FOLLOWING MICRO SIGNS OF TRANSCULTURALITY

– A discourse analysis of political street stickers in Utrecht

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1. Introduction and problem definition

Some bring back sand as a souvenir from the beaches they have traveled to. Others collect magnets with skylines of the cities they have explored in order to attach them as memories to their kitchen fridge. My favorite sort of souvenirs are stickers. The collection at the ceiling of my plateau bed in my hometown Berlin grew fast. Whenever I had a bad day, I would lay on the ground, look at the stickers and let them speak to me. Since I started to collect stickers myself, I suddenly perceived the city in a different way. I became aware of the omnipresence of stickers in urban environments and it got almost impossible not to pay attention to them and the discourse they are provoking. Having grown up in the German capital, a dense hub of public artistic expression, every step outside the door potentially turned into a research expedition. Still today, I turn into an urban explorer, searching and tracking traces in the form of stickers when wandering through Berlin or discovering a new city such as Utrecht, the location of my masters program. Noticing familiar stickers or recognizing patterns in places far away from my hometown, make the world feel a little bit smaller (cf. Fairey, 2003, para. 6).

When visually exploring the urban space, however, what instantly becomes apparent is the vast amount of different forms of institutional advertising. Provided with the necessary amount of money, it is possible to place almost any message in any size (cf. Sartwell, 2002, pp. 123-24). Graffiti and the multifaceted variations of street art are anonymous and ephemeral "localized inscriptive artefacts." (Andron, 2017, p. 71). These accessible works of art are forming a counter movement to the commercialisation of the urban space, aiming to reclaim the city (cf. Andron, 2017, p. 78; Visconti et al., 2010, p. 522). While graffiti has become a relatively broadly researched topic, this master thesis will investigate another form of semiotic expression which is mostly referred to under the collective term of "street art" but still little researched independently: Street stickers.

Particularly appearing in urban environments with a high density of public interaction, street stickers are an analog and indirect communication of the city's dwellers and visitors. They appropriate the urban space, which hence serves as "a social instrument of great creative power" (Keating, 2015, p. 244). Although stickers are sensitive to erosion and often destroyed or removed wantonly, they usually stick long after they have been

placed. Street stickers can therefore be understood as a representation of current but also past urban discourse. Moreover, they "have the potential to highlight a range of prominent social issues, inspire critical thinking and diverse perspectives." (O'Sullivan, 2018, para. 10). A discourse analysis of street stickers as components of a linguistic landscape provides a method to learn about the city and to discover potential tendencies of change. Adapting the intercultural communication angle, the goal of the analysis conducted within the frame of this master thesis is to reveal the "[r]eflection of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in urban communication [and] globalization tendencies in the urban landscape." (Leontovich, 2019, p. 648). More specifically, the representation of global and local issues in street sticker communication will be investigated, aiming to identify patterns in the use of language and semiotics. Therefore, the central research question is the following:

In which ways do political street stickers reflect globalization tendencies
in the urban landscape?

As a guiding line through the research process, three subquestions were formulated: What are the topics addressed via political street stickers? Who raises a voice through political street sticker communication? By which linguistic and semiotic means do political street stickers communicate? The subquestions were chosen in alignment with the theoretical underpinning of the analysis: The register, a key component of Michael Halliday's systemic functional model (cf. Halliday, 1977, pp. 200-201). Its three dimensions field, tenor and mode refer to the different functions of language in a certain context, "show[ing] the openness of language to the eco-social environment, and, therefore, to the dynamics of social change." (Lukin et. al., 2011, p. 189).

By utilizing a street in the Dutch city Utrecht as a field of research, this master thesis aims to reveal the potential of stickers to promote an understanding of the sociopolitical discourse in increasingly globalized urban environments. It intends to highlight their relevance in the process of appropriation and democratization of urban space that ultimately transforms it into a vibrant place (cf. Keating, 2015, p. 250). In conclusion, this master thesis is supposed to be a manifest for the conscious stopping at lampposts to learn from urban discourse instead of just walking by or complaining about vandalism.

The following chapter provides a theoretical framework. Subsequently, the third chapter outlines the methodological approach chosen for the analysis. In the fourth chapter, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed in reference to the introduced theories. A conclusion stating the main findings of the research completes this master thesis in the fifth chapter.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Public art – A voice in urban space

By 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities. In 2018, this figure was already at 55 percent (cf. United Nations, 2019). This development not only legitimizes the field of urban studies, but rather stresses its relevance in the investigation of change processes (cf. Hannigan & Greg, 2017, p. 19; Leontovich, 2019, p. 646). Cities are rich sites of research for practically any discipline, since they are extremely dense sites of socio-culturally diverse human interaction. The research conducted for this master thesis can be allocated to the field of urban communication studies. It aims to gain insights of "the ways in which people in cities connect (or do not connect) with others and with their urban environment via symbolic, technological, and/or material means." (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016, p. 1254).

The role of the people that are planning, inhabiting or visiting cities is striking when attempting to define the city. Apart from visible and measurable characteristics, such as architecture or size of the population, what distinguishes cities from rural areas is their status of being in permanent flux caused by human (inter)action. In the words of Park (1925), "The city is [...] involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature." (p. 1).

Sharing physical space with a multitude of individuals and shaping everyday life while being confronted with the demands and expectations of others is unavoidably leading to friction (cf. Andron, 2017, p. 77). It is the multimodal responses to these frictions, that is turning neutral and solely physically perceivable spaces into social places of meaning-making (cf. Keating, 2015, p. 250). Especially public environments become contested sites of expression and compromises. The public space can be characterized as "open to all, unrestricted in character, and unconditional as to participation" (Goodsell, 2003, p. 371). This description presupposes a democratic system to which the free use of public space is a fundamental pillar. Such unrestricted space can therefore encourage political discourse as it incorporates the "capacity for a connected and interactive human process of communicative experience" (ibid, p. 370). People participate in shaping public space

both indirectly, through their presence and the way they move within the space, and directly, by actively inscribing themselves into the space.

One way of active inscription in public space is to alter its visual appearance. Public art is only part of the versatile toolbox for this purpose. Evans (2018) describes public art as "any artistic creation that has the intent or effect of addressing democratic values and occurs in public spaces." (p. 10). Furthermore, he defines public art as an act of citizenship which combines the characteristics of being political as well as aesthetic. In the context of the research for this master thesis, I will equally adapt Evans' metaphor of "voices" and "quasi-voices". The US-American philosopher defines these terms as follows:

> "[...] voice includes all the major participants that constitute public art and its setting. These partici-pating voices are, on the one hand, the artists, sponsors, viewers, politicians, and others who engage the art work, and, on the other, the "quasi-voices" [...] of the public art works themselves." (p. 24)

In contrast to the actual definition of the human voice, a voice as Evans understands it can be attributed to an individual or a group that is expressing an opinion regarding a certain topic. What results is a form of dialogic and dynamic social discourse. This definition of public art in mind, the study of this form of expression in order to listen and achieve an understanding of the voices becomes more apparent. Analyzing public art can contribute to gaining insights into the current social discourses of a city. It has become "progressive-ly fundamental to an understanding of what cities are and, as a consequence, also to urban planning and policymaking." (Aiello & Tosoni, 2016, p. 1253).

2.2 Street stickers as a form of urban discourse

When taking a closer look at art in public spaces, the observer is entering a distinct discursive arena (cf. Edwards-Vandenhoek, 2017, p. 54). The "quasi-voices" of the pieces represented in the public urban gallery (cf. Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017, p. 4) are manifold and shift between legal and illegal appropriation of space or surfaces. One of these inscriptive practices is graffiti, which increasingly enjoys academic attention. Graffiti is often mentioned together with street art, which encompasses a wide variety of methods ranging from sculpture art to yarn bombing. While the definitions blur, graffiti

is grounded in the composition of letters using spray cans. Thus created tags usually represent the writer's street name and are addressed to a very distinct community of practice (cf. Bates, 2014, p. 57). Street art, on the other hand, is usually more accessible to the public – the "quasi-voices" of the pieces are more likely to be understood by the public (cf. Clough, 2011, p. 8). Street stickers, small size visual or textual messages on adhesive paper or vinyl, belong to the street art genre. Nonetheless, they are strongly connected to graffiti as they were increasingly used by graffiti writers in the 1980s in order to more efficiently spread their tags (cf. Bates, 2014, p. 55). For this purpose, "Hello my name is" adhesive name-tags originating in the 1960s (Fig. 1), but also free postal (Fig. 2) or overpainted advertising stickers became commonly used as affordable carrier materials (cf. Clough, 2011, p. 6-7).


**Fig. 1:** "Hello my name is"-sticker in Voorstraat, Utrecht, March 2, 2022 (Author's own)

Fig. 2: Postal sticker in Voorstraat, Utrecht, March 2, 2022 (Author's own)

This is, however, not the first indication of the emergence of stickers as a form of urban expression. Starting in the 1910s, the Chicago-based international labor union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), designed, printed and distributed so called stickerettes with political messages (Fig. 3 & 4). These "silent agitators" were produced in millions and translated in different languages (cf. Tedford, 2020a, p. 35).
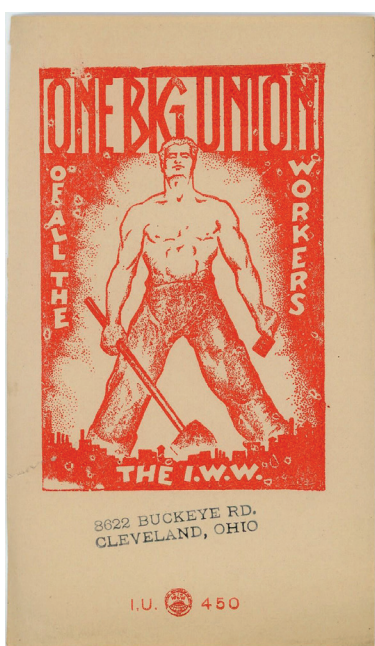
Fig. 3: Industrial Workers Of The World sticker, 1910 (Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)
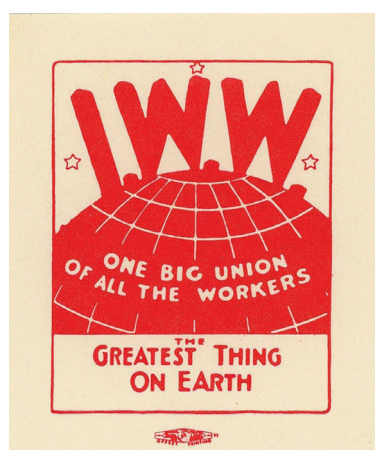
Fig. 4: Industrial Workers Of The World sticker, 1917 (Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

This brief historical digression gives an idea of the different intentions with which stickers are created. Four categories can be identified, whose boundaries are fluid and overlapping. Official stickers, such as safety warnings, which are legally placed for information purposes, are left aside. A sticker can be created as a means for advertisement following a monetary objective. The intention of a sticker can equally be to serve as a form of representation of the creator themselves or a particular community such as sport clubs. In this case the aim is recognition and reputation. Moreover, street stickers can be produced as art, with the simple aim of the aestheticization of the urban space. Lastly, the intentions behind creating stickers can be to convey a political message. While, in line with McLuhan's statement "the medium is the message" (1964, p. 23), the act of attaching stickers to public property can be seen as a political statement in itself, there are stickers that clearly pursue activist goals through their content.

