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FROM MEMORY REGIMES TO DISCURSIVE MODES: A THEORY-DRIVEN FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING CULTURAL MEMORY IN HYBRID PUBLIC SPHERES

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ABSTRACT

This article develops a theory-driven framework for analysing cultural and communicative memory across traditional and digital public spheres. Building on political legitimacy theory, it shifts attention from substantive claims invoked by memory regimes to discursive modes through which memory is enacted in hybrid public spheres. The framework links narrative articulations of cultural memory with interactional modes of contestation (antagonism, agonism, and deliberation) and with discursive functions through which public remembrance gains political significance. Although technical components of the analytical architecture have been piloted elsewhere, this article provides the first full theoretical elaboration of the framework and illustrates it across national, cross-border, and transnational commemorative fields.

Keywords: cultural memory, politics of history, hybrid public spheres, antagonism–agonism–deliberation (AAD), democratic legitimacy, deliberative democracy

DAI REGIMI DELLA MEMORIA ALLE MODALITÀ DISCORATIVE: UN QUADRO TEORICAMENTE ORIENTATO PER L'ANALISI DELLA MEMORIA CULTURALE NELLE SFERE PUBBLICHE IBRIDE

SINTESI

Il presente articolo sviluppa un quadro teoricamente orientato per l'analisi della memoria culturale e comunicativa nelle sfere pubbliche tradizionali e digitali. A partire dalla teoria della legittimità politica, esso sposta l'attenzione dalle rivendicazioni sostantive evocate dai regimi della memoria alle modalità discorsive attraverso cui la memoria viene messa in atto nelle sfere pubbliche ibride. Il quadro collega le articolazioni narrative della memoria culturale con le modalità interazionali della contestazione — antagonismo, agonismo e deliberazione — e con le funzioni discorsive attraverso cui la memoria pubblica acquisisce rilevanza politica. Sebbene le componenti tecniche dell'architettura analitica siano già state sperimentate altrove, il presente articolo offre la prima elaborazione teorica complessiva del quadro e lo illustra attraverso campi commemorativi nazionali, transfrontalieri e transnazionali.

Parole chiave: memoria culturale, politica della storia, sfere pubbliche ibride, antagonismo–agonismo–deliberazione (AAD), legittimità democratica, democrazia deliberativa

INTRODUCTION

Cultural memory provides communities with shared reference points, *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989), through which collective identities, values, and political orientations are articulated (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).¹ These mnemonic markers, ranging from constitutive myths and national traumas to monuments and commemorations (Winter, 2008; Lampe, 2021; Detiček & Pušnik, 2025), can stabilise public discourse by generating common interpretive horizons, particularly within nation-building projects (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983). However, competing interpretations of the past can also mobilise political conflict, deepen polarisation, and legitimate exclusionary agendas (Wodak & Richardson, 2013; Manucci, 2020).² Importantly, we argue that these divergent effects depend not only on what is remembered, but also on how mnemonic claims are publicly enacted and contested through different discursive modes of engagement.

In the digital age, these dynamics intensify and become more complex as social media turns into important arenas for memory practices. Individuals and groups commemorate historical events, invoke past traumas or triumphs, and challenge official narratives in real time. Digital media restructure practices of remembering (van Dijck, 2007), producing a “connective turn” in which private and public domains intertwine and memory becomes continuously reshaped through digital interaction (Hoskins, 2011). Platforms facilitate transcultural memory exchanges (Erl, 2011), transnational mnemonic flows (Rutten et al., 2013) and hashtag-driven memory activism (Yasseri et al., 2022). At the same time, the acceleration, visibility and affective intensity of digital communication magnify the political stakes of mnemonic contestation. Under platform conditions, the same mnemonic reference can travel faster and trigger sharper interactional

dynamics. These developments can reproduce and amplify ideological ruptures, promote selective historical framings (Richardson-Little et al., 2022; Pshenychnykh et al., 2024) or, conversely, facilitate new forms of accountability and efforts to redress historical injustice (Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023).

Transformations in collective memory carry significant implications for democracy. They reshape historically embedded patterns of identity formation that once stabilised political orders (Calhoun, 2007; Habermas, 2001), while algorithmic recommender systems and platform logics amplify social and political ruptures previously moderated by the norms and practices of the classical public sphere (Habermas, 2023; Splichal, 2024). The consequences are double-edged: digital media broaden access and diversify mnemonic voices, but platform affordances also distort deliberation (Papacharissi, 2009) and facilitate toxic polarisation (Törnberg, 2018). New, digitally mediated forms of commemorating defining historical events have thus become sensitive indicators of broader transformations of the public sphere. They reveal shifts in identity formation, changes in communicative norms, and a growing instability of once sedimented narrative frameworks, all of which shape the conditions under which democratic reasoning can take place.

Despite extensive scholarship on memory politics (e.g., Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Lebow, 2006; Olick, 2007), there is still a lack of an analytical framework capable of systematically linking cultural-memory theory, democratic theory and the empirical analysis of public discourse across both traditional and digital media systems in order to assess how these transformations affect democratic discourse. Scholarship has largely mapped memory regimes and their normative repertoires, including nation-centred, human-rights-based, and cosmopolitan forms (e.g., Olick et al., 2023; Levy & Sznaider, 2002; Assmann, 2014), and has also devoted attention to specific discursive modes, in

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2 The political instrumentalisation of memory is well documented across diverse contemporary contexts. For example, Maria Mälksoo (2023, 1) notes that Vladimir Putin justified the 2022 invasion of Ukraine through “twisted lessons of history,” denying Ukrainian statehood while framing the attack as “denazification” and “decommunisation.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invoked the Holocaust when justifying Israel’s decision to attack Iran in June 2025, framing the strikes in terms of preventing an existential threat (Reuters, 2025; cf. also van der Beek, 2020). Viktor Orbán has mobilised the memory of Trianon to legitimise an illiberal nationalist project (Toomey, 2018), while Brexit exposed deep symbolic divisions within the United Kingdom (Göhrmann & Henneböhl, 2024). Across the Western Balkans, entangled narratives of World War II and the 1990s wars remain powerful political instruments (Pavlaković & Pauković, 2019; Pavlaković, 2020).

particular agonistic ones, through which mnemonic contestation is enacted in public discourse (e.g., Bull & Hansen, 2016; Maddison, 2016; Nienass, 2023; Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023). However, relatively few studies operationalise how regime-based mnemonic repertoires relate to observable discursive modes across traditional and digital media.

This article aims to address this gap by developing a theory-informed and empirically applicable framework to analyse how cultural memory operates, circulates and transforms within hybrid public spheres (Chadwick, 2017; Smrdelj, 2024). While technical components of our methodological apparatus were piloted elsewhere (Horvat et al., 2026; Lampe et al., 2026; Horvat & Koražija, 2026), this article offers its first full theoretical elaboration. We integrate insights from cultural-memory studies, deliberative democracy and agonistic democracy theory to connect three analytical dimensions: (a) the substantive content of memory, i.e. what is remembered and to what normative end; (b) the modes of contestation, i.e. how memory is debated and negotiated; and (c) the democratic consequences of memory discourse, which we analyse in connection with broader questions of deliberative legitimacy, public-sphere dynamics and political reasoning. Concretely, we operationalise these dimensions through (i) narrative inputs of cultural memory, (ii) discursive throughput captured through an antagonism–agonism–deliberation (AAD) framework, and (iii) outputs evaluated via deliberative functions (epistemic, ethical, democratic), complemented by an additional ideological function as an evaluative layer.

To illustrate the analytical potential of this approach, the article draws on three brief empirical illustrations: a) the nationally polarised Slovenian Day of Resistance Against the Occupier; b) the Italo-Slovenian contested memory surrounding *Giorno del Ricordo*, which commemorates the so-called *foibe* killings and the Istrian–Dalmatian exodus; and c) two transnational commemorations, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Europe Day, that function as symbolic pillars of European integration. These commemorations show how the integrated framework operates across different scales, capturing narrative structures, discursive modes of engagement and the deliberative functions of memory discourse in national, bilateral and transnational contexts.

The article proceeds in four steps. First, we conceptualise cultural and communicative memory as arenas in which embedded norms, values, identity patterns and forms of legitimacy are negotiated, thereby structuring political meaning-making in the public sphere. This also enables us to introduce the distinction between substantive memory regimes

and discursive modes of engagement in mnemonic contestation. We then translate this theoretical background into an operational framework for assessing deliberative legitimacy across hybrid public spheres. Next, we briefly illustrate the framework through selected commemorations. Finally, we consider its implications for memory studies, democratic theory and analyses of public-sphere transformation in digital environments.

WHY (AND HOW) CULTURAL MEMORY MATTERS FOR DEMOCRACY

Although commemorations refer to historical events, their primary referent is the present. Public debates over the past reflect existing configurations of socio-integrative consensus and reveal the embedded political-ideological narratives, cultural specificities and value systems that shape contemporary identity formations. In this sense, public commemorations repeatedly raise the explicitly political question “what is past and what is still present?” (Assmann, 2023, 3). Memory thus becomes operative not merely as a representation of what was, but as a symbolic lens through which communities articulate contemporary social and political dilemmas and orient toward collective futures. For this reason, as Mälksoo (2023, 1) notes: “What does ‘memory’ do, who ‘does’ memory – and what is being done by politically utilizing memory – are the central concerns for the study of memory politics.” However, Wüstenberg (2023) further sharpens this normative inquiry by asking “what kind of memory is good for democracy?” Namely, she stresses that “not only is remembering the past not always good for democracy, then, but not all forms of remembering are democratic” (Wüstenberg, 2023, 34). For instance, nostalgia for fascist symbols may flourish under democratic rule, and some mnemonic practices may erode rather than reinforce liberal-democratic norms.

In Europe, post-war and post-authoritarian contexts have provided fertile ground for examining how memory regimes shape democratic cultures. Verovšek (2021) argues that Western European political culture is anchored in the memory of the Nazi era and the trauma of 1945, which institutionalised strong commitments to minority rights, antifascism, and liberal civil society. By contrast, in Central and Eastern Europe memory centres on the legacy of communism and the upheavals of 1989, foregrounding national sovereignty, majoritarian democracy and scepticism toward supranational authority. These divergent “memory cultures” generate different democratic imaginaries. Similarly, Schmidtke (2023) asserts that German remembrance practices institutionalised liberal norms

grounded in negative lessons of authoritarianism, whereas Polish memory emphasised national martyrdom, thereby fuelling a more populist nationalism. A similar pattern appears in Southern Europe, evidenced by research on Spain's transition from Francoism and attempts to re-anchor democratic practices through forms of "constitutional patriotism" designed to diffuse divisive historical narratives (Aguilar & Humlebæk, 2002).

This body of research demonstrates how memory structures the normative horizons within which politics and public discussion unfold. It helps identify who is recognised, which grievances are heard, and which visions of the future appear legitimate. In this sense, cultural memory forms an underlying, often implicit dimension of democratic life that shapes both inclusion and contestation in the public sphere. The next section builds on these insights by revisiting Jan Assmann's distinction between communicative and cultural memory, thereby establishing a theoretical groundwork from which to analyse how different memory regimes operate within political communities and how they enter (online) public discourse.

Communicative and Cultural Memory in the (Digital) Public Sphere

Jan Assmann (2008) defines cultural memory as the part of collective memory that is transmitted through symbolic forms: rituals, monuments, holidays, textbooks, and media. It preserves durable frameworks of meaning through which a community constructs a narrative about itself. Communicative memory is "living" memory, produced through everyday conversations, personal stories, and family narratives, and typically reaches back three to four generations (cf. also Širok, 2012). The rise of social media, however, profoundly alters this relationship and necessitates a reconsideration of Assmann's typology. Research shows that digitalisation has "democratised" memory production, though not necessarily in emancipatory, integrative or stabilising ways. Whereas cultural memory was once largely shaped by state institutions, archives, museums and traditional media, it now also emerges "from below," through dynamic, real-time exchanges among millions of users (Hoskins, 2018). Personal narratives, emotions and micro-stories circulate alongside institutional commemorations, collapsing boundaries between public and private, official and vernacular, ritualised and everyday communication. As Ben-David et al. (2024, 2) observe, "social media memory discourse lumps together multitudes of mnemonic agents in a continuous and often seemingly context-lacking conversation," thereby transforming long-standing patterns of collective memory formation.

Communicative memory, once tied to oral transmission and embodied interaction, now becomes externalised, archived and continuously recirculated through platform infrastructures. Cultural memory, formerly anchored in formalised institutions, is increasingly hybridised through hashtags, memes, viral reinterpretations and multimodal commemorative practices that fuse symbolic and affective registers (van Dijck, 2007). The result is a fluid mnemonic ecology in which the boundaries between the two memory types blur (Pentzold et al., 2023). The transition from communicative to cultural memory can occur rapidly, driven less by institutional canonisation than by algorithmic amplification and participatory virality.

Within online environments, epistemic processes of knowledge production and circulation undergo significant transformation: linear and non-linear narratives merge, giving rise to fluid "memoradic narratives" (Marles, 2015) shaped by shifting spatial, temporal and affective coordinates (Maurantonio, 2023). Platform algorithms, optimised for attention and driven by commercial imperatives, further undermine the public sphere's commitment to rational opinion-formation (Splichal, 2024; Habermas, 2023; Papacharissi, 2009). This also means that hybrid public spheres cannot be understood only as spaces of interaction between older and newer media logics, but must also be analysed in relation to the structural and material conditions that shape visibility, agency and power within contemporary media systems (Srnđelj & Pajnik, 2025). Consequently, social media researchers argue that meaningful analysis of digital discussion must attend to the materiality of platforms (Oswald, 2024), as these structures decisively shape how deliberation is conducted in hybrid public spheres.

These developments have profound implications for democratic culture. Communicative memory, which traditionally supported everyday trust, reciprocity and interpersonal civic interaction, and cultural memory, which anchored long-term identity and legitimacy, are both destabilised (cf. Table 1). On one hand, digitalisation enables unprecedented mnemonic participation and the visibility of marginalised voices, facilitating grassroots memory activism, as evidenced by campaigns ranging from #BlackLivesMatter and #ICantBreathe to #Srebrenica and #NakbaStories, which demonstrate how personal testimony can catalyse collective reflection and symbolic and spatial change (Dobrin, 2020; Robinson, 2022; Fridman, 2022; Jaugaitė, 2024). On the other, it intensifies contestation and polarisation. Far-right movements mobilise selective pasts to construct grievance-based identities (e.g., Birkner & Donk, 2018; Richardson-Little et al., 2022), misinformation proliferates (Zannettou

Table 1: Communicative and cultural memory in Assmann's (2008) typology. In grey: platform-driven transformations reshaping memory's core dimensions—content, forms, media environments, temporal structures and participation.

Dimension	Communicative Memory	Cultural Memory	Platform-driven transformations
Content	history in the frame of autobiographical memory; recent past	mythical history, events in absolute past (“in illo tempore”)	fluid, context-collapsed mnemonic micro-narratives, viral reinterpretations reshape significance
Forms	informal traditions and genres of everyday communication	high degree of formation, ceremonial communication	hashtags, memes, short-form commemorations, hybrid affective-symbolic practices
Media	living, embodied memory, communication in vernacular language	mediated in texts, icons, dances, rituals, and performances of various kinds; “classical” or otherwise formalized language(s)	multimodal, platform-mediated memory shaped by feeds, interfaces, metrics, and algorithmic curation (“in-scroll”)
Time Structure	80–100 years, a moving horizon of 3–4 interacting generations	absolute past, mythical primordial time, “3000 years”	compressed, non-linear temporality, resurfacing of the past via algorithmic recirculation
Participation	diffuse	specialized carriers of memory, hierarchically structured	expanded, hybrid personal–public participation, visibility structured by algorithmic ranking, moderation, and platform governance

et al., 2020), and revisionist or conspiratorial narratives circulate under the guise of ‘memory’ (Olson, 2023), transforming cultural memory into a vector of conflict rather than deliberation.

Although Jan Assmann’s distinction between communicative and cultural memory remains useful for analysing memory transformation, it is not sufficient on its own for analysing the political implications of mnemonic contestation. For this reason, the next section turns to Erik Meyer’s concept of the “politics of history,” which provides a bridge between cultural memory studies and political science.

From *Geschichtspolitik* to Research on (Online) Public Discourse

Meyer (2008) differentiates between “policy for the past” (*Vergangenheitspolitik*), the concrete politico-institutional handling of the past, such as reparations, lustration, trials, amnesties or official inquiries, and “politics of history” (*Geschichtspolitik*), which operates on a broader symbolic level. While the former concerns administrative or legal responses to historical wrongdoing, the latter treats the community’s past as a continuously renegotiated normative resource: the symbolic reference system through which the society’s coordinates linking past, present and future are articulated, affirmed

or transformed (Meyer, 2008). *Geschichtspolitik* thus captures how collective memory becomes politically operative, how it legitimises preferred policies, structures political identities and defines the moral parameters of public discourse.

Conflicts in the “politics of history” are thus not primarily disputes over historiographical accuracy but struggles over the normative frameworks that guide collective identity, moral judgement, and political legitimacy. They reveal, as Meyer emphasises by referring to the work of Edgar Wolfrum, the deeper value orientations, behavioural norms, and belief systems that structure political culture across generations (Meyer, 2008, 176). In this sense, cultural memory functions as a symbolic reference code: it provides the background grammar through which communities understand what constitutes justice, responsibility and collective belonging. The symbolic power of cultural memory becomes especially evident during periods of transition. According to Meyer, debates in post-Cold War Germany, for instance, were less about settling factual disagreements than about establishing a new normative identity shaped by lessons learned from Nazism and authoritarianism. Similarly, Slovenia’s transition of the late 1980s and early 1990s mobilised competing memories of World War II, post-war violence and socialist modernisation. Yet at the same time, public debate increasingly focused on the key sites of

memory that would serve as reference points for the post-transition Slovene community (Pušnik, 2017). Conducted also in the mass media, these debates revolved around which historical events were appropriate as shared reference points and could help establish new normative and value coordinates for its future. In this case, public disputes concerned not only the historical events themselves, understood through the lens of *Vergangenheitspolitik*, but also the question of which elements of the past could legitimately serve as anchors for future community-making and political legitimacy (Horvat, 2021).

Meyer underscores that the “politics of history,” operating in the symbolic sphere, is less a communicative frame for concrete policy than a long-term struggle for cultural hegemony over the values that should prevail in society. It can support the legitimacy of collective identity, a new political order or particular actors, either through negative differentiation from, or positive reference to, specific historical points. In commemorations, competing interpretations of the past are therefore publicly negotiated in terms of their claim to legitimacy, and such conflicts reveal underlying power structures, interests, norms and values (Herz & Schwab-Trapp, cited in Meyer, 2008, 175). As König notes, this is “politics without policy,” insofar as public debates do not merely describe or announce actions but already constitute political action themselves (König, cited in Meyer, 2008, 178). Defining cultural memory as a reference code within the “politics of history” highlights the role of communicative memory in affirming or inventing tradition, a process that is never conflict-free. Meyer stresses that the transformation from communicative into cultural memory increases the need for political decision-making and reflects ongoing struggles for hegemony.

For political science, however, these underlying normative configurations are difficult to operationalise and are usually inferred indirectly from their effects in the public or political sphere. They function like a kind of “dark matter” in political discourse—a political unconscious (Jameson, 2002) that steers and reorders collective experience and interpretations (Benjamin, 2019). Although commemorations often present themselves as integrative rituals, they invariably open a contested discursive field in which, on the surface, political parties and their supporters compete for primacy, while at a deeper level the struggle concerns cultural hegemony (Meyer, 2008). Each commemoration therefore reactivates basic value schemas that link past, present and future, legitimising present decisions and articulating visions of the community’s future.

From this perspective, commemorations exert a multilayered impact on public discourse in both offline and online environments. To grasp this dynamic, we draw on Willaert & Olbrich’s (2024) empirically grounded framework for analysing the relationship between social media and the public sphere through platform affordances. Building on Davis (2020), they identify four core public-sphere functions that can be measured with big-data techniques and linked to concrete platform affordances: information dissemination, deliberation, collective-identity formation and coordination of collective action. However, given the specificity of cultural memory, these functions require further conceptual clarification before they can be applied to commemorative discourse.

First, identity is marked by a “double bind”. Cultural memory simultaneously shapes cultural-political identities, yet it is also filtered through pre-existing orientations toward particular sites of

Table 2: Cultural-memory specificities of the four public-sphere functions – identity, deliberation, information and engagement – and the corresponding analytic focus adopted in our framework.

Function	Cultural memory specificity	Analytic focus
Identity	Cultural memory both shapes identities and is filtered through prior political orientations (double bind).	Mapping narrative positioning, legitimation claims, and boundary-drawing.
Deliberation	Disagreement unfolds through rational argument as well as antagonistic/agonistic contestation of symbolic codes.	Assessing how conflict is structured and whether opponents are treated as enemies, adversaries, or interlocutors open to reciprocal justification.
Information	Information functions less as “truth per se” than as a meaning-making resource anchoring interpretations of the past.	Evaluating claims along epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological dimensions.
Engagement	Utterances in memory debates are performative acts that already constitute political action.	Treating participation as an enactment of legitimacy and belonging.

memory. This double bind becomes sharper in digital environments, where political orientations influence how users appropriate commemorations. Analysing memory debates therefore requires mapping the narrative structures through which users position themselves, justify claims and contest legitimacy. Second, deliberation in the field of cultural memory unfolds not only through rational argument but also through antagonistic and agonistic contestation of symbolic codes, making it necessary to analyse how conflict is structured rather than merely whether dialogue occurs. Evaluating memory debates thus requires tracing their discursive modes of engagement, i.e. whether actors engage opponents as legitimate adversaries (agonism) or as enemies to be excluded (antagonism). Third, information in memory debates rarely functions as “truth per se”. It operates as a meaning-making resource whose epistemic quality must be assessed alongside its ethical, democratic and ideological implications. Finally, engagement cannot be reduced to simple participation, since in the “politics of history” utterances are performative acts, as public debates “do not refer to actions, nor do they announce actions or decisions, but in fact already constitute actions themselves” (König, cited in Meyer, 2008, 178). This performativity becomes more explicit online, where posting, sharing or hashtagging are political acts that enact visions of community, belonging and legitimacy.

Memory Regimes and Discursive Modes

To understand how cultural memory operates in contemporary public spheres, particularly within digitally mediated environments, it is necessary to distinguish between the substantive normative frameworks through which societies interpret the past (memory regimes) and the interactional ways in which these interpretations are articulated, contested and transformed in public discourse (discursive modes). This dual differentiation reflects the broader evolution of memory studies, in which analytical attention has been expanded beyond nation-centred commemorative traditions to encompass questions of justice, trauma and transnational responsibility (Zubrzycki & Woźny, 2020; Olick et al., 2023; Levy & Sznajder, 2002) and, increasingly, the discursive modes (antagonistic, agonistic, deliberative) through which mnemonic conflict unfolds (e.g., Bull & Hansen, 2016; Strömbom et al., 2022, Horvat, 2025b). What follows is a brief overview of the main memory regimes discussed in the literature and a clarification of how they relate to discursive modes of engagement in hybrid public spheres.

Nation-based memory was central to early scholarship on collective remembrance. Halbwachs

(1925/1992) conceptualised it as a mechanism of social integration that provides continuity and belonging while simultaneously drawing boundaries toward an “Other.” Renan’s (1882/1990) classic formulation likewise links national identity to shared remembrance and shared forgetting, while Smith (1991) and Anderson (1983) highlight its essentialist or constructivist dimensions as foundational to political community formation. Nation-based memory stabilises identity through selective remembering (Tratnik, 2021; Darovec, 2021), yet societies remain internally plural, while *lieux de mémoire* rarely integrate divergent ideological positions and often marginalise groups whose experiences fall outside dominant memory reference points. Furthermore, nation-based memory is only one among several mnemonic formations even within the same political community. As Berenskötter (2023, 18) notes, powerful collective memories also operate across and above states, meaning that the integrative force of national memory always coexists with other memory regimes. Depending on context, nation-based memory may manifest in antagonistic, agonistic or deliberative modes.

Human-rights-based memory emerged after 1945 and expanded significantly after 1989, grounding remembrance in universalistic norms of justice, accountability and victim recognition (Yasseri et al., 2022). This regime developed alongside political apologies (Misztal, 2005) and renewed debates on acknowledging harm (Margalit, 2022; Ricoeur, 2004). In post-socialist contexts, in particular, human-rights-based memory intersected with identity crises and attempts to “catch up” with the West (Krstev & Holmes, 2018), sometimes producing moralising binaries that pitted “victims” against “perpetrators.” In this sense, narratives of transition and modernisation merged with claims of national martyrdom and chosenness (Luthar, 2017), transforming remembrance into an ideological performative and fuelling “culture wars.” This type of memory carries a structural paradox. While human-rights-based memory broadens ethical reflexivity and supports victim recognition, it also creates new hierarchies of legitimacy and new forms of symbolic competition, as stressed by scholars of the culture of remembrance (Assmann & Shortt, 2012). Practices of coping with trauma, ranging from silence and forgetting (Berenskötter, 2023) to “deliberative ignorance” (Hertwig & Engel, 2020), show that this memory regime can democratise or polarise depending on whether it is integrated dialogically or instrumentalised for political ends.

Cosmopolitan memory gained prominence in the 1990s as the human-rights paradigm intertwined with cosmopolitan discourse (Yasseri et al., 2022). Levy & Sznajder (2002; 2006) conceptualise cos-

Table 3: Substantive memory regimes: core logics, normative functions and democratic implications.

Type of Memory	Core Logic	Normative Function	Democratic Implications
Nation-based memory	Constructs collective identity through selective remembering and forgetting.	Provides cohesion, continuity and shared belonging.	Can integrate or exclude; may support dialogue or fuel division depending on the context.
Human-rights-based memory	Addresses past wrongdoing through universal norms of justice and recognition.	Encourages ethical reflection and acknowledgement of harm.	Expands recognition but can polarise when moral hierarchies harden.
Cosmopolitan memory	Frames traumatic pasts within global rather than national reference points.	Promotes shared responsibility and transnational empathy.	Offers a normative horizon for solidarity; uneven resonance across local contexts.

mopolitan memory as remembrance that transcends national frameworks by establishing the Holocaust as a universal moral reference point. This theoretical framework corresponds with the theory of reflexive modernisation (Beck, 2006; Beck & Grande, 2007), which argues that cosmopolitanisation erodes national binaries and enables transnational solidarities. Similarly, Delanty & Rumford (2005) identify within this paradigm the public sphere and civil society as central to enacting cosmopolitan identities. Cosmopolitan memory emerged in a post-Cold War moment marked by EU enlargement, liberal optimism and confidence in global norms to restrain nationalist excesses. As geopolitical conditions shifted, the universalistic promise of cosmopolitan memory became harder to sustain, yet it continues to function as a normative horizon, an orientation for recalibrating how social and political change is imagined.

Agonistic memory, introduced by Bull & Hansen (2016), responds to the limitations of both nation-based and cosmopolitan memory regimes, which often reproduce binary moral schemas of “good versus evil.” They outline four features of agonistic remembering: (i) resisting reductive binaries by situating wrongdoing in specific historical circumstances and socio-political struggles; (ii) drawing on testimonies from both victims and perpetrators, alongside other implicated positions such as witnesses and bystanders; (iii) recognising the political significance of emotions by treating empathy as an initial step toward remembrance that fosters critical understanding, while also acknowledging the legitimacy of civic and political passions; and (iv) reconstructing historical context and struggle by tracing the socio-political dynamics and narrative formations through which mass crimes are perpetrated (Bull & Hansen, 2016, 10).

Deliberative memory, as we propose here, offers an alternative to both antagonistic closure and agonistic contestation. Although Bull & Hansen (2016) note that deliberative approaches, aimed at consensus, suppress

conflict, Habermas’ own intervention in memory debates, particularly concerning the Holocaust and perpetrator responsibility, aims not at consensus for its own sake but at preventing cultural nationalism from becoming the basis of community. His model of constitutional patriotism foregrounds belonging in procedures and communicative norms rather than shared ethno-cultural narratives. Understood in this way, deliberative memory does not seek closure but reframing, for example transforming ideological antagonisms into communicative, self-reflective dialogue. Rather than erasing trauma, deliberative memory aims to cultivate the conditions under which more reflexive engagement with contested pasts becomes possible, extending democratic repertoires beyond purely agonistic modes. This is in line with contemporary deliberative democracy theory, which shifts the focus from consensus to the creation of discursive spaces capable of altering political vocabularies (Hammond, 2019).

In this sense agonistic memory, developed by Bull & Hansen, refers to a normative orientation toward plural, conflict-aware remembrance that resists moral absolutism and closure. By contrast, the agonistic mode in our framework (cf. Table 4) captures how conflict is actually enacted in communicative practice. The two are related but not identical since agonistic interaction may occur within different substantive memory regimes. Accordingly, we treat antagonism, agonism, and deliberation here as discursive modes of engagement rather than as memory regimes. They do not define what kind of past is being remembered, i.e. the substantive content that constitutes a memory regime, but rather specify how competing mnemonic narratives are enacted in public interaction. Table 4 then illustrates that any regime can be enacted through different discursive modes of engagement (antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberative), depending on how actors position themselves and their opponents in public discourse.

Table 4: Mapping substantive memory regimes across discursive modes of engagement (AAD). The table illustrates plausible (non-exhaustive) enactments of each regime in public debate.

Regimes / Modes	Nation-based memory	Human-rights-based memory	Cosmopolitan memory
Antagonistic mode	Uses national past to draw sharp boundaries, exclude “others,” and legitimise conflictual identity politics.	Turns victimhood and justice claims into moral binaries, reinforcing blame, competition, and a symbolic hierarchy.	Frames global norms in oppositional terms, producing defensive reactions and identity backlash.
Agonistic mode	Allows plural interpretations of national history while recognising legitimate disagreement about identity.	Encourages contestation over responsibility, justice and recognition without collapsing into moral absolutism.	Enables critical, context-sensitive engagement with global solidarities while accepting persistent differences.
Deliberative mode	Reinterprets national narratives through inclusive dialogue and reflective debate; opens space for shared understanding.	Supports balanced discussions of harm, responsibility, and reconciliation beyond rigid victim-perpetrator roles.	Fosters transnational dialogue oriented toward mutual understanding rather than normative imposition.

The table also illustrates that memory regimes do not predetermine the democratic quality of public remembrance. Rather, their effects emerge through the discursive modes of engagement—antagonistic, agonistic or deliberative—through which they are articulated in the public sphere. Each memory regime can thus function as a source of exclusion and polarisation, as a platform for legitimate contestation, or as a resource for dialogue and democratic renewal. This matrix highlights that the key analytical task is not only to identify the content of a memory regime but also to examine the communicative mode through which it operates, since it is the interaction between the two that shapes democratic possibilities and constraints. What matters, therefore, is not only what is remembered but also how mnemonic narratives are mobilised and transformed within contemporary, digitally mediated communicative dynamics. This insight motivates the need for an analytical framework capable of capturing narrative patterns, discursive dynamics and deliberative functions—an operationalisation developed in next section.

OPERATIONALISING CULTURAL MEMORY RESEARCH: MEMORY REGIMES, DISCURSIVE MODES AND FUNCTIONS

If the previous sections established cultural memory as a field of negotiation that structures political meaning-making across public spheres (Meyer, 2008), the next step is to translate this conceptual apparatus into an analytical framework. The distinction developed earlier between the regimes of memory and the discursive modes in which memory is enacted provides the backbone of this operationalisation. Substantive regimes capture what communities remember and to

what normative end; discursive-mode configurations, by contrast, concern how these memories are performed in offline or online discourse: whether they polarise through antagonism, open plural spaces through agonism, or support more reflexive, transformative deliberative engagement.

To analyse memory in a way that speaks to both political theory and empirical research, we integrate these dimensions into a three-part analytical architecture. The unit of analysis is a discrete communicative act (e.g. a social-media post or a news article). In the first step, narrative analysis identifies the substantive memory regime by reconstructing narrative structures. In the second step, discursive modes of engagement are assessed through the Antagonism–Agonism–Deliberation (AAD) framework or operationalised through DQI-based deliberative quality indicators. In the third step, deliberative functions (epistemic, ethical, democratic) with added ideological function are evaluated discursively or using empirically observable indicators. This architecture ensures cross-media comparability while remaining sensitive to platform- and genre-specific communicative logics. Each component is theoretically elaborated in the subsections that follow, while the technical components of our methodological apparatus are presented elsewhere (Horvat et al., 2026; Lampe et al., 2026; Horvat & Koražija, 2026).

Narrative Analysis: Exploring the Substantive Level of Memory

To identify the embedded narratives attached to a commemoration, cultural memory cannot be treated as a self-contained phenomenon but must be situated within the broader discursive field of the “politics of history” (Meyer, 2008). Narrative analysis, in our framework, serves as this bridge, linking the symbolic

Table 5: Narrative and rational world paradigm (adapted from Fisher, 1989).

Narrative paradigm	Rational world paradigm
1. Humans are storytellers.	1. Humans are rational.
2. Decision making and communication are based on “good reasons”.	2. Decision making is based on arguments.
3. Good reasons are determined by matters of history, biography, culture and character.	3. Arguments adhere to specific criteria for soundness and logic.
4. Rationality is based on people’s awareness of internal consistency and resemblance to lived experience.	4. Rationality is based on the quality of evidence and formal reasoning processes.
5. We experience a world that is filled with stories, and we must choose among them.	5. The world can be understood as a series of logical relationships that are uncovered through reasoning.

sphere of memory with the public sphere in which political reasoning unfolds and providing an operational tool for making the symbolic work of memory analytically visible.

Narrative approaches are well established in memory studies. Much scholarship conceptualises memory narratively as structured accounts, mental images or symbolic representations of the past (Zerubavel, 2003). Berenskötter (2023, 23) notes that while images suggest stability, narratives allow change; they evolve as new experiences or shifting political contexts reshape their meaning. Narrative “maps” thus function as cognitive devices that organise temporal flow through plots, actors and moral framings. Examining their architecture reveals how political actors mobilise memory, justify action, define visions of order and delineate boundaries of legitimate interaction. This is particularly salient in digital environments where attempts to impose a unified “grand narrative” are readily countered by reframings and participatory appropriations (Silvestri, 2018; Maurantonio, 2023).

However, understanding how such narratives impact political reasoning requires recognising that they operate according to a logic distinct from the procedural norms of public discourse. Whereas the public sphere is normatively grounded in rational justification (Habermas, 1989; 1996), political narratives are first and foremost socio-historically embedded meaning-making devices (Boswell, 2013). They may transmit doctrines, serve as vehicles of ideology, or compress political complexity into narrative form. This produces a performative double bind: individuals align themselves with narratives, while narratives—in Luis Althusser’s terms—interpellate subjects who recognise themselves as their addressees.

This contrast is particularly evident at the micro level. Walter Fisher’s (1989) narrative paradigm suggests that individuals often reason through narratives rather than through reason-based argumentation. Good reasons,

Fisher argues, are grounded not in formal logical criteria but in narrative coherence and fidelity, that is, in consistency with one’s history, biography, culture and character. Following Meyer (2008), we can argue that cultural memory activates precisely this narrative rationality by linking past, present and future through inherited value templates. Conversely, the rational-world paradigm corresponds to communicative rationality, where claims are validated through evidence, mutual justification and procedural testing (Habermas, 1984; 1987). These two modes coexist in political life, yet commemorative discourse tends to foreground narrative reasoning, especially when the past functions as a source of identity and legitimacy. This tension is illustrated in Table 5.

At the mezzo level, public debates often appear as contests between competing narratives (Eliaz & Spiegler, 2020). However, political narratives are embedded in deeper socio-historical configurations, in particular value cleavages, institutional trajectories, implicit social contracts, and collective experiences that shape how stories resonate and how they structure public discourse (Horvat, 2025a; Schneiderhan & Khan, 2018). Under digital conditions, the public sphere becomes a dense intersection where narratives collide, reinforce or undermine each other. For this reason, narrative analysis must examine not only which stories circulate but how they function: how they frame and articulate moral boundaries, construct visions of political community and legitimise ideological positions, often echoing grand political narratives at the macro level.

Narrative analysis therefore forms the first component of our integrated theoretical framework. It identifies the substantive content of memory and reveals how commemorations provide legitimating resources for political reasoning. In line with the narrative layer developed here, we operationalise commemorative narratives through Greimas’s actantial schema, implemented in a scalable LLM-supported pipeline. This facilitates the

systematic identification of subjects, objects, helpers, opponents, senders and receivers across large datasets (X and online news), thus allowing us to map how memory discourse produces, circulates and legitimises political claims (Horvat et al., 2026).

