorissen seemed more positive about the crowdfunding experience than Lexmond.

In light of the first critical perspective on crowdfunding (artistic versus business world), the enthusiasm Jorissen expressed for the marketing side of crowdfunding was not in line with the idea that marketing and the business side of art are considered undesirable aspects for artists, and that asking for money is considered 'begging'. However, some other artists in her group did seem to experience the marketing process as difficult. In light of the second perspective (participatory culture), the campaign of De Belofte seems to support the ideal of crowdfunding that many backers contribute small amounts of money to a project. However, Jorissen expressed strong doubts about the ideal that crowdfunding increases one's network, as she believed this could be very difficult. Moreover, as crowdfunding depends on one's network, it is difficult to do many crowdfunding campaigns in a short period of time. In light of the third perspective (is crowdfunding democratic and fair?), Jorissen argued that indeed not all projects seem crowdfundable, which does not make crowdfunding a mechanism that should stand on its own in financing arts and culture. Yet, she also expressed that *voordekunst* is open to all kinds of projects, and that she did not experience the amount of time spent on the campaign as excessive (or as exploitation as one critique on crowdfunding implied). Finally, Jorissen did not feel that a basic income for artists is an absolute necessity. She is used to the current situation in the arts and culture sector and is content with the jobs she has and the income she earns.

The Institution: Marres Centre for Contemporary Culture

Marres is located in Maastricht and offers exhibitions, lectures, performances and publications in which the senses and the sensory experience are central elements. The crowdfunding campaign Marres has completed on *voordekunst* is called *The Relativity of Matter*⁵. The information in this section is entirely based on explanations and statements that Valentijn Byvanck, director of Marres, provided in a personal interview, conducted on 25 March 2016, unless in-text references indicate otherwise.

erwise.

The Relativity of Matter is an all-encompassing installation that can take over an entire gallery or house, made by visual artist Levi van Veluw. Marres was the first to exhibit this installation in an exhibition that was called *Levi van Veluw: The Relativity of Matter* (see figures 8, 9, and 10). Once in the gallery, the visitor experienced a labyrinth-like space in which various sculptures are displayed, all in a darkened environment. The experience is aimed to be immersive, atmospheric, and sensory.

With the crowdfunding campaign, Marres aimed to raise money for the completion of Van Veluw's installation. Van Veluw had already started building the installation but in order to fill all available spaces in Marres, more money for materials and labour were needed. The target amount in the campaign was 25.000 euros, and the final amount collected was 25.280 euros, from 141 backers. Marres' team took charge of the campaign, but naturally Van Veluw himself and the gallery that represented him, Ron Mandos in Amsterdam, were closely involved in the process as well. The campaign lasted from 6 June to 21 July 2015. *The Relativity of Matter* had been on display in Marres from 4 October 2015 till 17 January 2016.

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Marres is one of the six presentation-institutions that are supported by the Dutch government with money from the BIS. From 2013 to 2016, the centre for contemporary culture received 530.589 euros per year ("Toekenning" 3). From 2017 onwards, the allocation of the money for presentation-

⁵The campaign can be found here: <https://www.voordekunst.nl/projecten/3342-the-relativity-of-matter-1>.

institutions will be reconsidered. Furthermore, the exhibition of Van Veluw's installation was financed with the help of funds. Marres received about 30.000 euros from the Mondriaanfonds, 30.000 euros from Fonds 21, and Van Veluw himself received 25.000 euros from the Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie. Thus, Marres already had a considerable amount of money available. However, in order to make the most of the exhibition and avoid having to cut a room from the installation, Marres decided to try crowdfunding. However, Byvanck also explained that a recruitment campaign (recruiting people to donate money) is essentially a communication method. Therefore, Byvanck stressed that Marres chose for crowdfunding specifically because the institution wanted to increase general support for the exhibition, and make people enthusiastic about visiting.

Byvanck indicated that he enjoyed doing the campaign. He found it fun and exciting to find new people to support it, and convincing them to donate money. As the director of Marres, most of the work came down to him. He explained that he played the biggest part in recruiting backers. His task was to map out who could potentially be willing to donate money. Each week was dedicated to approaching a different subgroup, such as 'the neighbourhood', 'politics', and 'service organizations'. He called and wrote all potential backers, for example Marres' suppliers, its accountant, its notary, and the law firm Marres had previously collaborated with. Byvanck said that it is a matter of being constantly visible. He preferred increasing visibility with a structured crowdfunding campaign than using regular strategies.