Even though the intentions behind the creation of stickers vary, a number of characteristics unite stickering as an inscriptive practice, distinguishing it from other forms of street art: Anonymity, ephemerality, reproducibility and portability. Albeit the author or authors of a sticker might be revealed on its surface – directly through e.g. a name, a link, a hashtag or indirectly through a recurring pattern that can be traced back – the person who places the sticker stays anonymous. Depending on their material, stickers suffer more or less from erosion or they get destroyed, removed or pasted over with another sticker wantonly. Even though the durability of a sticker can be extended through favorable placement or clever camouflage by adapting to the environment (cf. Fairey, 2003, para. 10), its lifetime remains ephemeral. This is countered by the possibility of reproducing stickers in large quantities, although it varies due to the technique of sticker production, created by hand or printed industrially.

Lastly and probably the most significant characteristic of stickers is their size. It not only makes it possible to collect, easily transport and inexpensively send them by mail (cf. Clough, 2011, p. 31), but also ensures that they can be applied quickly and with little risk of legal prosecution. The former leads to a lively barter trade of stickers on a global scale using online platforms such as flickr or Instagram. In Berlin, the world's first sticker museum Hatch opened in 2008, featuring a collection of over 30.000 stickers from all over the world as well as an online shop (cf. hatchkingdom, n.d.). For those who decide to "slap" stickers on urban surfaces instead of collecting them, the probability of being caught is low. Since stickers can be removed with less effort compared to graffiti, stickering is usually considered a minor offense. This lowers the barrier to entry for this form of appropriation of public space and therefore increases the diversity of voices that communicate through stickers. Furthermore, "[t]he moment a sticker claims its place in the urban landscape, it co-produces the city as an indicator of cultural diversity."[1] (Drognitz, 2018, p. 14). In contrast to the highly digitalized modes of communication that increasingly shape the everyday life of modern civilization, street stickers are grounded in their analog and haptic existence. Placed on traffic light- or lamp posts, rain gutters and street signs, the brief adhesive visual and textual statements can be interpreted as an offline Twitter.

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1 Translation of the author, original in German: "In dem Moment, in dem ein Sticker seinen Platz im urbanen Gefüge einnimmt, produziert er die Stadt mit, als Anzeiger einer kulturellen Diversität."

I also like to describe stickers as an alternative city guide, which consists of many sticky parts and is spread all over the city. Both metaphors highlight the role of stickers as a medium of communication (cf. O'Sullivan, 2018, para. 4). Developing an understanding of this specific medium is not only critical to emphasize how it influences society (ibid.). Moreover, stickers "offer an alternative history; a mapping of social trails or subcultural behaviours – a voyeuristic pleasure at entering the story of the city." (Avramidis & Tsilimpounidi, 2017, p. 4).

2.3 Linguistic landscapes in transition – Global cities and transculturality

A factor undeniably affecting the development of cities is their shift towards increasingly globally connected networks. As economic, political and societal hotspots, they are playing a crucial role in the process of globalization. Relevant in this context is the global city theory, which was significantly influenced by Sassen (2001; 2005). Along with the globalization of the economy, including factors such as the geographic dispersal of economic activities and centralization of headquarters, she underlines "[t]he growth of networked cross-border dynamics among global cities includ[ing] a broad range of domains: political, cultural, social, and criminal" (2005, p. 31). Moreover, Sassen defines a city "as a strategic site not only for global capital, but also for the transnationalization of labor and the formation of translocal communities and identities" (ibid., p. 38).

Related to this concept is another known as transculturality, which was first introduced by Welsch (1997). He questions the traditional idea of nation-bound cultures and proposes an understanding of cultures as fluidly transcending and non-homogenous identity constructions. Welsch formulates four hypotheses: a hybridisation of the individual cultures and thus a blurring of the own and the foreign; increasingly transcultural lifestyles and the decrease of the importance of regional cultures; a growth in subject-internal transculturality in which "[i]dentity formation is increasingly about the integration of components of different cultural origins." (ibid., p. 13)[2]; and finally, analogous developments in the field of science, referring specifically to the cross-border impact of seemingly regional problems.

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2 Translation of the author, original in German: "Idetitätsarbeit wird immer mehr zur Arbeit an der Integration von Komponenten unterschiedlicher kultureller Herkunft."

These tendencies of transculturality provoqued through globalization can become recognizable in the linguistic landscape of urban environments. Landry and Bourhis (1997) were among the first scholars to define the term:

"Linguistic landscape refers to the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region. It is proposed that the linguistic landscape may serve important informational and symbolic functions as a marker of relative power and status of the linguistic communities inhabiting the territory." (p. 23)

The languages textually represented on the signs of a city do not only fulfill an informative function as indicators of the dominant language(s) in this specific territory. They also symbolically represent power relations of present ethnolinguistic groups (ibid.). Furthermore, Landry and Bourhis' study (ibid.) showed that the linguistic landscape can even influence patterns of language use of the people living in or visiting the area and that it can give indications of language shifts. Over the past years, the initial definition of the linguistic landscape, including only public and commercial signs, was discussed by various scholars and broadened to basically any kind of multimodal inscription in a physical environment (cf. Pütz & Mundt, 2018, p. 2).

Moreover, the notion of semiotic assemblages was introduced, which "expands the semiotic inventory and relocates repertoires in the dynamic relations among objects, places and linguistic resources, an emergent property deriving from the interactions between people, artefacts and space" (Pennycook, 2018, p. 85). When analyzing stickers as micro-signs in the linguistic landscape of a city, the incorporated languages and semiotics should therefore not simply be understood as an indication of the sociolinguistic composition of the environment as suggested by Landry and Bourhis. It needs to be taken into account that language is more complex and dynamic than a property of a specific nation-bound community and always applied in relation to the surrounding space and time (ibid., p. 86). Furthermore, increasing connectivity and transcultural identities encourage linguistic variation and hybridity, which manifest in forms of code-mixing and -switching (cf. Waris, 2012; Hall & Nilep, 2015).

As "it is the changing economic and political dynamics of the global city – and the messy conflation of street art and graffiti with these new forms of urban economy and control – that shape graffiti and street art today" (Ferrell, 2017, p. 28), using urban public art such as stickers as a lense of research becomes obvious. The definition of street stickers as micro signs reflecting social discourses such as the increase of transculturality in globalized cities, laid ground for the analysis described in the following chapter.

3. Methodology

A reading of a number of research papers revolving around street stickers was conducted to serve as an orientation for my own methodological approach. Four papers were found that address the topic from different angles, taking a close look at stickers in Berlin, St. Petersburg, Athens and Birmingham. While all four studies are grounded in ethnographic research, the methods chosen to investigate the different subjects of the works are varied.

Clough (2011) focused on the materiality of street stickers and the perspective of a number of street sticker artists in Berlin. She followed a mixed methods approach including semi-structured interviews with local sticker artists, participant observation at the Hatch sticker museum in Berlin and fieldwork, observing changes in the sticker landscape around the museum. In a more recent work, Vasileva (2019) researched sticker art as part of urban youth culture in St. Petersburg, defining stickers as a means of appropriation and "a step towards democratization of the urban life" (ibid., p. 39). Similar to Clough, a set of mixed methods, consisting of interviews and city walks with local sticker artists as well as the participation at subject-related events, was chosen. A rather quantitative approach was adopted by Papoutzis et al (2014) as well as Reershemius (2019). Using a semiotics and content analysis, the former investigated how fan stickers and slogans of the Greek soccer club FC Aris Thessaloniki contribute to identity formation. Reershemius equally worked with an extensive corpus, consisting of photographs of the semiotic landscape in Dinghneth, Birmingham to gain knowledge about the pragmatics of stickers with a spotlight on multilingualism.

The focus of the research for this thesis is to investigate in which ways street stickers reflect globalization tendencies in the urban landscape. From the four categories of stickers described in 2.2, political stickers were chosen to be in the center of this research. Political stickers are not only promising for analysis as they appear in large numbers but also because they usually carry comparatively much information to be studied. Similarly to the research papers presented above, this work can also be located within the field of ethnography. I took the role of a passive observer of street stickers as a form of indirect human interaction in a specific urban environment. Considering the given timeframe and

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the focus of the thesis, I decided to take the approaches of Papoutzis et al (2014) and Reershemius (2019) as a guideline. An extensive corpus of photographs of political street stickers was assembled, serving as the basis for a profound analysis. The process will be described in detail in the following.

3.1 Field of research

One sticker placed in a public environment is often the starting point for a growing cluster of stickers, "they find each other and cluster together in little nodes of activity amidst the chaotic urban environment." (Clough, 2011, p. 36). Depending on the city's effort to keep the public space clear of any illegal intervention, sticker clusters tend to grow to vast networks spreading in large numbers throughout the urban area. In regard to the overwhelming mass of stickers, it became evident that I would have to limit my field for research. Choosing the Dutch city of Utrecht was not only apparent as it being the location of my masters program. It also counts approximately 350.000 residents of which a comparatively high number are expats and attracts international students as well as tourists (cf. Gemeente Utrecht, 2019). The internationalization of the Dutch education system (cf. Nuffic, 2018), the right to vote in municipal elections for registered EU-citizens (cf. Government of the Netherlands, 2021) as well as the increasing role of English next to the official language Dutch (cf. Edwards, 2016, p. 226) make the Netherlands a rich field of analysis in regard to globalization tendencies.

To further limit the field of research, one street in the city center near the main train station was chosen for analysis. The Voorstraat, which merges into the Wittevrouwenstraat after crossing the canal Kromme Nieuwegracht, is characterized by high public engagement, caused by a large number of shops, restaurants and bars. In addition, the city's university, a student associations' headquarters as well as a political cultural center are located in this street of approximately 1 km in length. While other forms of public art such as graffiti were almost completely absent in the street at the time of investigation, street stickers were visible on the majority of rain gutters, lamp posts, power boxes, bicycle racks and also partially on the facades of buildings. This tangible yet rich site allowed to assemble a corpus of photographs for a profound analysis aiming to reveal patterns that can subsequently form the basis for larger-scale studies.