**Antagonism–Agonism–Deliberation (AAD):
Discursive Modes of Discussions**

If narrative analysis clarifies the substantive content of memory, the next analytical step concerns how these narratives are enacted in public discourse. To capture these dynamics, we introduce the Antagonism–Agonism–Deliberation (AAD) framework, which identifies three distinct yet interrelated modes of interaction that structure contemporary commemorative discourse: antagonistic, agonistic and deliberative. Again, it is important to distinguish between substantive memory orientations (memory regimes) and interactional modes of engagement. Substantive orientations describe how the past is normatively interpreted and politically framed, whereas antagonism, agonism, and deliberation refer to discursive enactments, i.e. how mnemonic claims are performed, contested, and negotiated. The same substantive orientation can therefore be enacted antagonistically, agonistically, or deliberatively across different media environments and genres. To map these enactments more precisely, we describe the three AAD modes in turn, starting with antagonism as the most polarising baseline (cf. Table 6).

The antagonistic mode emerges when discourse is organised around an existential friend–enemy distinction. Digital media intensifies this logic since homophily (McPherson et al., 2001), filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011) and echo chambers (Cinelli et al., 2021) reward affectively charged and identity-signalling communication, contributing to what Törnberg (2018) terms “toxic polarisation.” In antagonistic commemorative debates,

rival groups assert mutually exclusive moral claims, often encapsulated in slogans such as “our truth versus their lies”, framings that cast the past as a battlefield of competitive victimhood, unbridgeable grievances and categorical delegitimisation. Here, opponents are constructed not as participants in a shared public sphere but as enemies whose perspectives lack legitimacy.

The agonistic mode reframes conflict without dissolving it. Drawing on Mouffe (1999; 2013) and memory-studies scholarship such as Bull & Hansen (2016), agonism recognises that interpretations of the past may remain irreconcilable, yet insists that adversaries accept one another as legitimate opponents. Conflict is thus relocated from moral absolutism to democratic contestation. Agonistic commemorative discourse acknowledges plural perspectives, enables critical engagement and sustains political disagreement without collapsing into exclusion. Recognition of the opponent, reason-giving critique and explicit “agree to disagree” cues are central indicators of agonistic interaction.

The deliberative mode introduces a further normative shift by prioritising mutual justification, argumentation and openness to persuasion. Whereas antagonism turns disagreement into exclusion and agonism structures conflict as legitimate contestation, deliberation seeks to transform tensions through communicative practices that foster understanding and shared problem-solving. Deliberation can be conceptualised at both a systemic level (Parkinson & Mansbridge, 2012; Bächtiger & Parkinson, 2019) and a micro level, where inclusive language, explicit justification and willingness to revise one’s position signal constructive engagement. In the context of cultural memory, deliberation becomes visible when participants introduce historical evidence, respond to counterarguments or re-evaluate claims in light of alternative interpretations. Although emotionally charged memories make such exchanges difficult, the deliberative mode is essential for moving beyond entrenched antagonisms.

Table 6: Antagonistic, agonistic and deliberative modes of engagement in commemorative discourse: core interactional traits and main empirical indicators.

Mode	Core interactional traits	Empirical indicators
Antagonistic mode	Binary “us vs. them” framing; affectively charged communication; mutual delegitimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegitimising or dehumanising language • Hostile labels and moral exclusion • Refusal of common ground or dialogic engagement
Agonistic mode	Adversaries rather than enemies; conflict conducted within shared democratic rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the opponent as legitimate • Reason-giving critique • Explicit “agree to disagree” cues
Deliberative mode	Reason-giving and mutual justification; openness to persuasion; transformative potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberative quality signals (e.g. justification, responsiveness) • Presence of structured argumentation • Openness to revising one’s position

This modal layer provides the essential analytic bridge between the reconstruction of narrative structures and the evaluation of deliberative functions. It shows how memory enters the public sphere as communicative action and how different modes of engagement shape the democratic possibilities of mnemonic contestation.

Deliberative Functions and Ideology in Memory Discourse

Public discourse on cultural memory is never a neutral recounting of past events. It is a site where identities, values and power relations are negotiated, stabilised or contested. From a deliberative perspective, assessing discourse quality requires attention not only to what is said but also to how, and with what consequences. This is particularly important for online commemorative discourse, where platform affordances shape visibility, emotional intensity and interpretive authority. Building on Mansbridge et al. (2012), we distinguish three deliberative functions—epistemic, ethical and democratic—and add a fourth, ideological, which captures systematic distortions that often structure memory debates in practice. Together, these functions provide a diagnostic vocabulary for evaluating the normative pressures and communicative tensions through which public engagement with the past unfolds.

The epistemic function concerns whether discourse supports shared standards for evaluating historical claims and whether it enables evidence-based contestation of

narratives. In cultural-memory debates, epistemic quality depends on responsible engagement with sources, interpretive transparency, and openness to correction. Ideally, commemoration functions as a form of collective inquiry. Participants can weigh claims, challenge distortions, and reduce misinformation and symbolic misrepresentation of the past. When epistemic safeguards fail, and claims are neither evidence-tested nor open to correction, deliberation becomes fragile or impossible. Yet the symbolic nature of memory (Meyer, 2008) complicates epistemic assessment, and digital infrastructures further intensify these vulnerabilities.

The ethical function concerns how participants are treated in interaction and how moral registers of memory are articulated. Ethical deliberation requires recognising others as legitimate interlocutors, acknowledging historical harm, and refraining from humiliation, mockery, or exclusion. Misztal (2005) argues that memory discourse should cultivate civic virtues such as empathy and respect rather than function as a space of symbolic retaliation. However, the ethical dimension also raises a normative paradox: should democracies respect all memories, even those glorifying authoritarianism or ethnic cleansing? As Wüstenberg (2023) notes, not all remembrance is democratically valid. Ethical deliberation, therefore, requires both normative boundaries around memory practices and communicative infrastructures that can sustain cross-group respect under conditions of heightened affect and visibility in different media systems.

Table 7: Deliberative functions, adapted from Mansbridge et al. (2012, 11–12), and applied to cultural-memory discourse; the ideological function is added as an analytical dimension.

Function	Mansbridge et al. (2012, 11–12)	Applied to Memory Field
Epistemic function	<i>“... is to produce preferences, opinions, and decisions that are appropriately informed by facts and logic and are the outcome of substantive and meaningful consideration of relevant reasons.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates shared standards for evaluating historical claims • Opens space for evidence-based contestation of narratives • Reduces misinformation and symbolic distortions of the past
Ethical function	<i>“... is to promote mutual respect among citizens ... Mutual respect is also an ethical requirement among democratic citizens”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages recognition of suffering across memory communities • Weakens moral exclusion (“our victims vs. your victims”) • Allows disagreement without delegitimation
Democratic function	<i>“... to promote an inclusive political process on terms of equality ... For those excluded, no deliberative democratic legitimacy is generated”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporates silenced memories • Expands participation • Strengthens the democratic legitimacy of how a society remembers
Ideological function (added)	<i>(Analytical dimension capturing systematic distortions rather than a normative deliberative goal)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces competing truth claims defining legitimate knowledge • Enhances ideological filtering and framing of archives, testimonies, and historical evidence • Facilitates victimhood narratives and moral labels used as identity boundaries

The *democratic (inclusive) function* addresses who can participate and whose memories become publicly visible. It asks whose voices are heard, whose experiences are marginalised and who is granted interpretive authority in the construction of collective pasts. Historically, many groups were excluded from authorised sites of remembrance, while digital platforms appear to widen participation by enabling minority groups and activists to circulate alternative narratives (Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023). In divided memory debates, inclusion also requires that silenced memories can enter the public sphere and that participation is not reduced to polarised identity camps. Fulfilling the democratic function therefore depends on conditions that diversify visibility, protect vulnerable participants and enable reciprocal engagement across groups.

The *ideological function* captures how commemorative discourse is used to legitimise political positions, stabilise power relations or naturalise particular interpretive frames. While the epistemic, ethical and democratic functions articulate normative expectations of deliberation, the ideological function foregrounds a recurrent empirical pattern: memory debates are frequently structured by power and strategic mobilisation. We conceptualise the ideological function as an analytic dimension capturing how actors mobilise memory to justify positions, identities, and policy preferences within power-laden public arenas. This function is not “negative” per se since ideological articulation is an inevitable feature of democratic contestation. It becomes problematic when it overrides epistemic robustness, ethical recognition, and democratic reciprocity, thus shifting debate from contestation to discursive closure.

These four functions (Table 7) provide an analytic vocabulary for evaluating how commemorative discourse operates epistemically, ethically, democratically, and ideologically across media systems. Of course, no public debate fully satisfies these functions. Tensions among them are inevitable. However, diagnosing epistemic failures, ethical violations, democratic exclusions, and ideological instrumentalisation clarifies whether cultural-memory discourse contributes to democratic understanding or, conversely, deepens division and distortion. This functional framework has been fully operationalised in Horvat et al. (2026), where its dimensions are translated into empirically observable indicators for empirical analysis.

Integrating the Three Analytical Components

The integrated model presented below (Figure 1) synthesises the three analytical components developed in previous sections into a single legitimacy-oriented framework, corresponding to the input-throughput-output framework of political legitimacy (e.g. Schmidt & Wood, 2019). As demonstrated in Horvat et al. (2026), where this approach was first fully applied to the commemoration of Slovenia’s Day of Resistance Against the Occupier, the model provides a systematic way to trace how cultural memory moves from symbolic meaning-making to democratic consequences across hybrid media environments. Importantly, Figure 1 not only summarises analytic relations between components. It also makes explicit the methodological logic of our approach: each component is a potential leverage point for diagnosing—and, in applied settings,

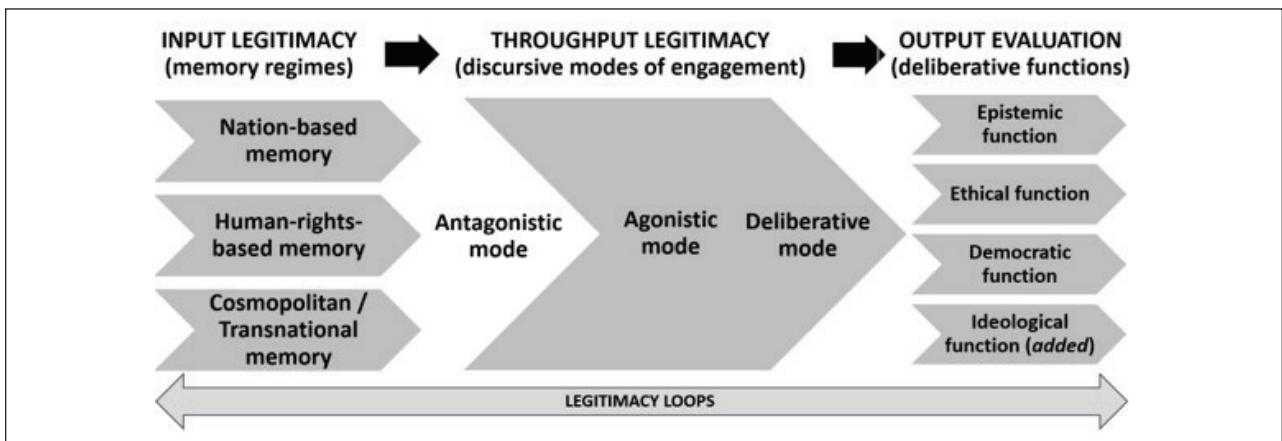


Figure 1: Legitimacy-oriented framework linking memory regimes (input legitimacy) to discursive modes of engagement (throughput legitimacy; AAD) and deliberative functions (output evaluation) across public spheres. The arrow at the bottom indicates legitimacy loops: improvements in any one component can feed back into and strengthen the others, reshaping how mnemonic narratives gain traction, how conflict is enacted (AAD), and how epistemic, ethical, democratic and ideological qualities of discourse are realised.

improving—the deliberative potential of contested memory debates.

Cultural memory enters public discourse primarily through narratives that articulate historically grounded claims about identity, responsibility, and political orientation. These narratives reflect the substantive memory regimes discussed earlier (nation-based, human-rights-based, and cosmopolitan/transnational) and encode memory regime-based legitimacy. In our model, they constitute the input dimension: a justificatory horizon through which actors (e.g. online users) across the political spectrum mobilise the past to authorise present preferences. To analyse these inputs systematically and at scale, we employ narrative analysis, adapted for computational extraction (Horvat et al., 2026). This approach enables us to reconstruct the deep-structural logic of commemoration. Throughput legitimacy concerns the communicative modes through which these narratives are enacted and contested in public interaction across hybrid media environments. Output evaluation refers to the epistemic, ethical, and democratic qualities that emerge from public debates. However, Figure 1 should not be read as implying a linear progression from antagonism to deliberation. Rather, it illustrates what we termed “legitimacy loops”: improvements in each component, especially at the level of discursive modes (AAD) and deliberative functions, can generate feedback effects between the input, throughput and output dimensions, thereby strengthening the overall quality of public discussion and reducing the traction of antagonistic framings.

EMPIRICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

To understand how digital memory operates across different political and symbolic contexts, we examine three commemorative fields situated at the national, cross-border, and transnational levels. Together, they span key substantive memory regimes discussed earlier in the paper, and allow us to observe how history, identity, and digital communication intersect in contemporary Europe. Although each case is shaped by a distinctive symbolic logic and political function, all are analysed through the same integrated framework, with operational choices adapted to the specifics and substantive content of each memory regime.

The first case, the Day of Resistance against the Occupier (April 27) is one of Slovenia’s most sensitive public holidays. It commemorates the founding of the Liberation Front (OF) and symbolises anti-fascist resistance, while also being marked by disputes over the role of the Communist Party, post-war violence, and the legacies of Socialist Slovenia. Since independence, it has remained a focal point where contemporary political divisions become especially visible. To examine how this nationally institutionalised memory is rearticulated across hybrid public spheres, we compare traditional

media coverage with social media discussion. We ask how social media reshapes the dominant narratives of the commemoration (inputs), whether they shift the interactional style of contestation toward antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberation-compatible modes (throughput), and how such shifts affect epistemic authority and claims to political legitimacy in debates about the past (outputs) (Horvat et al., 2026).

Case study 2 examines one of the most polarising commemorations in contemporary Italy—Giorno del ricordo—and its cross-border resonance in Slovenia. The main aim is to assess whether public discourse contains agonistic potential despite strong antagonistic framing of victimhood, responsibility, and national identity. Methodologically, the case study combines an LLM-assisted analysis of debates across Twitter/X and online news (2022–2024) with a survey of citizens’ normative orientations toward key agonistic principles. This triangulation enables a systematic comparison between mediated communicative practices and broader public dispositions, thereby providing a transferable template for diagnosing agonistic modes in contested memory conflicts. We ask: to what extent do debates on *Giorno del ricordo* / *foibe* exhibit agonistic potential; how does agonism vary across media arenas (X vs. online news) and across national contexts (Italy vs. Slovenia); and how do citizens’ normative orientations toward agonistic principles align with, or diverge from, observed mediated practices? (Lampe et al., 2026).

Case study 3 addresses transnational commemorations that function as European-level reference points and are frequently mobilised to interpret contemporary political conflict: Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall. It tests a three-step LLM-assisted design on Twitter/X across France, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia: (A) conflict detection, (B) antagonistic versus non-antagonistic tone within conflict (as an incivility proxy), and (C) deliberative quality assessment using DQI-based indicators. In addition, topic modelling serves as a diagnostic layer to identify thematic hotspots where conflict, antagonistic tone, and lower deliberative quality concentrate, as well as clusters where deliberative signals persist even under confrontational tone. The results enable direct cross-country comparisons of whether commemorative talk is primarily ceremonial, confrontational, or conflictual yet deliberation-compatible. We ask whether Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall systematically differ in conflict intensity and tone across countries; how the balance between antagonistic and non-antagonistic engagement varies across France, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia; and how deliberative quality (DQI-based indicators) varies across commemorations, countries, and topics—including whether specific thematic clusters sustain deliberative signals even under antagonistic tone (Horvat & Koražija, 2026).

To synthesise these observations, Table 8 presents a comparative overview of the three commemorative

Table 8: Comparative overview of three commemorative cases—Day of Resistance (Slovenia), Giorno del ricordo (Italy–Slovenia), and Europe Day & the Fall of the Berlin Wall (four countries)—mapping the memory field, dominant narrative inputs, and core research questions.

Dimension	Day of Resistance (Slovenia)	Giorno del Ricordo (Italy–Slovenia)	Europe Day & Fall of the Berlin Wall (EU)
Memory field	National	Bilateral / cross-border	Transnational (European)
Dominant narrative inputs	Nation-based (statehood/ antifascism; partisan resistance; revolution; post-war violence)	Human-rights-based + nation-based (victimhood/justice; responsibility attribution; borderland histories)	Cosmopolitan/transnational frames, filtered nationally (integration/legitimacy; democracy/authoritarianism; contemporary analogies)
Core research questions	How does X (vs. online news) reconfigure commemorative narratives (inputs), shift AAD and deliberative quality (throughput/ outputs), and reshape epistemic authority in a polarised national commemoration?	To what extent do debates exhibit agonistic potential (throughput) across arenas (X vs. online news) and countries (Italy vs. Slovenia), and how does this align with citizens’ agonistic orientations (survey; outputs)?	How do the two commemorations differ in conflict prevalence, antagonistic tone, and deliberative quality across France, Germany, Italy, and Slovenia, and which topic clusters concentrate antagonism vs. deliberation-compatible conflict?

fields. The reflections presented here indicate how the methodology elaborated in this article is customised and extended across commemorations. By covering a wider spectrum of memory discussions, the cases show how digital memory practices can reinforce entrenched cleavages but also open new spaces for interpretation, dialogue, and learning. The conclusion draws out these implications for cultural-memory studies, democratic theory, and computational social science.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that understanding cultural memory in contemporary public spheres requires moving beyond analyses centred on memory regimes toward an integrated framework that also captures the discursive modes through which memory is articulated, contested, and transformed. Digitalisation intensifies the need for such an approach. As communicative and cultural memory increasingly merge on hybrid media platforms, commemorations become dynamic arenas in which narratives circulate rapidly, discursive modes shift continuously, and epistemic, ethical, and democratic functions are enacted in ways that standard regime-centred approaches and classical public-sphere theory cannot fully explain.

By conceptualising memory simultaneously as a symbolic reference code, narrative resource, and communicative practice, the framework developed here provides a structured way to analyse how mnemonic claims enter public debate (input legitimacy), how they interact within platform-mediated environments (throughput legitimacy), and how they affect the epistemic, ethical, and democratic quality of discourse (output evaluation). Integrating three analytical layers

allows us to trace how mnemonic structures become politically operative in digital settings and how discursive modes shape the democratic possibilities embedded in memory conflicts, including through “legitimacy loops,” where improvements in one segment can feed back into the others. Methodologically, the framework has demonstrated its analytical value in our empirical studies (Horvat et al., 2026; Lampe et al., 2026; Horvat & Koražija, 2026).

The integrated framework proposed here contributes to ongoing debates in cultural memory studies, democratic theory, and computational social science by offering a scalable, theoretically grounded basis for analysing commemorative discourse across classical and digital media. As memory continues to serve as an important terrain for negotiating identity, legitimacy, and power, such analytical tools are essential for diagnosing democratic vulnerabilities and identifying opportunities for more inclusive, reflexive, and deliberative public engagement across media platforms.

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OD SPOMINSKIH REŽIMOV K DISKURZIVNIM MODUSOM: TEORETSKO-KONCEPTUALNI OKVIR ZA ANALIZO KULTURNEGA SPOMINA V HIBRIDNI JAVNI SFERI

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POVZETEK

Prispevek razvija teoretično-konceptualni okvir za analizo kulturnega in komunikativnega spomina v klasičnih in digitalnih javnih sferah. Izhaja iz predpostavke, da učinkov spomina v javni sferi ni mogoče pojasniti zgolj z analizo njegove vsebine, temveč tudi z analizo načinov njegove javne artikulacije. Na tej podlagi članek premakne težišče od analize spominskih režimov — nacionalnega, na človekovih pravicah utemeljenega, kozmopolitskega in transnacionalnega spomina — k analizi diskurzivnih modusov, skozi katere se ti režimi udejanjajo v hibridnih javnih sferah. Osrednji prispevek članka je tridelni analitični model. Prva raven obravnava narativne sestavine spomina in načine, kako akterji s sklicevanjem na preteklost oblikujejo identiteto, odgovornost, krivdo in politično pripadnost. Druga raven analizira načine razpravljanja skozi okvir antagonizem–agonizem–deliberacija (AAD), ki omogoča presojo, ali so nasprotniki v javni razpravi obravnavani kot sovražniki, legitimni nasprotniki ali sogovorniki, s katerimi je mogoča argumentirana razprava. Tretja raven presoja učinke spominskega diskurza skozi epistemsko, etično, demokratično in ideološko razsežnost. Izhajajoč iz razumevanja kulturnega spomina in komemoracij kot polja, v katerem se pogajajo norme, identitete, legitimnostne zahteve in razmerja kulturne hegemonije (Erik Meyer), predstavljeni okvir pokaže, kako akterji spomin artikulirajo, izpodbijajo in potencialno preoblikujejo v javni razpravi. Pristop je ponazorjen z delovanjem spomina na nacionalni, čezmejni in transnacionalni ravni. Predlagani model tako omogoča analizo, kdaj in pod kakšnimi pogoji digitalni spominski diskurzi poglobljajo politične razkole in polarizacijo ter kdaj lahko odpirajo možnosti za agonistično soočanje, pluralizacijo razlag in bolj reflektivno razpravo o preteklosti.

Ključne besede: kulturni spomin, politika zgodovine, hibridne javne sfere, antagonizem–agonizem–deliberacija (AAD), demokratična legitimnost, deliberativna demokracija

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MAPPING CONTESTED CULTURAL MEMORY: AN LLM-SUPPORTED APPROACH TO ANALYSING NARRATIVE STRUCTURES, DISCURSIVE MODES AND DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article develops and evaluates an exploratory LLM-supported methodology for analysing contested cultural memory in hybrid public spheres. The methodology combines three analytical dimensions: Greimasian actantial extraction for identifying narrative structures, antagonism–agonism–deliberation classification for assessing discursive modes, and epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological scoring for analysing discourse functions. These outputs are examined through semantic clustering, statistical analysis, and expert-based validation. The pipeline is demonstrated through Slovenia’s Day of Resistance Against the Occupier, comparing newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts. The findings show that the approach can identify meaningful relations between narrative configurations, discursive modes, and discourse functions, especially in longer texts, while X posts remain exploratory due to reliability limits.

Keywords: social media, cultural memory, deliberative democracy, Greimas actant model, large language models (LLMs), prompt engineering, statistical analysis, political discourse

MAPPARE LA MEMORIA CULTURALE CONTESA: UN APPROCCIO SUPPORTATO DA LLM ALL'ANALISI DELLE STRUTTURE NARRATIVE, DELLE MODALITÀ DISCORSIVE E DELLE FUNZIONI DISCORSIVE

SINTESI

Il presente articolo sviluppa e valuta una metodologia esplorativa supportata da LLM per l'analisi della memoria culturale contesa nelle sfere pubbliche ibride. La metodologia combina tre dimensioni analitiche: l'estrazione attanziale greimasiana per identificare le strutture narrative, la classificazione antagonismo–agonismo–deliberazione per valutare le modalità discorsive, e l'attribuzione di punteggi epistemici, etici, democratici e ideologici per analizzare le funzioni discorsive. Tali risultati sono ulteriormente esaminati attraverso clustering semantico, analisi statistica e validazione basata sul giudizio di esperti. La pipeline viene applicata al caso della Giornata slovena della resistenza contro l'occupatore, attraverso il confronto tra articoli di giornale e post pubblicamente visibili su X. I risultati mostrano che l'analisi attanziale supportata da LLM può identificare configurazioni narrative significative, soprattutto nei testi più lunghi e ricchi di contesto. I risultati relativi ai brevi post su X sono invece utilizzati soltanto come indicatori esplorativi, a causa della minore affidabilità e della limitata disponibilità di informazioni contestuali.

Parole chiave: social media, memoria culturale, democrazia deliberativa, modello attanziale di Greimas, grandi modelli linguistici (LLM), prompt engineering, analisi statistica, discorso politico

INTRODUCTION

Cultural memory provides communities with shared historical reference points (Nora, 1989), through which collective identities, political orientations, and normative attachments are articulated (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995).¹ Such reference points include monuments, rituals, commemorations, formative historical events, and collective traumas such as the Holocaust (Winter, 2008). They can stabilise public discourse by creating common interpretive horizons, particularly in nation-building processes (Anderson, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983). Yet cultural memory is never politically neutral. The same commemorative reference can also become a site of exclusion, ideological struggle, and competing interpretations of the past (Rothberg, 2009). When mobilised strategically,

especially by populist or nationalist actors, memory conflicts can reinforce social divisions and political polarisation (Wodak & Richardson, 2013; Tveskov & Bissonnette, 2023). Contemporary “memory wars” are therefore not confined to reinterpretations of 20th-century history, but continue to shape present political conflicts and geopolitical tensions (Rutten et al., 2013; Pshenychnykh et al., 2024).

Digital media have made these dynamics more visible, faster, and more difficult to stabilise. Cultural memory continues to be shaped by state institutions, museums, schools, official commemorations, traditional media, as well as by family narratives, personal testimonies, and other forms of everyday remembrance. What has changed is the speed, visibility, and scale at which these practices circulate and interact. Social media posts, hashtags, memes, and affective reactions

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have expanded the arenas in which memory is produced, contested, and recontextualised. This transformation has been described as part of the mediatisation and digitalisation of memory (van Dijck, 2007) and as a “connective turn” in which public and private memory practices increasingly overlap and blur (Hoskins, 2011).

These developments raise a methodological challenge. If collective memory is increasingly articulated across hybrid media environments (Chadwick, 2017) researchers need tools capable of analysing not only what is remembered, but also how mnemonic claims are narratively structured, how conflict is discursively enacted, and what democratic functions such discourse performs. Existing approaches in memory studies have provided rich theoretical accounts of memory regimes (Olick *et al.*, 2023; Levy & Sznajder, 2002), digital remembrance, polarisation, and public-sphere transformation (Hoskins, 2011; Rutten *et al.*, 2013; Richardson-Little *et al.*, 2022). However, it remains difficult to operationalise these concepts systematically across larger corpora while preserving interpretive depth.

This article addresses this challenge by developing and testing an LLM-supported methodology for analysing cultural memory across hybrid media environments. The approach builds on a theoretical-conceptual framework (Horvat, 2026), which shifts the focus from memory regimes to the discursive modes through which cultural memory is enacted in hybrid public spheres. The methodology of the study combines three main analytical dimensions and examines their empirical applicability through an LLM-supported workflow. First, texts are examined through Greimasian actantial extraction, which reconstructs narrative structures by identifying subjects, objects, senders, receivers, helpers, and opponents. Second, discursive modes are examined through antagonism–agonism–deliberation (AAD) classification, which assesses how these narrative configurations are publicly performed. Third, discourse functions are examined through epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological scoring, which evaluates whether texts mainly contribute to factual clarification, ethical recognition, democratic inclusion, or ideological positioning. The outputs of these three analytical dimensions are then linked through semantic clustering and statistical analysis in order to identify recurring narrative and discursive patterns and are subsequently assessed through expert-based validation. The full methodological pipeline is presented in section Case selection, data and method.

The empirical aim is to compare how the same commemoration is represented in two communicative environments: newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts. More specifically, the article examines how narrative structures, AAD classifications,

and discourse functions can be computationally linked to identify areas of conflict and patterns of agonistic and deliberative potential. The comparison is used to demonstrate the proposed pipeline. Accordingly, findings based on X posts are interpreted cautiously: short social media texts provide limited contextual information, are difficult to classify reliably, and should be treated as publicly visible discursive traces rather than as a representative deliberative debate.

The empirical case is Slovenia’s Day of Resistance Against the Occupier, commemorated on April 27. The holiday refers to the founding of the Liberation Front in 1941 and to the broader memory of anti-fascist resistance, the Partisan movement, the communist revolution, post-war violence, and the socialist past. Since Slovenian independence, it has remained politically contested and has been mobilised in disputes over national identity, anti-fascism, anti-communism, reconciliation, and historical responsibility (Kranjc, 2013; Prunk, 1992; Pirjevec, 1995; Godeša, 1995; Hribar & Hribar, 2021). This makes it a suitable case for testing how an LLM-supported methodology can map contested memory discourse across media.

The article addresses four research questions:

RQ1: How can LLM-supported actantial analysis be used to identify recurring narrative structures in contested memory discourse?

RQ2: How do these narrative structures relate to antagonistic, agonistic, and deliberative modes of discourse?

RQ3: How do newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts differ in their actantial configurations, AAD modes, and discourse-function profiles?

RQ4: What are the methodological limits of LLM-supported analysis when applied to longer news articles and shorter X posts?

The article’s main contribution is methodological. It demonstrates how actantial narrative analysis, AAD classification, and discourse-function analysis can be combined in a scalable LLM-supported pipeline for analysing contested cultural memory, while also specifying the scope conditions of this approach.

The paper proceeds in several steps. First, we introduce the background for the three analytical dimensions used in the study. We then present the case selection, data, methodological pipeline, clustering, and validation strategy. Next, we examine the empirical results of the application. Finally, we discuss the methodological and substantive implications of the findings, including scope conditions and limitations, and outline directions for future validation and application.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

Because the broader theoretical-conceptual framework is developed in detail elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), this article does not attempt to reconstruct the full debates on cultural memory, deliberative democracy, agonistic theory, or hybrid public spheres. Instead, it focuses on the methodological development and empirical testing of an LLM-supported pipeline for analysing contested memory discourse.

The study distinguishes between three interlinked analytical dimensions. First, narrative structures capture how cultural memory is organised through relations between actors, goals, sources of legitimation, beneficiaries, helpers, and opponents. Second, discursive modes capture how these narrative structures are enacted in the hybrid public spheres: antagonistically, agonistically, or deliberatively. Third, discourse functions capture what kind of epistemic, ethical, democratic, or ideological work commemorative claims perform.

These dimensions are operationalised through actantial extraction, AAD classification, and discourse-function scoring. Table 1 summarises the three analytical dimensions of the study and their methodological implementation. The following subsections briefly introduce the background required for each, while the next section presents the implementation of the LLM-supported pipeline: annotation, semantic clustering, statistical analysis, interpretation, and validation.

Narrative Structures: Greimas' Actantial Model

The first analytical component concerns the narrative structuring of commemorative claims. Commemorative discourse organises the past into narrative configurations that assign agency, responsibility, victimhood, legitimacy, and opposition, thereby linking historical interpretation to present political identities and future orientations (Meyer, 2008).

To operationalise this dimension, we draw on Greimas' actantial model. Building on structural analyses of myth and narrative (Lévi-Strauss, 1955/1963; Propp, 1968), Greimas (1966/1983) proposed six basic actantial

roles that structure narratives: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent. These roles describe the relational architecture of a narrative: who pursues what, on whose behalf, for whose benefit, with whose support, and against which obstacles.

For cultural memory research, the actantial model is useful because commemorative conflicts often involve competing assignments of these roles. In the case of Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier, the Liberation Front and the Partisan movement may be positioned as subjects of anti-fascist liberation, fascist occupation as the opponent, and national freedom as the object. In alternative framings, however, the same commemoration may be reorganised around anti-communism, post-war violence, national reconciliation, or competing claims to historical legitimacy, with the Liberation Front or the Partisan movement positioned as opponents rather than subjects of national liberation. Actantial analysis therefore helps identify the internal narrative structure of competing memory claims.

Greimas' model has been applied across legal, media, literary, visual, and political discourse analysis (Jiang, 2017; Aarva & Pakarinen, 2006; Langer, 2000; Salama, 2021; Wang & Roberts, 2005; Schoor, 2021). Computational applications remain more limited, although recent studies have begun to apply actantial or actantial scheme inspired narrative-structural methods to larger text corpora and social media discourse (Tangherlini *et al.*, 2020; Willaert, 2023; Elfes, 2024). Our approach builds on this emerging literature but treats actants not as surface-level entities or subject-verb-object units, but as inferred narrative functions. The same actantial role can be realised through different actors, characters, or formulations across texts. Actantial analysis thus serves as a bridge between cultural-memory theory and computational analysis by identifying where conflict is located in memory structure.

Antagonism, Agonism, and Deliberation as Discursive Modes

The second analytical dimension of the study concerns the discursive mode through which

Table 1: Analytical dimensions and their methodological implementations.

Analytical dimension	Analytical question	Operationalisation	Methodological implementation
Narrative structures	How is cultural memory narratively structured?	Greimasian actantial roles: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, opponent	LLM-supported actantial extraction; semantic clustering of extracted actants
Discursive modes	How is conflict over memory enacted?	Antagonism, agonism, deliberation	LLM-supported AAD classification
Discourse functions	What work does the discourse perform?	Epistemic, ethical, democratic, ideological function scores	LLM-supported function scoring linked to narrative configurations

commemorative narratives are articulated. We distinguish between antagonism, agonism, and deliberation. These modes (AAD) do not refer to different memory regimes, but to different ways in which conflict over memory is publicly performed.

Antagonism refers to conflict organised around mutual delegitimation, exclusion, and friend–enemy distinctions. In commemorative debates, antagonism appears when actors frame the past as a struggle between “our truth” and “their lies,” refusing to recognise opponents as legitimate participants in public discourse. In digital environments, such dynamics may be intensified by homophily, echo chambers, and affective polarisation (McPherson *et al.*, 2001; Pariser, 2011; Cinelli *et al.*, 2021; Törnberg, 2022).

Agonism, by contrast, preserves conflict while transforming enemies into legitimate adversaries. Drawing on Mouffe (1999), the democratic challenge is not to eliminate conflict, but to transform antagonism into agonism. In memory studies, agonistic approaches criticise both exclusionary national memory and overly consensual models of remembrance (Bull & Hansen, 2016). They stress that contested pasts cannot always be resolved through rational consensus and that attempts to impose a single reconciliatory narrative may marginalise alternative memories or generate backlash (Nienass, 2023).

Deliberation refers to modes of discourse oriented toward mutual justification, reason-giving, responsiveness, and inclusion. It is studied at the level of deliberative systems (Mansbridge & Parkinson, 2012) or through more specific indicators of discourse quality, such as the Deliberative Quality Index and its later adaptations (Steenbergen *et al.*, 2003; Bächtiger *et al.*, 2010; Beauchamp, 2020; Fournier-Tombs & MacKenzie, 2021; Oswald, 2022). In the theoretical-conceptual framework developed by Horvat (2026), deliberation does not mean the elimination of conflict or the production of consensus, but the opening of contested memory claims to justification, response, correction, and possible transformation.

For the purposes of this article, AAD is used as an operational distinction between three ways of enacting commemorative conflict: antagonism as exclusionary conflict, agonism as legitimate adversarial contestation, and deliberation as reason-giving, responsive, and potentially transformative discursive engagement. The framework (Horvat, 2026) does not treat these modes as a linear scale from conflict to consensus, but as analytically distinct ways of organising conflict over memory. This allows us to examine not only whether commemorative discourse is conflictual, but also how conflict is articulated and whether contested memory claims are opened to justification, response, and reinterpretation.

Discourse Functions in Cultural Memory Discourse

The third dimension of the study concerns the functions performed by commemorative discourse. Memory debates do not only transmit information about the past. They also justify political identities, recognise or deny harm, include or exclude voices, and legitimise particular interpretations. To capture these differences, we adapt the deliberative functions identified by Mansbridge *et al.* (2012), adding an ideological function.

The epistemic function concerns informed judgement, factual clarification, and responsible engagement with historical evidence. In cultural memory debates, this includes whether claims about the past are open to correction and grounded in verifiable information rather than denialism, selective distortion, or unsupported assertion. The ethical function concerns recognition, respect, and the treatment of others as legitimate interlocutors. This is especially important in memory conflicts, where the right to remembrance may come into conflict with democratic norms, particularly when memories glorify authoritarianism, exclusion, or violence. As Wüstenberg (2023) argues, not all forms of remembrance are democratically valid. The democratic function concerns inclusion: whose memories become visible, whose experiences are marginalised, and who is allowed to participate in defining the public meaning of the past. Commemorations may broaden recognition and participation, but they may also reproduce exclusionary hierarchies of memory. The added ideological function captures how memory is mobilised to stabilise political identities, naturalise particular interpretations, or support strategic political claims. This function is not necessarily illegitimate, since ideological articulation is part of democratic contestation. It becomes problematic when it overrides epistemic robustness, ethical recognition, and democratic reciprocity.