Figure 8: Van Veluw, Levi. *The Relativity of Matter*. 2015. Installation. Marres, Maastricht. Photo by Levi van Veluw.



Figure 9: Van Veluw, Levi. *The Relativity of Matter*. 2015. Installation. Marres, Maastricht. Photo by Levi van Veluw.

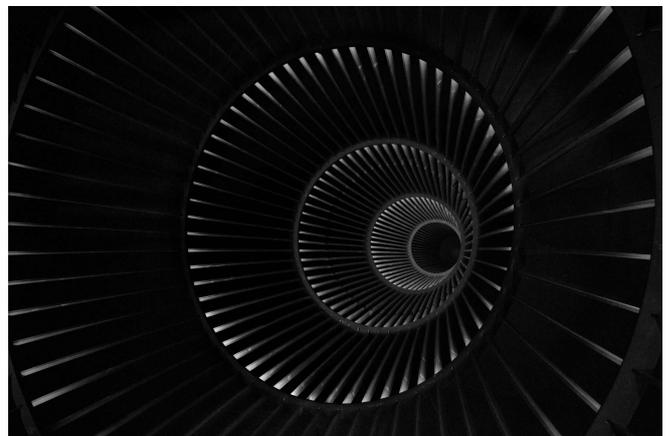


Figure 10: Van Veluw, Levi. *The Relativity of Matter*. 2015. Installation. Marres, Maastricht. Photo by Levi van Veluw.

Four to five of Marres' team members continuously worked on the campaign as well. Everyone started recruiting backers in their own direct network of friends and family. As mentioned, Byvanck was mainly occupied with the recruitment of Marres' business networks. In addition, Van Veluw recruited his own network of 'fans', and his gallerist Ron Mandos made the supporters of his gallery enthusiastic. There were thus three networks of significant size to recruit backers from. Marres, Van Veluw, and Ron Mandos together had more than 15.000 likes on Facebook, which would create a great reach for their campaign messages. Byvanck said that this triangular situation contributed greatly to the success of the campaign, as potential backers could see that the artist was actively supported by two institutions, which made the cause stronger and more reliable.

Byvanck indicated that all the backers of the project were somehow involved in the art world, or simply enjoyed art. He stated that projects that aim to help poor children or people with cancer are more likely to reach a broad audience than art-related projects, as only people with at least some interest in or knowledge of art will decide to give their money to art. However, according to Byvanck, this does not mean that money only circulates within the art world because not all backers have earned the money they donated. Moreover, he remarked that the money that was raised in the campaign might not have ended up in the art world had Marres not organized the campaign.

Even though the three parties involved in the campaign mainly found backers in their own networks, this did lead to an increase of support for Marres, for example from the collectors of Van Veluw's work. Byvanck explained that Marres has increased its network because the institution became more visible in the networks of Van Veluw and Ron Mandos. Van Veluw and Ron Mandos mainly have contacts in the Randstad (the urban conglomeration of Western Holland), Amsterdam in particular, and Van Veluw additionally has a network in Arnhem, where he went to art school. Their networks thus represent different regions than Maastricht, where Marres is located. According to Byvanck, the crowdfunding campaign had established relationships with (new) supporters that involve

more than a once-only donation to the project. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the contacts made, in order for the support to continue.

Byvanck is mainly enthusiastic about crowdfunding as a marketing method as opposed to a financing method. He explained that the crowdfunding campaign Marres did only accounted for about 2.5% of Marres' annual income of one million euros. Moreover, Byvanck believes that Marres cannot successfully complete a crowdfunding campaign more than once every two years, as it puts a great burden on the team and there is a limit to what one can ask from its network. This would mean that over two years, little more than 1% of the total income would be generated through crowdfunding. The importance of crowdfunding in organizing one's finances is thus negligible. Byvanck is sceptical about private money replacing public money, which strengthens the idea that the government should continue to play a key role in financing arts and culture.

However, Byvanck sees a future for crowdfunding as marketing method in order to increase the communication about one's project, to make it more visible, and to increase the support for the project. Consequently, a crowdfunding campaign could indirectly increase one's income as well. When there is a broad knowledge about and support for a project, for example for Van Veluw's exhibition in Marres, more people would come to see the project. According to Byvanck, the increase in visibility of Van Veluw himself and his installation *The Relativity of Matter* had drawn many visitors to the exhibition in Marres, to such extent that it was almost sold out. Byvanck is evidently a great advocate of crowdfunding, and would be open to organizing another crowdfunding campaign in the future, if the project is special enough.