3.2 Assembling of the corpus

The assembling of the corpus was carried out with respect to the framework of geosemiotics, "the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world" (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2003, p. 2). This approach is based on the principle of indexicality, hence the dependency of a meaning on the context (ibid.) and dialogicality, "a double indexicality with respect to the meaning attached to the sign by its placement and its interaction with other signs" (ibid., p. 23). Therefore, the photographs were taken following a clear path, accompanied by note taking on paper that allowed to trace back the direct environment of the sticker during the subsequent analysis.

On March 2nd 2022, I walked along both sides of the chosen street one after the other, which took approximately one hour. Walking "as a multisensory experience is a methodology" through which "a graffiti and street art researcher gains an experience of the surroundings of the artwork as well as of the artwork itself" (Fransberg et. al., 2021, p.7). Every sticker on my way that gave a hint of a political statement was photographed. A political statement was broadly classified as the expression of an opinion about a particular issue on a textual or pictorial level. Since the boundary here is ambiguous, stickers whose message remained unclear at first glance were also initially included in the photographic record. When bigger clusters of stickers occurred, a photo was taken allowing an overview of their placement in relation to one other. In the case that the same sticker was spotted repeatedly, it was recorded in the written notes.

As a first step after the assembling of the photographs, the stickers for which it was unclear whether they incorporated a political statement, were looked at more closely. If the brief search revealed that they could be assigned to a different category, they were sorted out. The remaining photographs were numbered according to the order in which they were taken and thus ready for analysis.

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3.3 Discourse analysis inspired by Michael Halliday's systemic functional model

While the range of definitions of and approaches to discourse analysis are broad, the term generally originates in the idea of "the study of language in use" (Juez, 2009, p. 10) and "the way language communicates meaning and social and power relations" (Munday, 2016, p. 142). The Hallidayan model of language and discourse was used to create a table that allowed for a structured and efficient analysis of the corpus. Rooted in systemic functional linguistics, the model is based on the notion that "there is a strong interrelation between the linguistic choices, the aims of the communication and the sociocultural framework" (ibid, p. 143). This goes in line with the geosemiotics approach of Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) introduced above. Of special interest for the analysis was the models' dimension of register, which refers to the link between language and the social context and encompasses the three elements field, tenor and mode (cf. Halliday, 1977, pp. 200-201; Lukin et. al., 2011, p. 191; Munday, 2016, p. 144). The three elements refer to specific functions of language which, in the case of street stickers, appear in a purely textual and pictorial form.

The field revolves around the type of social action: "that which is 'going on', and has recognizable meaning in the social system" (Halliday, 1977, p. 200). Applied to the subject of analysis, the field therefore enquires into the topic of the sticker. What is its message? Which issue is addressed through the sticker and where can it be placed on a scale reaching from the local to the global? Furthermore, the tenor examines "the role structure: the cluster of socially meaningful participant relationships" (ibid., p. 201). The aim is to determine the sender and the potential addressee of a stickers message. Is it a political party, an activist movement and where are they rooted? Due to the disconnection of the production, the placement and the reception of the stickers, the analysis of the tenor required particular attention. Finally, the mode refers to the form of the message, its "symbolic organization: the particular status that is assigned to the text within the situation" (ibid.). Is it only textual or also visual? Which language(s) are present on the sticker and do forms of code-mixing, slang or expressions occur? Code-mixing is understood as "using two or more languages in the same sentence or discourse but one language more dominant, and it related with the social context as a function of choosing the code"

(Waris, 2012, p. 128). Moreover, attention was paid on the use of any (pop-)cultural references that communicate on a meta-level. This touches upon the field of semiotics, the study of signs and symbols. More specifically, the concept of global semiotics, which "focuses on translation processes interconnecting different sign systems and different languages" (Petrilli, 2014, p. vii). Apart from the table compiled for the analysis based on the dimensions of register (appendix II), I used the online whiteboard miro to cluster the photographs.

As the field, tenor and mode of the stickers did barely become apparent at a first glance, the analysis was accompanied by online research using a search engine or the social media platform Instagram. Names, links or qr-codes depicted on some of the stickers allowed for a targeted search. Stickers without such indications of ownership required a closer look, whereby the search for keywords or conspicuous visuals proved to be helpful. Another highly insightful resource was the extensive online archive of nearly 4,000 political stickers of St. Lawrence University, New York (Artstor, n.d.). The collection that has been assembled unter the lead of Catherine Tedford since 2004 includes stickers from more than 40 countries dating back to 1903. A keyword search in this archive, allowed cross referencing patterns that stood out in the analysis of the corpus. Furthermore, my personal archive of street stickers in Berlin served as a resource for reference.

It needs to be emphasized that the complexity of the Hallidayan model of language and discourse goes far beyond what is drawn upon in this master thesis. Investigating the stickers through the concept of register, however, provided a suitable orientation for analysis and allowed for a deeper understanding of how "individuals from spatially and culturally distant areas can create their own discrete discourse" (Clough, 2011, p. 47). Furthermore, analyzing the stickers in relation to each other gave the opportunity to understand narratives among them that might elsewise stay hidden if looking at them separately (cf. Edwards-Vandenhoek, 2017, p. 68). This method grounded in the field of urban communication research helped to "disclose the city as a multi authored communicative space, a hybrid of the planned and unplanned, of cooperative and competing actions, of past and present interventions" (Pauwels, 2016, p. 1325).

4. Analysis of the political street sticker communication in Utrecht

The basis for the analysis and the subsequent findings was a corpus of 104 photographs of 91 different stickers. The total number of photographs taken on March 2nd, 2022 along Voorstraat/Wittevrouwenstraat in the city of Utrecht was 121. After a brief initial research as described in 3.2, 17 stickers of which the statement did not fit into the category of political were sorted out. Stickers that were photographed twice or from different angles in order to be able to fully read their content, were given the same number. Photos capturing the context of a cluster of stickers were excluded from the numbering. If not embedded as a figure in the text, the number in square brackets will in the following refer to the corresponding sticker to be found in the corpus (appendix I).

Before the presentation of the findings, it is important to emphasize the high dynamics of the street sticker landscape. Some of the stickers captured on March 2nd, 2022 might be gone already the day after and most likely accompanied or even covered by new stickers. Figures 5-8 illustrate the vivid transformation. This constant flux ensures that it never becomes boring to examine the stickers in the same environment. On the contrary, observing the changes in a well-known environment over a longer period of time can be insightful. The analysis conducted for this master thesis, however, only depicts a snapshot of the constantly transforming urban space.

Moreover, the researchers' bias needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. As it will become apparent in the following subchapters, being able to understand the "quasi-voice" of the stickers often requires contextual knowledge of the addressed social discourse. As a researcher, I am only capable of understanding and translating the voices of social discourses I have been confronted with before. It is therefore most likely that I missed a number of political stickers on my way as I was not able to decode their political character. Stickers originating from the (extreme) right wing spectrum for example, tend to make use of rather decoded statements that can only be understood by members of the community, which can help extend the durability of the sticker in its environment. With these two limitations in mind, the findings will be presented in the following, structured along the three dimensions of the Hallidayan register described in 3.3.

Fig. 5: Facade of the ACU political-cultural center in the Voorstraat in 2020 (ACU)

Fig. 6, 7, 8: Facade of the ACU political-cultural center in the Voorstraat, Utrecht on March 2, April 17 & May 8, 2022 (Author's own)

4.1 Field – Topics on a range from the local to the global

The initial step of the analysis aimed to provide answers to the first subquestion: What are the topics addressed via political street stickers? The findings could be clustered into three dominating subjects and a number of less frequently addressed subjects, visualized in a mind map in figure 9. 34 of the stickers contain general statements and demands from the (extreme) left-wing political spectrum. This includes stickers that voice opposition to fascism, capitalism and the police or that promote anarchist or socialist political approaches. Almost as significantly represented are stickers revolving around Dutch domestic politics, 25 in numbers. A particularly striking subcategory here is the housing situation, along with the Dutch general and municipal elections. Moreover, a number of stickers address changes in Dutch law. The third dominating subject can be broadly labeled as climate. 16 stickers call for protest marches, speak out against the fossil industry or forest logging and criticize the food system while promoting veganism. Clusters that contain four or less stickers are related to soccer and hooliganism respectively, the art system, sexual self-determination, voice opposition to conspiracy theorists and address localized conflicts such as the Hong Kong security law [15] or the Rojava revolution [74].