These four functions are not mutually exclusive. A single text may combine epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological elements. The purpose of this analytical dimension is therefore not to classify each text into one fixed category, but to assess which functions are more or less salient and how they interact with actantial structures and AAD modes.

LLMs and Computational Analysis of Political Discourse

The methodological motivation for using LLMs lies in the difficulty of analysing complex narrative and discursive structures at scale. Traditional NLP and machine-learning approaches have enabled large-scale analysis of social media and political discourse, but they often require task-specific annotated datasets and are less suitable for interpretive tasks where categories are complex, context-dependent, or theoretically derived.

Large language models, including GPT-based models, Llama, and DeepSeek, have opened new possibilities for semantic and multilingual text analysis (Brown et al., 2020; OpenAI et al., 2023; Grattafiori et al., 2024; DeepSeek-AI et al., 2024). Their strength lies in their ability to process context, infer implicit meaning, and apply complex annotation instructions without task-specific fine-tuning. This renders them potentially useful in the analysis of cultural memory discourse, where narrative roles, discursive modes, and discourse functions cannot easily be reduced to keyword dictionaries. In the empirical analysis below, we use GPT-4o as one implementation of this broader class of models.

At the same time, LLM-supported annotation has notable limitations. Existing computational research on political discourse remains strongly oriented toward English-language, US-centred, Twitter/X, and election-related data (AlDayel & Magdy, 2021; Kawintiranon & Singh, 2022; Németh, 2023). These limitations are particularly relevant for less-resourced languages such as Slovene and for complex socio-semiotic tasks such as actantial and deliberative discourse analysis.

For this reason, the present article treats LLM-supported annotation as an experimental method rather than as a fully validated measurement instrument. The method is used to test whether theoretically derived categories can be operationalised at scale, while the validation section evaluates where the approach is more reliable and where its outputs require cautious interpretation.

CASE SELECTION, DATA AND METHOD

This section presents the empirical design and methodological pipeline. The aim is to test whether a theory-guided LLM-supported workflow can identify recurring narrative and discursive patterns in a large corpus of commemorative discourse. Figure 1 summarises the main steps of the pipeline, which are described in detail in the following subsections.

The first subsection introduces Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier as a case of contested memory. The second subsection describes the two corpora: newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts. The third subsection explains the LLM-supported annotation procedure, including actantial extraction, AAD classification, and discourse-function scoring. The fourth subsection describes semantic clustering and statistical analysis. The final subsection presents the validation strategy used to assess the reliability and plausibility of the outputs.

Case Selection: Slovenia's Day of Resistance as Contested Memory

Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier, commemorated on April 27, provides a suitable empirical case with which to test the proposed LLM-supported methodology because it condenses several unresolved layers of collective memory and divided memories in

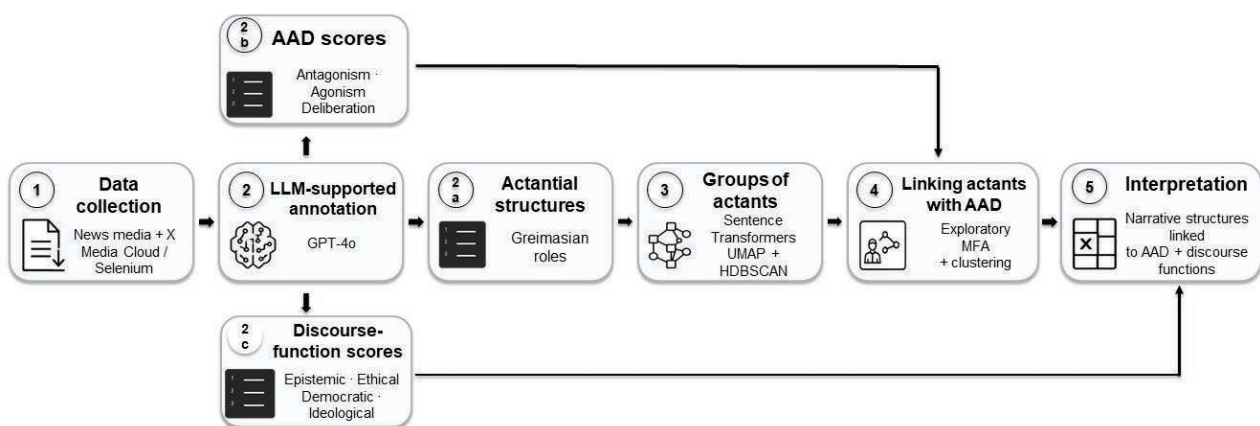


Figure 1: Overview of the LLM-supported methodological pipeline. After data collection from newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts (1), GPT-4o was used to generate three types of annotations: actantial structures (2a), AAD scores (2b), and discourse-function scores (2c). Extracted actants were embedded with Sentence Transformers, projected into a lower-dimensional space with UMAP, and clustered with HDBSCAN to identify recurrent groups of actants (3). Exploratory Multiple Factor Analysis with clustering was conducted to uncover relationships between actantial narrative structures and AAD scores. (4). The final step involved qualitative interpretation of narrative structures in relation to AAD and discourse-function patterns (5). The outputs were subsequently assessed through expert-based validation, including reliability checks for AAD and discourse-function scores and plausibility assessment of actantial extraction. Source: authors' own illustration based on the methodological pipeline developed in this study.

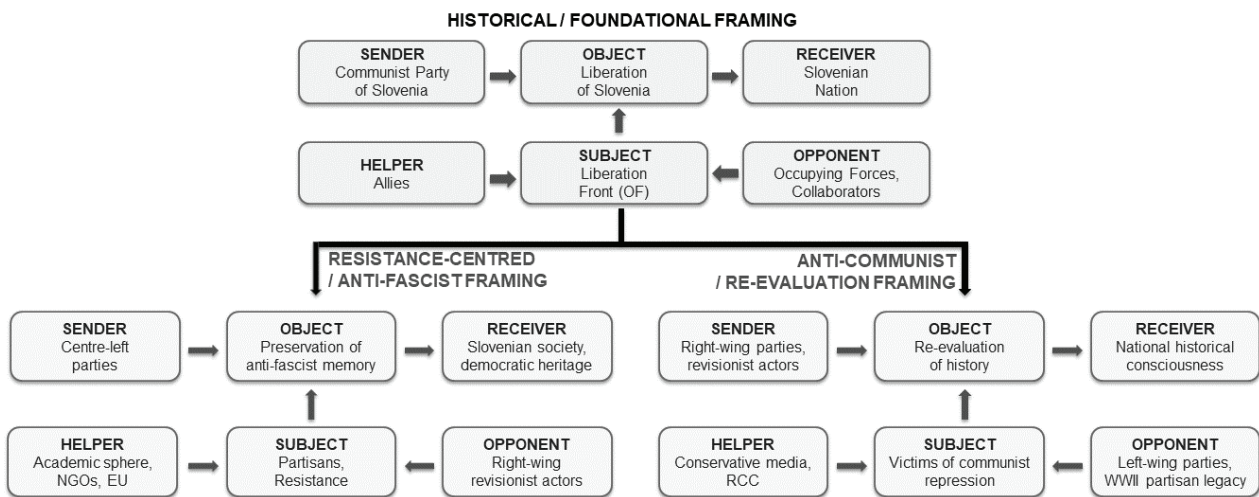


Figure 2: Heuristic actantial framings of Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier. The figure schematically illustrates dominant narrative configurations of the commemoration. It is not used as a coding template or as a map of the full empirical field, but as a heuristic example of the polarising narrative structure that the empirical analysis seeks to examine, complicate, and compare with more fine-grained patterns in the corpus (Source: authors' own illustration).

Slovenia, especially related to the Second World War (Lampe & Bajc, 2025). The holiday refers to the founding of the Liberation Front in 1941 and is officially associated with the National Liberation Struggle, anti-fascist resistance, the Partisan movement, and national liberation. At the same time, this memory remains politically contested because of the entanglement of resistance with revolutionary transformation, wartime collaboration and anti-communism, post-war extrajudicial violence, socialist heritage, national reconciliation, and the political instrumentalisation of history (Godeša, 1995; Prunk, 1992; Pirjevec, 1995; Kranjc, 2013; Hribar & Hribar, 2021).

The case is analytically useful because it cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between an anti-fascist/Partisan narrative and an anti-communist/reconciliation narrative. While this opposition remains politically important, public discourse around the commemoration also includes institutional, ethical, democratic, historical, generational, and ideological framings. A discourse-analytical approach makes it possible to examine not only which interpretation of the past is present, but also how historical agency, legitimacy, responsibility, victimhood, and opposition are narratively distributed.

At the narrative level, the commemoration raises questions about who is positioned as the legitimate subject of resistance, what object the commemoration is said to pursue, who authorises or legitimises this pursuit, who benefits from it, and who is presented as helper or opponent. At the level of discursive modes, it allows us to examine whether conflict is performed

antagonistically, agonistically, or deliberately. At the level of discourse functions, it facilitates an assessment of whether references to the past primarily clarify historical facts, recognise suffering, defend democratic values, or stabilise ideological positions.

Figure 2 provides an illustration of such actantial framings of the Day of Resistance. It shows how the commemoration is commonly structured through two broad and politically recognisable narrative orientations: a resistance-centred/anti-fascist framing and an anti-communist/re-evaluation framing. However, the figure should not be understood as a map of the full empirical field or as a predefined coding template.

We use the comparison between newspaper articles and publicly visible X posts to examine how the dominant polarising framing of the commemoration is reproduced, modified, or complicated across different communicative environments. This perspective is important because public representations of the Day of Resistance often rest on a binary opposition that can perpetuate political divisions and reinforce polarisation. The aim is therefore not to demonstrate the impact of social media on cultural memory per se or simply to confirm the existence of polarisation. Rather, our analysis tests whether the proposed LLM-supported pipeline can move beyond this dominant binary image and identify more fine-grained patterns within public discourse: how conflict is structured, how agency and legitimacy are assigned, whether disagreement is enacted antagonistically, agonistically, or deliberately, and which discourse functions become salient.

Corpus and Data Collection

The empirical analysis is based on two corpora referring to Slovenian commemorations of the Day of Resistance Against the Occupier: publicly visible X posts and online news articles. The two corpora were selected to compare narrative and discursive patterns across two communicative environments: shorter, platform-mediated social media posts and longer news texts.

The X corpus covers the period from April 2023 to April 2024 and was collected by Sciences Po within the SoMe4Dem project. The collection focused on Slovenian-language commemorative discussions and comprises 753 publicly visible posts. For publication and data-sharing purposes, the original dataset was transformed into an anonymised, post-level analytical dataset. The version used in this article includes the text of individual posts together with non-identifying metadata, such as language, timestamp, external links, and variables indicating whether a post is a retweet or a quote. The analysis was conducted at the level of individual posts. Retweets and quotes were treated as textual units only insofar as they appeared in the dataset; the analysis did not examine retweet networks, diffusion patterns, or user-level interaction dynamics. The corpus was compiled using the query terms “Dan upora proti okupatorju” and “Dan upora”, with special-character normalisation to improve retrieval. These keywords were selected to capture posts directly referring to the Day of Resistance and its broader commemorative context in Slovenia.

The news corpus was collected using Media Cloud, an open-source platform for collecting and analysing online news content across media ecosystems, developed by the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University (Roberts et al., 2021). The Slovenian database was queried using 14 case-sensitive keywords: “dan upora”, “dnevu upora”, “dan OF”, “dneva OF”, “proti okupatorju”, “državna proslava”, “državne proslave”, “državni proslavi”, “dan spomina”, “dnevu spomina”, “osvobodilna fronta”, “osvobodilne fronte”, “protiimperialistična fronta”, and “protiimperialistične fronte”. Additional material was collected through links found in the X dataset and through manual retrieval from three Slovenian publications: *Delo*, *Demokracija*, and *Mladina*. The final news corpus includes relevant articles published over three consecutive years, from 2022 to 2024. After removing irrelevant and duplicate items, the dataset was reduced from 308 to 164 articles.

The two corpora are not directly equivalent in genre, length, or communicative context. News articles are longer, more explicitly contextualised, and produced within traditional media environments.

X posts are shorter, more fragmented, and often dependent on platform conventions, implicit references, quotes, retweets, or external links. For this reason, comparisons between the two corpora are interpreted cautiously. In particular, the X corpus should be understood as a collection of publicly visible discursive traces around the commemoration, not as a representative sample of public opinion or as a deliberative debate.

LLM-Supported Annotation Procedure

To carry out this analysis, we built a computational workflow around GPT-4o. All annotations were generated through the API using the default temperature of 0.7. During prompt development, we reviewed trial outputs and decided to keep this setting. Outputs at temperature 0, which would have allowed full replicability, felt overly rigid and simply didn't work well for the kinds of interpretive tasks this study required. Once the prompts were finalised, we applied the same structure and settings consistently across the full corpus for each analytical component. We did not formally test whether submitting the same texts multiple times would yield identical or near-identical outputs. The validation section therefore focuses on how well the final annotations agree with expert judgement and whether they seem plausible, rather than on whether the model would produce the same results if run again. For this reason, we treat the LLM-generated outputs as annotations produced under a specific prompting and parameter setup, not as fixed, repeatable measurements.

Actantial extraction

This section explains how Greimas's actantial narrative analysis was operationalised for the two corpora of news articles and X posts. Greimas's model identifies six actantial roles that structure the narrative logic of a text: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent. Each role was analysed at three levels: actant as the abstract functional role in the narrative, actor as the entity manifesting that role, and character as the specific textual manifestation of the actor.

To operationalise this analysis, we implemented a computational workflow using the GPT-4o API. The system was programmed to process each text as a single unit of analysis by applying a standardised prompt designed to identify and classify actantial roles according to the three levels described above: actant, actor, and character (cf. Appendix A for full prompt (GITHUB, 2026a)). Actantial extraction was therefore used to map narrative configurations within commemorative discourse.

Rather than treating actors as fixed categories, the analysis focuses on how their narrative roles change across texts and how these configurations structure the meaning of the commemoration. This is particularly important in contested memory debates, where the same historical actor, event, or collective identity may be positioned differently depending on the narrative logic of the text.

The results of the analysis were compiled into a tabular dataset in the results section. This dataset includes both the raw textual output from the language model and a structured parsing of the actantial roles, enabling further qualitative and quantitative analysis. The structured output categorises data into fields corresponding to each actantial role and its three analytical levels — actant, actor, and character — ensuring clarity, consistency, and transparency in subsequent analysis. These structured outputs were then used for semantic clustering, statistical analysis, and qualitative interpretation of recurring narrative configurations.

AAD classification

The second analytical component of the methodology concerns Antagonism–Agonism–Deliberation (AAD) classification. This analysis was used to identify how commemorative discourse is articulated through three discursive modes: antagonism, agonism, and deliberation. Each mode was defined by specific linguistic, rhetorical and tonal features, enabling a systematic evaluation of how conflict, disagreement, and justification appeared in the dataset (cf. Appendix B for the full prompt (GITHUB, 2026b)).

For the news articles, GPT-4o evaluated each text by detecting discursive features associated with antagonistic, agonistic, and deliberative communication and assigning a six-point score ranging from strong antagonism to strong deliberation. For X posts, in contrast, due to the brevity and contextual limitations, a simplified three-category classification was applied, categorising discourse as primarily “Antagonistic,” “Agonistic,” or “Deliberative”. If no clear dominance of any category was detected or insufficient information was available, the model assigned the label “N/A”.

The distinction between the two procedures reflects the different properties of the corpora. News articles are longer and usually provide more contextual information, allowing the model to detect multiple discursive features within a single text. X posts are shorter, often implicit, and may depend on hashtags, quotations, retweets, external links, or shared background knowledge. For this reason, AAD outputs for X posts are interpreted as exploratory indicators of discursive orientation rather than as directly equivalent to the scores assigned to news articles.

The results were compiled into a structured tabular dataset in which each textual unit — news article or X post — was recorded together with its assigned AAD classification and, where applicable, the identified presence of antagonistic, agonistic, and deliberative features. These AAD variables were later used to examine whether particular narrative configurations were associated with more antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberative forms of engagement.

Discourse-function scoring

The third analytical component of the methodology is the detection of four key discourse functions: epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological. For each text, GPT-4o assigned a 0–100 score to each dimension, indicating its relative prominence in the text (cf. Appendix C for full prompts (GITHUB, 2026c)). The epistemic function addresses the clarity and accessibility of fact-based knowledge; the ethical function examines fairness, justice, and moral responsibility; the democratic function captures inclusion, participation, and public accountability; and the ideological function captures the extent to which the text mobilises memory to legitimise particular positions, identities, or political interpretations.

These scores were interpreted as indicators of functional salience rather than as precise interval-level measurements. A higher score does not necessarily mean that a text is more important or more influential, but that a given function is more strongly present in the text according to the annotation criteria. Since commemorative discourse often performs several functions at the same time, the analysis does not assign each text to a single dominant function only. Instead, it examines how epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological functions combine within individual texts and how these functional profiles relate to narrative configurations and AAD classifications.

Table 2 illustrates the outputs of the three analytical components using one example from a newspaper article and one example from an X post. The first example is taken from a newspaper article that challenges the official meaning of the Day of Resistance Against the Occupier and frames the commemoration as a divisive rather than unifying national holiday. The second example is taken from an X post by Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob, who presents the holiday affirmatively as “a holiday of remembrance and reflection.” The examples are used only to illustrate the structure of the LLM-generated outputs; they are not treated as representative of the full corpus.

Table 2: Illustrative examples of LLM-generated outputs for one newspaper article and one X post. The table shows how the pipeline records actantial roles, AAD classification, and discourse-function scores. The examples are used for methodological illustration and are not treated as representative of the full dataset.

Analytical output	News Article	X post
Subject	<i>National identity discourse</i>	<i>Commemoration</i>
Object	<i>Historical narrative</i>	<i>National unity</i>
Sender	<i>Ideological beliefs</i>	<i>Historical memory</i>
Receiver	<i>Slovenian public</i>	<i>National identity</i>
Helper	<i>Historical revisionism</i>	<i>Public discourse</i>
Opponent	<i>Established historical narratives</i>	<i>Forgetfulness</i>
AAD classification	<i>Mild antagonism</i>	<i>Deliberation</i>
Epistemic Function	62	20
Ethical Function	65	15
Ideological Function	78	10
Democratic Function	58	5

Semantic Clustering and Statistical Analysis

After the LLM-supported annotation, the extracted actantial outputs were processed through semantic clustering and statistical analysis. The purpose of this step was to identify recurrent semantic patterns across the corpus and to examine how these patterns relate to AAD classifications and discourse-function scores. The clustering procedure was primarily used to support interpretation, not to produce definitive categories.

To compare actants across texts, group semantically similar outputs, and generalise the findings, we used neural text representation methods from natural language processing (NLP). These methods require textual units to be represented as numerical vectors that approximate their semantic properties. Each text in the dataset was first annotated with six actantial roles: Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent. Many of the extracted actants overlapped semantically, differing only in wording or level of abstraction. To capture and consolidate these variations, each extracted actant string was represented as a high-dimensional vector using the SentenceTransformer model `all-mpnet-base-v2`. The embeddings were then subjected to dimensionality reduction via UMAP (Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection). For each actantial role separately, the resulting low-dimensional projections were grouped using HDBSCAN (Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise) in order to identify clusters of semantically similar actants.

Our code was designed to test several parameter settings for dimensionality reduction and HDBSCAN minimum cluster size. Rather than treating the highest Silhouette score as a purely automatic optimisation criterion, parameter selection was guided by a combination of cluster diagnostics and expert inspection of cluster coherence. HDBSCAN was selected because it can discover clusters of varying densities without requiring a predetermined number of clusters. Points that lacked sufficient density in the vector space were labelled as outliers.

Descriptions in each non-outlier cluster were then generalised by assigning them a concise descriptive label using GPT-4o via API. We provided the model with actant names from each cluster; in response, it generated a short one- to three-word designation reflecting their shared semantic theme. After naming the clusters, we prompted GPT-4o again to detect and merge clusters that appeared semantically identical, thus reducing redundancy and improving clarity in subsequent analyses. Outliers were re-examined through a second prompt, where GPT-4o attempted to integrate them into existing clusters based on semantic alignment. Only if ten or more outliers coalesced around a distinct conceptual theme would a new cluster be created, ensuring that minor variations did not fragment the data. All GPT-generated cluster labels, proposed merges, and outlier assignments were treated as interpretive aids and inspected by the researchers before being used in subsequent analysis. For illustrative purposes, Table 3 presents an example of

Table 3: Illustrative example of an Opponent actant cluster.

<i>Original Opponent Actants</i>	<i>Final Opponent Actant Cluster</i>
Oppressive Forces	Oppression & Threats
<i>External Aggression</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Historical oppression</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Foreign oppression</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Modern societal threats</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Ideological threats</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Structural Challenges</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Modern distractions</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Threats to freedom</i>	Oppression & Threats
<i>Modern threats</i>	Oppression & Threats

a final Opponent actant cluster with original actants assigned by GPT-4o. The example is included to illustrate the consolidation procedure and should not be read as a complete or representative list of all clusters.

In the next step, after consolidating actantial clusters, we explored how these clusters relate to AAD classifications. Having consolidated the actantial data from Greimas' model and established AAD scores for each text, we examined how the six clustered actant roles — Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent — corresponded with AAD levels. To do this, we employed Multiple Factor Analysis (MFA), followed by HDBSCAN clustering.

First, we compiled all relevant variables into a single dataset: six columns corresponding to the clustered actant roles and one numeric column representing the AAD score. MFA was conducted using the FactoMineR package, with one block of variables corresponding to the six actant roles and a second block corresponding to the AAD score. The purpose was to identify common dimensions that captured both actantial configuration and variation in AAD classification. Following the MFA, we extracted the factor coordinates reflecting the combined actantial configuration and AAD score. HDBSCAN was then applied to identify clusters of texts with similar narrative structures and AAD orientations, while observations that did not belong to a dense region were labelled as outliers.

Because HDBSCAN can flag a subset of observations as outliers, we performed a second pass of HDBSCAN on those outliers. This two-stage procedure allowed us to detect whether some outliers formed coherent subclusters. Each text's first- and second-pass cluster assignments were saved in tabular form to facilitate further interpretation. Graphical outputs, including scree plots

of variance explained and two-dimensional scatterplots of factor coordinates coloured by cluster membership, were generated to visualise how AAD patterns align with or diverge from particular actantial configurations. Through this combination of MFA and iterative HDBSCAN clustering, the analysis identified recurrent configurations in which particular actantial structures co-occurred with more antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberative modes of engagement.

For each cluster, we then calculated the mean epistemic, ethical, democratic, and ideological scores. The same logic was used to support interpretation of discourse-function scores. This made it possible to identify whether particular narrative clusters were associated with stronger epistemic clarification, ethical recognition, democratic framing, or ideological mobilisation.

All parts of the methodology described above were implemented within a documented computational workflow, which we make freely available. This design allows for a streamlined process: once the initial dataset is uploaded, the scripts sequentially execute each stage. By structuring the methodology as a coherent pipeline, we increase transparency and reproducibility, as each step is automated and documented. However, the workflow should not be understood as fully automated interpretation. The outputs of semantic clustering, MFA, and HDBSCAN were used as guides for qualitative interpretation, not as self-standing proof of stable narrative categories or causal relationships.

Validation Strategy

The reliability and plausibility of the LLM-supported outputs were evaluated through comparison with human expert annotations. The validation was designed as an initial expert-based assessment of the proposed pipeline rather than as a definitive validation of a general-purpose measurement instrument. Its purpose was to examine whether GPT-4o outputs were sufficiently consistent with expert judgement to support large-scale mapping of commemorative discourse. The validation covered the three main analytical components of the pipeline: AAD classification, discourse-function scoring, and Greimasian actantial extraction. The validation sample included 18 news articles and 30 X posts. Since the two corpora differ substantially in length, genre, and contextual density, results are reported separately for news articles and X posts.

Validation of AAD classification and discourse-function scoring

First, we evaluated reliability for AAD classification and discourse-function scoring by comparing expert annotations with GPT-4o outputs. Three measures were used: absolute agreement, Krippendorff's alpha, and intraclass correlation coefficients.

Table 4: Inter-rater reliability statistics for discourse functions and AAD analysis for news articles and X posts. A = news articles; X = X posts; $K\alpha$ = Krippendorff's alpha; ICC = intraclass correlation; AA = absolute agreement. Significance levels: * $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.**

Category	A - $K\alpha$	A - ICC	A - AA	X - $K\alpha$	X - ICC	X - AA
Epistemic f.	0,45	0,51**	83,3%	0,13	0,22	80%
Ethical f.	0,60	0,61**	83,3%	-0,11	0,11	60%
Ideological f.	0,63	0,66***	88,8%	0,16	0,14	50%
Democratic f.	0,58	0,57**	77,7%	-0,08	0,08	70%
AAD score	0,69		66,60%	0,41		43,3%

The four discourse-function parameters were originally annotated by GPT-4o on a 0–100 scale and then normalised to a 10-point scale for human annotation. Absolute agreement was calculated as the percentage of cases in which the GPT-4o rating matched the human rating within a ± 2 margin. Given the interval-like nature of the data, this margin was used to capture near-equivalent ratings while still distinguishing larger discrepancies. Absolute agreement therefore provides an intuitive measure of how often LLM scores approximate expert ratings within an acceptable range.

We also employed intraclass correlation coefficients and Krippendorff's alpha. ICC was used because it captures consistency between two sets of continuous ratings and is therefore suitable for interval-like data. Following Koo and Li (2016), we used a two-way mixed-effects model, ICC (3,1), with a consistency definition, since the aim was to assess whether the LLM reproduced the pattern of expert judgements rather than exact numerical identity. Krippendorff's alpha was calculated as a complementary measure, since it is widely used in content analysis and accounts for chance agreement.

Table 4 shows a clear difference between news articles and X posts. For news articles, the reliability statistics indicate moderate alignment between GPT-4o and expert judgement. ICC values for discourse functions range from 0.51 to 0.66, Krippendorff's alpha ranges from 0.45 to 0.69, and absolute agreement reaches up to 88.8%. These results suggest that GPT-4o performs reasonably well when applied to longer, more context-rich texts.

For X posts, reliability is substantially lower. Alpha and ICC values indicate weak agreement for several dimensions, even though absolute agreement remains between 50% and 80% for some discourse functions. This discrepancy is important. It shows that tolerance-based agreement may capture cases where LLM and expert ratings are relatively close, but low chance-corrected agreement suggests that

GPT-4o does not reliably reproduce expert judgement at the item level for short posts. The AAD score follows a similar pattern, with stronger agreement for news articles and weaker agreement for X posts.

These findings suggest that GPT-4o more reliably approximates expert judgement in longer, more formal texts and performs less consistently on semantically sparse X posts. This is not surprising, since short social media posts are difficult to label even for simpler tasks such as sentiment analysis, where human inter-annotator agreement has been reported between 0.42 and 0.67, while self-agreement ranges between 0.46 and 0.84 (Mozetič et al., 2016). The X corpus is therefore treated as a source of indicators of discursive orientation rather than as a basis for robust item-level measurement comparable to news articles.

Validation of Greimasian actantial extraction

The validation of Greimasian actantial extraction required a different procedure. Exact string matching was not appropriate because actants are abstract narrative functions and can be expressed through multiple semantically similar formulations. For example, an opponent may be named differently across texts while performing the same narrative function.

Two human expert annotators were therefore presented with the actants and characters generated by GPT-4o alongside the original texts. They were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the LLM-generated output on a 1–5 scale, where 1 meant complete disagreement and 5 meant complete agreement. This approach assessed the plausibility and coherence of the actantial extraction rather than exact identity between human and machine labels.

For news articles (Table 5), both annotators generally rated GPT-4o outputs favourably, with mean scores often exceeding 4. This suggests that the

Table 5: Agreement scores between human expert annotators and GPT-4o for Greimasian actantial roles in news articles. Values indicate means and standard deviations. MAD = mean absolute difference between human annotators.

Actant Role	Human 1	Human 2	MAD
Subject Actant	4,35 ± 0,63	4,94 ± 0,27	0,57
Subject Character	3,86 ± 0,86	4,29 ± 0,61	1,00
Object Actant	4,86 ± 0,36	4,57 ± 0,51	0,43
Object Character	4,50 ± 0,76	4,07 ± 0,83	0,86
Sender Actant	3,93 ± 0,83	4,79 ± 0,58	1,00
Sender Character	4,29 ± 0,91	3,50 ± 1,02	1,64
Receiver Actant	4,29 ± 0,47	4,93 ± 0,27	0,64
Receiver Character	4,14 ± 0,66	4,64 ± 0,63	0,64
Helper Actant	4,29 ± 0,73	4,50 ± 0,52	0,21
Helper Character	4,14 ± 0,95	4,21 ± 0,80	0,93
Opponent Actant	4,64 ± 0,63	4,64 ± 0,50	0,57
Opponent Character	4,64 ± 0,75	4,07 ± 0,83	1

extracted actantial roles were usually considered narratively coherent and textually plausible. The strongest convergence appears for Helper Actant, where the mean absolute difference between annotators is 0.21. The largest discrepancy appears for Sender Character, where the MAD reaches 1.64. This indicates that some roles, especially more abstract or interpretively demanding ones, remain difficult to identify consistently.

For X posts (Table 6), agreement scores are lower and more variable. Annotator 1's scores range from 2.70 to 3.23, while Annotator 2's scores range from 3.43 to 4.40. The higher MAD values indicate greater divergence between expert assessments. Discrepancies are especially visible for Receiver Character and Opponent Actant. These results suggest that extracting complete actantial structures from short social media posts is considerably more difficult than from news articles.

Implications of the validation

Taken together, the validation results indicate that the proposed LLM-supported pipeline can produce analytically useful outputs, especially for longer, context-rich texts such as news articles. In

Table 6: Agreement scores between human expert annotators and GPT-4o for Greimasian actantial roles in X posts. Values indicate means and standard deviations. MAD = mean absolute difference between human annotators.

Actant Role	Human 1	Human 2	MAD
Subject Actant	2,80 ± 0,66	3,97 ± 1,22	1,43
Subject Character	3,00 ± 3,43	3,43 ± 1,36	1,3
Object Actant	3,23 ± 0,77	3,77 ± 1,31	1,2
Object Character	2,93 ± 0,91	3,43 ± 1,31	1,1
Sender Actant	3,17 ± 0,70	4,00 ± 1,29	1,37
Sender Character	2,96 ± 1,00	3,53 ± 1,22	1,23
Receiver Actant	3,23 ± 0,57	4,40 ± 0,77	1,23
Receiver Character	2,97 ± 0,56	4,33 ± 0,88	1,57
Helper Actant	2,80 ± 0,96	3,93 ± 1,41	1,33
Helper Character	2,70 ± 1,01	3,70 ± 1,37	1,13
Opponent Actant	3,10 ± 1,19	3,93 ± 1,23	1,5
Opponent Character	3,17 ± 1,21	3,70 ± 1,24	1,27

the news corpus, GPT-4o showed moderate alignment with expert judgement in discourse-function scoring and AAD classification, while actantial outputs were generally evaluated as plausible and coherent. This supports the use of the pipeline as a scalable exploratory tool for mapping narrative and discursive patterns in commemorative discourse.

The results for X posts were more limited. Short posts are often semantically compressed, context-dependent, and difficult to interpret even for human annotators. Lower chance-corrected reliability, weaker ICC values, and greater variability in actantial assessment show that X-based outputs should be treated cautiously. Although absolute agreement within the ± 2 margin remained relatively high for some categories, this does not imply reliable item-level reproduction of expert judgement.

Overall, the validation results call for a cautious approach to using GPT-4o as an annotation tool within our exploratory pipeline. For news articles, the LLM-generated annotations showed partial agreement with expert judgement. Reliability was moderate for AAD classification and discourse-function scoring, while actantial extractions

were generally considered plausible. For X posts, however, the results were considerably weaker, suggesting that the LLM-generated annotations are not reliable enough to support solid item-level measurement. We therefore retain the X corpus only for exploratory comparison of communicative environments, and treat X-based results as indicative patterns rather than validated quantitative findings. The empirical results of this exploratory application are presented in the next section.

APPLYING THE PIPELINE: NARRATIVE CONFIGURATIONS AND DISCURSIVE MODES

This section presents the application of the LLM-supported pipeline to the two corpora on Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier. The aim is to show how the pipeline can identify recurrent actantial configurations and examine how these configurations relate to AAD classifications and discourse-function scores. The analysis identified recurrent narrative configurations in both corpora. In the news article corpus, 12 configurations were identified. In the X corpus, 21 configurations were identified. Because the validation results showed stronger reliability for longer and more context-rich texts, the news configurations are presented in greater detail. X-based results are retained as an exploratory contrast, but are interpreted more cautiously due to the lower reliability of short-text annotation and the fragmentary nature of platform-mediated discourse.

Narrative Configurations in News Articles

The news article corpus reveals a more differentiated field of commemorative discourse than a simple binary opposition between pro-resistance and anti-communist narratives would suggest (Table 7).

The table shows three important patterns. First, the most frequent configuration (No. 6), which account for 32 % of the dataset, is indeed antagonistic, but only mildly so. Its main narrative structure centres on historical identity / preservation and historical acknowledgement, while the opponent is constructed as historical distortion. The high ideological score (76.1) indicates that this configuration is strongly involved in stabilising a particular interpretation of the past. However, its relatively high epistemic and ethical scores suggest that this ideological positioning is not epistemically empty, but is combined with claims to historical clarification and moral responsibility. Second, the news corpus is not dominated by antagonism alone. Several configurations are classified as strong agonism, strong agonism / mild deliberation, or even strong deliberation.

Configurations centred on national unity, resistance remembrance, national liberation, cultural heritage preservation, historical acknowledgement, and collective solidarity indicate that contested memory discourse in the news corpus contains multiple modes of engagement. Third, high epistemic function is not limited to deliberative configurations. Some agonistic configurations have very high epistemic scores, especially configurations 7, 10, 3, 8, and 11. At the same time, democratic scores are generally lower than epistemic, ethical, and ideological scores. This indicates that the commemoration is more often articulated through historical clarification, moral evaluation, and political identity positioning than through explicit claims about inclusion or democratic accountability.

Narrative Configurations in X Posts

The X corpus was analysed using the same logic as the news corpus, but the results are interpreted more cautiously. As shown in the validation section, X posts are shorter, more implicit, and more dependent on platform context than news articles. The configurations identified in the X corpus should therefore be read as indicators of discursive orientation rather than as robust item-level measurements. The full tabular overview of all configurations is provided in Appendix E2 (GITHUB, 2026d). In the main text, we report the aggregate AAD distribution, the most frequent configuration, and the relationship between AAD modes and discourse-function scores.

The analysis identified 21 narrative configurations in the X corpus. At the level of identified narrative configurations and their associated instances, antagonistic configurations account for 50.8% of the X corpus, while deliberative configurations account for 30.3%. Strong agonistic configurations represent 7.4%, and mild agonistic configurations 2.3%. One configuration, accounting for 9.1%, could not be assigned a clear AAD classification. This distribution suggests that antagonistic framings are prominent in the X corpus. A substantial share of the corpus is classified as deliberative, and smaller agonistic configurations are also present.

The discourse-function scores further clarify how AAD modes differ internally. The main distinction between AAD modes is not simply the presence or absence of ideology. Ideological salience appears across antagonistic, agonistic, and deliberative configurations. The more important difference lies in how ideological positioning is combined with epistemic, ethical, and democratic functions (cf. Table 8).

Table 7: Narrative configurations in the news article corpus. Note: C = Cluster number; Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent refer to Greimasian actantial roles; AAD = antagonism–agonism–deliberation classification; % = share of instances in the corpus assigned to the configuration; Ep. = epistemic function; Et. = ethical function; Id. = ideological function; De. = democratic function.