From this final case study, it can be concluded that Marres is the only example presented here that chose for crowdfunding because of its marketing possibilities. In light of the first perspective (artistic versus business world) Byvanck had no difficulties with the marketing aspect of the campaign, which could be explained by the fact that he is the director of an institution; a position that requires marketing skills to begin with. In light of the second perspective (participatory culture), this final case

study suggests that a crowdfunding campaign can be very successful in terms of amount of money raised and increase of network, if the founder already has a considerable network to begin with. An institution is more likely to have this bigger network than an individual artist, especially when the institution works together with other parties. Marres' campaign suggests that it is possible to increase one's network through crowdfunding. Moreover, the fans of the three parties were apparently mobilized in an effective way, as the campaign was so successful. Without an effective mobilization, the possession of a broad network in itself is pointless. However, it remains very difficult to get money from a circle beyond people who are in some way related to or interested in the art world. From this example follows that the ideal that everyone in society would contribute financially to arts and culture is not (yet) viable. In light of the third perspective (is crowdfunding democratic and fair?), the example of Marres supports the idea that crowdfunding would most likely not be able to provide structural financing, and state support remains necessary for the art world. However, with crowdfunding one can increase their personal network, which Marres considers to be just as important.

Conclusion

After the budget cuts in the Dutch arts and culture sector, crowdfunding was put forward as a potential solution that could fill the financial gaps the cuts had created. This research has investigated whether crowdfunding could indeed be considered as a valuable financing system for visual artists and institutions in the present-day Netherlands. In order to find an answer to this question, this project first investigated the historical developments in the financing of the arts and culture sector with the aim to discover from what needs and underlying ideas crowdfunding arose. Moreover, this project explored the ideas and opinions of various parties: the crowdfunding platform *voordekunst*, the public fund Mondriaan Fonds, a broad range of experts working in the crowdfunding field, a broad range of scholars investigating crowdfunding, and several visual artists and institutions – Marie Lexmond, Nienke Jorissen, and Marres in particular.

From the various findings, this research concludes that crowdfunding is not primarily a financially valuable mechanism, but should rather be considered valuable as a marketing method. From the academic research examined in this paper as well as from the artists' and institutions' practical experiences described, it can be deduced that crowdfunding is not suitable for every project or every artist. Some projects are not necessarily popular amongst a broad audience (yet), which makes it unlikely that founders will raise money for these projects via a crowdfunding campaign. Some artists have introverted personalities, which makes it difficult for them to ask people for money, and promote themselves. Moreover, some artists do not have a considerable network, whereas it seems important to have enough social capital at the start of a campaign for the campaign to be successful. If the artist does not have the required social capital, he should either be extroverted enough to actively find backers, or accept that he might not raise his target amount in a crowdfunding campaign. In addition, academics as well as artists and institutions have stated that crowdfunding involves a lot of work for a relatively small amount of money, and that crowdfunding is an incidental method, as founders feel they cannot continuously ask money from the same people. Thus, it seems impossible that every artist or institution can rely on the crowd for his/its funding. Therefore, crowdfunding is not a solution for the financial cutbacks in the arts and culture sector, and cannot replace public funding. Casander from *voordekunst* and Van Teeseling from the Mondriaan Fonds have also emphasized this.

However, as a marketing method, crowdfunding seems to be a valuable additional mechanism to the arts and culture sector. Most of the artists and institutions expressed a few of the disadvantages of crowdfunding that were also expressed by academics. Yet, what many of these artists and institutions enjoyed about their campaign was that it finally increased their visibility and sometimes their network. Therefore, *crowdfinding* could be a name that reflects the actual purpose of the method better than *crowdfunding*. *Crowdfinding* indicates that the method is primarily aimed at finding a 'crowd' to whom the founder can show and promote his project. The visibility of the founder and his project

amongst this crowd could result in financial gifts for the project, but this should be considered as a beneficial bonus.