The boundaries of these clusters are often blurred and can be discussed as they partly overlap and some stickers could match several categories. However, this attempt to map out the narratives of the stickers makes it possible to get an idea of prominent social discourses in the environment at the time of investigation. It becomes apparent, for example, that the housing situation in Dutch cities is precarious as 10 different stickers addressing this issue could be found repeatedly along Voorstraat/Wittevrouwenstraat. They call for protest marches in Utrecht [16], Amersfoort [44], Haarlem [10, 19] and The Hague [64] or draw attention to collectives offering advice. The high amount of stickers expressing antipathy towards politicians (Mark Rutte [22, 49], Geert Wilders [1]) and parties (VVD [51], FvD [46], CDA [87]) or that are a form of electoral advertising (Volt [9], PvdA [41]), provide insights into the party political landscape of the Netherlands. It can be assumed that the frequency of these stickers is related to the Dutch general and municipal elections that took place in March 2021 and 2022. Less frequent but equally educational are the stickers concerning Dutch law. One already somewhat faded sticker refers to a referendum in 2017 on the Intelligence and Security Services Act [5], while a seemingly recently
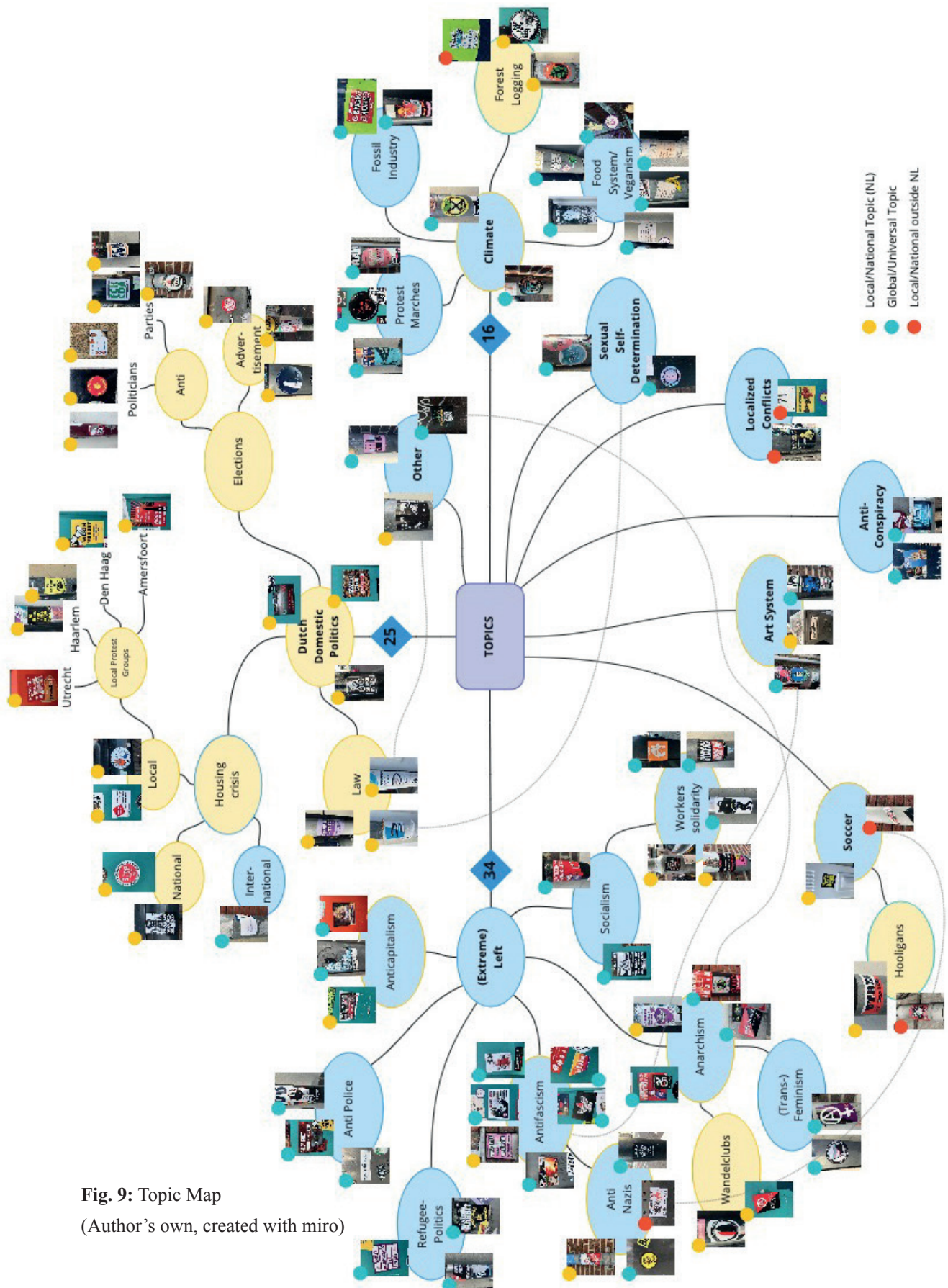
Fig. 9: Topic Map
(Author's own, created with miro)

placed sticker concerns a protest against the new law on student loan compensation that came into force in 2021 [36]. Another example is a sticker stating "ZWARTE PIET IS RACISME" [70], which points to a controversy concerning the servant of the traditional figure Sinterklaas, Black Pete, as this role assignment is considered discriminatory.

The previously outlined discourses can be defined as being relevant on a local or national scale. With regard to the overarching research question, however, it can be stated that 58% of the stickers cover topics that can be allocated outside the Netherlands or on a global level. The decisive criterion for this classification was the scope of the respective topic. This becomes more clear in the following threefold explanation, partly arching back to the transculturality theory of Welsch (1997): Firstly, the 6 stickers addressing an issue on a local or national topic originating outside of the Netherlands, e.g. the logging of the Hambacher Forst near Cologne [56], can be interpreted as an evidence of the hypermobility of people leaving behind sticky markers of their presence. Secondly, a number of the depicted issues transcend national borders even if they call for action on a local level, such as climate marches. This is what Welsch describes as the "causal chain of reality"[3] (1997, p. 14). The stickers calling attention to the issue revolving around refugee politics, the Hong Kong security law or the Rojava conflict in Syria stress this statement. Lastly, there are stickers voicing socio-political demands or statements, for example against fascism or for workers solidarity, that are not limited to national politics. Here, a link can be drawn to Welschs' remark about increasingly transcultural lifestyles: "Similar life forms permeate different cultures and nations almost unmodified" (1997, p. 11). The majority of the stickers from the dominant category that I defined as (extreme) left can be allocated to political views that are represented on a global scale.

To conclude this subchapter, the occurrence of the discussed topics must be related to the context in which stickers were documented. This refers to the principles of indexicality and dialogicality as part of the geosemiotics approach by Scollon & Wong Scollon (2003), briefly introduced in chapter 3.2. The stickers found on Voorstraat/Wittevrouwenstraat "take a major part of their meaning from how and where they are placed – at that street corner, at that time in the history of the world" (ibid., p. 2). It becomes clear that

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3 Translation of the author, original in German: "Kausalkette der Wirklichkeit"

the vast majority of the topics of the recorded stickers can be assigned to the left-wing political spectrum. In this context, left-wing is understood as representing values such as equality, solidarity and public sovereignty (cf. Eckert, 2011, p. 103).

When assembling the corpus it was striking that close to shops such as a tattoo studio or a record store, stickers linked to these subcultures – e.g. stickers of tattoo artists and studios or labels and bands – could be found increasingly. These places act as magnets for people with similar goals and mindsets, some of whom leave stickers behind when they visit. With regard to political stickers and their accumulation, the same phenomenon was observed. Around the café and hangout for lovers of alternative music The Village as well as the political cultural center ACU, the number of stickers increased. Especially at the facade of ACU, which describes itself as "non-commercial, independent from the municipality's agenda, and fully run by volunteers" (ACU, n.d.), a quickly expanding cluster of mostly political stickers can be found (Fig. 5-8). The presence of like-minded people in a certain environment does not only contribute to the flourishing of the street sticker landscape towards a certain narrative, but makes it equally more likely for stickers opposing the general opinion to be removed shortly after they have been placed. The placement of stickers can also be a strategic decision considering the audience of a specific environment. Due to the high traffic of students in Voorstraat/Wittevrouwenstraat visiting the universities buildings or the student associations' headquarters, the high amount of stickers addressing the housing situation is not surprising as it is a major issue among students. Lastly, it needs to be emphasized that the appropriation of stickers as a communication tool is more prevalent in some subcultures than in others.

4.2 Tenor – Global communities of practice

In the second step of the analysis of the corpus, the focus was set on the creators of the stickers, following the second subquestion: Who raises a voice through political street sticker communication? Moreover, as the dimension of tenor takes into account the relationship between the sender and receiver of a message, the role of the addressee of the stickers was investigated. At the beginning of this subchapter, it is worth briefly recalling the characteristics of stickers described in 2.2. They can be produced in high quantities, easily shared through various channels and attached by anybody, which can lead to a

snowball effect. This is why it is important to differentiate between the creator of a sticker and the person who attaches it and hence takes the role of a sender. The latter is almost impossible to determine, even though it might be feasible to retrace their path following the same sticker. On the contrary, the creators of the stickers from the corpus could almost entirely be identified.

Aside from two stickers by individual street artists and those whose creators could not be uncovered, 67 stickers could be attributed to collectives. The depiction of a name, a link or a qr code gave a clear indication of the authorship of most of the stickers. A logo also served this purpose, even if this required some research, in case the logo was unknown. Examples for this are the stickers against stadium entry denial, incorporating the logo of the football club Vitesse Arnheim [4] or the logo of the Dutch Partij van de Arbeid [41], as depicted in figure 10 and 11. The reason for this liberal approach to authorship may be the protection the collective provides. Not a single individual can be held accountable in the case an infringement gets reported. However, it is certainly also related to the fact that many stickers call for support, which requires more information via, for example, a website or an Instagram account.

Fig. 10: Sticker showing the colors and the logo of FC Vitesse Arnheim (Author's own, [4] in corpus)

Fig. 11: Sticker showing the colors and logo of the Partij van de Arbeid (Author's own, [41] in corpus)

Of the creators that could be identified, 65% originate within the Netherlands. With regard to the research question, it is interesting to note that not all of them are solemnly acting on a local or national scale. Among the authors based in the Netherlands, 17% are part of global communities of practice. Included are stickers from Extinction Rebellion Nederland, a grassroots movement that originated in the United Kingdom and quickly grew into an international network (cf. Extinction Rebellion NL, n.d.). Other examples are Greenpeace Nederland or Amnesty International Nederland, both parts of globally acting NGOs (cf. Greenpeace Nederland, n.d.; Amnesty International Nederland, n.d.). A case of doubt were antifascist movements, especially the Anti Fascistische Actie Netherlands. Its logo of two to the right waving flags can be traced back to the "Antifaschistische Aktion", an alliance founded by the German communist party KPD in 1932 (cf. Jesse, 2021, p. 95). It is equally used by other antifascist groupings around the world. Such as the Anti Fascistische Actie Netherlands, they are mainly autonomous and locally organized (cf. Anti Fascistische Actie, n.d.). This finally led to the decision not to include them within the 17% stated above.

Among the stickers originating outside the Netherlands could be found some that illustrate this global network perspective. For example one of the Urban Knowledge Collective based in Vienna [45], which "connects urban actors across cities in Europe and beyond." (Urban Knowledge Collective, n.d.) or a sticker promoting the #STANDFOR-SOMETHING campaign for European youth engagement [88], funded by the European Parliament and based in Brussels (European Youth Card Association, n.d.). Another example is a sticker which struck my attention as it not only depicts the statement "TO LIVE AND LET LIVE - STREET ART AGAINST HATE" but also hints for various contributors as it shows two different Instagram handles [12]. One of them connects to the street artist girav located in Amsterdam, the other one is the translation of the first part of the statement in a dialect from Cologne. The corresponding account reveals that the sticker is part of a project under the hashtag #nohatefamily, which was initiated in 2018 by a group of street artists in Cologne and quickly turned into a viral movement of street artists around the world who contributed sticker designs (nohatefamily, n.d.). The sticker is shown in figure 12, next to a number of sticker designs from other artists participating in the campaign.