C	Subject	Object	Sender	Receiver	Helper	Opponent	AAD	%	Ep.	Et.	Id.	De.
4	Historical Identity Preservation	Cultural Heritage Preservation	Historical Significance	National Awareness	Cultural / Collective Memory	Historical Distortion	Strong Deliberation	5,8	74,5	60,8	49,8	36,9
1	Resistance Remembrance	National Commemoration	Historical Significance	National Identity	Cultural / Collective Memory	Societal Division	Strong Agonism / Mild Deliberation	4,4	70,0	65,2	56,7	43,3
2	National Unity	X	Historical Significance	National Identity	Cultural / Collective Memory	Societal Division	Strong Agonism / Mild Deliberation	13,1	71,4	69,2	67,8	52,2
12	Historical Identity Preservation	Freedom and Rights	Historical Significance	Slovenian Social Future / National Awareness	Collective Solidarity	Oppression & Threats	Strong Agonism / Mild Deliberation	2,9	65,0	70,0	72,5	48,8
3	National Resistance	National Liberation	Historical Interpretation	National Identity / Slovenian Social Future	Collective Solidarity	Foreign Occupation	Strong Agonism / Mild Deliberation	10,9	78,4	65,7	68,3	44,7
8	Historical Identity Preservation / National Resistance	Historical Acknowledgment	National Identity Crisis	National Awareness	Cultural / Collective Memory	Societal Division	Strong Agonism	5,1	77,1	66,4	72,9	47,1
11	National Unity / Resistance Remembrance	National Unity	Historical Significance	Slovenian Social Future	Cultural / Collective Memory	Societal Division	Strong Agonism	12,4	76,9	72,8	71,8	56,7
5	Historical Identity Preservation	Historical Acknowledgment/ Freedom and Rights	Ethical Duty	National Awareness	Supportive Alliances	Societal Division	Strong Agonism	3,6	65,0	48,0	44,2	30,0
7	Historical Identity Preservation	Historical Acknowledgment	Ethical Duty	National Awareness	Historical Documentation	Historical Distortion	Strong Agonism	2,2	83,7	71,0	68,3	43,3
9	Historical Identity Preservation	National Commemoration	Historical Significance	National Awareness	Supportive Alliances	Historical Distortion / Oppression & Threats	Mild Agonism	3,6	71,2	48,0	64,2	42,0
10	Historical Identity Preservation	x	Historical Injustice	National Awareness	Cultural / Collective Memory	Societal Division	Mild Agonism	3,6	81,0	76,0	75,0	58,0
6	Historical Identity Preservation	Historical Acknowledgment	Ideological Agenda / Historical Interpretation	National Awareness / Slovenian Social Future	Cultural/ Collective Memory / Historical Documentation	Historical Distortion	Mild antagonism	32,1	67,4	62,5	76,1	43,7

Table 8: Discourse-function scores by AAD classification in the X corpus. Shares indicate the summed size of configurations within each AAD category. Discourse-function scores are weighted averages calculated by multiplying each configuration's score by its share of the X corpus and dividing by the total share of the corresponding AAD category.

AAD classification	Share of X corpus	Epistemic function	Ethical function	Ideological function	Democratic function
Antagonism	50.8%	18.2	30.2	48.3	17.6
Deliberation	30.3%	27.6	30.4	39.9	20.3
Strong agonism	7.4%	33.0	19.8	41.6	15.1
Mild agonism	2.3%	14.3	33.0	49.3	24.1
No clear classification	9.1%	8.1	8.1	13.4	6.8

Note: The X posts were originally labelled using three categories, antagonism, agonism, and deliberation. Once narrative patterns were identified, each pattern was given an AAD label based on how the posts within it were distributed across those three categories. Patterns with a mix of labels got intermediate designations like “strong agonism” or “mild agonism”. The table aggregates configurations with the same derived AAD orientation. Shares indicate the summed size of these configurations within the X corpus.

Antagonistic configurations have the highest ideological score among the main AAD categories, but relatively low epistemic and democratic scores. This suggests that antagonistic X corpus tends to mobilise the commemoration as a political or identity marker, with limited historical elaboration and weak democratic framing. Deliberative configurations show a more balanced profile, with higher epistemic and democratic scores, while strong agonistic configurations display the highest epistemic score.

The most frequent configuration (No. 4), accounting for 20.7% of the corpus, is classified as antagonism and centres on resistance and independence, national sovereignty, national unity, collective memory, and threats to sovereignty (Table 9). Its epistemic and democratic scores are relatively low, while its ideological score is close to the overall X average. This configuration is therefore best understood as a condensed oppositional mnemonic signal rather than as an elaborated historical or democratic argument.

Overall, the X results suggest that the commemoration appears in a more compressed and platform-mediated form than in news articles, but not as a uniformly antagonistic discourse. Because of the lower validation reliability for X posts, these findings are treated as exploratory patterns rather than as a basis for strong conclusions about platform effects.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTION, SCOPE, AND LIMITATIONS

This article examined whether a theory-guided, LLM-supported pipeline can operationalise an analytical approach to contested cultural memory discourse by linking three analytical dimensions: actantial narrative structure, discursive modes and discourse functions. The results show that this approach can identify recurrent narrative and discursive patterns across larger corpora, especially in longer and more context-rich texts. At the same time, the findings also clarify the limits of the method. The pipeline should be understood as an exploratory mapping procedure rather than as a fully automated measurement instrument.

Mapping narrative structures in contested memory discourse

With regard to RQ1, the findings show that LLM-supported actantial analysis can identify recurring narrative structures in contested memory discourse. In the news corpus, the extracted configurations reveal how the commemoration is organised around recurring relations between subjects, objects, senders, receivers, helpers, and opponents. These configurations show that the Day of Resistance Against the Occupier is not articulated through one stable narrative, but through several competing assignments of agency, legitimacy, opposition, and collective purpose.

Table 9: Most frequent narrative configuration in the X corpus (No. 4). The table shows the actantial role clusters, AAD classification, discourse-function scores, and share of instances for this X configuration.

Analytical component	X corpus
Subject	Resistance and Independence
Object	National Sovereignty and Independence
Sender	Historical Themes
Receiver	National Unity
Helper	Collective Memory / Collective Empowerment
Opponent	Sovereignty Threats
AAD classification	Antagonism
Share of instances	20.7%
Epistemic function	14.0
Ethical function	25.5
Ideological function	42.1
Democratic function	15.1

This is the main added value of actantial analysis. It does not merely identify topics or named actors. It reconstructs how texts organise the past into narrative relations: who is presented as acting, what goal is pursued, who benefits, who legitimises the action, who supports it, and who is constructed as an obstacle. This makes it possible to move beyond a simple binary between pro-resistance and anti-communist framings and to identify more specific narrative configurations within public discourse.

At the same time, this component involves an important limitation. Actants are inferred narrative functions, not simple named entities. The same actor may occupy different actantial positions across texts, and the same narrative function may be expressed through different formulations. We addressed this limitation by treating actantial outputs as structured interpretive data rather than as directly observable textual facts.

Linking narrative structures to AAD modes and discourse functions

With regard to RQ2, the results show that narrative conflict and discursive modes are related, but not identical. The presence of an opponent in an actantial structure does not automatically imply antagonism. Some configurations contain clear opponents but are classified as agonistic or deliberative, especially in the news corpus. This distinction is important because contested memory discourse should not be equated with polarisation as such.

The combined use of actantial analysis, AAD classification, and discourse-function scoring shows not only where conflict is narratively located, but also how it is publicly performed and what kind of work it does. In the news corpus, several configurations combine ideological salience with relatively strong epistemic or ethical scores. This may suggest that ideological positioning does not necessarily exclude historical clarification or moral reflection. In the X corpus, antagonistic configurations are more prominent, but deliberative and agonistic configurations are also present. The AAD dimension therefore helps distinguish different forms of conflict, rather than simply marking texts as conflictual or non-conflictual.

This distinction is important for the interpretation of the Slovenian case. The public discourse around the Day of Resistance is clearly conflictual and polarising but the analysis shows that conflict is not always organised in the same way. Some configurations are exclusionary and antagonistic, while others preserve disagreement in more agonistic or deliberative forms.

Comparing newspaper articles and X posts

With regard to RQ3, the comparison between newspaper articles and X posts shows that the same commemoration appears differently across communicative environments. News articles provide more elaborated and context-rich narrative configurations. They allow for more explicit historical explanation, moral evaluation, and institutional framing. The X corpus, by contrast, contains more compressed and context-dependent configurations. The dominant X configuration functions more as a condensed mnemonic and political signal than as an elaborated historical or democratic argument.

These differences should not be interpreted as evidence of a platform effect. Newspaper articles and X posts differ in genre, length, institutional setting, sampling logic, communicative function,

and validation reliability. The comparison therefore indicates how the pipeline behaves across two contrasting communicative environments, rather than demonstrating causal differences between media systems.

Methodological contribution and scope conditions

With regard to RQ4, the validation results indicate that the pipeline is more reliable for longer and more context-rich texts than for short X posts. For news articles, GPT-4o showed moderate alignment with expert judgement in AAD classification and discourse-function scoring, while actantial outputs were generally evaluated as plausible and coherent. For X posts, reliability was lower, reflecting the brevity, ambiguity, and contextual dependence of social media discourse.

This does not make the method unusable, but it defines its proper scope. The pipeline is best understood as a scalable interpretive tool. It helps detect patterns that would be difficult to identify manually across larger corpora, but it does not replace close reading, expert knowledge, or historical contextualisation. Semantic clustering further supports this function by grouping similar actants and identifying recurrent configurations, but clusters should be treated as heuristic aids rather than self-evident empirical categories.

We addressed these methodological risks by combining automated annotation with validation, clustering, and qualitative interpretation. The article therefore does not present LLM outputs as autonomous findings, but as structured inputs into an interpretive research process. The central methodological point is therefore straightforward: LLM-supported analysis can help operationalise complex theoretical concepts in cultural memory research, but only when its outputs are validated, contextualised, and interpreted with caution.

CONCLUSION

This article developed and evaluated an exploratory LLM-supported pipeline for analysing contested cultural memory discourse. Building on a broader theoretical-conceptual model for linking cultural memory and democratic practices, the study was organised around three analytical dimensions: narrative structures, discursive modes, and discourse functions. These dimensions were implemented through Greimasian actantial extraction, antagonism–agonism–deliberation (AAD) classification, and discourse-function scoring. The resulting outputs were integrated through semantic clustering and statistical analysis, interpreted

qualitatively, and assessed through expert-based validation. By combining narrative-structural, discursive-mode, and discourse-function analysis with semantic clustering, statistical analysis, and expert-based validation, the article showed how theoretically complex concepts can be operationalised for larger-scale discourse analysis without reducing them to simple keywords, sentiment categories, or topic labels.

The empirical case of Slovenia's Day of Resistance Against the Occupier demonstrates the usefulness of this approach. The analysis showed that contested memory discourse is not exhausted by a binary opposition between pro-resistance and anti-communist narratives. In the news corpus, antagonistic, agonistic, and deliberative configurations coexist, while ideological positioning is often combined with epistemic and ethical claims. In the X corpus, the commemoration appears in a more compressed and platform-mediated form, with stronger antagonistic tendencies but also internal variation across deliberative and agonistic configurations. The substantive finding is therefore not that one medium is simply more polarised than the other, but that the same commemoration is organised through different narrative and discursive profiles across the two corpora. These findings support the article's main methodological claim: the proposed pipeline can help identify where conflict is narratively located, how it is discursively enacted, and what functions it performs.

At the same time, the article does not present LLM-supported analysis as a substitute for human interpretation. The validation results indicate that the method performs more reliably on longer, context-rich news articles than on short X posts. The findings based on X should therefore be treated as exploratory indicators rather than as robust item-level classifications or evidence of platform effects. More broadly, the pipeline should be understood as a scalable interpretive tool that can help structure and extend qualitative analysis, but it cannot replace close reading, historical contextualisation, or expert judgement.

Future research should further test the robustness and portability of the approach. This includes expanding expert validation samples, comparing different LLMs and prompting strategies, testing repeated-run stability, and applying the pipeline to other commemorations, languages, media systems, and political contexts. Social media analysis would also benefit from incorporating thread-level, reply-level, quotation, and external-link context rather than relying only on individual posts. Such work would help determine whether the narrative-discursive patterns identified in this case also

appear in other contested memory debates, and whether LLM-supported methods can contribute more broadly to the study of cultural memory in hybrid public spheres.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data collection was carried out within the project CIVICA Research – The European University of Social Sciences: Research and Innovation, funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101017201. The datasets supporting the findings of this study are publicly available through the CLARIN.SI repository under the title Slovenian Day of Resistance X & news corpus 1.1: <http://hdl.handle.net/11356/2216>. The repository contains two CSV files: an anonymised, feature-based analytical dataset of publicly visible X posts and a dataset of traditional media articles. The X dataset includes post-level entries with derived analytical features,

including Greimasian actantial coding, actant clusters, actor and character fields, author stance, antagonism scores, discourse-function indicators, HDBSCAN-based cluster information, and average cluster scores. For privacy and platform-compliance reasons, the published X dataset does not contain user-identifying information. The news dataset contains the traditional media corpus used in the analysis.

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Conceptualisation: MH
 Methodology: MH, JK, JB, TŠ
 Formal analysis: JK, JB, MH, TŠ, MRŠ
 Investigation: MH, JB, JK, UL, DD, ŽO, AE
 Data curation: JK
 Software: JK, TŠ, JB
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KARTIRANJE SPORNEGA KULTURNEGA SPOMINA: LLM-PODPRTI PRISTOP K ANALIZI NARATIVNIH STRUKTUR, DISKURZIVNIH MODUSOV IN DISKURZIVNIH FUNKCIJ

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POVZETEK

Članek razvija in ovrednoti eksplorativni raziskovalni pristop, podprt z velikimi jezikovnimi modeli (LLM), za analizo spornega kulturnega spomina v hibridnih javnih sferah. Izhaja iz širšega teoretsko-konceptualnega okvira, ki težišče premakne od spominskih režimov k diskurzivnim modusom, skozi katere se kulturni spomin artikulira (Horvat, 2026). Metodološki postopek študije povezuje tri analitične dimenzije: Greimasov aktantski model za analizo narativnih struktur, klasifikacijo antagonizem–agonizem–deliberacija za analizo diskurzivnih modusov ter ocenjevanje epistemskih, etičnih, demokratičnih in ideoloških funkcij diskurza. Rezultati teh analiz so nato povezani s semantičnim gručenjem, statistično analizo in eksperimentalno validacijo. Pristop je preizkušen na primeru slovenskega praznika Dan upora proti okupatorju, ki ostaja pomembno polje nasprotujočih si interpretacij antifašističnega odpora, revolucije, povojnega nasilja, socialistične dediščine in nacionalne sprave. Članek primerja časopisne članke in javno dostopne objave na omrežju X ter preverja, ali lahko LLM-podprt postopek prepozna ponavljajoče se narativne konfiguracije in pokaže, kako se te povezujejo z različnimi diskurzivnimi modusi in diskurzivnimi funkcijami. Ugotovitve kažejo, da pristop omogoča prepoznavanje pomenljivih narativnih in diskurzivnih vzorcev, zlasti v daljših in kontekstualno bogatejših besedilih. Pri kratkih objavah na X so rezultati manj zanesljivi, zato jih članek obravnava predvsem kot eksplorativne kazalnike. Prispevek ponuja empirično preverjeno metodološko operacionalizacijo analize spornega spomina, hkrati pa jasno opredeli njene omejitve in potrebe po nadaljnji validaciji.

Ključne besede: kulturni spomin, hibridna javna sfera, družbena omrežja, deliberativna demokracija, Greimasov aktantski model, diskurzivni modusi, veliki jezikovni modeli (LLM), semantično gručenje, politični diskurz

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POLITICAL MEMORY AS AGONISTIC PRACTICE ON SOCIAL MEDIA:
SEMIO-SOMATIC MEMORY, MULTIMODALITY, AND AFFORDANCES
THEORIZED THROUGH THE DIGITAL CIRCULATION OF THE SLOGAN
“SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, digital platforms have become central spaces for reshaping cultural memory. The article examines the contemporary circulation of the Yugoslav partisan slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People”) on X and Facebook and argues that its political force cannot be explained by textual meaning alone. It argues that the contemporary power of the slogan in the context of digital memory comes from activating semio-somatic memory sedimented through repeated bodily practices, ritual performance, collective action, and recognizable semiotic forms. The article shows how digital memory operates as agonistic practice: historically sedimented semio-somatic forms are reopened as sites of struggle over meaning, legitimacy, and power in the present.

Keywords: digital memory, semio-somatic memory, agonistic public sphere, platform affordances, multimodality, embodiment, political memory

LA MEMORIA POLITICA COME PRATICA AGONISTICA SUI SOCIAL MEDIA:
MEMORIA SEMIO-SOMATICA, MULTIMODALITÀ E AFFORDANCE DELLE
PIATTAFORME TEORIZZATE ATTRAVERSO LA CIRCOLAZIONE DIGITALE DELLO
SLOGAN “SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

SINTESI

Negli ultimi decenni, le piattaforme digitali sono diventate spazi centrali per la ridefinizione della memoria culturale. L'articolo esamina la circolazione contemporanea dello slogan partigiano jugoslavo “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Morte al fascismo, libertà al popolo”) su X e Facebook e sostiene che la sua forza politica non possa essere spiegata solo dal significato testuale. Sostiene che il potere contemporaneo dello slogan nel contesto della memoria digitale derivi dall'attivazione della memoria semio-somatica, sedimentata attraverso ripetute pratiche corporee, performance rituali, azioni collettive e forme semiotiche riconoscibili. L'articolo mostra come la memoria digitale operi come pratica agonistica: forme semio-somatiche storicamente sedimentate vengono riaperte come luoghi di lotta per il significato, la legittimità e il potere nel presente.

Parole chiave: memoria digitale, memoria semio-somatica, sfera pubblica agonistica, affordance delle piattaforme, multimodalità, incarnazione, memoria politica

INTRODUCTION

In academic circles, it is nearly undeniable that digital platforms have become central environments in which memory is now experienced and shaped (Hoskins, 2011; 2018; van Dijck, 2013; van Dijck et al., 2018).¹ The collective act of remembering, once largely organized through traditional institutions such as museums, archives, education, and mass media, is now increasingly mediated by digital platforms and their multimodal, interactive structures. These environments introduce new layers of technical and semiotic mediation, where digital design and algorithmic logic influence how the past is reshaped into publicly perceptible and affectively charged forms (Birkner & Donk, 2018; Hoskins, 2024a; Bucher, 2018).

Processes once largely stabilized through institutional selection and archiving (with expert object annotation, established metadata taxonomies, and classificatory relations), and presentation within relatively enclosed reception contexts – such as exhibitions, official commemorations, and legacy media (Bennett, 1995; Assmann, 2011) – are increasingly reactivated through algorithmic circulation and user co-authorship. Instead of stabilizing mnemonic authority through institutional curation, digital infrastructures condition how mnemonic forms resurface and gain prominence within feedback-driven interactional environments (Hoskins, 2024b). Within this memory ecology (cf. Brown & Hoskins, 2010), institutional authority remains; it operates within reorganized conditions where remembering and forgetting are shaped by platform architectures. These dynamics intensify with legacy institutional efforts toward platformization, networkization, and user co-authoring engagement (Ringel & Ribak, 2024), the rise of AI-driven curation, and dedicated memory applications. Institutional authority persists but now functions within a hybrid ecology in which institutional materials circulate alongside vernacular and user-generated content.

The article argues that the political power of digital memory arises where *semio-somatic* forms sedimented through earlier ritual, institutional, and bodily practices meet platform-specific conditions of action. By semio-somatic memory, we mean mnemonic forms sedimented across semiotic structures,

sensory modalities, learned bodily dispositions, and recurrent social practices, so that linguistic, visual, auditory, and bodily cues can mutually activate one another. Semio-somatic memory does not designate a separate body-stored or procedural memory system; rather, it refers to the semiotically organized relation between signs, sensory experience, bodily disposition, and memory. While bodily practices refer to concrete gestures, postures, vocalizations, and ritual actions; bodily dispositions refer to learned tendencies toward such actions; and sensorimotor dimensions refer to the sensory-motor processes through which these forms can support mnemonic reactivation.

Theory of multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) can help us explain why certain mnemonic forms remain affectively potent and recognizable over time; affordances theory (Gibson, 2015) and platform affordances studies (Hutchby, 2001; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Evans et al., 2017) help us to explain how – and under what conditions – this affective force becomes activated in public. Memory is thus viewed as a political practice that functions in the present and influences current power relations. These processes of redistribution of multimodal artifacts and their platform-conditioned visibility are explored through digital circulation of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People”), which demonstrates how semio-somatic mnemonic forms are reactivated and contested on social media. The article approaches digital memory from a praxeological perspective, considering it a somatic and semiotic *practice* whose political impact depends on the interaction of historically sedimented mnemonic forms, platform affordances and the potential for multimodal articulation of meaning. By examining how the slogan is activated and contested on X and Facebook, the analysis situates platformed remembrance within broader discussions of agonistic public memory and democratic debate.

MEMORY, POWER, AND POLITICAL ACTUALITY

Memory studies emphasize that references to the past gain meaning through their current significance, meaning – their ability to address ongoing matters that range from intimate experience to collective and

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political issues. As Jan Assmann (1997, 9–10) has argued, the “truth” of memory lies not so much in its factual accuracy as in its relevance.

Memory is selective and interest-driven, making it inherently open to intervention. As Edward Said notes, “the processes of memory are frequently, if not always, manipulated and intervened for sometimes urgent purposes in the present” (Said, 2000, 179). Institutions and social groups do not simply inherit memories; they actively create them through symbols, narratives, and commemorative practices (Assmann, 2008, 55) that reinforce certain interpretations of the past while marginalizing others. Since memory functions through selective activation and suppression, it influences current power dynamics connected to identity claims and struggles for legitimacy. This political aspect becomes especially prominent in digital spaces, where processes of remembering and forgetting are intensified and publicly contested. Personal recollections reappear through algorithmic prompts and “memories” features (e.g., Facebook Memories, Instagram Stories Archive and Highlights, and Snapchat Memories), while collective histories are reassembled through platform-native mechanisms such as tagging, recommender systems, and algorithmic curation.

Aleida Assmann (2010) has demonstrated that cultural memory operates through a distinction between the canon and the archive: the canon comprises narratives that are actively shared and normatively reinforced, while the archive holds preserved materials that remain politically dormant. Systems of memory are therefore also systems of forgetting: exclusion and omission function as organized mechanisms through which relations of power determine what becomes publicly rememberable and what is made invisible.

Michel Foucault’s (1977) concept of *counter-memory* offers terminology for analyzing these struggles. Counter-memory refers to practices that challenge dominant historical narratives by reactivating marginalized pasts and exposing the power relations embedded in regimes of remembrance. As Davis & Starn (1989) point out, counter-memory does not just recover suppressed content but functions through strategic remembering that resists enforced silence and questions established frameworks of historical authority. In this way, counter-memory shows that memory conflicts are not rare moments of disruption, but recurrent interventions through which claims to legitimacy and historical meaning are continuously contested.

This political and present-focused view of memory is further developed in approaches that see memory as mobile and ongoing, such as Astrid Erll’s (2011) concept of “travelling memory.” Memory is not tied to a single medium, institution, or authoritative narrative, but circulates through continuous processes of

mediation, translation, and recontextualization across social and historical settings. As memories travel, they do not retain a stable or original meaning but are constantly rephrased in relation to new actors, interests, and power relations (Erll, 2011). This view is especially relevant for understanding digital memory cultures, where mnemonic forms quickly circulate across platforms, formats, and audiences. The mobility of memory increases its political importance: as references to the past shift between contexts, they become sites of continuous reinterpretation and contested public debates. However, mobility does not displace the importance of the sedimentation of mnemonic forms; rather, historically layered meanings, carried by repeatable signs, images, gestures, and practices, periodically crystallize in specific communicative conjunctures. They gain political strength when they are revived in new communicative settings – places where remembering becomes both a mode of discourse and a mode of political intervention. Sedimentation provides the structured forms through which memory becomes intelligible and politically operative.

This tension becomes especially noticeable in digital memory cultures, where mnemonic forms quickly spread across platforms, formats, and audiences. Under faster mediation, processes of de-sedimentation and re-sedimentation happen more quickly and dynamically, giving the impression of constant instability as references to the past are repeatedly mobilized, contested, and displaced. As the following analysis demonstrates, the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” illustrates this dynamic, maintaining its political salience not as a stable discursive reference but as a historically ritualized and semio-somatic mnemonic form that remains accessible for reactivation under contemporary conditions.

The slogan today circulates across different mnemonic registers. It may appear as a nostalgic invocation of the socialist antifascist canon, and it can also act as a site of counter-memory, reopening silenced or marginalized aspects of that regime. At the same time, it undergoes further semantic transformations (discussed in detail below) that go beyond both nostalgia and critique. These changes, however, do not detach it from the past; they draw their strength precisely from historically sedimented semio-somatic memory, which allows the slogan to stay recognizable while embracing new political expressions.

The digital shift: from the regulation of meaning to the regulation of visibility

In more centralized regimes of cultural memory, authority was more strongly tied to the stabilization of legitimate interpretations of the past. Digital platforms, by contrast, reorganize mnemonic power around conditions of visibility and circulation rather than

interpretive closure. Authority no longer rests primarily on defining what the past means, but on shaping which references to the past become perceptible, repeatable, and affectively resonant in public space. Mnemonic power therefore depends not only on visibility itself, but also on the visual forms through which the past becomes repeatable, recognizable, and politically or ideologically operative (cf. Babnik, 2026).

This shift has important political consequences – struggles over memory are increasingly fought over algorithmically intensified “exposure” rather than interpretative “closure.” Mnemonic power arises through iterative interaction and affective involvement, embedding memory in ongoing public contests. While institutional actors still influence memory cultures, they now operate within a hybrid environment where platform circulation increasingly intersects with grassroots practices.

The reconfiguration of mnemonic power to platform-mediated visibility has significant implications for the public sphere. When remembering is structured by algorithmic exposure and emotional uptake, memory practices revolve around political contestation rather than the possibility of agreement. Instead of reinforcing shared narratives of the past, platform-mediated remembering increasingly leads to competing claims about what should be remembered, how, and by whom.

Chantal Mouffe’s (2013) concept of the agonistic public sphere offers a helpful framework for understanding these dynamics, highlighting conflict as a core element of democratic life. When applied to memory cultures, this indicates that struggles over remembrance and forgetting are not anomalies within a stable historical consensus but are expressions of ongoing disputes over identity, legitimacy, and power. Digital platforms amplify these agonistic dynamics by enabling multiple, often conflicting memory claims to be visible, circulate broadly, and mobilize affective responses within the same public space.

BODILY PRACTICES, MULTIMODALITY, AND SEMIO-SOMATIC MEMORY

Historically ritualized semio-somatic forms of remembering existed before digital media, but they continue to shape how memory is revived online. The focus here is not on platform infrastructures themselves but on the semio-somatic dispositions ingrained through earlier ritual practices and reinterpreted within platformed environments. Instead of being replaced by digital mediation, these forms – considered not as purely modal or mental representations (Iani, 2019) – persist and are reshaped through platform-specific multimodal discourse. The article argues that embodiment must be recognized as an

important aspect of digital memory, which is often overlooked in memory and multimodal research, where emphasis generally goes to representational modes and sensory channels at the expense of bodily and ritualized enactment and the somatic nature of memory itself (cf. Campbell et al., 2019; Iani, 2019).

In digital platform environments, the political efficacy of mnemonic forms depends on how bodily dispositions are reactivated through multimodal configurations. Affordances and modes of expression influence whether dispositions and sign-forms sedimented through earlier practices remain latent or become publicly active in the present. Such reactivation relies on culturally recognizable discursive configurations and shared semantic vocabularies (cf. Greimas, 1987; Eco et al., 1989). In platform settings, these patterns are rearticulated through historically ritualized semio-somatic forms whose affective force is modulated by specific affordances and multimodal expression.

The key difficulty lies in analytically distinguishing semiotic, sensory, and perceptual dimensions of remembering that are intertwined in experience. Rather than opposing “disembodied” and “embodied” memories, this approach examines how these dimensions operate together (Lagerkvist, 2016). Many ideas about affordances in digital media research assume embodiment but rarely explicitly highlight it. Embodiment, seen as our relationship to the world, forms a foundational “ur-relation” that underpins the link between material substrates and action possibilities (Gibson, 2015). This aligns with cognitive scientific accounts of memory as an adaptive ability that supports agency in response to environmental demands, particularly with the symbol-grounding hypothesis, which states that symbols gain meaning through sensorimotor experience (Iani, 2019, 1747–1748).

Concepts such as “media ecology” and “memory ecology” already situate memory and media within environmental relations (Lagerkvist, 2016); the emphasis of the article’s argument lies in considering the environment as both semiotic and somatic. It examines semio-somatic memory diachronically, focusing not on the formation of new memories specific to digital platforms, but on the persistence and rearticulation of earlier bodily practices within platformed environments, as well as their relevance for political memory. Social-media-specific sensorimotor practices (such as clicking, scrolling, and finger gesturing), while important in their own right, are not the subject of the article’s focus. The political effectiveness of memory in the present stems from the activation of historically ritualized mnemonic forms through multimodal configurations that enable their rearticulation and contestation across different contexts.

Multimodality as a political force of memory

Multimodality is essential for understanding the political force of memory because memory is constituted through bodily, sensory, and semiotic processes that arguably precede and exceed any specific technological setting. To explore questions about platform affordances and digital circulation, it is important to clarify how meaning and affect converge to create political intensity through the interaction among bodily practices, perceptual processes, and semiotic material forms.

In multimodal theory, a key distinction is made between semiotic modes and sensory modalities. Based on social-semiotic approaches developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006), modes are seen as socially and culturally shaped semiotic resources – such as language, images, sounds, gestures, and layouts among others – each with its own conventions and potential for meaning-making. Modes are not neutral transmitters of information; rather, they are structured systems of meaning-making that are historically sedimented and socially regulated; they are habitualized practices. The concept of modality, as used here, following multimodal theorists, refers to sensory modalities (Kress, 2010; Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014; Forceville, 2006): the sensory channels through which modes are apprehended – visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic modalities (among others). Sensory modalities influence how semiotic modes are perceived, integrated, and affectively experienced.

Multimodal research distinguishes three analytically separate yet interconnected dimensions: (1) sensory channels (e.g., vision, hearing, bodily movement), (2) perceptual integration through which sensory input is combined and organized, and (3) semiotic modes, which convey culturally mediated meanings (cf. Kress, 2010; Bateman et al., 2017; Oja, 2023). A common issue in communication and memory studies is that these dimensions are often conflated. Multimodality is frequently used as a catch-all term, while in practice it most often refers primarily to the coexistence of text, images, and sounds, or to the multimedia character of digital artifacts. Consequently, analyses tend to remain descriptive, emphasizing media formats rather than exploring the relationships among semiotic modes, sensory modalities, and socio-technical affordances. This conceptual slippage is particularly consequential for memory studies. When multimodality is reduced to a combination of media forms, the embodied and ritual dimensions through which memory acquires affective and political force are obscured.

Memory, as enacted through bodily practices – gestures, vocalizations, rhythms, and repetitions – can be seen as a kind of “semiotic scaffolding acquired by learning” as that which binds sensory experience to shared symbolic frameworks (Campbell et al., 2019, 356). Although multimodal theories foreground the material base of meaning-making, they often neglect the role of bodily enactment when semiotic resources are treated primarily as culturally available forms rather than as enacted in and through the environment. As Campbell et al. (2019, 358) argue, referencing James J. Gibson’s (2015) idea of affordances, “semiotic resources [as affordances] are not just anything in the environment, but anything that an organism’s sense perceptive and motoric capabilities evoke as available.”

The political importance of memory cannot be understood without considering both its semiotic materiality and its somatic dimensions, including sensory-perceptual and sensorimotor aspects. As Kress (2010, 157) highlights, the affordances of modes “rest on the materiality of the stuff” from which signs are made, even though this materiality is socially shaped into cultural semiotic resources. Meaning is therefore not purely discursive, cognitive, or somatic; nor should materiality be understood only as the physical form of the sign. Rather, it emerges through historically situated practices that interrelate semiotic forms, sensory perception, embodied dispositions, and social conventions.

Existing research on digital and political memory primarily focuses on representational, discursive, informational, and technological aspects of remembering – highlighting communication but often neglecting the bodily and sensorimotor dimensions as important dimensions through which memory acquires affective force. This limitation is evident not only in memory studies but also in media and platform research and in political theories. It is less prominent in multimodal scholarship, where the bodily dimension is usually emphasized, but only secondary to questions of mode, medium, and signification. Multimodal theorists emphasize that meaning is co-constructed across modes, rather than found in any single mode alone (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Bateman et al., 2017). The political and mnemonic power of an expression depends as much on bodily enactment, sensory perception, and collective repetition as on semantic content and modal composition. The more inter-semiotically complex the multimodal configuration is, the more expansive is its intermodal meaning potential, as well as its potential for affective charge.

The political intensity of certain mnemonic expressions arises from their prior ritualization and bodily repetition. Through sustained collective actions, ideological meanings become sedimented as



Figure 1: Early partisan poster dated July 7, 1941, featuring the slogan “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” (Serbian Cyrillic: “Смрт фашизму, слобода народу”), along with an image of a clenched fist as a symbol of resistance (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

learned bodily dispositions – internalized through repeated vocalization, posture, rhythm, and synchronized performance. This early habituation forms the mnemonic substrate from which current reactivations draw their force. In post-socialist digital environments, such expressions no longer function within the institutional rituals that once grounded them, but their political efficacy persists precisely because they still activate historically internalized forms. Multimodality is crucial here: it facilitates the reexpression of sedimented semio-somatic memory across textual, visual, and gestural configurations, allowing both affirmative and critical political expressions to surface today. Positioning multimodality at this fundamental level highlights an approach to memory as practice – a process in which ideological meanings are sedimented, internalized, and made experientially compelling.

MNEMONIC ENDURANCE OF THE SLOGAN “SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU”

The analysis in this section traces how the slogan is activated and rendered contestable in platformed environments, thereby shifting attention from memory as representation to memory as practice within contemporary political struggles.

The slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” originates in the WWII Yugoslav resistance against the occupying Axis Powers. Although the exact point of origin is difficult to discern from available documentation – it is clear that it became particularly widespread during the summer of 1941 when it began to circulate (on posters and official correspondence) within the partisan movement (Figure 1).²

Semiotically, the slogan condenses existing European antifascist signifiers – most notably the

² The Kingdom of Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact, the Axis alliance between Germany, Italy, and Japan, on 25 March 1941 under strong geopolitical pressure. Two days later, however, a military coup in Belgrade overthrew the government that had signed the pact. In April 1941 the country was invaded by Axis forces, rapidly defeated, and partitioned among occupying powers, giving rise to both collaboration and resistance. In the first months of occupation, resistance activities largely took political, organizational, and cultural forms, including the establishment of clandestine networks, the circulation of illegal publications, and other forms of opposition to the occupying regimes, involving a variety of political actors. Notably, TIGR, an antifascist militant organization rooted in the Slovene Littoral and the wider Julian March, had already engaged in clandestine and armed activity against Fascist Italian rule during the interwar period. Until 22 June 1941, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were still bound by the Molotov–Ribbentrop non-aggression pact of 1939, during which the Comintern interpreted the war as an imperialist conflict between capitalist states. After the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 (Operation Barbarossa), the Communist Party of Yugoslavia initiated and expanded the organization of its armed resistance. During this period the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” began to circulate widely. For the broader historical context of Yugoslavia in 1941, the Comintern line, and TIGR’s interwar antifascist activity, cf. Tomasevich (2002), Pavlowitch (2008), Mawdsley (2017), Kacin Wohinz & Verginella (2008) and Kacin Wohinz (2013).

