Visual strategies and representations

*How journalists and PR professionals co-produce the images of climate change*

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INTRODUCTION

• Rising media attention on climate change across countries since 1990s (cf. Schmidt, Ivanova & Schäfer, 2013)
• recent studies on visual content (e.g., DiFrancesco & Young, 2011) and visual effects (e.g., O’Neill et al., 2013)

➢ research gap concerning image production
➢ theoretical interest: understanding the interplay of civil society and mass media in (visual) information production (cf. Powers, 2014)
➢ subject of research: UN Climate Change Conferences as “focusing events” (Birkland, 1998)
  – Global staged political media events ➔ focal points for the emergence of global public attention to the issue ➔ trigger frame change and shape social construction of public issues
THE PROJECT: "SUSTAINABLE MEDIA EVENTS"

UN Climate Change Conferences

political PR professionals ↔ journalists

interviews & observations

discursive effects

media debates

content analyses

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A HEURISTIC MODEL OF CO-PRODUCTION

co-production

- preconditions
  - cognitive
  - social
- manifestations
  - behavioral patterns
  - consonance of interpretations

structural filters

outcome of co-production

- media coverage on co-produced event
  - consonance of information
**RESEARCH QUESTION**

*To what extent is co-production of COP messages between journalists, NGOs, and government delegations manifested in visual communication?*
Mixed Methods Design

• Semi-standardized interviews
  – 32 interviews on-site 18th UN Climate Change Conference (COP18), 2012 in Doha, Qatar
    • 16 journalists: BRA (2), GER (3), IND (2), RSA (1), USA (1), QA (2), UK (1), news agencies (4)
    • eight spokespersons for government delegations: BRA, GER, IND, RSA, USA, QA (2), CH
    • eight spokespersons for NGOs: Greenpeace, WWF, CAN, GCCA, Oxfam, FoE, OneWorld, Climate Analytics

• Content analysis
  – 450 news visuals in ten newspapers from five countries (BRA, GER, IND, RSA, USA)
  – Periods of analysis:
    • November 22 to December 19, 2010 (COP16 in Cancún, Mexico),
    • November 28 to December 14, 2011 (COP17 in Durban, South Africa),
    • November 19 to December 14, 2012 (COP18 in Doha, Qatar)
## Variables for Visual Content Analysis & Pretest Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>$\kappa_n$</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of visual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of visual</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects depicted in photo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons depicted in photo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin of depicted persons</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity of depicted persons</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location of depicted scene</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.77</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
HYPOTHESES PATTERNS OF CO-PRODUCTION

• National Co-Production
  – strong identification of national journalists with their respective government positions
  – nationally consonant interpretations and framing

• Transnational Co-Production
  – collaborative work between transnational journalists and transnational NGOs
  – consonant, albeit cross-border interpretations and framing

(cf. Adolphsen & Lück, 2012)
HYPOTHESES 1 & 2

- **H1:** Perceptions of striking and effective news visuals are more similar between transnational NGOs and transnational journalists (i.e., journalists working for transnational media outlets) than between transnational NGOs and national journalists.

- **H2:** Perceptions of striking and effective news visuals are more similar between national government delegations and national journalists than between national government delegations and transnational journalists.
RESULTS: PERCEPTIONS OF VISUAL IMAGERY

- government delegations
- NGOs
- journalists
- ministers/negotiators
- special topics
- info graphics
- victims of climate change
- aerial shots
- nature
- symbolic actions
- extraordinary moments
- indigenous people
- activists/protests
- police/security
**HYPOTHESES 1 & 2**

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- **H2**: Perceptions of striking and effective news visuals are more similar between national government delegations and national journalists than between national government delegations and transnational journalists.

*Commonalities along professional lines, not along national/transnational dimension*
HYPOTHESIS 3: TRANSNATIONAL NGOs AS IMAGE PROVIDERS

- NGOs stage protests around COP → putting a “human face” to climate change

- elaborate, artistic PR stunt installations → answer to mass media’s need for expressive, colorful imagery

➢ H3: The **visual frames** of published news visuals are **more similar to** the perceptions of NGOs on how to best illustrate the Climate Change Conferences than to the perceptions of government delegations and on-site reporters.
## Results of Interviews: Visual Frames According to Actor Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>spokespersons of NGOs</th>
<th>spokespersons of government delegations</th>
<th>national &amp; transnational journalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>photos of activists/protests</td>
<td>info graphics</td>
<td>photos of protests/activists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphorical/symbolic photos</td>
<td>info graphics</td>
<td>photos of police/security presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>info graphics</td>
<td></td>
<td>photos of symbolic actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos of extraordinary situations in negotiations</td>
<td></td>
<td>photos of extraordinary situations in negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos of own ministers/negotiators (at end of successful talks)</td>
<td></td>
<td>photos of indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos highlighting special topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>photos of victims of climate change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>photos of nature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aerial shots (of PR stunts)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## RESULTS OF CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS

<table>
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<th>national &amp; transnational journalists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>photos of activists/protests</td>
<td>(n=91: 20%, 1st rank of all photos)</td>
<td>photos of protests/activists (n=91: 20%, 1st rank of all photos)</td>
<td>photos of protests/activists (n=91: 20%, 1st rank of all photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>photos of police/security presence</td>
<td>photos of police/security presence (n=11: 3%, 15th rank of all photos)</td>
<td>photos of symbolic actions (n=47: 11%, 7th rank of all photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos of symbolic photos</td>
<td>(n=47: 11%, 7th rank of all photos)</td>
<td>info graphics</td>
<td>photos of extraordinary situations in negotiations (n=2: 0.4%, 21st rank of all photos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>info graphics</td>
<td>(n=123: 20% of all visuals)</td>
<td>(n=123: 20% of all visuals)</td>
<td>photos of indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos of own ministers/negotiators</td>
<td>(n=37: 8%, 10th rank of all photos)</td>
<td>photos highlighting special topics</td>
<td>photos of indigenous people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photos of victims of climate change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>photos of victims of climate change</td>
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<td>photos of nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>aerial shots (of PR stunts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>photos of nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>n=229: 36% of all visuals</td>
<td>n=150: 24% of all visuals</td>
<td>n=110: 17% of all visuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HYPOTHESIS 3

- H3: The visual frames of published news visuals are more similar to the perceptions of NGOs on how to best illustrate the Climate Change Conferences than to the perceptions of government delegations and on-site reporters.
CONCLUSION

1) common perceptions of visual framing between journalists and PR experts of transnational NGOs

2) NGO-favored image types most prominent in media coverage

➢ results confirm our understanding of mutual facilitations between journalists and NGO publicists (cf. Powers, 2014 & Waisbord, 2011)