Fig. 12: #nohatefamily sticker by girav (Author's own, [12] in corpus)

Fig. 13: A number of #nohatefamily sticker from international artists (levveunlevvelosse)

When compared to determining the creator of a sticker, naming the addressee was much more difficult or even impossible. A sticker in the public environment is potentially aimed at anybody who can see it. In the case that the text on a sticker is formulated as a call for action or as a demand, a target group can be assumed. Becoming a supporter by e.g. joining a climate march, visiting an anarchist book fair, listening to a socialist podcast, engaging in EU-politics, voting for a party or not to do it are examples for such calls for action. Also the government can be addressed and asked to act e.g. against the pushback of refugees or for the legalization of psychedelic drugs. Stickers can equally be a sign of solidarization with victims or sufferers of issues such as sexual abuse, bad working conditions or problems finding affordable housing. Some stickers are also openly confrontational as they tell descriminatory people to "fuck off" or face consumers of meat and fish with the consequences of their diet.

In general, the recipients of the medium sticker are either passive, active or reactive. Most of the city's dwellers and visitors probably are passive recipients, who only subconsciously perceive the micro signs. They might even have a short look at them, without taking any further action. An active recipient would try to decode the meaning of a sticker, do research about it and eventually change their behavior in a certain way. What I define as a reactive recipient is somebody, who takes action on the sticker itself by remov-

ing it, (partly) destroying it or pasting it over with another sticker such as the one stating "HERE WAS A WAPPIE STICKER. NOW NOT ANY MORE."[4] [30], shown in figure 14. A reaction can of course also be less destructive, rather positive and complementing, leading to clusters of stickers such as the ones at the facade of ACU.

Fig. 14: Anti wappie sticker (Author's own, [30] in corpus)

Whether someone can be considered an addressee, and is thus more likely to become an active or reactive recipient, depends on their ability to decode the sticker's message. In this respect, language plays an important role, but so does contextual knowledge regarding linguistic variations of certain subcultures or (pop-)cultural references. This leads to the next and final step of analysis.

4.3 Mode – Beyond the textual and pictorial

By which linguistic and semiotic means do political street stickers communicate? In order to answer this third subquestion, attention was paid to the languages represented on the sticker, as well as to code-mixing or and the use of slang or expressions. Moreover, very interesting findings resulted from the analysis of (pop-)cultural references.

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4 Translation of the author, original in Dutch: "HIER ZAT EEN WAPPIE STICKER. NU NIET MEER."

Language

As almost all of the stickers in the corpus apply text as the main carrier of meaning, the textual level was the first to be studied. Less than half of the stickers in the corpus, 41 to be exact, depict solely Dutch text, whereas 20 make use of only English words and phrases. 17 stickers show a mix of both, Dutch and English, although 9 of which the main message is Dutch and only minor details such as a name or a link include English. A small part of the stickers voice their message through another language, namely German (3), Polish or Slovakian (1 each). Stickers mixing German and English (3) or German and Arabic (1) were found too. The remaining 4 stickers communicated on a pictorial level using no text at all.

Arching back to the concept of the linguistic landscape by Landry and Bourhis (1997), "the diversity of languages present in the linguistic landscape can be seen as a concrete manifestation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of the ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting a particular administrative territory or region" (p. 27). The occurrence of stickers depicting text in German could therefore be an implication for the existence of a German-speaking community in the environment. Due to their very limited sighting, such a conclusion would be premature in the case of the Polish and Slovenian stickers. What can be noted, however, is that at least one person with a connection to these language communities was and/or is present in Utrecht.

On the contrary, the high representation of English on the stickers can not be understood as an indication for the presence of a large ethnolinguistic minority, as the theory of Landry and Bourhis (1997) might suggest. Rather, the importance of English as a global lingua franca has to be acknowledged. Furthermore, it could be interpreted as an illustration of its relevance in the Netherlands, as "the ever greater presence of English in Dutch society is suggestive of a shift from a purely foreign to a second language" (Edwards, 2014, p. 83). This assumption is supported by the fact that 21 of the 37 stickers using English or a mix uf Dutch and English derive from creators originating in the Netherlands and no code-mixing with languages other than English was found. Three examples illustrate how naturally English is made part of the stickers: An Extinction Rebellion sticker includes three statements in Dutch related to climate change. The call for action "JOIN

US", however, is in English [21]. Another sticker is promoting the "PARTIJTJE VOOR DE VRIJHEID" – an anti-discrimination street protest referencing to the right-wing party Partij Voor de Vrijheid in Utrecht in 2014 – using the English alliteration "RAVE! RESIST! REVOLT!" [57]. Lastly a Greenpeace sticker says "WE CAN CHANGE CLIMATE CHANGE" in English. Only the hashtag "#KLIMAATMARS" indicates that this sticker was probably created by the Dutch branch of the NGO [13]. The three stickers are depicted in figures 15-17.

Fig. 15: Extinction Rebellion sticker (Author's own, [21] in corpus)

Fig. 16: Partijtje voor de Vrijheid sticker (Author's own, [57] in corpus)

Fig. 17: Greenpeace sticker (Author's own, [13] in corpus)

Fig. 18: Ende Gelände sticker (Author's own, [56] in corpus)

Other cases of code-mixing often involve the name of the creator, parts of the e-mail address or the link to a website that is depicted in another language than the main statement. One example is the name of the movement "Antifaschistische Aktion" on a sticker all else completely in English [67]. But also informal terms like variations of the English

swearword "fuck" or "loser" are used, partly as component of a whole sentence in another language such as "HUUR FOCKING DUUR" [10] or "STAP IN LOSER" [69]. The same goes for an example which includes the established term "pushback" – the forcing back of fleeing people behind national borders – in the German sentence "kein pushback ist legal" [63]. Furthermore, a sticker showing code-mixing of German and Arabic was striking my attention. The Arabic expression "Yalla Habibi", translating to "Let's go, my dear", is intertwined with the name of the contested German forest Hambacher Forst, or informally called Hambi, resulting in "Yalla Hambibi", accompanied by the according arabic letters [56], as shown in figure 18. These examples illustrate linguistic hybridity as an effect of globalization, or as Hall and Nilep (2015) put it: "The transnational reconfiguration of media, migration, and markets has brought together in unprecedented intensity not just languages, but also the subjectivities of the people who speak them" (p. 598).

As implied at the end of 4.2, the language(s) used to communicate can give implications about the potential addressee the creator had in mind while composing the sticker. Accordingly, the relationship between language, creator and subject has been paid special attention to. Unsurprisingly, the stickers that revolve around Dutch domestic politics are almost all worded in Dutch. With regard to the addressees, probably people who are allowed to vote in the Netherlands, this is somewhat logical. Although the other topics in 4.1 were classified as transcending the Dutch border, the distribution of Dutch to English and other languages respectively is distributed evenly. What astonished me, however, was that all the local creators' stickers addressing the housing issue were in Dutch. This is striking for the reason that the number of international students in the Netherlands is steadily increasing (cf. Nuffic, 2018) and thus non-Dutch speaking students constitute a growing group of sufferers of the precarious housing situation.

An example which shows that the creators adapted to their target group are two stickers stating "RIDERS RISE UP" [83, 84]. The Radical Riders Union connects people working for food delivery services such as the globally acting companies Thuisbezorgd or Gorillas and suffering from bad working conditions (cf. Radical Riders, n.d.). Even though the union is rooted in the Netherlands, the fact that the stickers are completely in English provoques the assumption that a high number of the riders are internationals. Two examples of a set of different stickers by the same author in both English and Dutch stood

out. While stickers by the Dutch workers solidarity network Vloerwerk show statements in Dutch [27], a sticker which depicts a statement in English [23] was found too. The same goes for a number of stickers by an unknown creator, promoting veganism through stating facts about meat and fish consumption, either in Dutch [33, 47] or English [28]. This observation suggests that the authors of the stickers may be aware of the international population in the environment in question.

Finally, when performing a linguistic analysis, language variations bound to specific regions or subcultures must be taken into consideration. Several stickers show terms or expressions that require particular knowledge besides language skills to be understood by the recipient. The humoristic meaning of the sticker in figure 19, showing a fist and a bike symbol next to the claim "GA TOCH FIETSEN" [50], a Dutch expression for "telling someone to go away or to stop being ridiculous" (cf. amarens, 2020) will most likely stay unrevealed for a non-native speaker. Examples for local slang are "Utreg" [86] and "Ernem" [4] as ways used by locals to refer to the Dutch cities Utrecht and Arnheim. To understand the meaning of "Wappie" [30], I had to consult my Dutch friends, as I as an expat did not know that it refers to conspiracy theorists and got increasingly used since the start of the Covid pandemic. Moreover, the term "kraken" [58], Dutch for squatting, relates to a movement of people in Western European cities dating back to the 1980s, "who claimed spaces for communal living, political protest, and alternative work spaces" (Steen et. al., 2020, p. 1379). Another example for a term used by transnational subcultures is "TERF" [79], which stands for "Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist". The acronym "ACAB" (All Cops Are Bastards) found in variations on two stickers from different creators [34, 38], shows how a term first used by British prisoners transformed into "an international symbol for hatred of the police" (Poulter, 2020).

Fig. 19: Ga toch fietsen! sticker (Author's own, [50] in corpus)

Semiotics

Apart from text as meaning-carrier component of the stickers, pictorial elements such as symbols, colors or typography have the ability to communicate as a visual metalanguage. Contrary to text, signs have the ability to transfer meaning independently from language competencies. An example is the sticker shown in figure 20 [2], the alignment of the symbols allows one to understand the statement even without knowledge of the German language. The fist, as a globally understood sign for resistance, was spotted repeatedly on different stickers throughout the various topics and languages [7, 10, 19, 20, 48, 50, 86]. Equally a star, flags, a rose, an encircled A as well as the colors black and red appeared remarkably often, which is plausible with the knowledge that these are visual codes of the left scene. A brief keyword search of Tedford's sticker archive yielded a variety of results worldwide making use of this symbolism.

Fig. 20: St. Pauli sticker (Author's own, [2] in corpus)

What was particularly interesting, however, was to examine the stickers for references, which for the most part can be linked to the practice of cultural jamming. This creative communication form involves "appropriated, reworked, and disseminated cultural symbols in order to contest meanings and challenge dominant forms of power" (DeLaure & Fink, 2017, p. 6). Stickers applying such "semiotic defamiliarization" (ibid.) could be identified and clustered into four different categories. Firstly, five stickers could be identified that adapt company or brand logos in ways that alter their meaning [62, 68, 83, 84, 91]. For example the sticker shown in figure 21 [62]. The logo of a German soft drink, in which the original name has been replaced by "Antifa" and accompanied by the slogan in

German which translates to "refreshingly antifascist"[5]. The second category are stickers adapting and altering party logos and names [46, 49, 57], see figure 23 for reference.