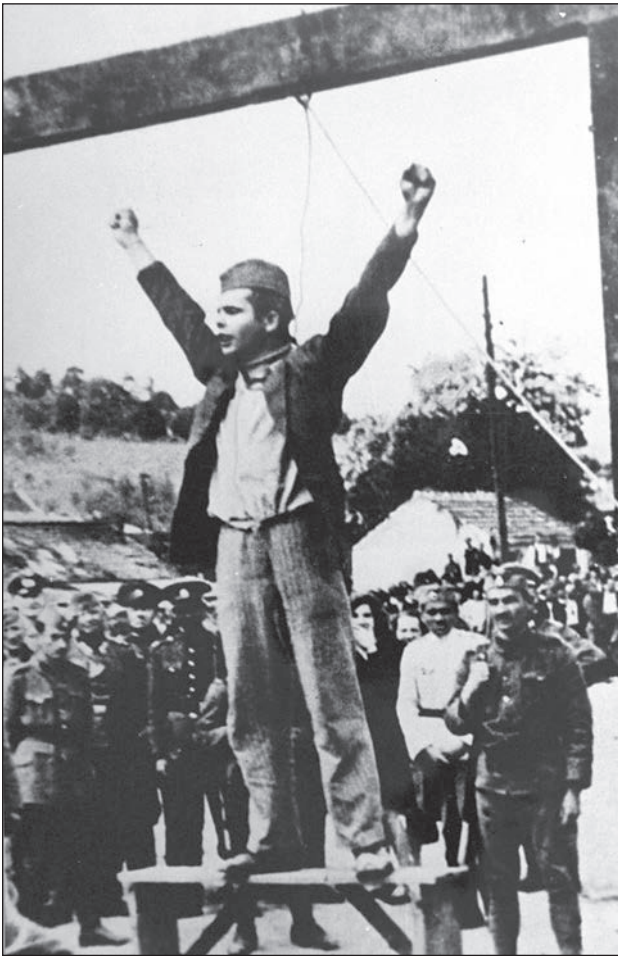


Figure 2: Slobodanka Vasić, Stjepan Filipović beneath the gallows in Valjevo, Serbia, on May 22, 1942, just before his execution. With his fists raised and clenched, he became a lasting symbol of partisan resistance, widely remembered for the slogan “Death to fascism, freedom to the people” (Source: Wikimedia Commons).

formula “death to fascism,” which circulated during the Spanish Civil War – into a binary structure that pairs negation with an emancipatory promise. It quickly spread across various forms of communication: printed leaflets and bulletins, partisan press, graffiti, correspondence, and everyday speech. It served both as a greeting and a farewell, replacing the traditional language and gestural conventions and norms of

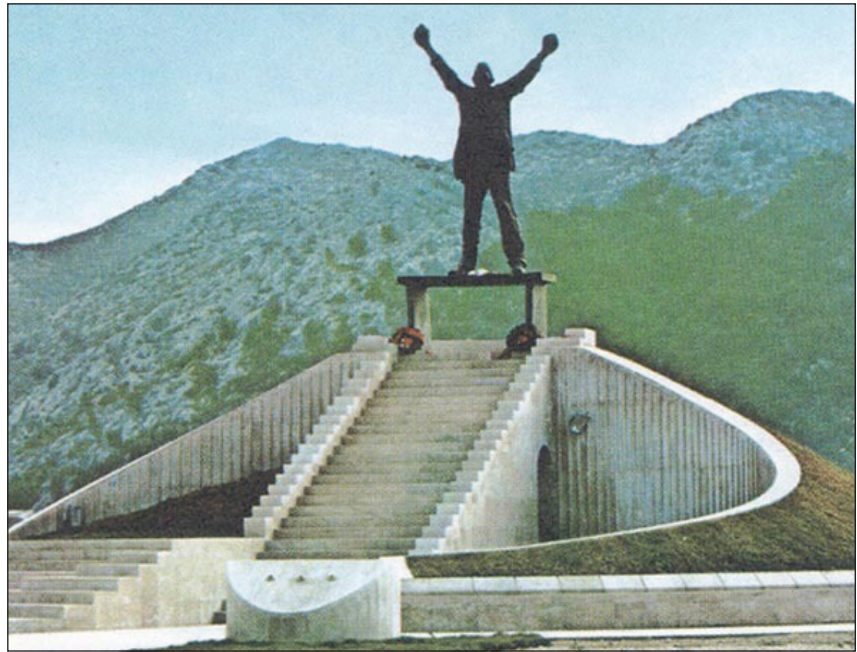
everyday address – embedding political opposition into daily interactions. Its abbreviation (“SF–SN”), numerous public inscriptions, and reported heroic vocalization during moments of intense combat confrontation indicate that it acted as a performative act of collective identity. In this context, its discursive economy and affective intensity invite comparison with “¡No pasarán!” of the Spanish Civil War.

After WWII, the slogan became increasingly associated with an image of the resistance fighter Stjepan Filipović, who was photographed just before his execution and is said to have spoken the slogan in the final moments, with raised and clenched fists (Figure 2).³ Especially after its public release in *Politika* on November 4, 1944, the photograph of Filipović became a symbol of partisan resistance; after the war it circulated publicly, and gained an iconic status. His signature defiant pose was replicated in statues (notably in Opuzen and Valjevo, cf. Figures 3 and 4), on an official Yugoslav stamp, and later even outside of the Yugoslav context as an international symbol of resistance, including in the Holocaust Museum New York.

In this process of public circulation and institutional reproduction, the image stopped serving only as a record of a single execution and instead became a condensed visual symbol of occupation violence, resistance memory, and post-war socialist narrative formation. Crucially, the difficulty of retrospectively distinguishing the slogan’s genesis, its association with Filipović’s posture, and its subsequent performances in schools and public ceremonies is not an obstacle but an indicator of its ritualized character. Ritual tends to erase contextual specificity, operating through repetition and bodily habit rather than conscious reflection. What endures is less the memory of specific events than a bodily disposition: a learned way of standing, speaking, responding, and aligning oneself with a shared symbolic order. In this way, ritualized mnemonic practices act as tools for internalization, embedding ideological orientations in bodily habits.

During WWII and afterward, within socialist Yugoslavia, the slogan functioned as a collective performative articulated through ritualized enactment: standing posture, forceful vocalization, coordinated bodily gestures (such as body orientation and a raised fist), and synchronized collective utterances in

³ Stjepan Filipović was executed in Valjevo on May 22, 1942, at the age of twenty-six. According to SS reports, he shouted antifascist and pro-communist slogans while being led through the streets (Radanović, 2012) urging the locals to take up arms and fight against the occupiers (Konjikušić, 2017, 139). Immediately before his execution, at least as is widely reported and circulated, he raised his arms, clenched his fists, and cried out “Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu.” While these exact final words cannot be definitively verified, collective memory has condensed these reports into the recognizable phrasing of the slogan, which captures both the event and his defiant stance at the gallows. Slobodanka Vasić, a young apprentice at the Kosara photographic studio in Valjevo, most likely took the photograph. According to later testimonies, the image was briefly offered for sale by the studio after the execution, before a German raid confiscated and destroyed the negative and most prints; some reproductions nevertheless entered clandestine circulation (cf. Konjikušić, 2017).



Figures 3 and 4: Postwar monumentalization: cultural memorialization and mythologization of the WWII resistance movement. Figure 3 (left) shows the monument to Stjepan Filipović in Valjevo, Serbia (sculptor Vojin Bakić, erected 1960), which still stands today (Source: Wikimedia Commons). Figure 4 (right) shows the monument in Opuzen, Croatia (sculptors Miro Vuco and Stjepan Gračan, erected in 1978), which was demolished in 1991 during the Yugoslav breakup wars by Croatian nationalists (Source: unidentified historical photograph, “Zaostrog spomenik (1980s),” reproduced in Donald Niebyl, “Zaostrog,” Spomenik Database, original source not specified (Niebyl, n. d.)).

partisan meetings and other settings. These practices engaged multiple sensory modalities simultaneously – auditory, visual, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic – tying the slogan to bodily experience and not to abstract cognition alone. Through repetition in institutional and public contexts during the war and later in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (including Slovenia until 1991), the slogan became associated with learned bodily dispositions, acquiring force beyond its propositional content.

A comparison with the slogan “Za domovino, s Titom naprej” (“For our homeland, we move forward with Tito”)⁴ helps clarify how mnemonic endurance functions in “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu.” The former was highly ritualized and routinely performed in post-WWII Yugoslav daily institutional settings, especially in schools. It also depended on repetition, collective vocalization, and bodily synchronization to foster ideological alignment. Its performative force did not come from a single utterance but from regulated repetition: the slogan worked by being cited and re-enacted across institutional settings, recalling Judith Butler’s (1997) account of performativity as citational

practice. In primary schools, classes usually started with a standard call-and-response performance: the teacher – or a designated pupil – would stand before the class and utter the initial phrase “Za domovino,” to which the pupils responded together, “S Titom naprej.” The slogan was also linked to the Pionir pledge – a formal oath children took when joining the Pioniri, the youth organization of socialist Yugoslavia.

Yet despite these similarities with “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu,” the slogan with Tito did not become a lasting political mnemonic form in later periods and mostly faded from use in independent Slovenia. This difference suggests that ritualization and bodily enactments alone do not ensure mnemonic longevity. They create conditions for mnemonic force that can later be reactivated or not, depending on semiotic structure and broader historical and political factors.

What sets apart slogans that endure from those that fade is less their level of ritualization than their capacity for resignification. A similar logic of historically mobile symbolic matrices, which retain recognizable structures while acquiring different social and political functions in changing contexts, can be

⁴ Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) was a Yugoslav revolutionary who led the Partisan resistance during WWII and became the leader of socialist Yugoslavia from 1945 until his death. For an insightful study, cf. Pirjevec (2018).

found in Tratnik's analysis of the dragon-slayer matrix (cf. Tratnik, 2022). In the case of "Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu," the bodily-affective charge generated through ritual repetition provides conditions for its rearticulation in new political contexts, especially as its original historical reference becomes partly obscured. The slogan is also characterized by a strongly oppositional semiotic structure. Its endurance is maintained through repeated enactment and through a linguistic configuration where political meaning is generated relationally rather than referentially: fascism and freedom are positions defined through negation, so that the rejection of fascism acts as the formal condition for the affirmation of freedom. By embedding political opposition directly into its linguistic form, the slogan distills a complex political stance into a durable and easily mobilizable utterance. Importantly, its semiotic "clarity" notwithstanding, the slogan remains underdetermined in a way associated with floating or partly empty signifiers, whose meaning is stabilized contingently through discursive articulation rather than by fixed referential content. The repeatability of the slogan's formulaic configuration allows metonymic displacement, enabling successive enemies and groups to be inscribed

into the same structural positions, while the rhythmic symmetry and evaluative asymmetry of the opposition sustain its affective charge. The slogan's political efficacy is therefore anchored in the tension between syntagmatic invariance and paradigmatic variability, allowing for a continuity of the form alongside semantic rearticulation within shifting discursive formations. By contrast, "Za domovino, s Titom naprej" cannot function in the same way, since it lacks a relational opposition that generates meaning through negation and ties its significance to the explicit figure of a former Yugoslav president, anchoring interpretation to a specific historical reference rather than a structurally reproducible opposition.

From ritualization to resignification: three phases in the use of the slogan

The persistence of "Smrt fašizmu, sloboda narodu" cannot be explained by a single historical context or political regime. Its durability comes from a series of transformations through which the slogan has been repeatedly re-embedded in changing configurations of power and memory. These transformations can be broken down into three



Figure 5: Public ceremony in the theatre of liberated Split, September 1943, beneath the banner "Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People," enacting the socialist symbolic order in a ritualized institutional and commemorative setting (Source: Horvatinčić, n. d.).

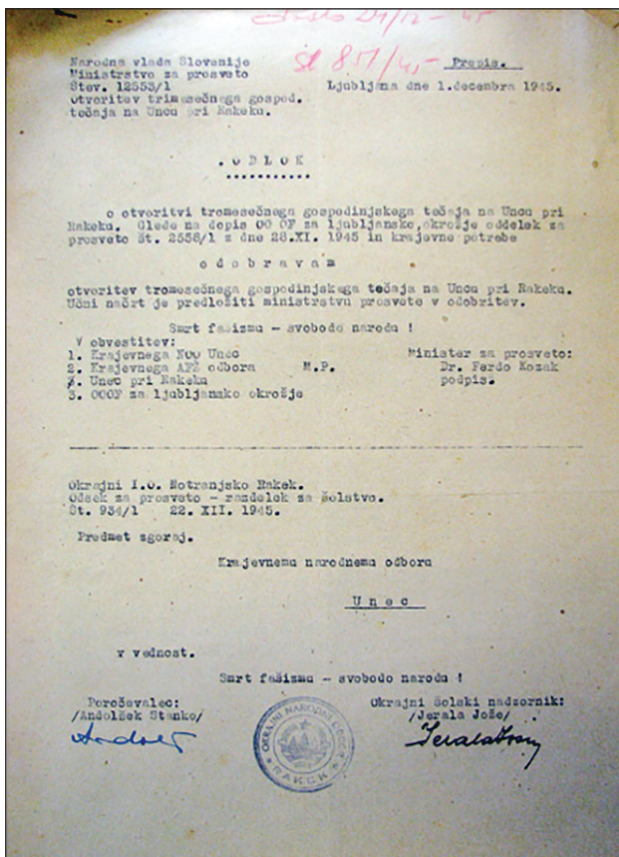


Figure 6: Official post-war administrative document (Ljubljana, December 1, 1945) ending with the salute “Smrt fašizmu – svoboda narodu.” The slogan was used as a formal closing greeting in both spoken and written bureaucratic correspondence (Source: authors’ archive).

interconnected phases: (1) the emergence of the slogan during the revolutionary and resistance efforts of WWII Yugoslavia; (2) its post-war institutionalization in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia; and (3) its reactivation during the transitional and post-socialist periods, including today’s contexts. Each phase features a different relationship between ritual, authority, and political function.

In its initial stage, the slogan arose within partisan resistance as a revolutionary and mobilizing utterance under conditions of foreign military occupation. Established in a context in which occupying forces maintained political and territorial control, the slogan served as an explicitly oppositional, anti-occupation, freedom-affirming performative statement. Appearing within a politically organized movement led by the Communist Party (Figure 5), it operated under conditions of existential threat and violent repression. Its performative force lay in its ability to articulate a collective stance in a situation of armed conflict and occupation, where

speech, bodily presence, and risk intertwined. During this phase, the slogan was a performative act of alignment enacted through bodily multimodal practices.

Following the war, the political actor that had mobilized the slogan within resistance – the Communist Party – became the ruling authority. The slogan was not abandoned; instead, it was carried into the new political order by the very actors who had previously used it in opposition. However, its role fundamentally shifted. What once embodied performative resistance under occupation became, in the post-war era, a commemorative tool embedded in state power. The conflict that initially defined its use was no longer active and had been resolved. The slogan’s antagonistic force was displaced from the present confrontation to the memory of past conflict. Integrated into state-sponsored rituals, school practices, national commemorations, and official memory culture, it became a stable part of the socialist symbolic order (Figure 6). Through ritual repetition, it no longer motivated collective action against an existing authority but instead confirmed the legitimacy of the authority now in control.

While the slogan continued to evoke freedom, this appeal was channeled through an authoritarian one-party political system. Its rebellious energy was redirected toward a narrative of antifascist victory and the prevention of perceived external and internal threats, thus anchoring state authority in the memory of communist-led resistance. In this second phase, the slogan mainly served as a legitimizing memory: it reinforced the ideological link between the Party, the Partisan struggle, and the socialist state, naturalizing their inseparability.

The third phase occurs in the post-socialist era after Slovenia’s independence, when socialist memory regimes dissolved and institutional monopolies over public remembrance weakened. In this context, “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” lost its clear institutional support and re-entered public debate as a contested, politically charged slogan. Its reemergence on social media – particularly X and Facebook – does not depend on detailed historical knowledge of its origins but on semiotic and bodily dispositions formed through earlier rituals, commemorative practices, and habitualized modes of response.

The capacity for resignification

The slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” functions as a multimodal semiotic complex in which meaning arises not from the verbal text alone, but through transductions among semiotic modes – verbal language, image, gesture, layout, and typographic form – and through the sensory modalities by which these modes are apprehended. Visually–textually, the slogan

can act as a trigger that activates culturally sedimented auditory patterns – specifically rhythm, volume, and collective cadence – as it circulates in various cultural contexts like commemorations, cinema, and protests. This causes a shift from a visual-verbal mode to vocalized enactment, where one hears or even mentally repeats the slogan's cadence. This auditory response can then shift into gestural and sensorimotor dimensions: once the written slogan is mentally vocalized as a chant, it may activate the bodily disposition associated with that chant, most notably the raised-fist gesture. The gesture is not produced primarily through explicit conscious reflection; rather, it is experienced as a bodily continuation of the vocalized slogan. This gestural response is not fixed, as the slogan can be easily conflated with the similar one "Za domovino, s Titom naprej," causing bodily responses to vary between defiant fist-raising and salute-like postures shaped by pedagogical and ceremonial repetition. Nevertheless, in this relation, the raised fist, whether enacted or represented, functions as a sign, whereas the learned readiness to assume or recognize such a gesture, or vocalize the slogan, is a bodily disposition.

These modal transitions are rooted in layered mnemonic structures – both personal and collective – condensed in iconic visual artifacts, such as the photograph of Stjepan Filipović at the gallows (and its reproductions in statues and stamps), which functions as a visual condensation of resistance, sacrifice, and bodily – gestural defiance. The slogan's semiotic force thus resides in a cascading affective economy where textual visibility, auditory resonance, visualization, and gestural enactment strengthen one another within a particular cultural sphere, or as Eco et al. term it – localized discursive universe (Eco et al., 1989), making its meaning inseparable from culturally specific multimodal memory and bodily practices through which it is repeatedly brought to life.

This account should be seen as an analytical reconstruction: it outlines a possible multimodal and somatic "trajectory" by extrapolating from the mnemonic abilities of the analyst and a nearby interpretive community. As a result, it runs the risk of mistaking such abilities for a generally available mechanism of remembering. Because collective memories are generational and constantly evolving, it is hard to identify a single way the slogan works in today's social media environments, especially when considering the somatic aspect of memory and its relation to different semiotic modes, sensory experiences, and platform affordances. Still, the significance of the slogan relies precisely on the specific ways memory forms within different cultural settings. Our analytical attempt at reconstruction arguably outlined its main multimodal semiotic function through a relational approach to modes and modalities (Oja, 2023).

Empirically, the bodily and sensorimotor dimension of the slogan is unevenly distributed: for some, it is grounded in practiced vocalizations and ritualized bodily postures, while for others, it is mediated – learned through popular culture, commemorative media, or contemporary platforms – or both; the iconic photograph might be central, peripheral, or completely absent. What keeps the slogan's circulation going is not a stable, shared archive but a certain fuzziness – partial overlap between episodic memory (personal recollections, bodily practices, lived through experience) and semantic memory (collective memory repertoires, testimonial experience, culturally mediated bodily practices). This very indeterminacy enables memetic adoption: the form stays recognizable enough to coordinate emotion and orientation, yet flexible enough to be re-anchored in different mnemonic resources, allowing vocal and bodily responses (such as standing, shouting, fist-raising, or salute-like postures) to remain variable enactments rather than uniform effects. The slogan functions as a complex mnemonic form – a meme in the Dawkins's (2006 [1976]) sense – before modern digital adaptations, as it condenses verbal, auditory, gestural, and emotional traces into a relatively stable yet internally diverse unit of memory. When it circulates on social media platforms like X and Facebook, its mnemonic and political power is heightened through integration into composite artifacts – photos, caricatures, typographic variations, added framing, acronym reduction, and interactional layers like replies, comment threads, and visibility metrics. These transformations do not diminish its semio-somatic complexity; rather, they expand it into new environments (as shown in numerous examples of its current circulation), enabling the slogan to act both as a condensed mnemonic cue and as a dynamically recontextualized node within networked political memory practices.

This capacity for resignification sets "Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu" apart from other ritualized socialist slogans like "Za domovino, s Titom naprej," which, despite similar levels of institutional repetition and bodily enactment, failed to re-emerge in contemporary political struggles with the same force. The difference is not in the level of ritualization itself, but in the slogan's capacity to define a normative boundary that stays relevant beyond its original historical context. While slogans focused on unity, development, or leadership were closely tied to the legitimacy of a specific political order, "Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu" maintains a semiotically conflictual structure that can be reactivated whenever questions of authority, exclusion, and freedom come to the forefront. Its semiotic openness, paired with ritualized embodiment, makes it adaptable to a variety of discursive reconfigurations. The variety of posts on X and Facebook from the Slovenian context that utilize this slogan across commemorative,

political, and everyday settings show not only its antagonistic power but also its ongoing agonistic potential. Rather than merely marking exclusion or opposition, the slogan functions as a reusable mnemonic form that enables political disagreement, historical positioning, and normative claims to be expressed within a shared symbolic framework. Its continued circulation demonstrates a form of semiotic applicability that supports ongoing processes of agonistic memory formation, in which conflict is preserved as productive and open rather than being resolved or closed.

PLATFORM AFFORDANCES AS CONDITIONS OF MNEMONIC ACTION AND VISIBILITY

In this section, affordances are understood in Gibson's (2015) original sense: as action possibilities that emerge from the relationship between an organism and its environment. When applied to social media, this does not mean viewing platform features as deterministic causes or simplifying affordances to user perceptions. Instead, platforms serve as extended environments – material and symbolic infrastructures of perception and action – where historically ingrained mnemonic dispositions can be reactivated and reshaped. The central question is which platform affordances sustain the repeated reactivation of mnemonic forms.

Affordances have become a key analytical lens in social media platform studies for explaining how platform architectures enable and constrain communicative action, its visibility, and its interactive potential (Hutchby, 2001; Boyd, 2011; Treem & Leonardi, 2012; Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Evans et al., 2017). What remains underexplored is how these actions become mnemonic and politically consequential by taking shape within specific multimodal and sensory configurations of expression and embodiment.

Within communication and media scholarship focused on social media and digital memory, affective, discursive, and political dimensions have been more prominently theorized than multimodal and sensorial ones (cf. Papacharissi, 2015; Ben-David et al., 2024). When multimodality is addressed, it is most often simplified to a general acknowledgment of the “multimedia” nature of platforms, mainly referring to the coexistence of text, images, audio, and video. What remains under-theorized is the relationship between modes and sensory modalities: how meaning is produced across them, how it is anchored in bodily perception, and how it acquires affective and ritual force. Approaches that combine affordance-based analysis with theories of multimodality are therefore uncommon, and even fewer studies explicitly integrate both traditions in a theoretically and methodologically explicit manner within research on digital and social media (notable exceptions include Reichl et al., 2022; van Leeuwen &

Johannessen, 2022; Plastina, 2022). Nonetheless, such integrative frameworks are rarely used in research on digital memory. Consequently, affordance-based analyses often focus on what platforms enable users to do without explaining how (mnemonic) meaning is concretely and sensorially constructed through multimodal configurations.

This limitation matters for memory studies because remembering is an embodied and affective practice shaped by repetition, ritual, and sensory involvement. Visual forms, vocal intensity, rhythm, gestures, spatial arrangements, and collective synchronization all enhance mnemonic force. Without paying attention to these dimensions, affordances risk being seen as just technical or interactional potentials, detached from the environmental conditions that make mnemonic forms politically charged and socially mobilizing. As previously mentioned, a helpful connection is offered by Campbell et al. (2019), who relate semiotic resources to Gibson's organism–environment relationship with sense-perceptive and motoric capabilities.

For the purposes of this article, Gibsonian affordances are therefore defined in relation to multimodal mnemonic circulation: the possibilities for action through which historically sedimented mnemonic forms can be repeatedly brought into platformed public space and become contested. Affordances matter politically because they create potentials under which memory-related interventions gain public traction and enter agonistic contestation.

In the case of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu,” the relevant affordances are those that support (a) the inscription and re-inscription of the slogan (including abbreviation, quotation, and reformulation), (b) transduction across modes (embedding the slogan in images, videos, and typographic compositions, including remediations of iconic artifacts such as the Filipović photograph), (c) interactional uptake (reply threads and quote-post framing through which the slogan is reaffirmed, contested, or recontextualized), and (d) visibility modulation (feed ordering, algorithmic ranking, and engagement metrics that condition its platformed recirculation). Together, these affordances enable the slogan to operate as a repeatable and contestable mnemonic form rather than a static symbolic reference.

These affordances do not replace the slogan's semio-somatic force, which was formed through earlier ritual and institutional repetitions; they modulate its circulation and activation. What changes under platform conditions is the speed and scope at which the slogan can be re-inscribed, recontextualized, and brought into interaction, intensifying cycles of reiteration and contestation central to its contemporary political efficacy. This efficacy is further sustained by the perceived public nature of platform environments: from users' perspectives, mnemonic interventions appear to unfold within a seemingly open public sphere,

even though the infrastructures that mediate them are privately owned, commercially oriented toward engagement, algorithmically governed, and subject to algorithmic personalization. The feeling of participating in a shared, accessible space for political expression strengthens the slogan's ability to serve as a public act of political positioning. However, the availability of these affordances does not guarantee equal political influence. The public uptake of mnemonic forms remains contingent on continued exposure and affective resonance – potentials that platform architectures and algorithmic filtering differentially enable and amplify.

The digital circulation of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” shows how platform affordances reconfigure political memory. The slogan's mnemonic force is not lessened in digital environments, but it becomes publicly operative through the platform-mediated dynamics. The following analysis explores how these dynamics shape the slogan's multimodal articulations and agonistic uses in today's digital publics.

“SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU” ON X AND FACEBOOK

An analysis of contemporary uses of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” on X and Facebook shows that it circulates less as a purely verbal statement and more as a multimodal mnemonic configuration in which text, images, and bodily gestures are tightly and affectively interwoven. The empirical material was gathered through keyword-based searches for the phrase on both platforms and assembled as a purposive qualitative corpus of approximately one hundred salient and diverse examples (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026), selected for their analytical relevance rather than for statistical representativeness.⁵

Across the analyzed posts, the slogan functions as a conflicting sign whose political meaning is repeatedly reactivated and renegotiated in the present. The posts do not form a single, uniform reference point but instead group into different ways of remembering. Across the material, six main patterns of reinterpretation can be observed. First (1), institutionalized commemorative uses, where the slogan appears in connection with officially recognized historical events and state holidays, such as the Slovenian Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April), functioning as a ritualized motto of institutionalized antifascist memory. Second (2), vernacular commemorative reaffirmations, in which users repeat the slogan alongside archival photographs, monuments, or references to partisan history, reaffirming the established antifascist narrative in a more informal digital context. Third (3), contemporary political

adaptations, where the slogan is redeployed in current political conflicts by substituting new actors into its antagonistic structure. Fourth (4), counter-memory reinterpretations, which detach the slogan from its association with the Communist-led partisan movement and reconnect it to alternative antifascist traditions. Fifth (5), post-socialist delegitimizing reinterpretations, which recast the slogan as a symbol of communist domination or totalitarian rule. Finally (6), reflexive or critical inversions, in which the slogan is deliberately altered to expose the instability and manipulability of politically charged mnemonic expressions. These variations do not stand alone but frequently intersect and overlap, showing the slogan as a compact mnemonic form through which competing interpretations of the past and present are articulated.

The circulation of the slogan on social media is not always confined to clearly demarcated national or linguistic contexts. In some instances, posts referencing “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” intersect with wider post-Yugoslav mnemonic repertoires, including the Cyrillic script, Serbian or Croatian language versions, or symbols associated with a shared socialist past. While such overlaps complicate attempts to attribute mnemonic practices to a single national memory culture, they underscore the transnational mobility of antifascist symbols that cross borders and the open, fluid nature of platform-mediated memory. Content circulates across linguistic, cultural, and political boundaries and becomes available to conflicting appropriations.

Across the examined posts, a dominant visual genealogy of the slogan emerges. Archival photographs of WWII partisans, post-war propaganda posters, the red star, contemporary urban graffiti, and photographs of standing or saluting figures positioned next to inscriptions or memorials – especially during commemorative events associated with WWII battles, meetings, or anniversaries – recur with striking regularity. These images do not merely illustrate the slogan but anchor it in a continuity of bodily and spatial practices that connect different historical moments through the repetition of bodily postures, spatial arrangements, and modes of public appearance. In this way, the mnemonic force of the slogan is sustained both symbolically and through recognizable bodily dispositions that persist across media, contexts, and generations.

Alongside conflicting and polemical appropriations, a significant number of posts reinforce the slogan in an affirmative and commemorative register (Figures 8 and 10). These posts reproduce archival photographs of partisans, wartime documents, or iconic figures such as Stjepan Filipović, often accompanied by quotations, dates, and references to specific battles or anniversaries. In

5 For ethical reasons, posts originating from private or non-institutional user accounts were anonymized before inclusion in the article. Usernames, handles, profile photographs, links, and other directly identifying metadata were removed or obscured in the reproduced screenshots. Figure captions retain only the platform and year of publication, while the anonymized items are cited through the authors' research corpus.

these cases, the slogan is not reinterpreted but reaffirmed as an ethical and historical axiom. Its meaning remains anchored in the antifascist struggle of WWII and is used as a sign of respect, continuity, or nostalgia. Here, the slogan acts as a stabilizing mnemonic device rather than a site of disruption. It reinforces an established narrative of antifascist legitimacy and effectively passes it down through generations, maintaining emotional ties to a heroic past. However, in such cases, the slogan usually implies a normative endorsement of the partisan and socialist historical narrative, framing it as the legitimate or morally authoritative trajectory of antifascist struggle. As a result, these invocations often generate counter-posts and revisionist responses that contest this implicit claim to historical legitimacy.

The slogan is often paired with visual symbols linked to socialist and antifascist iconography, most notably the red star (Figure 7). In this context, the red star does not function merely as a referential sign of communism or resistance but as a condensed visual mnemonic device. It encapsulates ideological positioning, affective alignment, and claims of historical continuity into an immediately recognizable form. At the same time, the red star's circulation across contemporary anti-imperialist, antifascist, anti-populist, and anti-nationalist contexts reveals the fragmented and contested nature of collective memory, as the same symbol can be adopted for different political appropriations.



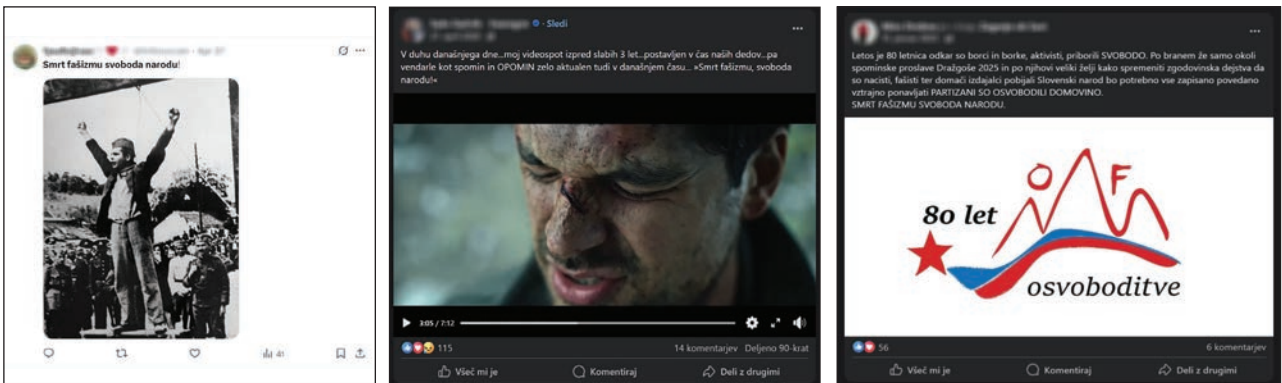
Figure 7: Anonymized post on X from 2025 pairing the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” with the red star and the hammer and sickle – symbols closely associated with socialist and antifascist iconography. In this configuration, the red star operates as a condensed visual mnemonic device that anchors the slogan within a recognizable socialist visual repertoire and signals ideological alignment with antifascist and leftist historical narratives (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

The slogan is frequently shared on social media in connection with the Slovenian national holiday Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April), which was known as the Day of the Liberation Front from 1948 to 1992. The Liberation Front was a political organization established in Ljubljana on 26 April 1941 as the Anti-Imperialist Front. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union, it was renamed the Liberation Front of the Slovene Nation. In this context, the slogan functions as a guiding motto of the commemorative event, reaffirming the established antifascist narrative associated with the Liberation Front (Figures 8–10).

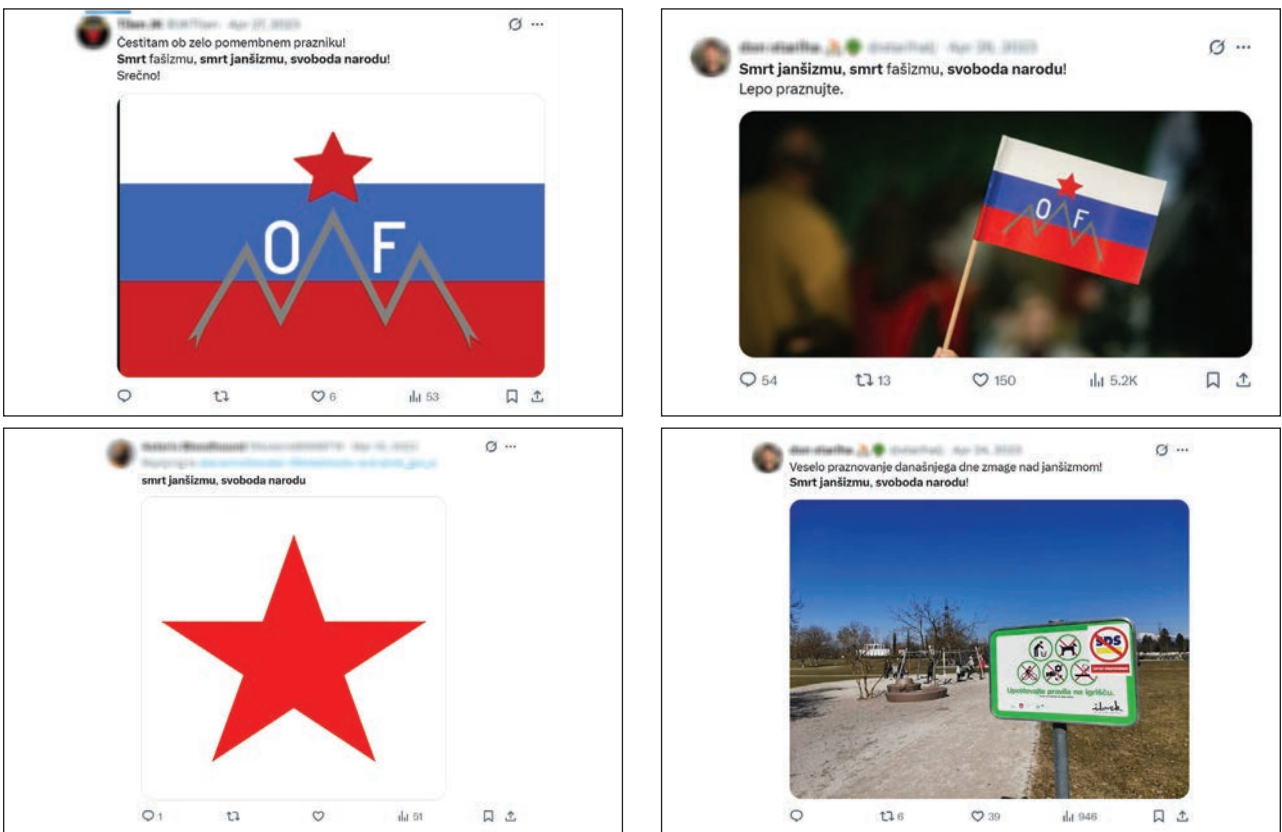
During the anti-government protests that took place in Slovenia between 2020 and 2022, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures, protesters coined the slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Janšism, freedom to the people”), which appeared on banners, placards, and other protest materials. At the time, the Slovenian government was led by Janez Janša of Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS, Slovenian Democratic Party; a conservative party), and many protesters framed the government’s broader political conduct as authoritarian, mobilizing against it and calling for political change. After the parliamentary elections of April 2022, which brought Robert Golob of Gibanje Svoboda (Freedom Movement; a liberal party) to power, the slogan did not disappear from public discourse but continued to circulate on social media. Especially after 2023, it appears frequently in the form “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” or in the expanded formulation “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” In some cases, the phrase is invoked around the anniversary of the 2022 parliamentary elections (Figures 11–14), where it functions as an informal commemorative marker of the political transition.

In September 2020, the Slovenian prosecution dismissed a request to prohibit the public display of banners carrying this slogan, a decision that supporters of the protests widely celebrated and commented on social media. The continued circulation of the slogan has also generated political controversy. In 2025, the parliamentary group of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), led by Janez Janša, addressed a question to the government asking whether the dissemination of the slogan could be sanctioned under proposed legislation addressing hate speech, arguing that it incites hostility toward political opponents (Figures 15 and 16). Similar post-Yugoslav disputes over historically charged slogans and salutes show how symbolic forms can operate simultaneously as memory markers, identity claims, and objects of hate-speech contestation (cf. Damčević, 2025).