The case studies indicate that this approach to crowdfunding might be more effective. The example of Lexmond clearly demonstrates that crowdfunding is not suitable to every artist. However, even Lexmond indicated that she felt that her visibility has increased by doing the campaign, simply by using social media more often than usual. Jorissen was sceptical about crowdfunding as a mechanism for financing the arts and culture sector, but quite enjoyed the promotional aspect of it, and also indicated that she felt that her visibility increased. Marres was one of the two only founders described in this research who considered crowdfunding as mainly a marketing mechanism from the start (the other founder was the duo Van Engelen and Teunis). Strikingly, these two founders had the most positive opinion on crowdfunding. In the case of Marres, this positive experience could have been enhanced by the fact that Marres is an institution, and therefore has a director who is more used to doing marketing in the first place and has a larger network than the individual artists to appeal to.

Important to note is that the opinions and ideas expressed by these three case studies and the eleven other founders discussed in this research can be considered no more than exemplary for prevailing ideas on crowdfunding in the Netherlands. The results cannot be generalized because they are not based on a large-scale statistical survey. In future projects, the results of this research could be used as a starting-point for a quantitative investigation. Moreover, the academic review could be complemented by a broader research into (popular) media, which would complete the overview of the general consensus on crowdfunding for the visual arts sector. A broad study into the official standpoints on crowdfunding of Dutch political parties could also provide a more decisive conclusion on the prevailing political ideas about the method. However, the practical experiences of the artists mentioned in this research still provide an indication of the different opinions that exist, and consider individual experiences in-depth.

Based on the case studies, this research also carefully suggests that in the future, crowdfund-

ing might become more valuable as a financing system. However, significant changes in society would have to occur in order to make crowdfunding more financially successful. The governmental cuts in the arts and culture budget and the new emphasis on cultural entrepreneurship have only occurred very recently (2011), which might make it difficult for senior artists who were used to receiving more generous funding, such as Lexmond, to adjust to the new situation. Young artists as Jorissen, on the other hand, grow up in these times, which might make them more acceptant of the fact that they have to generate more money on their own and from various resources. This could lead to the culture of asking that Steenberg suggested is indispensable for a successful culture of giving to emerge. Moreover, the neoliberal view that each individual should in the first place take care of himself should be replaced by a willingness to help others. The front-page image of this project suggests that some people are keen on having the possibility to decide for themselves how they can allocate their tax money, and which artistic projects they want to support. However, as for now, tax payers cannot spend their own tax money. Even if there is a willingness to support certain projects, it is unlikely that people will do this en masse, using their regular income. Finally, a more practical consideration could be that art schools should dedicate more courses to cultural entrepreneurship and the promotion of oneself as an artist.

However, as the financial success of crowdfunding in the Dutch arts and culture sector at the moment is not significant, this research aims to provide some final suggestions and recommendations on how to deal with the current situation. First, as the report of the Culture and Socio-Economic Councils indicated, many artists and institutions do seem in need of money after the cutbacks implemented in 2013. It might therefore be desirable to explore other financing options that can generate more income for the arts and culture sector, individual artists in particular. A basic income for all artists has been mentioned by various parties in this research. Secondly, to enhance the promotional but possibly also the financial success of future crowdfunding campaigns, this research suggests that institutions rather than individual artists

should more often be the founder of a campaign. Individual artists who organize a campaign regularly do this in order to complete a work that an institution has already agreed upon to display. This happened in the case of Lexmond and Jorissen, but also in the case of Bolhuis, Volkova and Shevelenko, Schurink, and Rooijackers. Yet, their campaigns were not organized in name of the institutions concerned. As the example of Marres clarified, when an institution is the founder, the credibility of the campaign is strengthened, and the collaboration between institution and artist provides a big network which leads to a great increase of the visibility of the project. The institution and the artist both benefit: from visibility in each other's network and consequently potentially from more financial support.

Finally, it is mainly important that crowdfunding for now is considered as a marketing instrument, and that artists and institutions as well as politicians regard crowdfunding as such. If crowdfunding is considered a marketing method, it is of less importance that it is not suitable for every artist or institution because the method would no longer be seen as a replacement for public money that every artist or institution has to resort to. Consequently, artists and institutions who feel that crowdfunding is not for them or for their project, would no longer feel urged to use the method. They would have a better understanding of what they can expect from the method, and disappointments can be avoided. The government would be encouraged to continue providing funds, as there is currently no method of private funding that can replace public money entirely. Casander from *voordekunst* already stressed that crowdfunding is primarily meant as a promotional instrument, and aims for crowdfunding to become increasingly associated with marketing and promotion. The creation of a well-founded understanding of the actual intentions behind crowdfunding as for now should have the highest priority.

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