Fig. 21: St. Antifa sticker
(Author's own, [62] in corpus)

Fig. 22: Original Paulaner Spezi Logo
(Redbubble)

Fig. 23: Anti FVD sticker
(Author's own, [46] in corpus)

Fig. 24: Original FVD Logo
(Wikipedia)

More relevant in relation to the research question, however, are the stickers that contain a pop-cultural reference, or draw on an activist movement. An example for the former are two stickers showing a cat [26, 30], which is not connected to the stickers content. The cat became a viral and widely used internet meme which is referenced here. Furthermore, two references to fictional children's characters were found. While the link to Miffie, a character invented by the Utrechter Dick Bruna becomes apparent [58], the reference to Tinky-Winky, a character from a British TV-show seems to be chosen more randomly [52]. A very interesting example in this category are the stickers shown in figures 25 to 29. The arrangement of the letters between two lines is a reference to the logo of the U.S. hip hop band Run-D.M.C., who became known worldwide in the 1980s. Beginning with a fashion collaboration with the sports brand Adidas, the logo has been adapted many

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5 Translation of the author, original in German: "erfrischend antifaschistisch"

times in other contexts and has since become a global pop cultural phenomenon (cf. Middlebrook, 2007, p. 79). Examples from my personal collection illustrate this. Using well-known logos in this manner is a successful strategy, since it "exploit[s] the feeling of familiarity and ultimate trust a viewer may feel towards that particular image." (Clough, 2011, p. 46).

Fig. 25: Logo of the US Hip-Hop Band "Run-D.M.C." (Wikipedia)

Fig. 26: Anti VVD sticker (Author's own, [51] in corpus)

Fig. 27: Anti CDA sticker (Author's own, [87] in corpus)

Fig. 28: Anti Nazis sticker (Author's own, taken in Berlin)

Fig. 29: Girl Power sticker (Author's own, taken in Berlin)

The stickers assembled in the last category to be discussed, do function in a similar way. Those are stickers that include references to activist movements, such as the umbrella protests in Hong Kong, depicted through a person in a yellow cape [15]. Another sticker created by the Anti Fascistische Actie Nederlands [39] is adapting the design of the REFUGEES WELCOME stickers that were part of an international campaign, which originated during the ducumenta X in Kassel in 1997 (cf. noii2017, n.d.). Both are depicted in figure 30 and 31. The stickers shown in figure 32 and 33 can equally be linked to this movement as they reference its logo (figure 34) in terms of content and layout.

Fig. 30: AFA Nederland sticker (Author's own, [39] in corpus)

Fig. 31: Sticker from the No One Is Illegal international campaign (Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

Fig. 32: Geen mens illegaal sticker (Author's own, [8] in corpus)

Fig. 33: kein mensch ist illegal Logo (Source: Wikipedia)

Fig. 34: kein pushback ist legal sticker (Author's own, [63] in corpus)

Finally, figure 15 shows a sticker that stands out as its topic, language and semiotic reference are spread across Europe. It is a sticker speaking out against a fourth term in office for Dutch politician Mark Rutte. However, the statement "RUTTE IV? NO THANK

YOU"[1] [22] is depicted in German. The composition of the sticker is a reference to the logo of the anti-nuclear movement shown in figure 16, which originated in Denmark in 1975 and "became the worldwide strongest brand against nuclear power" (atomkraftne-jtak, n.d.), being translated in over 60 languages (ibid.).

Fig. 35: Anti Rutte sticker
(Author's own, [22] in corpus)

Fig. 36: Fig. 16: Smiling Sun logo
(Richard F. Brush Art Gallery)

This subchapter demonstrates that text and image, or their combination, communicate beyond the readable or visible statement and can provide clues to transnational networking structures.

6 Translation of the author, original in German: "RUTTE IV? NEIN DANKE"

5. Conclusion

The exploration of the sub-questions in the previous chapter allows to finally approach an answer to the research question of this master thesis: In which ways do political street stickers reflect globalization tendencies in the urban landscape? Firstly, it was revealed that the social discourses or voices that were made perceptible through the "quasi-voices" of stickers are not limited to Dutch domestic politics. Even though stickers covering this topic make up a large share, issues transcending national borders are notably present. Secondly, a transnational connectedness with regard to creators of the stickers became visible, as a number of them could be linked to highly interconnected global networks. Lastly, language was found to act as an indicator of the origin of the creator but also of their target group. Language therefore provides insights about the population of the environment under investigation. The high frequency of English and various forms of code-mixing illustrate the relevance of English in the Netherlands. Furthermore, global semiotics and references manifest how today's hyper-connectivity through e.g. social media facilitates the spreading of trends and can amplify the outreach of activist movements.

To solidify these findings, it would be beneficial to study individual components in a broader radius or different cities. In addition, other fascinating areas of inquiry with regard to globalization have emerged during the research, such as an investigation of the globally networked community of individual sticker artists.

By analyzing the corpus, only a very small excerpt of an overwhelming landscape of street stickers, I was still able to learn immensely. Paying attention to the unique medium of stickers allowed me to approach the city's social-political narratives and beyond. I did not only gain a better understanding of Dutch politics and issues, but also of globally acting movements. Not least, I discovered links to stickers that I had already noticed in Berlin. This potential of stickers as micro-signs of globally connected socio-political discourse, can be drawn upon in the context of education. For instance, in writing seminars that use stickers as a starting point (cf. Tedford, 2020b), or as a sequence of a city walk, a discussion and the production of one's own stickers (cf. Ahlmer, 2020). But even by encouraging oneself to pay more attention to the sticker landscape, one can learn something every step of the way. Listening to the city's sticky discourses brings us closer not just to one street, but to the world at large.

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Fig. 33: Wikimedia. Retrieved from upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/ Kmii_logo_de.jpg (Accessed April 11, 2022).

Fig. 36: Richard F. Brush Art Gallery. Retrieved from library.artstor.org/#/asset/24444963;prevRouteTS=1649512832281 (Accessed April 11, 2022).

Appendix I – Corpus

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Necessary to avoid
CLIMATE BREAKDOWN
90% less meat
60% less dairy
50% less eggs

Veganism =
most effective solution
(Oxford & Potsdam 2018)
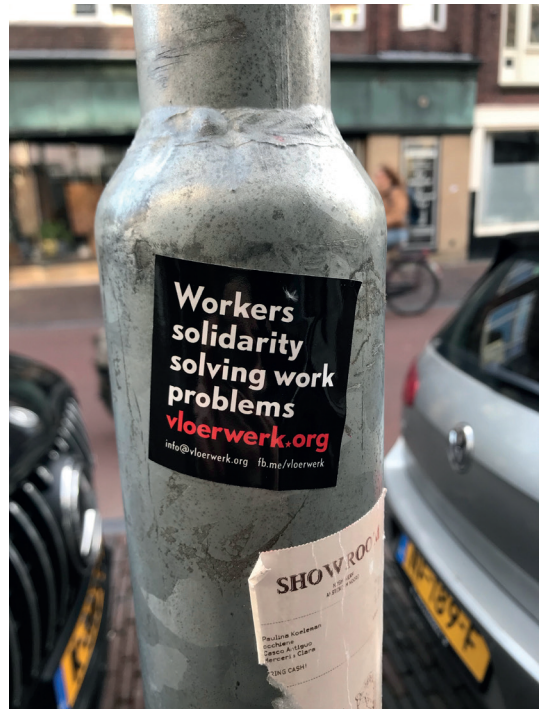
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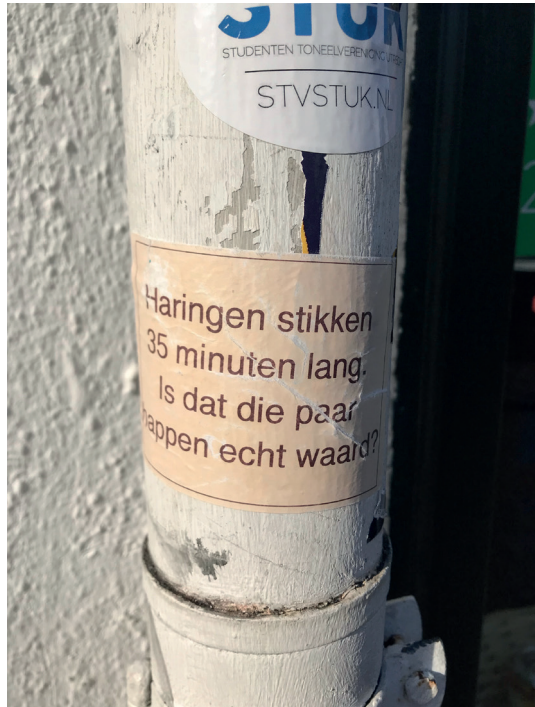30