Variants such as “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” and the expanded form “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu” appear particularly frequently after 2023, when the government had already been led by Robert Golob, whose electoral victory in 2022 had



Figures 8–10: Figure 8 (left) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2026 reproducing the iconic photograph of the partisan Stjepan Filipović with the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu”; Figure 9 (middle) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2020 in which a musician dedicates a music video marking Slovenia’s national holiday Day of Uprising Against Occupation (27 April); Figure 10 (right) shows an anonymized post on Facebook from 2025 that repeats the slogan and explicitly links it to the historical legacy of the Liberation Front (Osvobodilna fronta) (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figures 11–14: Anonymized posts on X from 2023 illustrating the contemporary adaptation of the slogan in connection with Slovenian electoral politics. The expanded formulation “Smrt fašizmu, smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” and the shortened version “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” appear alongside symbols associated with the Liberation Front (OF) and the red star. Circulating around the one-year anniversary of the 2022 parliamentary elections that brought a change of government, these posts reinterpret the historical slogan within a present-day political context, framing it as a celebratory marker of political transition and as a continuation of antifascist symbolic language in contemporary partisan discourse (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figures 15 and 16: Posts on X from 2025 illustrating critical reactions to the slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” Figure 15 (left) shows a post by the parliamentary group of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) questioning whether the dissemination of the slogan should be sanctioned under proposed legislation addressing hate speech. Figure 16 (right) shows a post by another account amplifying the same message through a video excerpt from a parliamentary debate. These X posts frame the slogan as an incitement to hostility against political opponents, demonstrating how its circulation generates counter-discourses that challenge its legitimacy in the contemporary political arena (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

been supported by the earlier protesters. In this new context, the slogan no longer functions primarily as an immediate anti-government address against the government then in office, as it did during the protests of 2020–2022. Rather, its already layered mnemonic and political function becomes more pronounced. The slogan’s reformulations simultaneously evoke several historical layers: the original wartime antifascist resistance, the socialist period in which that resistance was institutionally commemorated and ritualized, and the anti-government protest mobilizations of 2020–2022 directed against Janez Janša’s third administration. Through this layered mnemonic reference, the slogan increasingly operates as a symbolic reminder of earlier political struggles. At the same time, its continued repetition in digital environments maintains a clear motivational dimension. As Slovenia approached the parliamentary elections in March 2026, the slogan was frequently used as a form of political mobilization that draws on antifascist memory to reinforce support within a particular political camp.

A rarer but illustrative variation appears in the slogan “Smrt golobizmu, svoboda narodu,” which emerged shortly after the change of government in 2022 (Figure 17). This formulation can be understood as a reactive inversion of the much more widespread slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu.” By inserting a different political figure into the same antagonistic structure, the slogan demonstrates how its formulation

can be redeployed by opposing actors as a vehicle of political criticism directed at the government of Robert Golob. Although such examples are far less common, they reveal the structural openness of the phrase: its oppositional semiotic structure allows different political adversaries to occupy the same position within the formulaic configuration.

In some cases, the slogan is also linked to a broader geopolitical framework. For instance, the phrase “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” appears alongside expressions such as “Long live Vladimir Putin” and “Long live Russia,” framing contemporary geopolitical conflict through the symbolic language of antifascist struggle (Figure 18). Such uses extend the slogan’s mnemonic field beyond the national historical context and implicitly revive the earlier symbolic alignment between Yugoslav communist resistance, the Soviet Union and anti-imperialism. In this sense, the slogan demonstrates a form of mnemonic mobility, whereby antifascist memory is reactivated within new geopolitical narratives.

In some cases, the slogan is being reframed in ways that activate counter-memory. For example, a post on X (Figure 19) presents it as a “TIGR greeting,” referencing the antifascist organization TIGR that operated in the Slovene Littoral before and during WWII. Through this reframing, the slogan is detached from its association with the Communist-led partisan movement and reconnected to a non-communist lineage of antifascist resistance. This reinterpretation brings to the surface

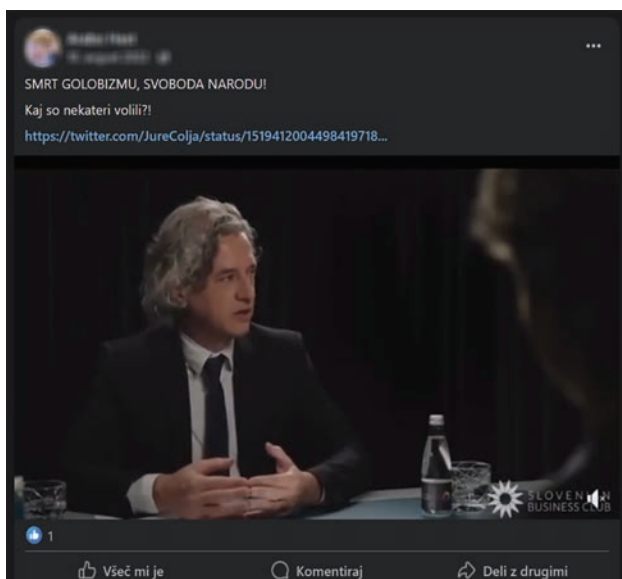


Figure 17: Anonymized post on Facebook from 2022 featuring the slogan “Smrt golobizmu, svoboda narodu” (“Death to Golobism, freedom to the people”), published shortly after the change of government in 2022. By substituting “Golobism” for the original target of the adapted slogan “Smrt janšizmu, svoboda narodu,” the post illustrates how the same antagonistic semiotic structure can be redeployed by opposing actors as a vehicle of political criticism directed at the government of Robert Golob (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

memories that had been marginalized within the socialist symbolic order, where the antifascist struggle was narratively unified under the Partisan movement and the Communist Party. By invoking TIGR, the slogan becomes a site where suppressed or subordinated strands of resistance history resurface, recalling actors who fought against fascist occupation and advocated for the freedom of the local population but were later overshadowed or ideologically neutralized in the dominant post-war narrative. In this way, the slogan functions as a vehicle of counter-memory: it destabilizes the previously hegemonic memory regime and reopens the questions about who constitutes the legitimate subject of antifascist struggle. Instead of merely repeating an established historical script, it becomes a discursive space where competing memories of resistance are articulated and renegotiated.

One X post reiterates the words of the famous Slovenian writer Vitomil Zupan in his disillusionment with the Communist Party after the war (and particularly its grandiloquent slogans) that “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” actually meant “Death to the fascist, power to the communist” (it combines the reinterpretation with an image of a page from Zupan’s

book, cf. Figure 20). Here the slogan is reinterpreted as an expression of communist dominance. What was once a call for collective liberation from fascism is reclassified as a tool for ideological consolidation. The slogan is seen as evidence of ongoing totalitarianism and is often dismissed as an illegitimate remnant of an authoritarian past. Through this reinterpretation, anti-fascism itself is destabilized as a moral and political benchmark, and the slogan becomes a proxy for broader disputes over the legitimacy of the socialist era. The slogan’s structure is reopened and reinterpreted, not to expand its emancipatory potential, but to invert its moral significance.

In another example from X (Figure 21), the slogan undergoes a mnemonic reversal, redirecting antifascist rhetoric against the current government. The phrase “Death to Fascism, Freedom to the People” is used in a post targeting Robert Golob (Prime Minister at the time). While Golob has previously called out the former government as fascist, this post reverses the accusation, blaming him for fascism. The reinterpretation occurs on multiple levels. The statement, typographically added on the collage – “My grandfather was a fascist,” adds a genealogical layer, personalizing the accusation and symbolically linking the Prime Minister to a stigmatized historical lineage. This shifts the debate

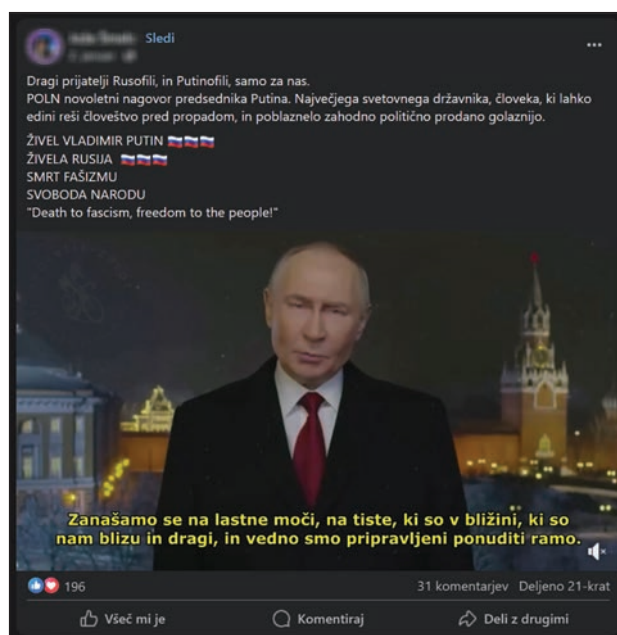


Figure 18: Anonymized post on Facebook from 2026 presenting Vladimir Putin as a global liberator and the only effective counterforce to Western power, invoking the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” to frame contemporary conflict through a revived anti-imperialist imaginary (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).



Figure 19: Anonymized post on X from 2023 reframing the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” as a “TIGR greeting.” By linking the slogan to the antifascist organization TIGR, which operated in the Slovene Littoral before and during WWII, the post, while using inflammatory rhetoric against Prime Minister Golob, reinterprets the slogan outside its association with the Communist-led partisan movement (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

from policy criticism to a moral and historical attack. The visual pairing of Golob with Hitler and Mussolini further erases the time gap, equating today’s democratic leadership with key figures of 20th-century fascism. In this context, the slogan acts as a call for political change. Calling the Prime Minister a fascist suggests that his removal from office would lead to freedom for the people. This results in a mnemonic reversal: the language of antifascist resistance is turned against a government that claims the antifascist tradition, disrupting traditional memory alignments and reinterpreting the meaning of fascism in today’s political landscape.

Taken together, these modes of circulation indicate that the slogan functions less as a stable form of remembrance and more as a recurring source of disruption within the contemporary memory landscape. It challenges both the socialist narrative of antifascist continuity and the post-socialist narrative of democratic rupture, reopening conflicts that dominant memory regimes try to close.

The repeated circulation of the photograph of Stjepan Filipović shows how this mnemonic persistence is maintained. The image often appears alongside the slogan or circulates on its own as a compact visual icon. For those who grew up in socialist Yugoslavia, its associated bodily dispositions may be linked to episodic memory of institutional rituals and public commemorations; for later generations, these dispositions are acquired through mediated repetition and

even reenactment – posing with raised fists, staging the gesture for the camera, and sharing it online. In this way, digital artifacts do not just represent the slogan but also participate in the reactivation of the repertoire of learned bodily dispositions. Memory here is not confined to narrative recall but is enacted through posture, gesture, vocalization, and affective alignment. Even when detailed historical knowledge is partial or absent, the repetition of recognizable gestures and signs sustains mnemonic continuity across generations and political orders.

The endurance of the slogan shows how historically sedimented semio-somatic mnemonic forms can traverse regimes and reappear in public space as arenas of ongoing struggle. Having lost its previous roles as a tool for resistance uprising and later for state legitimization, it persists as a politically charged mnemonic form whose force derives from multimodal recognition and bodily repetition. The fight over the slogan thus reflects a broader struggle over historical authority, political legitimacy, and the narrative framing.

CONCLUSION: PLATFORMED MEMORY AND AGONISTIC PUBLIC CONTESTATION

Representational accounts and generalized affordance models are inadequate to explain the political significance of digital memory. The analysis shows that memory becomes politically active in platformed environments through the reactivation of mnemonic forms previously stabilized through ritual repetition, institutional use, bodily enactment, and cultural recognition. Their political force depends on socio-technical conditions that regulate visibility and enable renewed mnemonic uptake. The issue is therefore not the displacement of institutional memory by vernacular participation, but the reorganization of mnemonic authority within hybrid, platform-mediated memory ecologies.

Central to this is the interaction between semio-somatic memory and platform affordances. The slogan’s oppositional semiotic structure and associated bodily dispositions provide the conditions for mnemonic endurance; platform affordances, understood in a Gibsonian sense as relational potentials for action within extended environments of perception and communication, modulate how it reappears and becomes publicly operative. Affordances do not determine meaning but condition the repeated inscription, multimodal rearticulation, and interactional engagement through which historically charged forms enter agonistic contestation. Memory on platforms thus functions as a field of mediated activation, where semio-somatic structures are continually reopened to public dispute.

The case of “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” demonstrates that mnemonic endurance relies not only on ritualization and bodily practices but also

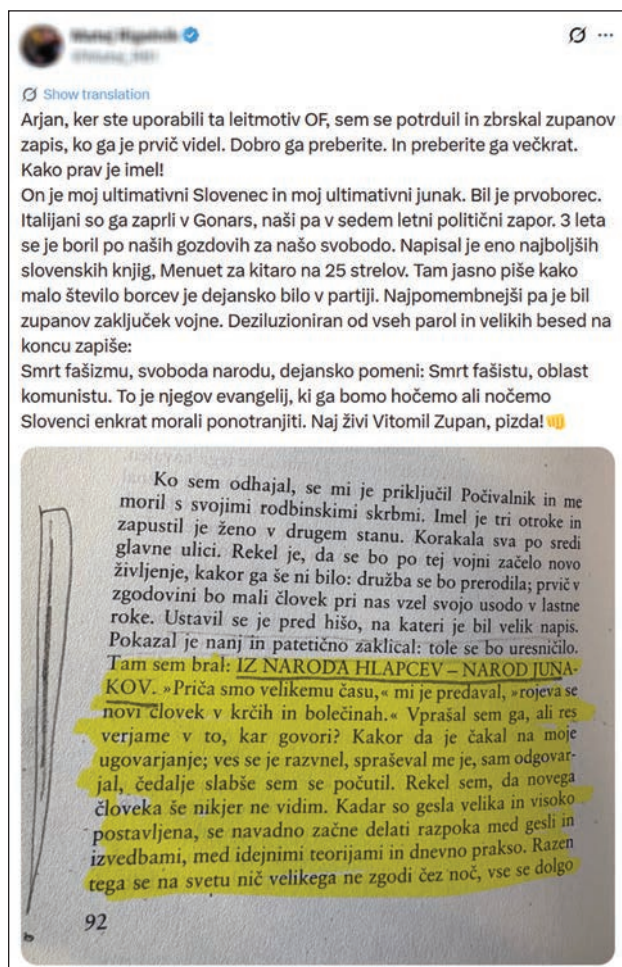


Figure 20: Anonymized post on X from 2026 presenting a post-socialist critique of the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu.” The post argues that the phrase in practice meant “Death to the Fascist, Power to the Communist,” thereby reinterpreting the slogan not as a call for liberation but as an expression of communist domination (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

on semiotic structure. By combining negation with emancipation, the slogan encodes political antagonism into its linguistic form. This relational structure allows different opponents to be incorporated into the same syntagmatic framework, preserving formal continuity while allowing paradigmatic variability. Its political durability therefore depends on the conjunction of structural flexibility and sedimented semio-somatic memory.

The slogan’s current circulation shows how digital platforms function as spaces of competitive public memory. Its various appearances – ranging from institutionalized commemorative uses and vernacular commemorative reaffirmations to contemporary political



Figure 21: Anonymized post on X from 2024 combining the slogan “Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu” with a visual collage juxtaposing Prime Minister Robert Golob with historical fascist leaders. By inserting a contemporary political figure into the antifascist visual and rhetorical framework, the post illustrates a mnemonic reversal in which antifascist symbolism is redeployed to target a government that claims the antifascist tradition (Babnik & Tratnik, 2026).

adaptations, counter-memory reinterpretations, post-socialist delegitimizing reinterpretations, and reflexive or critical inversions – demonstrate that its survival depends less on stable meaning than on its capacity for repeated uptake and resignification. In engagement-oriented platform environments, mnemonic power is sustained through forms that remain recognizable while being repeatedly drawn into divergent political uses. The repeated disputes surrounding the slogan therefore reveal the continuing political significance of the semio-somatic antifascist mnemonic repertoire as a resource in struggles over who may legitimately speak for the political community and on what normative grounds.

The rapid activation and recirculation of historically sedimented mnemonic forms within algorithmically structured environments – memorification – does not undo memory’s embodied foundation; it exposes it to intensified visibility and agonistic rearticulation. The political efficacy of digital memory therefore depends on the interaction of semiotic structure, semio-somatic sedimentation, and platform-driven visibility. Future research should further develop a relational multimodal approach capable of analyzing how semiotic modes, sensory modalities, bodily practices, and affordances co-constitute mnemonic force in digital publics.

POLITIČNI SPOMIN KOT AGONISTIČNA PRAKSA NA DRUŽBENIH OMREŽJIH: SEMIO-SOMATSKI SPOMIN, MULTIMODALNOST IN PLATFORMNE ZMOŽNOSTI DELOVANJA, TEORETIZIRANE SKOZI DIGITALNO KROŽENJE SLOGANA »SMRT FAŠIZMU, SVOBODA NARODU«

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POVZETEK

Digitalne platforme so postale ključni prostori oblikovanja kulturnega spomina. Članek zagovarja tezo, da politična moč digitalnega spomina izhaja iz aktivacije zgodovinsko ritualiziranih semio-somatskih mnemoničnih oblik znotraj platformnih infrastruktur vidnosti. Opira se na študije spomina, teorijo multimodalnosti in študije platformnih zmožnosti delovanja ter te procese konceptualizira skozi pojem semio-somatskega spomina. Pri tem poudarja, kako takšne mnemonične oblike vztrajajo in pridobivajo politični učinek s sedimentacijo telesnih praks, senzoričnih modalnosti in semiotičnih struktur. V sodobnih razmerah se mnemonična avtoriteta premika od razmeroma centraliziranega institucionalnega nadzora nad pomenom k hibridnim, platformno posredovanim procesom vidnosti, kroženja, sodelovanja in afektivne resonance. Argument je razvit skozi obravnavo današnjega kroženja slogana »Smrt fašizmu, svoboda narodu« na omrežjih X in Facebook. Slogan, ki izvira iz jugoslovanskega partizanskega odpora med drugo svetovno vojno, je prvotno deloval kot konfrontacijski in mobilizacijski performativni akt. V povojni socialistični Jugoslaviji je bil institucionaliziran in ritualiziran ter je postal del državnih slovesnosti in izobraževalnih praks, pri čemer se je njegova antagonistična moč delno zmanjšala, hkrati pa se je ponotranjil skozi ponavljajoče se telesno uprizarjanje. V postsocialistični in digitalni dobi ta semio-somatska mnemonična moč omogoča njegovo ponovno aktivacijo in resignifikacijo v novih političnih kontekstih. Primer kaže, kako semio-somatske mnemonične oblike preživijo različne politične režime in medijska okolja ter v sodobnih političnih bojih delujejo kot aktivne politične intervencije znotraj agonističnih javnih sfer. To preoblikovanje lahko razumemo kot memorifikacijo: pospešeno aktivacijo in ponovno kroženje zgodovinsko sedimentiranih mnemoničnih oblik v algoritmično strukturiranih okoljih.

Ključne besede: digitalni spomin, semio-somatski spomin, agonistična javnost, platformne zmožnosti delovanja, multimodalnost, utelešenost, politični spomin

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AGONISTIC ENGAGEMENT IN MEMORY POLITICS: MEDIA ARENAS, NORMATIVE ORIENTATIONS, AND DEBATES ON THE *GIORNO DEL RICORDO* IN ITALY AND SLOVENIA

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ABSTRACT

*The article examines agonistic engagement in debates on the *Giorno del ricordo* in Italy and Slovenia across three communication environments: X, online news, and survey responses. Drawing on agonistic memory theory and discourse-quality indicators, it analyses how contested memories are articulated as antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberation-compatible discourse. The findings show that X is dominated by conflict and contains little agonistic engagement, whereas Slovenian online news displays stronger agonistic framing than Italian news. Survey responses reveal a gap between respondents' declared support for plural, respectful debate and the more antagonistic dynamics of social media.*

Keywords: agonistic memory, memory politics, *Giorno del ricordo*, Italy, Slovenia, X, online news, contested memories

IMPEGNO AGONISTICO NELLA POLITICA DELLA MEMORIA: ARENE MEDIATICHE, ORIENTAMENTI NORMATIVI E DIBATTITI SUL *GIORNO DEL RICORDO* IN ITALIA E SLOVENIA

SINTESI

*L'articolo analizza l'impegno agonistico nei dibattiti sul *Giorno del ricordo* in Italia e Slovenia attraverso tre ambienti comunicativi: X, notizie online e risposte a un questionario. Basandosi sulla teoria della memoria agonistica e su indicatori della qualità del discorso, esamina come memorie contese vengano articolate in forme antagonistiche, agonistiche o compatibili con la deliberazione. I risultati mostrano che X è dominato dal conflitto e presenta scarso agonismo, mentre le notizie online slovene mostrano un inquadramento più agonistico di quelle italiane. Il questionario evidenzia uno scarto tra norme dichiarate e pratiche digitali.*

Parole chiave: memoria agonistica, politica della memoria, *Giorno del ricordo*, Italia, Slovenia, X, notizie online, memorie contese

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War left a wide range of long-term impact on Europe and around the world, continuing to shape politics, social relations, and everyday life.¹ This has generated extensive research on cultures of remembrance (Assmann, 2011; Olick, 2007), particularly on conflicting memories that persist within and across communities as a consequence of wartime divisions and complex post-war dynamics (Verovšek, 2021; Wüstenberg, 2017). Conflicting narratives continue to coexist, periodically reactivated by political contestation and historiographical disputes. Historical, social, and political factors condition whether such divisions are gradually mitigated or further entrenched. These struggles can be understood as competition among social groups over what “really happened” (the contested past; cf. Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003), where interpretations of the past carry strategic, political, and ethical implications.

A particularly salient example is the *Giorno del ricordo*, a national memorial day in Italy commemorated on 10 February since 2004. On this day, Italy commemorates victims of the so-called *foibe* killings (mass killings by the Yugoslav army after the liberation of Trieste in 1945) and the Istrian-Dalmatian exodus, which led to the emigration of about 220,000 to 270,000 (cf. D’Alessio, 2012, 295) Italians from Yugoslavia after the war. The commemoration remains among the most discussed sites of remembrance in Italy and in the Italo-Slovenian borderland (cf. Pagella politica, 2020; 2021; 2022).

Within this article, we adopt the agonistic memory approach as a framework with which to analyse contested commemorations. The broader theoretical basis for this approach has been developed elsewhere through a framework that shifts attention from memory regimes to discursive modes of memory (Horvat, 2026). This article builds on that conceptual framework by operationalising agonistic engagement for the empirical analysis of the *Giorno del ricordo* across different communicative arenas. Following Mouffe (1999; 2013), we distinguish between two modes of political conflict. In antagonism, opponents are constructed as enemies to be excluded and delegitimised. In agonism, by contrast, opponents remain legitimate

adversaries within a shared democratic horizon. In contested memory contexts, this approach enables us to treat polarised narratives not only as sources of division but also as potential resources for democratic engagement. This perspective has been further developed in agonistic memory studies (cf. Bull & Hansen, 2016; Berger & Kansteiner, 2021).

Despite the expanding literature on agonistic memory and digitally mediated memory conflicts, we still lack systematic, comparative evidence on how agonistic engagement is actually articulated across different media arenas. Much of the existing work either remains primarily normative, specifying what agonistic remembrance should look like, or examines single arenas in isolation, for example social media or journalistic discourse. In addition, empirical studies rarely connect mediated patterns to broader public normative orientations. Our study addresses these gaps by operationalising agonistic engagement through transparent indicator sets and rule-based typologies across X and online news, and by benchmarking these mediated patterns against citizens’ normative orientations measured in a cross-national non-structured survey.

Building on this conceptual framework, our research takes a step further by combining the theoretical contribution of agonistic memory with computational methods to systematically examine how contested memories are articulated in both traditional and online arenas. Rather than treating agonism as a purely normative ideal, we approach it as an empirical phenomenon that can be identified, described, and compared across media environments. We use a combination of LLM-assisted techniques² to detect and map agonistic elements in a large corpus of online news articles and X posts about the *Giorno del ricordo* in Slovenia and Italy. This includes detecting and comparing agonistic cues in X posts and in online news reporting. Finally, we complement these analyses with a survey capturing citizens’ orientations toward key agonistic principles, aligned with our indicator frameworks. This triangulation of methods allows us to assess not only where agonistic engagement emerges in mediated discourse, but also how it relates to broader public dispositions. We operationalise these aims in two research questions outlined below.

1 The authors acknowledge funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe programme under grant agreement ID 101094752: *Social Media for Democracy* (SoMe4Dem). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Horizon Europe. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. The article is also the result of the research project *From Contested Memories towards Multidirectional Communities: a Case Study of the Italo-Slovenian Borderland* (ARIS N6-0463) and research programme *Practices of Dispute Resolution between Customary and Written Law in the Area of Present-day Slovenia and Neighbouring Countries* (ARIS P6-0435), co-funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS).

2 By large-language-model-assisted techniques (LLM-assisted techniques), we refer to the use of a generative language model to support the systematic annotation of textual data according to predefined coding schemes. More specifically, we used an LLM to classify X posts and online news articles on the basis of theoretically derived indicators. The coding procedure was validated against expert-coded samples, as described in the methodology section.

RQ1: To what extent do debates about the *Giorno del ricordo* contain agonistic engagement, and how does this vary across X and online news in Slovenia and Italy?

To address RQ1, we provide a corpus-level mapping of agonistic engagement across both media arenas and countries by applying the rule-based typologies specified in Table 1 (X discourse types) and Table 2 (news profiles). On X, each post is coded on six binary indicators (conflict, incivility, respect, reciprocity, justification, constructiveness) and then assigned to a single discourse type using the decision rules in Table 1, separating antagonistic escalation (uncivil conflict) from non-antagonistic conflict, weak agonism, agonism with deliberative cues, agonism with constructiveness, and non-conflictual civil communication. In online news, each text is coded on four framing markers (G1–G4) and assigned to a single profile in Table 2, distinguishing non-agonistic/descriptive coverage from procedural-only neutrality, core agonism (legitimation of the opponent), stronger agonistic profiles combining plurality and/or bridging, and strong agonism (all markers present).

RQ2: How are memory-related discourses on the *Giorno del ricordo* shaped by the affordances, audiences, and normative expectations of different communication environments in Slovenia and Italy?

To address RQ2, we triangulate the media-based typology results with survey measures of respondents' normative orientations (cf. Table 3 and Table 4). Particular attention was paid to the presence and proportion of agonistic discourse, in order to evaluate the agonistic potential of each communication environment (news articles, social media/X, survey). This facilitates an assessment of how actors adapt their modes of engagement and argumentation to specific (media) contexts. By comparing the Italian and Slovenian national contexts, we identify similarities and differences in agonistic attitudes toward the *Giorno del ricordo* and assess how national frameworks influence the public performance of memory politics.

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Giorno del ricordo and political polarisation

After the Second World War, Fascist veterans in the postwar Italian democratic republic were free to narrate their war experiences but were marginalised by the prevailing anti-fascist rhetoric of public discourse (D'Alessio, 2012, 303). This had the paradoxical effect of leaving largely unaddressed Italian responsibility for what occurred during the

Second World War, as observed by historian Vanni D'Alessio (2012, 303), that raising the role of fascism in Italy "would probably have had the effect to reconsider the Italian responsibilities in the Second World War, the question of Italian aggression on Yugoslavia, and the case of unprosecuted Italian war criminals". This omission has had a lasting impact on the perception of fascism in contemporary Italy. Filippo Focardi (2016), one of Italy's leading experts on cultural memory of the Second World War and (anti)fascism, observes that after decades of a political "war of memory" marked by clashes and mediation, Italian public memory has become "self-centred, victimising and auto-celebratory" (Focardi, 2016, 193).

Until the 1990s, the historical narrative and public discourse mostly omitted the events related to the end of the Second World War in the borderland region of Venezia Giulia. Due to the need to maintain good relations with neighbouring Yugoslavia, these events – especially the mass killings (*foibe*) and the Istrian exodus – did not emerge in the historiographical narrative and public discourse until the collapse of Yugoslavia. However, after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the memory of those events occupied an increasingly prominent position in Italian public debate. In the space of two decades, an episode that had previously played a marginal role in Italy's wartime history, was transformed into a central national myth, increasingly placed alongside the memory of the *Shoah* (Tenca Montini, 2014; Knittel, 2015; Gobetti, 2021). Revisionist attempts, mainly on the part of the political right, have sought to portray the *foibe* as a forgotten episode in Italian history, the memory of which had been suppressed in the postwar period by the Communists (cf. Ballinger, 2000; 2004). At the discursive level, the Italian political right in particular, often frames the *foibe* as a symbol of national victimhood. As argued by Tenca Montini, the narrative is based on a limited range of simple assertions: (1) the total innocence of the victims, killed simply for their loyalty to their national group, (2) the brutality of the executioners and a supposed (3) forty-year "conspiracy of silence", which now justifies the exposure of the topic (Tenca Montini, 2014, 183–184).

In response, some intellectuals and politicians from the moderate left initially placed blame on their own side for the "silence". As such, we can understand the circumstances that facilitated the proclamation of the *Giorno del ricordo* in 2004.³ As Tenca Montini (2014, 183) argues, recognition of the mass killings allowed the left to distance itself from the Communist legacy and to reject accusations traditionally levelled at communists of

3 For details on *Giorno del ricordo* and the relationship between public discourse and history cf. Orlić (2015).

“national nihilism.” In fact, the law proclaiming the *Giorno del ricordo* was passed with an overwhelming parliamentary majority of 502 votes, opposed only by the *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC) and *Partito dei Comunisti Italiani* (PdCI), i.e. the successors of the historical Communist Party of Italy.

The National Memorial Day is held annually on February 10. The date chosen is no coincidence: it marks the signing of the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, by which Italy ceded most of Istria and parts of the Slovene-populated Littoral region to Yugoslavia, while the Free Territory of Trieste was created as a separate entity. This date thus symbolises both the end of Italian rule in large parts of the eastern Adriatic territories and the beginning of the mass exodus of a significant portion of their Italian-speaking population (partly regulated through the legal mechanism of the so-called “option” for Italian citizenship established by the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, cf. Kosmač, 2015; 2017). Consequently, the *Giorno del ricordo* quickly evolved from a national into a transnational issue, as it directly concerns the Italo-Slovenian-Croatian borderlands, a region historically characterised by ethnically and linguistically mixed communities.⁴ Yet the Slovenian government rarely launches an official protest regarding the narrative around the *Giorno del ricordo*, which openly criminalises the Yugoslav partisan liberation struggle and especially the Slovenian Partisans. However, events surrounding the *Giorno del ricordo* and media reports thereof have a direct impact on the lives of the Slovenian minority in Italy. This includes the fact that the central memorial site, declared a national monument in 1992, is the site of an annual national ceremony on the *Giorno del ricordo* at the memorial *Foiba of Basovizza*, located in Basovizza, a borderland village near Trieste largely populated by the Slovenian minority. In parallel to the general debate on the suitability of the site, which has been ongoing for years, another notable fact is that just a distance of one km from the foiba memorial stands another monument, this one commemorating the “heroes of Bazovica” – Slovenians, who were executed by the fascist militia on September 6, 1930, after the First Trieste Trial (cf. Dato, 2010). They are considered a symbol of opposition and resistance to the fascist regime and September 6 is still today the most important day of remembrance of the Slovenian minority in Italy.

Over the past twenty years, debates around the *Giorno del ricordo* have grown increasingly polarised, especially in the Italian public sphere. As Andrea Enrici explains, “[w]hile *Il Giorno del Ricordo* was initially introduced as a day of remembrance for

innocent victims, it has, over time, been shaped by a political agenda that decontextualises the violence committed by Tito’s partisans.” As he continues, portraying Yugoslav partisans as war criminals has been instrumental in criminalising the Resistance itself, with a clear goal of discrediting the Italian partisans (Enrici, 2025). According to the historian Eric Gobetti, the debate around the *Giorno del ricordo* has been placed in a much broader context of a long-term attempt to rehabilitate fascism, conveying the image of a fascism with a ‘human face’ (cf. Gobetti, 2025). On the other hand, some left-wing political parties and their representatives express criticism of the way the Day of Remembrance is celebrated, emphasising the need for a more comprehensive historical context and warning of the danger of the political instrumentalisation of this day. Strong opposition about events related to the day is expressed in particular by the bearers of anti-fascist memory and narrative in Italy – the National Association of Italian Partisans (*Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d’Italia* – ANPI). Each year, this creates a sharp polarisation in opinions toward the *Giorno del ricordo* in the public sphere.

While most scholarship has focused on discursive and historiographical debates (Pirjevec, 2009; Gobetti, 2021), limited research has analysed the social media debates. A notable exception is *Pagella Politica*’s monitoring of politicians’ social media activity between 2020 and 2022 on two days of remembrance: *Giorno della Memoria* (Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27) and *Giorno del ricordo* (February 10) (cf. *Pagella politica*, 2020; 2021; 2022). The analysis showed that, in general, right-oriented politicians are much more engaged on social networks than other politicians on the *Giorno del ricordo*, compared to the Holocaust Remembrance Day. Engagement levels fluctuated due to political dynamics and the Covid-19 pandemic, but the findings suggest that the commemoration is particularly amplified within right-wing digital discourse.

The *Giorno del ricordo* illustrates how contested memories of the Second World War continue to fuel political and social polarisation in both Italy and the Italo-Slovenian borderland. Previous scholarship has highlighted the transformation of the events into a powerful national myth, the political instrumentalisation of remembrance, and the persistent silencing of alternative perspectives, while recent monitoring of online debates points to their amplification in the digital spheres. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to how such conflicts unfold across different media environments or how polarised narratives might nevertheless contain agonistic elements of recognition and openness.

⁴ For a discussion of the region’s historical complexity and cultural hybridity, particularly in the post-Second World War period and in relation to the Istrian exodus, cf. Hrobat Virloget (2015). For more details on contested (collective) memories in Italo-Slovenian borderland cf. Širok (2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c), Cattunar (2012; 2014) and Klabjan (2012; 2017).

Agonism as discursive mode: From theory to operationalisation

Building on the case outlined above, we treat the *Giorno del ricordo* as an instance of contested memory. Rawski (2024, 1) defines this type of memory as “any dispute over the legitimacy of specific sets of meanings and symbols related to significant events of the past, which play an important role in identity-formation for more than one social group in the present.” In such disputes, the analytical object is not only historical reference or accuracy per se, but the public struggle over interpretations, symbols, and claims of responsibility within the shared political space (Meyer, 2008).

In such settings, where identities, moral claims and competitive notions of victimhood are at stake, the public discourse is often antagonistic. Antagonistic memory is typically marked by binary oppositions, competitive victimhood, and moral exclusion of the other side (Berger & Kansteiner, 2021), and this mode of discussion can often be amplified by digital media dynamics such as selective exposure, echo chambers, and toxic polarisation (Törnberg, 2022). An agonistic approach, advanced in particular by Bull & Hansen (2016), offers a productive alternative to antagonism by distinguishing adversaries from enemies and by recognising conflict as a legitimate form of democratic contestation rather than a pathology to be eliminated (Mouffe, 1999; 2013). Applied to memory politics, this perspective suggests that competing interpretations of the past are not necessarily destructive; under certain conditions, they can constitute arenas of plural coexistence in which disagreement is publicly articulated without enforcing closure. In this context, there has been an increasing body of research on how to employ an agonistic approach in memory debates (Berger & Kansteiner, 2021), for instance by linking oral history and agonistic memory to the contested past (Reynolds, 2021), through specific case studies on how to deal with the past (Castro de Azevedo, 2025) or with contentious heritage (Deufel, 2017; Kisić, 2021).

The central analytical question is not whether memory conflicts will disappear, but whether they are structured as antagonistic struggles or as agonistic contests among legitimate opponents. In this sense, Bull and Hansen specify how remembering can be organised so that conflict remains democratically productive. They outline four features of agonistic remembering: (i) resisting reductive “good versus evil” binaries by situating wrongdoing in specific historical circumstances and socio-political struggles; (ii) drawing on testimonies from both victims and perpetrators, alongside other implicated positions such as witnesses and bystanders; (iii) recognising

the political significance of emotions by regarding empathy as an initial step toward forms of remembrance that foster critical understanding, while also acknowledging the legitimacy of civic and political passions; and (iv) reconstructing historical context and struggle by tracing the socio-political dynamics and narrative formations through which mass crimes are perpetrated (Bull & Hansen, 2016, 10).

Bull & Hansen (2016) developed this categorisation within memory studies. However, to link agonistic memory with the domain of political science and to analyse how debates about contested commemoration are conducted across online and offline arenas, a broader approach is useful, one that foregrounds interactional quality and communicative practices. For this purpose, we draw on a deliberative-democratic framework as a measurement toolkit for observable interactional cues. It should be noted that, referencing Habermas’s deliberative model of the public sphere, Bull and Hansen argue that a deliberative approach to memory risks the silencing of dissensus and conflict, since consensus-building can underestimate the importance of affect, identity, and antagonism in the political realm, whereas agonistic memory “does not aim to overcome conflict but to make it productive” (Bull & Hansen, 2016, 30).

However, this does not mean that deliberative-democratic approaches are irrelevant for the empirical study of contested memory. As argued elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), at the level of discourse quality, deliberative-democratic methods that focus on procedural features and are operationalised through Discourse Quality Index indicators can be productively adapted to contested memory debates. In our approach, agonism is treated as one discursive mode alongside antagonistic and deliberative modes, and can be measured through observable signals. This allows us to move beyond the binary of “enemy” versus “adversary” by identifying and measuring specific moves that acknowledge disagreement while sustaining minimal mutual recognition, such as respectful engagement, reciprocity, reason-giving, and constructive orientation. In other words, combining an agonistic lens with deliberative quality markers helps us identify discursive “bridges” across deep divisions, a move through which conflict becomes manageable without eliminating disagreement (Bächtiger & Dryzek, 2024), and a transformative moment that enables communication across divides. Identifying such moments resonates with micro-analytical approaches that study shifts between low- and high-quality interaction in divided settings (cf. Steiner et al., 2017). In contested memory politics, these are particularly important as they represent rare but meaningful instances in which polarisation does

not merely reproduce itself, but generates openings for recognition, pluralism, and constructive contestation. Importantly, we operationalise the distinction between agonistic memory through specific markers: agonistic engagement is captured primarily through pluralising, de-polarising remembrance (e.g., acknowledging multi-sided suffering, resisting instrumentalisation) that keeps the contestation “in play” while sustaining mutual respect.

To examine agonistic potential across the full corpus, we translate the above concepts into comparable empirical signals across three data sources. On X, we focus on the communicative conditions under which conflict becomes compatible with agonistic engagement. This part of the framework draws on established deliberative democracy indicators (Steenbergen et al., 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2009), as well as work on identifying conflict in online political communication (Canute et al., 2023). For the operationalisation of deliberative-quality signals on X, we rely on the Corpus for the Linguistic Analysis of Political Talk ONline (CLAPTON), which provides a framework for capturing features such as constructiveness, justification, relevance, reciprocity, empathy, and incivility in political discussions (Jaidka, 2022). We adapt and tailor this coding scheme to the specificities of the *Giorno del ricordo* debates in our datasets.

For online news, we apply a specific agonism-focused coding scheme that captures whether texts present opposing positions as legitimate and whether they introduce plural perspectives and bridge-building frames. Here, agonism is approximated less through conversational exchange and more through framing practices that either reinforce binary delegitimation or open space for adversarial coexistence.

Finally, we complement these indicator-based measures with a survey capturing respondents’ normative orientations toward key agonistic principles, such as willingness to listen to those who disagree, tolerance for plural interpretations, acknowledgement of others’ suffering, and preferences for common ground and solution-oriented discussion. By aligning these normative orientations with observable patterns, identified through our measures on X and online articles, we assess how mediated practices relate to broader dialogical dispositions of the public in Slovenia and Italy.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Data and corpora

We analyse debates on the *Giorno del ricordo* in Slovenia and Italy using two media corpora, X posts and online news articles, collected for the period from 2022 to 2024, complemented by a cross-national survey

(December 2025–February 2026). This section describes sampling, time windows, inclusion criteria, and basic corpus statistics.

We collected X posts using Zeeschuimer v1.11.3 (2024), a browser extension developed by the Digital Methods Initiative that captures items visible in the platform’s public web interface for research purposes. We queried conceptually equivalent, event-related keywords in Italian and Slovene.⁵ For each year from 2022 to 2024, we collected all posts returned by the tool that matched the keyword queries and were published within a 20-day window (ten days before and ten days after the commemoration date). The resulting corpus is highly imbalanced, comprising 23,389 Italian posts and 198 Slovene posts; we therefore interpret cross-national comparisons for X as primarily descriptive and treat estimates for Slovenia with caution due to the small N (and avoid fine-grained breakdowns for the Slovene X subset).

We collected online news articles using Media Cloud, applying the same event-related keyword logic for each year from 2022 to 2024. Because Media Cloud coverage of Slovenian outlets is limited and the Slovenian news corpus is comparatively small, we complemented the Media Cloud dataset with an additional set of Slovenian articles gathered manually from publicly accessible online sources. Manual collection followed a documented protocol: we searched outlet archives and the open web using the keywords and removed duplicates across sources. The final news corpus comprised 1,390 Italian articles and 148 Slovene articles.

The cross-national survey was designed by the members of the research group. It was designed in the open-source tool 1KA, which provides an online survey service. The link to the survey was shared on social media (Facebook, Instagram) and through private correspondence on the part of researchers (e-mail, etc.). The survey was active from December 16, 2025, to February 3, 2026. To support cross-national comparability, the survey was available in two equivalent translations (Slovenian and Italian), with respondents choosing their preferred language. The survey was fully completed by 68 respondents (22% of all those who accessed the questionnaire). In this article, we analysed 42 responses from those who chose Italian as their mother tongue and 22 responses from respondents who chose Slovenian as their mother tongue. The remaining completed responses were excluded from the language-based comparison because respondents either reported another mother tongue or did not provide this information. The subsample included 37 women and 27 men. Among respondents who provided a usable age response, the average age was 43.6 years,

⁵ Italian keywords: *Giorno del ricordo, foibe, esodo, esuli, 10 febbraio, Basovizza, monumento di Basovizza*; Slovene keywords: *Dan spomina na fojbe, fojbe, eksodus, ezuli, 10. februar, Bazovica, šoht, bazoviški šoht*.

Table 1: Rule-based typology for assigning each X post to a single discourse label based on six binary indicators (Conflict, Uncivil, Respect, Reciprocity, Constructiveness, Justification). “x” denotes either 0 or 1, because the final assignment is determined by the precedence and the extra-condition rules.

Conflict	Uncivil	Respect	Reciprocity	Constructive	Justification	Label	Extra condition / rule
0	0	x	x	x	x	Non-conflictual (e.g., informative)	Respectful, Reciprocity, Constructiveness AND Justification = 0 OR 1
x	1	x	x	x	x	Antagonistic conflict	Uncivil = 1 overrides everything
1	0	0	x	x	x	Non-antagonistic conflict	-
1	0	1	0	0	0	Agonism (weak)	(= 101000)
1	0	1	x	1	x	Agonism + Constructive	(= 101x1x)
1	0	1	x	0	x	Agonism + deliberation	(Reciprocity = 1 OR Justification = 1)
0	0	1	x	x	x	Deliberation	(Reciprocity = 1 OR Constructiveness = 1 OR Justification = 1)

with an age range from 19 to 74 years. Age was calculated by treating four-digit responses as year of birth and two-digit responses as reported age, while non-responses and “I do not know” answers were excluded. The Italian-mother-tongue group included 23 women and 19 men, with an average age of 42.6 years among valid age responses. The Slovenian-mother-tongue group included 14 women and 8 men, with an average age of 45.3 years among valid age responses. Regarding educational attainment, of those who answered, 48 respondents, or 75.0% reported university-level education or higher, while 16 respondents, or 25.0%, reported secondary education as their highest completed level.⁶

Indicators and typology of agonistic categories: X

X posts were coded with a multi-label scheme in which each indicator is evaluated independently as a binary variable. Our coding scheme draws on DQI-inspired discourse-quality indicators (Steenbergen et al., 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2009) and related frameworks for online political discourse (Jaidka, 2022), and adds an explicit Conflict indicator to distinguish disagreement-oriented posts from descriptive or commemorative content. In total, the scheme includes eight indicators: Conflict, Incivility, Respectfulness, Reciprocity, two Constructiveness subtypes (Common ground and Solutions/Next steps), and two Justification subtypes (Justification–Reason and Justification–Personal experi-

ence). During prompt development and validation, the original Constructiveness indicator proved both conceptually too broad and the weakest-performing item in the X scheme. We therefore replaced it with two more specific indicators, Common ground and Solutions/Next steps. For typology assignment, we use a binary Constructiveness flag coded 1 if either Common ground and/or Solutions/Next steps is present, and we collapse the two justification subtypes into a single binary indicator, Justification (coded 1 if Justification–Reason and/or Justification–Personal experience is present). We retain the subtype labels for descriptive analyses.⁷

Each post was then assigned to one discourse type using the decision rules in Table 1, following the DQI-based discourse-typology approach proposed by Bächtiger et al. (2009). Non-conflictual and civil (e.g., informative) includes posts that are non-conflictual and civil, but do not display deliberative cues (e.g., announcements, reporting, or descriptive commemoration-related content). Antagonistic conflict includes posts that contain uncivil expressions (insults, slurs, degrading stereotypes, or threats), irrespective of whether they also contain justification, reciprocity, or constructive elements (i.e., incivility takes precedence). Non-antagonistic conflict captures conflictual posts that are civil but not respectful (i.e., no incivility, yet no minimal recognition of the other side), such as critique or blame expressed without explicit acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the opposing

⁶ To consult the entire questionnaire, cf. Koražija et al. (2026).

⁷ The full annotated dataset (including all indicators and subtypes) is available in Koražija et al. (2026).

Table 2: Agonism markers and derived news profiles (G1–G4). Online news texts are coded on four binary indicators capturing agonism-relevant framing: recognition of plurality (G1), legitimization of the opponent (G2), bridging elements (G3), and restrained language (G4), where 1 indicates presence and 0 absence. “x” denotes either 0 or 1, because the profile is determined by the defining condition(s) in each row.

G1 (Recognition of plurality)	G2 (Legitimation of the opponent)	G3 (Bridging elements)	G4 (Restrained language)	Profile
0	0	0	0	No agonism / descriptive
0	0	0	1	Procedural-only neutrality (G4 only)
1	0	x	x	Non-core (G1 only; no opponent legitimization)
0	1	0	0	Core only (thin; G2 only)
x	1	0	x	Core + X (G2 + at least one of G1 or G4; no bridges)
1	1	1	0	Strong core + bridges + plurality (without G4)
1	1	1	1	Strong agonism

position. Agonism (weak) includes conflictual posts that maintain a respectful tone but contain no reciprocity, constructiveness, or justification. Agonism + constructiveness includes conflictual posts with a respectful tone that also contain explicit constructive moves, such as proposing de-escalatory steps, suggesting dialogue-oriented practices, or articulating common-ground remembrance. Agonism (+ deliberation) includes conflictual and respectful posts that additionally feature deliberative moves, such as reciprocity and/or explicit justification. Deliberation includes respectful, non-conflictual posts that nevertheless contain deliberative elements (reciprocity and/or justification) and/or constructive moves (e.g., proposals for dialogue or forward-looking steps).

Indicators and coding: news (G1–G4 agonism markers)

For online news, we apply an agonism-focused coding scheme capturing plural perspectives, legitimization of opposing positions, bridge-building frames, and restrained style. This allows us to assess how journalistic discourse frames contested memories as antagonistic boundary-drawing or as legitimate adversarial contestation (cf. Table 2).

Each text was coded on four binary indicators, where 1 indicates the presence of the feature and 0 indicates its absence. Recognition of plurality (G1) captures whether the text acknowledges the legitimacy of multiple positions, experiences, or memories. This includes explicit recognition that more than one side can have valid claims or that different historical or political experiences can

coexist without being reduced to a single moral hierarchy. Legitimation of the opponent (G2) captures whether the text criticises an opponent while maintaining the opponent as a legitimate participant in the political or moral community. This indicator is treated as the core indicator of agonism in this framework because it operationalises the key distinction between adversary and enemy (Mouffe, 1999). Bridging elements (G3) capture whether the text attempts to connect different traumas, values, or historical experiences. This includes rhetorical moves that link narratives across groups, acknowledge reciprocal suffering, or otherwise construct an explicit bridge between competing collective memories or identities. Restrained language (G4) captures whether the text avoids stereotypes, insults, and absolute generalisations, such as totalising expressions that portray one side as uniformly or inherently culpable. This indicator does not require explicit respect or agreement, but rather a restrained style of presentation.⁸

Based on combinations of these indicators, texts were classified into the following categories. Strong agonism is defined as the joint presence of all four indicators, G1, G2, G3, and G4. This category represents texts that recognise plurality, legitimising the opponent, include bridging elements, and maintain restrained language. Core + X (no bridges) is defined as the presence of G2 together with at least one additional marker (G1 and/or G4), while explicitly lacking bridging elements (G3 = 0). This category captures texts centred on opponent legitimization with added pluralist and/or stylistic support, but without bridging moves across competing memories or identities. Because G2 is central,

⁸ For the full coding scheme and the corresponding prompt cf. Koradžija et al. (2026, Appendix A).

this category represents a broad set of agonistic texts beyond the strongest form. Core only (thin) is defined as G2 only, without G1, G3, or G4. This captures minimal agonism in which the opponent is treated as legitimate, but there is no explicit recognition of plurality, bridging, or restrained language beyond what is implied by G2. Strong core plus bridges plus plurality is defined as the presence of G1, G2, and G3 without G4. This category captures texts that perform a substantive bridging and plurality move while not meeting the restrained language criterion. Procedural only neutrality is defined as G4 only. This category captures texts that are restrained in style but do not show plurality recognition, opponent legitimation, or bridging. It reflects neutrality in tone rather than agonism in substance. No agonism / descriptive is defined as the absence of all four indicators, meaning G1, G2, G3, and G4 all equal to 0. These texts do not contain the features used to operationalise agonistic discourse in this framework and are treated as descriptive or non-agonistic within this typology. This typology is designed to distinguish between different strengths and forms of agonism, anchored in the core requirement of opponent legitimation, and to separate these from texts that are stylistically restrained but not agonistic, and from texts with no agonistic features.

Survey comparability to indicators

We fielded a cross-national online survey to capture respondents’ normative orientations toward key agonistic principles. The responses were not treated as ground truth for discourse quality or as behavioural validation of platform indicators. Instead, survey measures served as a benchmark for locating norm–practice gaps between respondents’ orientations, observed interaction on X, and journalistic framing in online news.

For X, Table 3 maps platform indicators to conceptually corresponding survey items. Conflict is approximated by the perceived legitimacy of clearly expressing disagreement (Q10), while Uncivil is benchmarked by tolerance of harsh or provocative language (Q11). Respect/Reciprocity is approximated by openness to listening to those who disagree (Q12), complemented by a reverse-coded closure item capturing unwillingness to discuss these events with certain individuals (Q3). For Justification, we align survey items on argument-based debate and fact-based discussion (Q15, Q13) with the broad reason-giving indicator used in the platform coding; any subtype distinctions in the platform data (e.g., reason, experience, links) are analysed separately. Finally, we disaggregate constructiveness into two analytically distinct components: CommonGround

Table 3: Mapping between X discourse indicators and survey items. The table links platform-based indicators used to code X posts to conceptually corresponding survey questions capturing citizens’ normative orientations (used as a benchmark for norm–practice gaps rather than behavioural validation).

X indicator (practice)	Survey item(s) (Q numbers)	Measures in the survey
Conflict <i>(explicit disagreement / conflict)</i>	Q10: “... important that I can clearly express disagreement when I think an interpretation is wrong.”	Legitimacy of expressing disagreement
Uncivil <i>(incivility: harsh/abusive language, insults, slurs, threats, degrading stereotypes)</i>	Q11: “Using harsher and provocative expressions ... is sometimes necessary ...”	Tolerance/acceptance of harsh language
Respect+Reciprocity <i>(respectful engagement + recognition; listening/responding/questions)</i>	Q12: “For substantive debate it is important to listen to those who disagree.” + (reverse/closure proxy) Q3: “With some individuals it is impossible to discuss these events.”	Openness to dialogue / recognition-oriented engagement (vs. exclusion/closure)
Justification_reason <i>(reason-giving / argument-based justification)</i>	Q15: “Debates should be based on arguments and not on emotions.” Q13: “Debates are more constructive if based on verified facts.”	Justification norm (reason-giving)
Constructiveness / CommonGround <i>(depolarising memory: recognising more than one side’s suffering; plural interpretations; inclusive remembrance / anti-instrumentalisation)</i>	Q7: “Remember our victims while acknowledging others’ suffering.” Q4: “There are multiple interpretations of post-WWII events.” Q6: “Different interpretations of history can coexist.” Q8: “Public debate should show multiple perspectives.” Q18: “On this day we should also talk about suffering under Italian fascism.”	Norms of pluralism + mutual recognition + inclusive remembrance (“common ground”)
Constructiveness / SolutionsNextStep <i>(concrete peaceful steps: dialogue, education, commemorative practices, institutional steps)</i>	Q14: “Debates are more constructive if they offer concrete proposals for joint reflection.” Q19: “Governments should form a new joint commission ...”	Solutions orientation / willingness to take constructive next steps (incl. institutional measures)

Table 4: Mapping between news agonism markers (G1–G3) and survey items. The table links content-coded news indicators to the closest survey questions for cross-arena benchmarking; restrained language (G4) is not mapped because it has no direct survey equivalent.

News indicator (G)	Survey item(s) (Q numbers)	Measures in the survey
G1 — Recognition of plurality	Q4: “There are multiple interpretations of post-WWII historical events.”; Q6: “Different interpretations of history can coexist.”; Q8: “Public debate should encourage discussions showing multiple perspectives.”	Pluralism norm / preference for plural framing
G2 — Legitimation of the opponent	Q12: “For substantive debate it is important to listen to those who disagree with us.”; Q3 (reverse/closure proxy): “With some individuals it is impossible to discuss these events.”	Recognition-oriented engagement (openness to engage vs. exclusion/closure)
G3 — Bridging elements	Q7: “Remember our victims while acknowledging others’ suffering.”; Q18: “On <i>Giorno del ricordo</i> we should also talk about suffering/victims under Italian fascism.”	Bridge / mutual-acknowledgement norm (inclusive remembrance across groups)

captures pluralist and inclusive remembrance through recognition of multiple interpretations and mutual suffering (Q4, Q6–Q8, Q18), whereas SolutionsNextStep captures support for concrete, peaceful next steps that can improve understanding or coexistence, including institutional measures (Q14, Q19).

For online news, Table 4 maps the agonism markers (G1 to G4) to the closest survey items. Recognition of plurality in news (G1) is aligned with survey items capturing pluralism norms and support for multi-perspective public debate (Q4, Q6, Q8). Legitimation of the opponent (G2), the core agonism marker in our framework, is linked to respondents’ willingness to listen across disagreement and the reverse “closure” item indicating exclusionary attitudes (Q12 and Q3). Bridging elements (G3) correspond to norms of mutual acknowledgement and inclusive remembrance across groups (Q7 and Q18). Restrained language (G4) has no direct survey equivalent and is therefore not mapped.

Evaluation and robustness checks

To create ground truth data for evaluation and prompt development, we drew a random sample from the X and news-article corpora (N=200 and N=30, respectively), which were independently coded by two expert annotators. Inter-annotator agreement on the initial independent coding was moderate overall, with some indicators on the lower end, but

sufficient to support adjudication through structured discussion. Across the X dataset, observed (percent) agreement ranged from 68.0% to 97.0%, Cohen’s κ ranged from 0.00 to 0.82, and Gwet’s AC⁹ ranged from 0.45 to 0.97. For news articles, observed agreement ranged from 73.0% to 90.0%, Cohen’s κ from 0.32 to 0.71, and Gwet’s AC from 0.58 to 0.85 across the four indicators.¹⁰ We therefore constructed an adjudicated ground truth, where for each item and label, disagreements were reviewed and resolved until a final consensus label set was reached.

We used GPT-5.2 via the API for LLM-assisted annotation. The model was selected because it represented a state-of-the-art option at the time of analysis and because it supports fully deterministic inference settings. Specifically, we set the temperature to 0, which constrains the model to produce identical outputs for identical inputs, thereby strengthening the reproducibility of the annotation procedure. We began with prompts that mirrored the codebooks intended for human annotators and then followed an iterative prompt-tuning process. In this process, we tested candidate prompts on the ground-truth sample, assessed agreement against expert annotations, and refined definitions and decision rules until performance stabilised at an acceptable level. For the X prompt, we additionally introduced a small set of few-shot examples targeting edge cases and the weakest-performing indicators (for the full prompt, cf. Koražija et al., 2026, Appendix B).

9 Several indicators are rare in our samples, producing highly skewed distributions (most items are coded 0, with relatively few 1s). Under such conditions, Cohen’s κ can be deflated despite high observed agreement, making κ alone potentially misleading (Zec et al., 2017). We therefore report Gwet’s AC1 alongside κ , as it is commonly regarded as less sensitive to imbalance-driven deflation and provides a more robust reliability estimate under such conditions (Gwet, 2014).

10 Expert–expert inter-rater reliability (prior to adjudication). X posts (N=200): Conflict (Percent agreement=0.880; κ =0.710; AC=0.790), Respectfulness (0.755; 0.450; 0.560), Incivility (0.875; 0.660; 0.800), Reciprocity (0.955; 0.390; 0.950), Constructiveness_old (0.680; 0.270; 0.450), Justification_reason (0.770; 0.460; 0.600), Justification_experience (0.970; 0.000; 0.970). News articles (N=30): G1: Recognition of plurality (Percent agreement=0.800; κ =0.460; AC=0.690), G2: Legitimation of the opponent (0.870; 0.580; 0.800), G3: Bridging elements (0.900; 0.710; 0.850), G4: Restrained language (0.730; 0.320; 0.580).

Because the original X ground-truth sample contained too few instances of Justification - experience to meaningfully evaluate agreement for that label, we added a set of six synthetic X posts designed to express first-hand experience explicitly used as justification. These were generated by prompting GPT-5.2 using real comments as templates and providing a broader sample of authentic comments to preserve topical and stylistic context. Both expert annotators coded the synthetic comments, and the resulting labels were integrated via the same adjudication procedure as the rest of the ground truth. This augmentation explains the difference between the expert-expert X sample size (N=200) and the GT-LLM X evaluation size (N=206). Across the X dataset (N=206), observed agreement between the ground truth and GPT-5.2 ranged from 78.6% to 97.6%, with Cohen's κ from 0.51 to 0.79 and Gwet's AC1 from 0.50 to 0.79 across indicators. For news articles (N=30), observed agreement ranged from 70.0% to 87.0%, with Cohen's κ from 0.42 to 0.59 and Gwet's AC1 from 0.42 to 0.80 across the four agonistic-discourse indicators.¹¹

During this validation process, the original X Constructiveness indicator proved both conceptually too heterogeneous and the weakest performing item. To improve interpretability and reliability without disrupting the remainder of the X measurement pipeline, we replaced Constructiveness with two more specific binary indicators, Common ground and Solutions/Next steps, and validated these in a targeted re-annotation of the same X ground-truth sample (N = 200). Both expert annotators coded all 200 items again for the two new indicators and disagreements were resolved through the same adjudication procedure. In the expert-expert coding, agreement was 89.4% for Common ground (Cohen's κ = 0.65; Gwet's AC = 0.84) and 97.5% for Solutions/Next steps (Cohen's κ = 0.77; Gwet's AC = 0.97). We then evaluated a dedicated prompt that classified only these two indicators. Agreement between the adjudicated ground truth and GPT-5.2 was 84.4% for Common ground (Cohen's κ = 0.52; Gwet's AC1 = 0.77) and 95.0% for Solutions/Next steps (Cohen's κ = 0.56; Gwet's AC1 = 0.94). After validation, the original Constructiveness indicator was dropped and replaced with these two indicators in the X annotation pipeline; for typology assignment, Constructiveness is operationalised as present when either Common ground and/or Solutions/Next steps is present.

11 Ground truth-LLM inter-rater reliability (GPT-5.2 vs adjudicated ground truth). X posts (N=206): Conflict (Percent agreement=0.908; κ =0.789; AC=0.789), Respectfulness (0.893; 0.745; 0.744), Incivility (0.903; 0.761; 0.760), Reciprocity (0.976; 0.604; 0.603), Constructiveness_old (0.786; 0.508; 0.501), Justification_reason (0.806; 0.597; 0.591), Justification_experience (0.976; 0.693; 0.693). News articles (N=30): G1 (Percent agreement=0.867; κ =0.586; AC=0.804), G2 (0.767; 0.462; 0.607), G3 (0.833; 0.444; 0.762), G4 (0.700; 0.416; 0.416).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse-type distributions and agonistic engagement in X corpora (Italy-Slovenia)

As we have seen, the two Twitter/X datasets are highly imbalanced. The dataset for Italy contains 23,389 entries (N = 23,389), while the dataset for Slovenia contains 198 entries (N = 198). Charts 1 and 2 report the distribution of discourse types in both datasets. In the Italian dataset, the two most prevalent discourse types are Non-antagonistic conflict (31.6%) and Antagonistic conflict (29.9%). The third largest category is Non-conflictual content (24.3%), followed by Deliberation (6.0%). The remaining categories occur at comparatively low levels: Agonism + Constructive (3.4%), Agonism + Deliberation (2.7%), and Agonism (weak) (2.1%).

In the Slovene dataset, Antagonistic conflict is the most prevalent discourse type (37.9%), followed by Non-antagonistic conflict (34.8%). Non-conflictual (e.g., informative) content accounts for 20.7%. The remaining categories are observed at low levels: Agonism + Constructive (3.0%), Deliberation (2.0%), Agonism (weak) (1.0%), and Agonism + Deliberation (0.5%).

Overall, as we can see, both datasets are dominated by conflict: combining non-antagonistic conflict and antagonistic conflict yields 61.5% of X posts in Italy and 72.7% in Slovenia. Furthermore, we can observe that three larger groups predominate in both datasets (antagonistic conflict, non-antagonistic conflict and non-conflictual), while the remaining four groups (agonism + constructive, agonism (weak), deliberation and agonism + deliberation) share a smaller portion. Those groups are consistently more prevalent in Italy than in Slovenia (14.2% in Italy vs. 6.5% in Slovenia).

To facilitate interpretation, we separated the relevant discursive groups into an agonistic and a non-agonistic cluster. For Italy, the non-agonistic cluster amounts to 91.8% vs. 8.2% of the agonistic cluster. For Slovenia, the non-agonistic cluster amounts to 95.4% vs. 4.5% of the agonistic cluster. Related to RQ1, we can identify agonistic engagement within the dataset in three discourse types: agonism + constructive, agonism (weak) and agonism + deliberation. This represents 8.2% of the Italian dataset (N=1921) and 4.5% of the Slovenian (N = 9). We can therefore see that despite the very different sizes of the datasets, the results are very comparable in terms of agonistic and non-agonistic

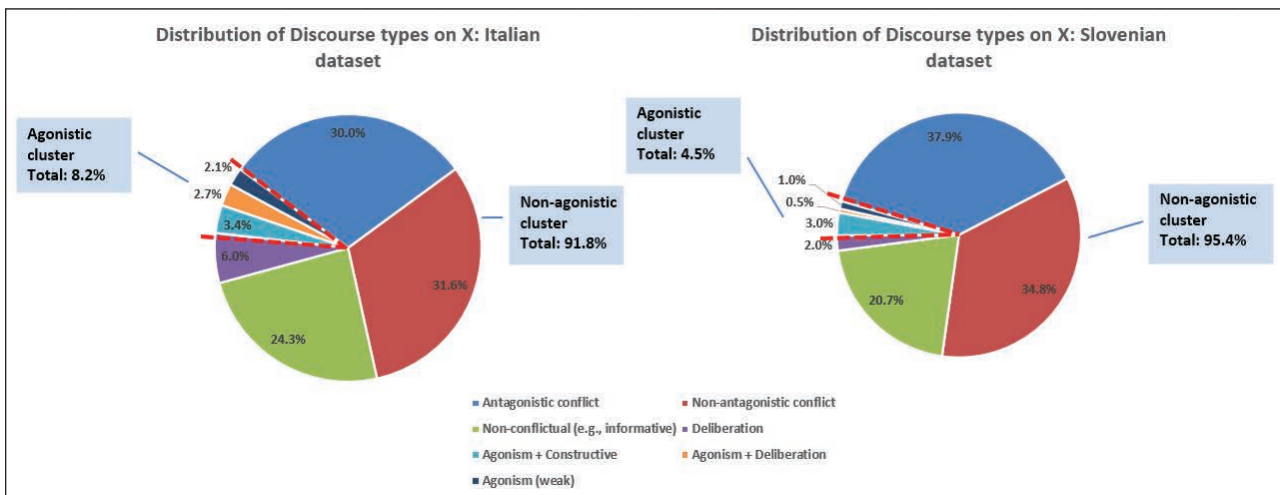


Chart 1 & 2: Comparative Distribution of Discourse Types on X in the Italian and Slovene Datasets.

discourse in the Slovenian and Italian X dataset, when it comes to discussions related to the *Giorno del ricordo* and the related historical events, only a very small proportion of discourse on X is agonistic in nature, both in Slovenia and Italy. To better understand what this means in a broader discursive landscape, we will proceed to the distribution of discourse in online news.

Discourse-type distributions and agonistic engagement in news corpora (Italy–Slovenia)

In analysing the news article dataset, we have focused on agonistic discourse by identifying forms of public argument in which disagreement and conflict are present, but the opponent is treated as a legitimate adversary rather than an enemy. For this reason, the typology used is an agonism-oriented typology that distinguishes different intensities and forms of agonism and separates them from texts without agonistic features.

While the data for distribution within X was very similar, here it differs significantly. The Italian news dataset is concentrated in categories that do not meet the core agonism requirement. The category no agonism accounts for 32.6%, and procedural only neutrality accounts for 31.2%. The remaining categories are smaller: strong agonism 11.7%, core plus X 10.9%, core only 7.4%, strong core plus bridges plus plural (no G4) 3.7%, and non core 2.5%. The Slovene news article dataset shows a markedly different composition. Strong agonism is the largest category at 44.9%, followed by core plus X at 20.4%. Categories without agonistic indicators are less prevalent than in Italy: no agonism or descriptive is 10.9%, and procedural only neutrality is 9.5%. The remaining categories are smaller: core

only 6.1%, strong core plus bridges plus plural (no G4) 5.4%, and non core 2.7%.

We can see that, unlike social media/X, the presence of agonism in Italian and Slovenian online media is significantly different. As shown in the Charts, the fundamental difference is that agonistic discourse prevails in Slovenian online media (76.88%), while in the Italian context, agonistic discourse accounts for only 33.69%. This is certainly to be expected, since articles in Slovenian online media are usually designed to call on the Italian political and media arenas to contextualise events rather than simply presenting a unilateral view (G1). In addition, the majority of those articles also link narratives across groups and acknowledge reciprocal suffering or otherwise construct an explicit bridge between the conflicting narratives (G4). The predominance of this type of discourse is evident from the fact that most articles within the Slovenian agonistic discourse (44.9% or 58.4% of the whole agonistic cluster) fall into the “strong agonism” group, which is characterised by the presence of all indicators (G1–G4).

Discourse-type distributions and agonistic engagement in survey results

In order to address RQ2, we fielded a cross-national online survey to capture respondents’ normative orientations toward key agonistic principles. The survey was active from December 16, 2025, to February 3, 2026, and available in two equivalent translations (Slovenian and Italian), with respondents choosing their preferred language. A total of 309 people opened the survey, with 86 people partially and 68 people (22%) fully completing it. A total of 47% (N = 40) of respondents were female and 31%

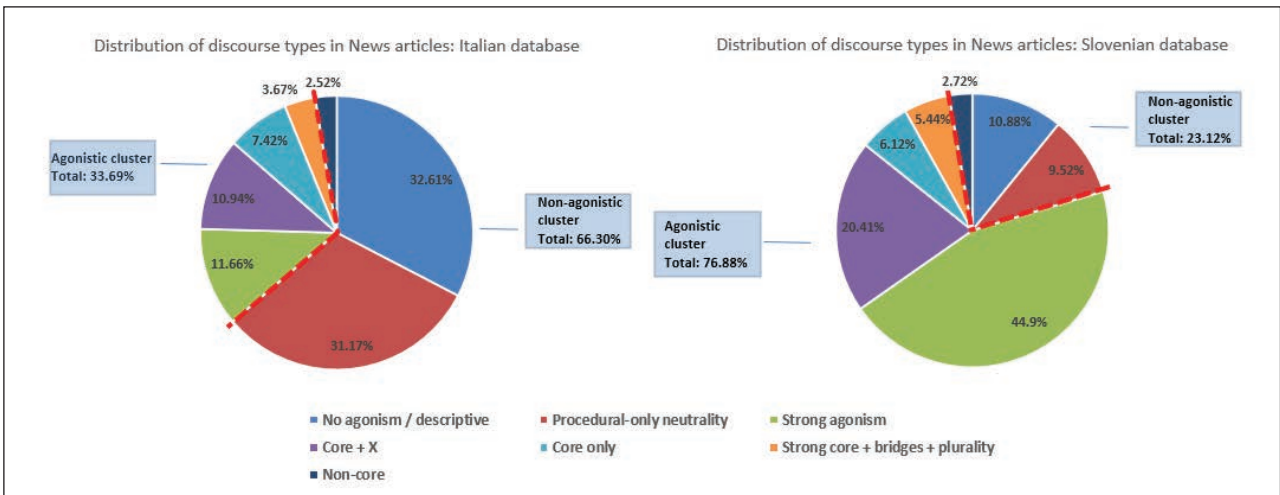


Chart 3 & 4: Comparative Distribution of Discourse Types in Online News Articles in the Italian and Slovene Datasets.

(N = 27) were male. We used an anonymous survey precisely in order to best compare people’s behaviour on social networks with how they respond when asked directly, but still anonymously. The data obtained is therefore most comparable to the data in the X dataset, as the data in the online news dataset does not reflect the attitudes of the general population, but primarily those of journalists and writers. The results obtained are not representative due to the not structured and small sample size (N = 68), which is why the comparison will be based on social media activity and respondents to the survey and cannot be generalised.

We first divided the survey results into two groups of respondents based on Q29: those who declared Slovenian is their mother tongue (N = 22)

and those who identified Italian as their mother tongue (N = 42). By this division we “assumed” that those respondents that defined that Slovenian is their mother tongue, are “nationally Slovenian”, while those with the Italian mother tongue are “nationally Italians”. For presentation, we recoded the original 6-point Likert responses into a binary measure (Agree vs Disagree), with non-responses coded as Missing. After that we decided to find out the antagonistic narrative within both groups, based on responses to the adequate question (Q11). Within the question, we measured how acceptable it is for people – when asked directly – to use offensive and provocative language when discussing the issues related to the *Giorno del ricordo*. Compared to X data, we can see that when respondents

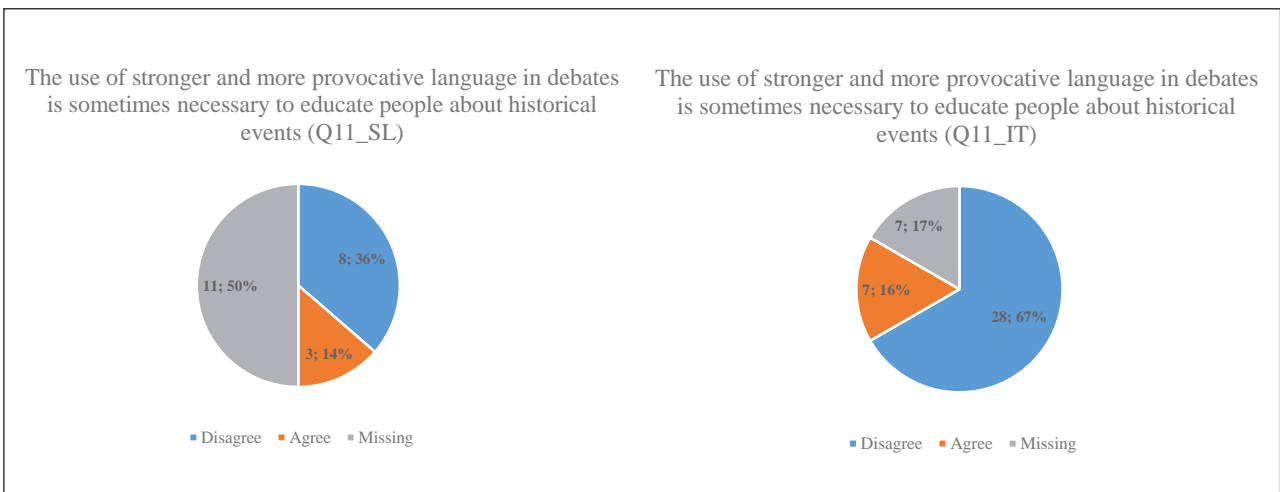


Chart 5 & 6: Comparative Distribution of Acceptance of Provocative/Offensive Language (Q11) among Italian and Slovene Survey Respondents.

were asked directly – although anonymously –, they report they are less in favour of engaging in antagonistic discourse and using insults than when interacting on X. It should however be emphasised that the Slovenian chart shows a very high percentage of missing answers – 50% –, compared to 17% in the Italian chart.