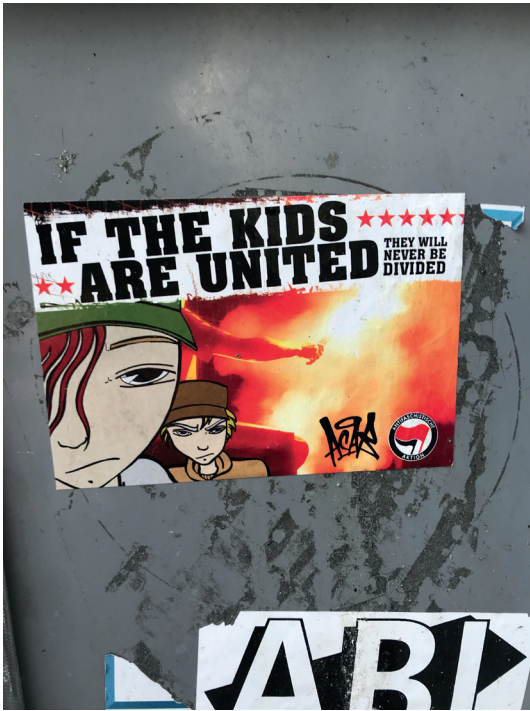

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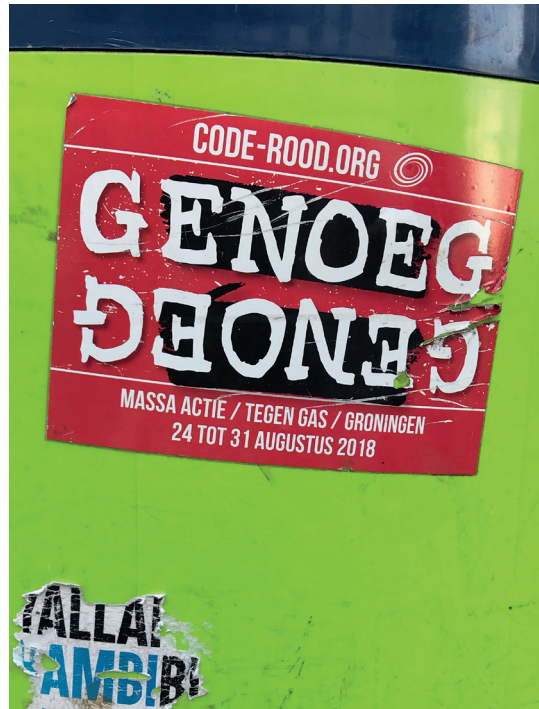
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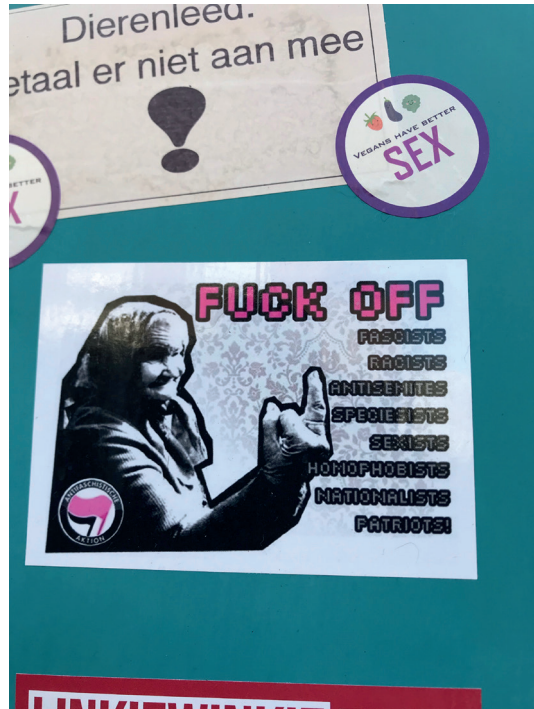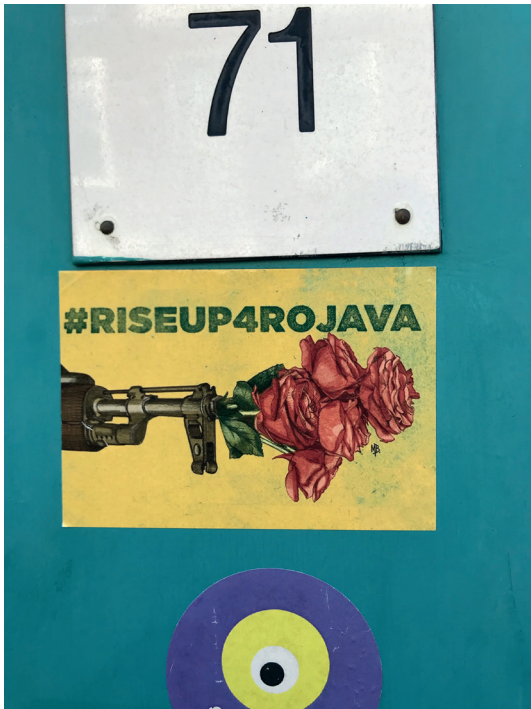58

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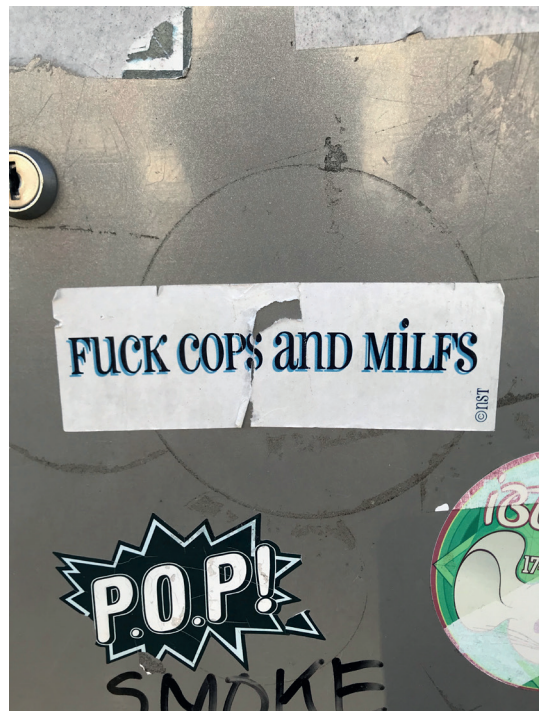
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N°	Field		Tenor				Mode			
	Topic	Scale (Local-Global)	Creator(s) (connected internationally)	Sender obvious	Extra info sender	Addressee	Language(s) Sticker	Code-Mixing	Slang/Expressions	(Pop-)Cultural References
1	Dutch elections (Anti Wilders)	National/NL	Anti Fascistische Actie (Netherlands)	x	Network of local antifascist groups	Potential voters	nl	-		Portrait of Geert Wilders, Dutch right wing politician (PVV)
2	Antifascism/Soccer	Local/Hamburg	Fans of FC St. Pauli (Hamburg)	x	Football club in Hamburg	Non-specific	de	-	-	Typography of "Rechts" in gothic font associated with the NS regime; Swastika; Fist
3	Sticker culture	National/NL	Tommy Foreveryoung (Amsterdam)	x	Street artist	Sticker slappers	nl, en	"Tommy Foreveryoung"		-
4	Stadium entry denial	Local/Arnhem	Fans of Vitesse Arnheim (Arnhem)	x	Football club in Arnhem	Football fans	nl	-	"Ernem" = Arnheim	Vitesse Arnheim Logo; Yellow as corporate color
5	Dutch law (Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017)	National/NL	Burgerrechtenvereniging Vrijbit (Utrecht)	x	Independant organization for the right to privacy, free communication & access to information (referendum in 2017)	Potential voters	nl		"Sleepnetwet" = Intelligence and Security Services Act	
6	Dutch law (New law for sexual consent)	National/NL	Amnesty International (Netherlands)	x	International NGO for human rights; National campaign	Potential voters/Supporters/Victims	en	-		Let's talk about (Song, 1991, Salt'n'Pepa, Queens, NY)
7	Climate	Global	Not readable	x	-	Non-specific	en	-	"Beat the system" = pun	Fist
8	Refugee politics	Global	Vrije Bond (Amsterdam)	x	Anarchist union/network	Non-specific	nl	-		Similar to German "Kein Mensch is illegal" stickers; Black/Red
9	Dutch elections (Party advertising)	National/NL	Volt (Netherlands)	x	Social-liberal political party; Part of Volt Europe	Potential voters	nl	-		-
10	Housing issue	Local/Haarlem	Het Woonproer (Haarlem)	x	Protest marches	Supporters/Sufferers	nl, en	"foking"		Fist
11	Anarchism	Local/Amsterdam	Anarchist Bookfair (Amsterdam)	x		Prospective visitors	nl, en	Link in en	"zines" = Magazines tied to subcultures	Fist; Anarcho-A
12	Street art against hate	Global	@girav_, Street artist (Amsterdam)/nohatefamily (Cologne)	x	Project founded by 8 streetartists from Cologne about "hatred in society", participation of artists from all over the world	Street art community	en, de	Handle in de dialect	"@levveunlevvelosse" = to live and let live (regional dialect)	-
13	Climate	Global	Greenpeace (Netherlands)	x	Globally acting NGO addressing climate issues	Non-specific	en, nl	"Klimaatmars"		-
14	Sexual abuse	Global	OIDA Campaign (Vienna)	x	Platform on IG to share personal stories about sexual abuse	Victims	en			-
15	Hong Kong security law	National/CN	Unknown	-	-	Non-specific	en	-		Yellow cape, reference to the Umbrella movement
16	Housing issue	Local/Utrecht	Woonprotest (Utrecht)	x	Protest march on 21 November 2021	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		-
17	Drug legalization	Global	PsychonautWiki (Berlin)	x	Community-driven online encyclopedia documenting the emerging field of psychonautics	Government/Supporters	en	-		-
18	Veganism	Global	Unknown	-	-	Non-specific	en	-		-
19	Housing issue > *10	Local/Haarlem	Het Woonproer (Haarlem)	x	Protest marches	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		Fist
20	Housing issue	National/NL	Zwartekat Collective (Utrecht)	x	Socialist art collective	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		Fist; Anarcho-A
21	Climate	Global	Extinction Rebellion (Netherlands)	x	Globally acting grassroots movement inspired by Extinction Rebellion UK	Potential supporters	nl, en	"Join us!"	"Zeesspiegel" = Reference to materiality of the sticker	Hourglass (Logo)
22	Dutch elections (Anti Rutte)	National/NL	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	-	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Potential voters	de	-		Reference to the laughing sun, symbol of the anti-nuclear movement, originating in Denmark and spread worldwide

#	Topic	Scope	Name	x	Description	Supporters/Sufferers	Language			Symbols
23	Workers solidarity	National/NL	Vloerwerk (Utrecht/Amsterdam)	x	Workers solidarity network		en, nl	"Vloerwerk"	-	Star; Black/Red
24	Soccer patriotism (?)	National/SL	Fans of Zrinski	-	Maybe soccer club Zrinski (Bosnia-Herzegovina)	Slovakian football fans	sl (only zrinjski remains the pride of my herzegovenia)	-	-	-
25	Art system	Global	Unknown	-	-	People in the art industry	en	-	-	"The white old men", symbol of patriarchy
26	Anticapitalism	Global	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	x	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Non-specific	nl	-	-	Cat (meme culture)
27	Workers solidarity > "23	National/NL	Vloerwerk (Utrecht/Amsterdam)	x	Workers solidarity network	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-	-	Star; Black/Red
28	Veganism	Global	Unknown	-		Non-Vegans	en	-	-	Reference to a study in Oxford/Potsdam
29	Veganism/Covid	Global	Unknown	-		Non-Vegetarians	nl	-	-	-
30	Covid	Global	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	x	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Wappies	nl	-	"Wappie" = Conspiracy theorist	Cat (meme culture)
31	Working conditions	Global	inserra (Italy)	x	Street artist	Non-specific	-	-	-	Slavery --> Slave of work
32	Anarchism	Global	Antithese (Amsterdam)	x	Anarchist propaganda collective	Non-specific	nl	-	-	Coot; Anarcho-A
33	Veganism > 28'	Global	Unknown	-		Non-Vegans	nl	-	-	-
34	Antifascism	Global	Antifaschistische Aktion (Deutschland)	x	Antifascist network originating from the Antifaschistische Aktion in Germany in 1933	Antifa-community	en, de	"Antifaschistische Aktion"	"ACAB" = All Cops Are Bastards	Flags; Stars; Black/Red
35	Anarchism	Global	Vrije Bond (Amsterdam)	x	Anarchist union/network	Non-specific	nl	-	-	Star; Black/Red
36	Dutch law (Student loan compensation)	National/NL	Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (Utrecht)	x	Student loan law was changed in 2021, protests arose	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-	"Ultra" = Football hooligans (term originated in Italy, now global use)	-
37	Soccer patriotism (Hooligans)	Local/Cologne	Wilde Horde (Cologne)	-	Hooligans 1. FC Köln	Hooligans	en	-	-	Black/Red
38	Antifascism	Global	Unknown	-		Non-specific	en	-	Reference to ACAB; Buttplug	Antifa flags, reference to No one is illegal network sticker
39	Refugee politics	Global	Anti Fascistische Actie (Netherlands)	x	Network of local antifascist groups	Refugees	en, nl	Link in Dutch	-	
40	Conspiracy reaction	Global	Unknown	-	Referring to a community of Bible-fanatics	Believers of Jezuskomtspoedig	nl	-	-	
41	Dutch elections (PvdA logo)	National/NL	PvdA (Netherlands)	-	Partij van de Arbeid, historic political party in the NL	Potential voters	-	-	-	Fist; Rose
42	Anticapitalism	Global	Anarchistische Groep (Nijmegen)	x	Anarchist organisation	Supporters	nl	-	-	Fire; Anarcho-A; Antifa flags; star
43	Drug legalization	Global	Anarchistyczny kolektyw (Kielc, Poland)	x	Anarchist collective	Non-specific	pl (Free people, free hemp)	-	-	Anarcho-A
44	Housing issue	Local/Amersfoort	Woonrevolte (Amersfoort)	x	Protest marches	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-	-	Silhoutte of "Onze Lieve Vrouwetoren" in Amersfoort; Black/Red
45	Housing issue	Global/EU	Urban Knowledge Collective (Vienna)	x	Collective connecting urban actors across cities in Europe & beyond	Supporters/Sufferers	en	-	-	-
46	Dutch elections (Anti FVD)	National/NL	Unknown	-		Potential voters	nl, en	"F*CK" = en; FVD = nl	"F*CK" = Fuck	FVD Logo distructed; Fire; Black/Red
47	Veganism > 28', 33'	Global	Unknown --> 33°, 28°	-		Non-Vegans	nl	-	-	-
48	Antifascism	Global	Anti Fascistische Actie (Netherlands)	x	Network of local antifascist groups	Non-specific	nl	-	-	Fist; Swastika; German equivalent
49	Dutch elections (Anti VVD)	National/NL	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	-	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Potential voters	nl	-	-	Reference to the actual VVD logo

#	Topic	Scope	Organisation	Cut	Description	Target	Language	Notes 1	Notes 2	Visual elements
50	Biking		Fietsersbond (Utrecht)	-	Organisation for bikers rights	Cyclists	nl		"Ga toch fietsen" = Expression, I don't believe it/go away already	Fist
51	Dutch elections (Anti VVD) > '87	National/NL	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	x	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Potential voters	en, nl	"FCK" = en; "VVD" = nl	"FCK" = Fuck	Reference to Run-D.M.C. Logo (US Hip Hop Band from the 80ies)
52	Socialism	National/NL	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	- (cut out)	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Supporters	nl	-		Reference to the Teletubbies (UK childrens series from the 90ies); Flag; Star
53	Climate	Global	Dutch Climate Crisis Coalition (Amsterdam)	x	Climate March in March 2021	Supporters	nl	-		-
54	Anarchism/Feminism	Global	Vrije Bond (Amsterdam)	x	Anarchist union/network	Non-specific	nl	-		Anarcho-A; Venussymbol
55	Climate	Global	Code Rood (Groningen)	x	Cooperation against fossil fuel industry	Supporters	nl	-		Black/Red
56	Forest Logging	Local/Cologne	Ende Gelände (Germany)	x	Anti-Nuclear & Coal movement; Campaign against logging of Hambacher Forst	Supporters	de, ar	"Yallah Hambibi" (pun) + ar letters	"Yallah Habibi" = Arabic expression	-
57	Antifascism	Local/Utrecht	Partijtje voor de Vrijheid (Utrecht)	x	Manifestation in Utrecht 09/2014	Supporters	nl, en	Alliteration in en	"Partijtje" = Diminution form of party	Dove for peace
58	Housing issue	Local/Utrecht	Kraakspreekuur (Utrecht)	x	Consultation offer	Supporters/Sufferers	nl, en	E-mail address in en	"Kraak" = Octopus, reference to the animal	Miffie (Dick Bruna); International squatters' symbol (N in a circle)
59	Abortion	Global	Abortion Network (Amsterdam)	x	Volunteer network to create access to safe abortion	Supporters/Sufferers	en	-		-
60	Antifascism	Global	Internationale socialisten (Amsterdam)	-	Socialist activist organisation	Non-specific	nl	-		Working woman in red dress; Black/Red
61	Anarchism	Local/Utrecht	Wandelclub Rood/Zwart (Utrecht)	x	Local anarchist club	Non-specific	nl	"Utreg" = Utrecht		Anarcho-A; Black/Red
62	Antifascism	Global	Unknown	-		Non-specific	de	-		Use of the Spezi Logo
63	Refugee politics	Global	Seebrücke/Balkanbrücke (Germany)	x	Movement for fair migration politics	Government/Supporters	de, en	"Pushback"		Reference to "Kein Mensch is illegal" Logo
64	Housing issue	Local/Den Haag	Woonverzet (Den Haag)	x	Protest marches	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		-
65	Anarchism	Global	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	- (cut out)	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Non-specific	nl	-		Coot; Black/Red
66	Anarchism/Accessibility	Global	Unknown	-		Non-specific	en	-		Anarcho-A; Black/Red
67	Antifascism	Global	Antifaschistische Aktion (Deutschland)	x	Antifascist network originating from the Antifaschistische Aktion in Germany in 1933	People belonging to listed groups	en, de	"Antifaschistische Aktion"	"Fuck Off"	Flags
68	Antifascism	Global	Unknown	-		Non-specific	unclear	-		Use of the Adidas Logo
69	Socialism	Global	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	x	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Non-specific	nl, en	"Loser"		Karl Marx in a car
70	Antifascism (Zwarte Piet)	National/NL	Unknown	-		Non-specific	nl	-		Peppernoten; Swarte Piet as Dutch christmas tradition; Black/Red
71	Dutch politics/Socialism	National/NL	Onderstroom (Amsterdam)	x	Political podcast	Potential listeners	nl	-		Black/Red
72	Housing issue	National/NL	Bond precaire woonvormen (Netherlands)	-	Solidarity movement to the right to reside	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		Fist; Black/Red
73	Housing issue	Local/Amsterdam	Actiegroep Niet Te Koop (Amsterdam)	x	Activist group agains the selling of social housing	Supporters/Sufferers	nl	-		Black/Red
74	Rojava revolution/Syrian war	National/Syria	unknown (MB, artist)	-	Political upheaval and military conflict in northern Syria (known among Kurds as Western Kurdistan/Rojava)	Non-specific	en	-		Rose growing out of a gun
75	Anticapitalism	Local/Breda	Rood (Breda/Tilburg)	x	Political youth party inside of SP Breda, sticker party destroyed	Potential voters	nl	-		Star; Black/Red

#	Topic	Scope	Organization	x	Description	Target	Lang	Slogan	Explanation	Visual
76	Climate	Global	Extinction Rebellion (Netherlands)	x	Globally acting grassroots movement inspired by Extinction Rebellion UK; Climate March in October 2021	Supporters	nl, en	"Extinction Rebellion"	-	Black/Red
77	Forest Logging	Local/Limburg	Red het Sterrebos (Limburg)	x	Campaign of a number of activist groups in the NL	Supporters	nl, en	"No forest destruction for a car factory" in nl/en	-	-
78	Forest Logging	Local/Utrecht	Amelisweerd niet Geasfalteerd (Utrecht)	x	Grassroots movement against the Broadening of the A27 highway	Supporters	nl	-	-	-
79	Anarchism/Transfeminism	Global	Vrije Bond (Amsterdam)	x	Anarchist union/network	Non-specific	en, nl	"vrijebond"	"TERFS" = Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist	Flag: Transgender colors
80	Student party	Local/Utrecht	PvdUS (Utrecht)	x	One of the student parties of Utrecht University	UU Students	nl	-	-	Silhouette of the Domtower of Utrecht
81	Anti police	Global	Unknown	-	-	Non-specific	en	-	"Cops"; "MILFS" = Police; Mothers I'd like to fuck	MILF as a youth cultural acronym originating from films such as American Pie
82	Antifascism	Local/Utrecht	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	-	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Locals	nl	-	-	Colors of Utrecht (red/white); 030 area code
83	Food delivery	Global	Radical Riders (Netherlands)	x	Self-organizaed grassroots union after the example of movements in Germany	Supporters/Sufferers	en	-	-	Reference to the Thuisbezorgt logo; Fist
84	Food delivery	Global	Radical Riders (Netherlands)	x	Self-organizaed grassroots union after the example of movements in Germany	Supporters/Sufferers	en	-	-	Reference to the Gorillaz logo
85	Anti public surveillance	National/NL	Unknown	-	-	Supporters	nl	-	-	Eyes as a metaphor for security cameras
86	Soccer patriotism	Local/Utrecht	Fans of Football Club (Utrecht)	-	-	Hooligans	en	-	"Utreg" = Utrecht	Fist; Colors of Utrecht (red/white); 030 area code; Reference to fan song
87	Dutch elections (Anti CDA) --> "51	National/NL	De Rode Lap (Nijmegen)	x	Online shop for socialist merchandise	Potential voters	en, nl	FCK = English; Party name = Dutch	"FCK" = Fuck	Reference to Run-D.M.C. Logo (US Hip Hop Band from the 80ies)
88	Europe	EU	European Youth Card Association (Brussels)	x	Youth engagement campaign funded by the European Parliament	Europeans	en	-	-	-
89	Climate	Global	Extinction Rebellion (Netherlands)	x	Globally acting grassroots movement inspired by Extinction Rebellion UK	Supporters	nl, en	"Extinction Rebellion"	-	Sprouting Seed
90	Antifascism	Local/Utrecht	Antifascistische Wandelaars (Utrecht)	x	Local anarchist club	Non-specific	nl	-	-	Silhouette of the Domtower of Utrecht; Black/Red
91	Climate (Stop Shell)	Global	Unknown	-	-	Supporters	en	-	-	Octopus with skull with reference to the Shell logo around the globe ball

Declaration of Originality

I, Laura Wittmann, hereby certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references.

This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes, nor has it been published.

Laura Wittmann
Utrecht, May 13, 2022