Compared to the data for X in charts 1 and 2, we can see that the antagonistic group (answer “I agree”) is smaller among the survey responses. Among the respondents who actually gave an answer, 20% of Italians and 27% of Slovenians are inclined toward antagonistic discourse. What is particularly interesting is that the ratio between Italy and Slovenia remains similar to that for X: Slovenian respondents are more inclined towards antagonism. The reason for this is probably quite similar to that for X networks: in Slovenia, the approach to this issue is more antagonistic, since the very content of the *Giorno del ricordo*, which – although indirectly – attacks Yugoslav and Slovenian partisans and condemns them for crimes, calls for a defensive position. This can often be very antagonistic (“attacking back”). However, it is important to emphasise again, that there is a high percentage of missing answers.

We tried to identify the conflictual group (question Q10), asking respondents whether they consider it important to be able to express clear disagreement if they believe that a certain interpretation of events is wrong. Here we can observe an overlapping of results: 67% of ‘Italian’ respondents and 63% of ‘Slovenian’ respondents agree that it is important for them to be able to express their opinion if they believe that others are not interpreting events correctly.

When comparing these data with the social media dataset, we first had to combine the data that indicated conflict on X. Specifically, we combined the following groups: non-antagonistic conflict, antagonistic conflict and all three agonism groups. We omitted deliberation and non-conflicting content, bearing in mind that most non-conflicting content on X is informative in nature and merely reports on events – something we did not measure among survey respondents. The result for Italy amounts to 69.7%, for Slovenia 77.2%. What we can observe is that the X and the survey results are fully comparable, with a small distinction: ‘Italians’ in the survey were more eager to debate the topic, while in the case of X, Slovenians were less reluctant to engage in conflict.

Finally, we will focus on question Q12, which measured openness to listening to those with whom they disagree. 76% of ‘Italian’ respondents and 59% of ‘Slovenian’ respondents in the survey are prepared to listen to the other party, even if in conflict or disagreement. What comes out from these results is that when respondents are asked directly, albeit anonymously, they are in practice very receptive to listening to the arguments of the opposing side.

Question Q12 gives us a direct comparison with the agonistic cluster in both previous datasets: social media (Charts 1 and 2) and the online news dataset (Charts 3 and 4). In fact, if we look at Tables 1 and 2, this indicator is always present in any agonistic discourse (“respect” marked with 1 in Table 1, and G2 marked with 1 in Table 2). Question Q12 – in combination with question Q11 – can thus also be employed to identify agonistic discourse among respondents:

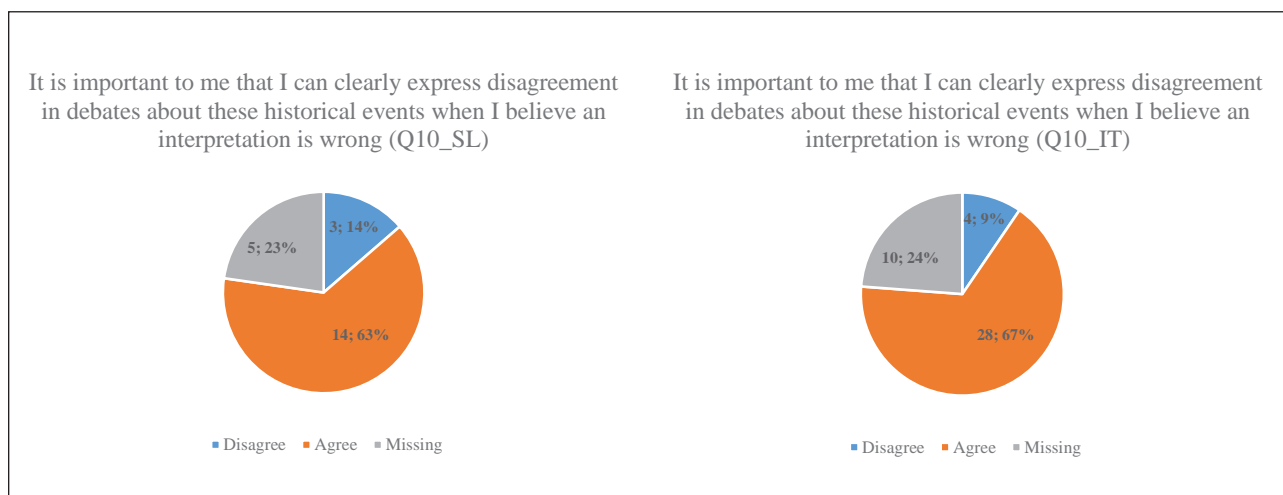


Chart 7 & 8: Comparative Distribution of Support for Expressing Clear Disagreement (Q10) among Italian and Slovene Survey Respondents.

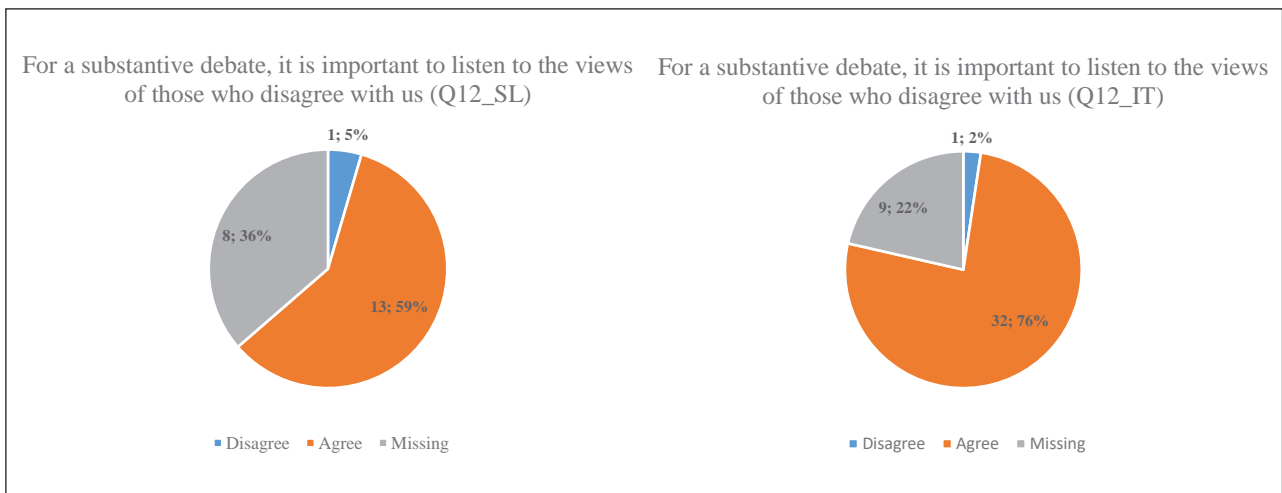


Chart 9 & 10: Comparative distribution of openness to listening to those with whom we disagree with (Q12) among Italian and Slovene survey respondents.

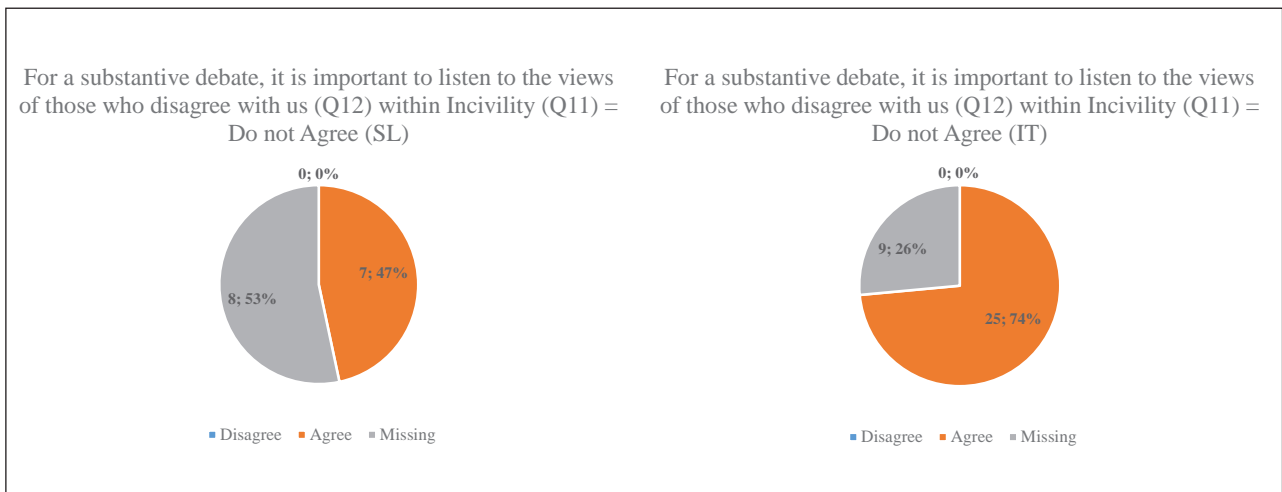


Chart 11 & 12: Comparative distribution of openness to listening to those with whom we disagree (Q12) among non-antagonistic respondents (Q11=Disagree) in Italy and Slovenia.

Q11: *The use of stronger and more provocative language in debates is sometimes necessary to educate people about historical events.*

Q12: *For a substantive debate, it is important to listen to the views of those who do not agree with us.*

We measured antagonistic conflict with question Q11. All respondents who did not agree with the statement (answer “I don’t agree” from 1 to 3) were classified as belonging to the non-antagonistic group. We then took only the responses from this non-antagonistic group and examined their responses to question Q12. With question Q12, we measured both conflict (“views of those who do not

agree with us”) and respectfulness and willingness to engage in dialogue, if we want the discussion to be substantive and constructive.

As Charts 11 and 12 show, all responses in both groups agree that it is important to listen to the views of those who disagree with them and are therefore prone to agonism. None of those for whom we have data disagreed with this. We have thus successfully identified the agonistic cluster among the respondents to the questionnaire. This amounts to 74% for the Italian group and 47% for the Slovenian group, although it should be noted that there are considerably more “missing” answers in the Slovenian cluster.

CONCLUSIONS: AGONISTIC ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENTS IN SLOVENIA AND ITALY

Based on the results obtained, we can observe that agonistic discourse is differently prevalent within the three communication environments analysed in this paper. What unites the analysis of the Slovenian and Italian case studies is the fact that agonistic discourse is by far the least prevalent on X. Debates on social networks are therefore generally much more prone to conflict, also antagonistic conflict, as Charts 1 and 2 demonstrate. The other two groups show a rather diverse picture depending on the national context. In general, Slovenian media outlets pay much less attention to events and discussions in Italy surrounding the *Giorno del ricordo*, as evidenced by the much smaller dataset for Slovenia (N = 198). This is to be expected, as national media do not usually follow commemorative ceremonies in other countries closely, if at all. Nevertheless, the presence of online news on the topic is still quite substantial, showing that the *Giorno del ricordo* is notably discussed in the Slovenian online media. To some extent this is expected, since the narrative addresses events in which Slovenian and Yugoslav partisans play one of the key – antagonistic – roles. Nevertheless, agonistic discourse largely prevails in the Slovenian dataset (Chart 4), especially when compared to the Italian national context (Chart 3). Furthermore, the majority of this discourse is characterised as strong agonism. Online media in Slovenia most often do not take an antagonistic stance, but call for broader contextualisation and recognition of the dynamics that led to post-war reprisals (borderland fascism and fascist crimes in Slovenia and Yugoslavia during the Second World War). Instead, they call for more balanced debates that would not divide but seek ways to bridge past divisions.

In Italy, on the other hand, agonism in online media is not as prevalent as in Slovenia, since Italian online media do not seek to problematise or contextualise issues of the official narrative surrounding the *Giorno del ricordo*. This is not expected in the Italian national discourse either. Nevertheless, there is an important proportion of this discourse (33.66 %), indicating that even in Italy there is a desire for more agonistic and thus constructive debate in online media when it comes to the *Giorno del ricordo*. Finally, it is particularly interesting to see how people responded to the survey. As we have seen, all respondents who answered the question and are not recorded as missing, were entirely in favour of agonistic discourse. This percentage is 74% among Italian

respondents and lower among Slovenian respondents (47%) due to a higher percentage of missing responses. In general, however, the data show that when asked directly, people are more inclined toward agonism, especially when compared to their behaviour on X, where the proportion of agonism is very small.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that the prevalence and intensity of agonistic discourse vary significantly across communication environments and national contexts. While X in both Slovenia and Italy is characterised by a markedly low presence of agonistic discourse and a higher propensity toward antagonistic conflict, online media spaces offer a more nuanced picture. In Slovenia, despite a smaller dataset, agonistic discourse – particularly strong agonism – clearly prevails, reflecting efforts to contextualise historical events and encourage more balanced and dialogical interpretations of the *Giorno del ricordo*. In contrast, Italian online media display a lower degree of agonistic engagement, largely aligning with the official national narrative, though traces of constructive debate remain visible. The survey results further highlight an important discrepancy between expressed attitudes and actual communicative practices. When asked directly, respondents in both countries overwhelmingly endorsed agonistic engagement, suggesting a normative preference for constructive and pluralistic debate. However, this stands in stark contrast to the limited presence of agonism observed on X. Taken together, the results point to a gap between individuals' declared support for agonistic discourse and the dynamics of digital communication environments, underscoring the structural and contextual factors that shape how public debates unfold.

The theoretical contribution of these findings is to conceptualise agonistic memory not only as a normative orientation toward plural remembrance, but also as an empirically observable discursive mode. By translating the distinction between different modes of engagement into operational indicators, the article shows how the same contested commemoration can be enacted differently across platforms, genres, and national contexts. In this sense, the analysis extends the agonistic memory approach by demonstrating how it can be used to diagnose the conditions under which memory conflict becomes antagonistic, agonistic, or potentially deliberation-compatible.

DATA AVAILABILITY

An anonymised, feature-only dataset supporting the findings of this study (computed/annotated indicators such as conflict, DQI scores

and discourse-type) is available via Zenodo. The record also includes the coding schemes, the LLM prompts, and the opinion poll questionnaire (cf. Koražija *et al.*, 2026).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests related to this work. There are no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be perceived as influencing this research or its findings.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Conceptualisation: MH, JK, UL

Methodology: MH, JK, UL, AE

Formal analysis: JK, UL, MH

Investigation: JK, UL, MH, DD

Data curation: JK

Software: JK

Visualisation: JK

Writing – original draft: MH, JK, UL (equal contribution)

Writing – review & editing: all authors (JK, MH, UL, AE, DD)

AGONISTIČNO ANGAŽIRANJE V SPOMINSKI POLITIKI:
 MEDIJSKE ARENE, NORMATIVNE USMERITVE IN RAZPRAVE
 O *GIORNO DEL RICORDO* V ITALIJI IN SLOVENIJI

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POVZETEK

Članek obravnava agonistično angažiranje v razpravah o Dnevu spomina (*Giorno del ricordo*) v Italiji in Sloveniji ter primerja tri komunikacijska okolja: objave na X, spletne novičarske članke in anketne odgovore. Izhaja iz teorije agonističnega spomina in kazalnikov kakovosti diskurza, s katerimi analizira, kako se sporne interpretacije preteklosti oblikujejo kot antagonistični, agonistični ali deliberativno združljivi diskurz. Empirična analiza pokaže, da so razprave na X v obeh nacionalnih kontekstih izrazito konfliktne in vsebujejo malo agonističnega angažiranja. Nasprotno pa spletni mediji, zlasti v Sloveniji, pogosteje vključujejo pluralnost perspektiv, priznavanje nasprotnih stališč in povezovalne okvire. Italijanski spletni mediji v večji meri sledijo uradni nacionalni pripovedi, čeprav tudi tam obstajajo elementi konstruktivne razprave. Anketni podatki razkrivajo pomemben razkorak med deklarirano podporo spoštljivemu, pluralnemu dialogu in dejanskimi komunikacijskimi praksami na družbenih omrežjih. Članek tako pokaže, da agonistični spomin ni le normativni ideal, temveč tudi empirično prepoznaven diskurzivni način, katerega pojavnost je odvisna od medijskega okolja, občinstva in nacionalnega konteksta.

Ključne besede: agonistični spomin, spominska politika, *Giorno del ricordo*, Italija, Slovenija, X, spletni mediji, nasprotujoči si spomini

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CONFLICT, ANTAGONISTIC TONE, AND DELIBERATIVE QUALITY IN ONLINE MEMORY DEBATES: EUROPE DAY AND THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL ON TWITTER/X

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ABSTRACT

This article compares how Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall are discussed on Twitter/X in Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France. We treat these public events as commemorative cues that prompt users to interpret contemporary political conflicts through salient European historical references. Using an LLM-assisted three-step design, we identify whether posts are conflictual, whether conflict takes an antagonistic or non-antagonistic tone, and whether it contains DQI-style deliberative signals such as justification, reciprocity, constructiveness, and respect. Topic modelling identifies thematic hotspots where conflict, antagonistic tone, and lower deliberative quality concentrate. The findings show that antagonistic tone generally lowers deliberative quality, but does not automatically eliminate reason-giving or constructiveness.

Keywords: cultural memory, commemorations, antagonism, deliberative quality, DQI, Twitter/X, large language models (LLMs), cross-country analysis

CONFLITTO, TONO ANTAGONISTICO E QUALITÀ DELIBERATIVA NEI DIBATTITI ONLINE SULLA MEMORIA: LA GIORNATA DELL'EUROPA E LA CADUTA DEL MURO DI BERLINO SU TWITTER/X

SINTESI

L'articolo mette a confronto il modo in cui la Giornata dell'Europa e la caduta del Muro di Berlino vengono discusse su Twitter/X in Slovenia, Italia, Germania e Francia. Consideriamo questi eventi pubblici come spunti commemorativi che inducono gli utenti a interpretare i conflitti politici contemporanei attraverso riferimenti storici europei salienti. Utilizzando un approccio in tre fasi assistito da modelli di linguaggio di grandi dimensioni (LLM), identifichiamo se i post sono conflittuali, se il conflitto assume un tono antagonistico o non antagonistico e se contengono segnali deliberativi in stile DQI quali giustificazione, reciprocità, costruttività e rispetto. La modellizzazione degli argomenti identifica i punti caldi tematici in cui si concentrano conflitto, tono antagonistico e minore qualità deliberativa. I risultati mostrano che il tono antagonistico generalmente riduce la qualità deliberativa, ma non elimina automaticamente la motivazione o la costruttività.

Parole chiave: memoria culturale, commemorazioni, antagonismo, qualità deliberativa, DQI, Twitter/X, modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni, analisi comparativa tra paesi

INTRODUCTION

Commemorations are not merely symbolic reminders of the past.¹ They are recurring public occasions in which societies renegotiate legitimacy, identity, and political authority through historically grounded narratives (Meyer, 2008). Critical memory studies have long shown that commemorations are contested arenas in which interpretations of the past, collective identities, legitimacy claims, and political antagonisms are articulated and disputed (Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995; Winter, 2008; Kuljić, 2012; Olick, 2007; Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Detiček & Pušnik, 2025). However, there are few studies which operationalise how different memory-regime repertoires relate to observable discursive modes across digital public spheres, and what these transformations of memory debate mean for democratic practice.

To advance this line of investigation, we apply a theory-driven framework developed elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), which shifts attention from memory regimes to discursive modes of engagement. The framework distinguishes between the substantive content of memory — what is remembered and to what normative end — and the communicative mode through which memory is enacted: antagonistically, agonistically, or in a more deliberation-compatible way. In the present article, this framework is operationalised through a three-step empirical design that distinguishes conflict presence, antagonistic tone, and deliberative signals.

We compare Europe Day (May 9) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9) across four countries: Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France. The selected anniversaries provide a productive contrast for examining how commemorations channel disagreement. Europe Day is more closely tied to institutional and legitimacy-oriented repertoires of European integration (Larat, 2005; Blokker, 2021; de Vries, 2022). By contrast, the fall of the Berlin Wall has greater mnemonic portability: its anniversaries function as iconic-historic commemorative events with transnational symbolic value and multi-layered narratives of collective memory and identity. As a result, the Berlin Wall is more easily mobilised as a historical reference in debates about post-communist transformation, East–West asymmetries, social inequality, freedom,

borders, the Cold War, and contemporary geopolitical divisions (Heller & Schmidt, 2024; Viol et al., 2024; Forrester et al., 2004; Krastev & Holmes, 2019).

The four countries were selected because they represent distinct positions within European memory politics and different relationships to the two commemorations. Germany is the primary mnemonic site of the Berlin Wall and reunification and is therefore expected to show more historically anchored forms of contestation around November 9 (Deodhar, 2021; Richardson-Little et al., 2022; Zehring & Domahidi, 2022). France represents a core Western European integration frame, where both Europe Day and the Berlin Wall can be interpreted through broader narratives of European unity, freedom, and liberal-democratic reconstruction (Chopin & Lequesne, 2010; Mussou, 2022; Boursier et al., 2021). Italy combines European integration with strong domestic anti-communist and post-fascist memory conflicts, including the institutionalisation of November 9 as *Giorno della libertà*, which makes the Berlin Wall commemoration more readily available for ideological contestation (Focardi, 2016; Bresciani, 2021; Cabrero & Sierp, 2025). Slovenia represents a post-socialist and post-Yugoslav case in which May 9 is entangled with memories of liberation, while November 9 has weaker institutional anchoring (Pušnik, 2019; Luthar & Uhl, 2019). The comparison among countries also reflects broader European memory divides. Western European democratic cultures have often been interpreted through the memory of 1945, Nazism, and liberal-democratic reconstruction, whereas Central and Eastern European memory cultures are more strongly shaped by communism, 1989, sovereignty, and post-socialist transformation (Bernhard & Kubik, 2014; Verovšek, 2021; Schmidtke, 2023; Zupančič et al., 2021; Pistan, 2020).

The analytical challenge is therefore not simply to show that memory debates are conflictual, but to distinguish how memory conflict is discursively organised. The main gap addressed by this article is that comparative studies of online memory debates rarely examine how conflict and deliberative quality relate to one another. To address this gap, we analyse commemorative discourse through a three-step measurement design that operationalises the distinction between memory regimes and discursive modes

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developed in the theoretical article (Horvat, 2026). Recent advances in large language models make it possible to implement this discursive-mode perspective as a scalable measurement strategy on large social media corpora. In our case, Large language model (LLM) assisted annotation facilitates context-sensitive coding of conflict, antagonistic tone via incivility, and Discourse quality index (DQI) style deliberative indicators across multiple languages and countries, making cross-national comparisons of commemorative debate feasible at scale.

First, we measure whether posts are conflictual (A: Conflict). Second, within conflict, we distinguish conflict expressed with an antagonistic tone from non-antagonistic disagreement by using an incivility proxy (B: Incivility). Third, distinguishing antagonistic from non-antagonistic tone, we evaluate deliberative quality using DQI-style indicators, capturing features such as respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (C: Discourse Quality). This stepwise structure prevents us from conflating low-conflict ceremonial talk with “high-quality” discourse: deliberative quality is assessed where disagreement is actually present. Building on this logic, we also track the prevalence of deliberation-compatible conflict, that is, conflictual posts that reach high deliberative quality, regardless of whether they are expressed in an antagonistic or non-antagonistic tone.

The article’s central claim is that the democratic significance of online memory conflict lies not in the presence of conflict itself, but in the way conflict is articulated. By distinguishing conflict activation, antagonistic tone, and deliberative signals, we show that commemorations differ not only in how much conflict they generate, but in how conflict is channelled across topics, how often it takes an antagonistic tone, and whether it remains compatible with justification, constructiveness, reciprocity, and respect.

Empirically, this framework enables direct cross-country comparisons of whether commemorations activate contestation and of how national contexts condition the tone and deliberative quality of conflict. We complement these comparisons with topic modelling as a diagnostic tool to map the thematic space activated by each commemoration and to locate topic-specific hotspots where antagonistic conflict and low deliberative quality concentrate. Against this background, we set four research questions:

RQ1: How do Europe Day (May 9) and the Berlin Wall commemoration (November 9) differ in the prevalence of conflict across Slovenia, Italy, Germany, and France?

RQ2: Conditional on conflict, how do countries differ in (a) the mode of conflict—antagonistic tone (incivility proxy) versus non-antagonistic disagreement—and (b) deliberative quality?

RQ3: How does deliberative quality within conflict differ between non-antagonistic and antagonistic discourse modes across topics within each commemoration?

RQ4: Which topics show pockets of comparable or even higher deliberative quality under antagonistic conflict, and what characterises these cases?

The article proceeds as follows. We first situate the empirical analysis within a theory-driven framework of memory regimes and discursive modes, deriving expectations about (A) conflict activation, (B) antagonistic tone within conflict, and (C) deliberation-compatible conflict. We also explain how these relationships are conditioned by cross-national differences in memory regimes and by the different mnemonic portability of Europe Day and the Berlin Wall commemoration. We then describe the datasets and the LLM-assisted coding design, including the three-step procedure that identifies conflict, distinguishes antagonistic from non-antagonistic tone as an incivility proxy, and assesses deliberative quality using DQI-inspired indicators and a composite quality score. The results section presents cross-event and cross-country comparisons for each step of the design and then moves to topic-level analyses that identify hotspots of conflict and examine deliberative profiles within selected clusters. We conclude by summarising the main empirical patterns, discussing their implications for the democratic quality of online memory conflict, and outlining limitations and directions for future research.

RELATED WORK

This study connects three research strands that are often treated separately: (1) commemorations and memory politics as sites where societies negotiate legitimacy and collective identity; (2) scholarship on conflict, including incivility and antagonistic styles; and (3) work on deliberative quality and discourse-quality indicators in digital publics. We build on critical memory studies, where remembrance and commemoration are already understood as contested fields of interpretation, legitimacy, and identity formation. Scholarship has mapped memory regimes and their normative repertoires, including nation-centred, human-rights-based, cosmopolitan and transnational forms (Levy & Sznajder, 2002; Assmann, 2014; Olick et al., 2023), and has also examined agonistic forms of memory contestation (Bull & Hansen, 2016; Maddison, 2016; Nienass, 2023). The contribution of this article is not to show that commemoration is conflictual as such, but to operationalise how online memory conflict is articulated through conflict activation, antagonism and deliberative signals.

Existing research on political communication and digital memory has also shown that social media intensifies mnemonic participation (van Dijck, 2007; Rutten et al., 2013; Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023) and can amplify polarisation through platform affordances (Pariser, 2011; Törnberg, 2018). At the same time, memory studies have already established that commemorative discourse is not neutral or merely ceremonial, but often structured by competing interpretations, identity claims, and struggles over legitimacy (Meyer, 2008; Damčević, 2025). Empirical studies often focus on what people talk about rather than on what characterises disagreement in terms of discourse quality. The analytical gap addressed here is therefore the limited operationalisation of how memory-regime repertoires become observable as different discursive modes in digital public spheres.

Bringing these literatures together, we analyse commemorations as commemorative cues that shape not only what becomes salient in public debate, but also how contestation unfolds on social media. In particular, comparative work on collective memories rarely systematically examines (i) whether conflict is present at all, (ii) whether it is enacted in an antagonistic tone, and (iii) whether conflictual posts nonetheless display markers of deliberative engagement, such as justification, reciprocity, constructiveness, and respectful interaction.

Commemorative cues in public discourse

We treat public events as commemorative cues because they provide structured occasions in which societies publicly (re)negotiate legitimacy, identity, and authority through references to the past. In Erik Meyer's (2008) terms, commemorative moments belong to the realm of *Geschichtspolitik* ("politics of history"): symbolic struggles that are less about settling factual disputes than about establishing the normative coordinates that link past, present, and future. In this symbolic arena, cultural memory functions as a reference code, a map of values and expectations that actors draw on to justify positions, assign responsibility, and articulate visions of the community. As commemorative cues, commemorations do more than "activate memory". They make specific interpretive templates, historical analogies, position-taking opportunities, and discursive modes more available in online debate.

As we argued elsewhere (Horvat, 2026), commemorations are empirically consequential for public discourse: each commemorative occasion can reactivate basic schemas of value-orientation and legitimising narratives that can be reused in current debates on domestic or geopolitical conflicts. Commemorations supply readily available interpretive templates - condensed storylines, moral binaries or pluralising frames, and authority cues about who and how we speak for "democracy," "solidarity", "victims",

"freedom" or geopolitical tensions. Precisely because these templates are embedded in nation-specific political culture, they tend to generate contestation over meaning, responsibility, and entitlement to interpret the past. Importantly, treating commemorations as commemorative cues does not imply that commemorative discourse is uniformly polarising or uniformly deliberative. Rather, the same commemorative cue may lead to markedly different interactional outcomes and levels of contestation, depending on national memory regimes, the contemporary political context, platform dynamics, and the topics that become salient in a given moment.

National memory regimes and expected conflict styles

We formulate expectations in terms of our three-step measurement design: (A) conflict activation, (B) antagonistic tone within conflict, and (C) post-level deliberative signals within conflict. We summarise deliberative quality as deliberation-compatible conflict (HQ), defined as conflictual posts with a quality score ≥ 2 . We then compare HQ separately within non-antagonistic conflict (HQ_{non}) and antagonistic conflict (HQ_{ant}). Additionally, drawing from the background historical analysis of Europe Day and the fall of the Berlin Wall commemoration (cf. Horvat et al., 2025), we set the following expectations:

E1 (A: Conflict activation, cross-country): Across all four countries, we expect higher conflict activation on **November 9** than on **May 9**. The rationale is that 1989 has been widely institutionalised as a symbolic rupture and a reusable interpretive template for contemporary conflicts, whereas Europe Day discourse is expected to be more ceremonial.

E2 (B: Antagonistic tone within conflict, cross-country): Within conflict, we expect the share of antagonistic tone (incivility proxy) to be higher on **November 9** than on **May 9** in most countries, reflecting the greater potential of the Berlin Wall commemoration to connect to present-day contestation.

E3 (Country-conditioned patterns across A–C): While E1–E2 capture cross-event differences, we expect national memory regimes to condition the level of activation (A), conflict tone within conflict (B), and the share of deliberation-compatible conflict (C).

Germany (B, C). Within conflict, we expect lower antagonistic tone and comparatively higher shares of high-quality conflict (HQ) than in the other countries, consistent with contestation anchored in competing memory claims rather than personal denigration.

Italy (B, C). Within conflict, we expect higher antagonistic tone and lower HQ shares on November 9 (relative to May 9), reflecting the politicised mobilisation of the memory of the fall of the Berlin Wall into domestic ideological cleavages in a context shaped by the institutionalisation of November 9 as *Giorno della libertà* (Focardi, 2016).

Slovenia (B, C). Given the absence of an official November 9 commemorative anchor and the stronger local salience of May 9 through liberation-memory frames, we expect weaker event-specific anchoring of discourse on November 9. Because the Slovenian subsample of X is relatively small, we treat this expectation descriptively.

France (B, C). We expect high conflict activation on November 9, consistent with the Berlin Wall as a transnationalised commemorative reference point in a European narrative of freedom and unity, but also topic-specific contestation around post-communist memory politics and broader debates about EU contradictions (Chopin & Lequesne, 2010).

E4 (C: Cross-cutting expectation)

We do not expect conflict to imply low-quality discourse automatically. Instead, the prevalence of antagonistic versus non-antagonistic tone and the share of conflict that remains compatible with deliberative engagement should vary by commemorative context and by topic, even when conflict takes an antagonistic tone. This aligns with our broader claim that the democratic significance of memory conflict depends not only on whether conflict is present, but on how it is articulated.

From commemorative cues to measurement: a three-step operationalisation

The concept of commemorative cues is used here in an operational sense. It translates the theory-driven framework of memory regimes and discursive modes developed elsewhere (Horvat, 2026) into a measurable design for online discourse analysis. In that framework, the key analytical distinction is between what mnemonic repertoires invoke and how they are discursively enacted in public debate. The present article operationalises this distinction by examining whether commemorative cues generate conflict, whether conflict is expressed antagonistically, and whether it retains deliberative signals.

The Methodology (cf. below) therefore translates the framework into a conditional three-step operationalisation: (A) whether posts contain conflict at all (Conflict), (B) within conflict, whether disagreement takes an antagonistic tone (Incivility proxy), and (C) within conflict, whether posts retain deliberative signals (DQI-style indicators and a summary score). Methodologically, this

approach draws on established deliberative-democracy indicators (Steenbergen et al., 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2009; Fournier-Tombs & MacKenzie, 2021; Behrendt et al., 2024), recent work on modelling online conflict dimensions (Canute et al., 2023), and CLAPTON-based measurement of online political talk (Jaidka, 2022a; Jaidka, 2022b). We adapt these indicators to the specificities of commemorative discourse on X and to the A/B/C structure.

METHODOLOGY

Data and corpora

Our empirical material consists of 101,740 unique Twitter/X texts. After removing duplicate texts during data cleaning (e.g., repeated captures of identical posts across collection steps), the final corpus used for event assignment comprises $N = 98,966$ posts. Importantly, the corpus does not provide full conversation threads (i.e., it does not systematically reconstruct reply chains or complete discussions). We therefore treat the unit of analysis as the individual post and measure post-level deliberative signals that indicate whether conflictual posts remain compatible with deliberative norms.

Because the corpus is multilingual (German, French, Italian, and Slovenian), we machine-translated all posts into English prior to annotation to ensure a common language input for both human coding and LLM-assisted coding. We used madlad-400-7b-mt to translate the corpus into English.² The classification results reported in this article, except for topic modelling (cf. below), are based on measurements performed on translated texts, while original-country metadata remain unchanged.

Step 1: Assigning tweets to commemorations

Because the broader collection includes multiple commemorative cues (4), we first linked tweets to specific commemorations. We retrospectively used a combination of keyword-based identification,³ link-based identification, and propagation through retweet/quote networks, we were able to assign ~90% of all texts to one of the two main commemorations analysed in this article: Europe Day (May 9) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9).⁴ These are the final event assignment results: Berlin Wall: 77,322; Europe Day: 10,130;

² <https://huggingface.co/google/madlad400-7b-mt>

³ The following keywords were used to collect the dataset on 4 commemorations: **Slovenian query:** „(,Dan Evrope' OR ,mir in enotnost v Evropi' OR Schuman OR ,Schumanova deklaracija' OR ,padec Berlinskega zidu' OR ,Berlin Wall' OR ,Berlinski zid' OR ,Dan upora proti okupatorju' OR ,Dan upora' OR ,dan državnosti' OR samostojnost)“; **French query:** „(,Journée de l'Europe' OR ,Déclaration Schuman' OR Europe Day OR europe Day OR ,mur de Berlin' OR ,Rideau de fer)“; **German query:** „(Europatag OR ,Schuman-Erklärung' OR ,Schuman Erklärung' OR Europe Day OR europe Day OR ,Berliner Mauer' OR Mauerfall OR ,Eiserner Vorhang)“; **Italian query:** „(,Giornata dell'Europa' OR ,Dichiarazione Schuman' OR ,Muro di Berlino' OR ,Cortina di ferro)“.

⁴ Event assignment proceeded in three stages: Keyword matching (~80%): We identified tweets referencing the commemorations via multilingual keyword queries tailored to each country/language. Link-based identification (~5%): We assigned tweets to an event when they contained links strongly indicative of a given commemoration (e.g., URLs to event-related articles, institutional pages, or commemorative media content). Network propagation via retweet/quote IDs (~5%): We clustered tweets by shared quote_id and retweet_id, and assigned tweets within a cluster to the event label of a “parent” tweet that had already been identified via keywords.

Both commemorations (ambiguous): 28; Unclassified: 11,486. The unclassified tweets are cases where we could not reliably identify a “parent” post containing event-specific keywords, and where links/metadata were insufficient to infer the commemoration.

Step 2: Topic modelling corpus

Topic modelling was run on the full dataset spanning all four commemorative cues (Europe Day, Berlin Wall, Statehood Day, Day of Resistance). Prior to modelling, we pre-processed tweets by removing URLs, line breaks, and reply markers (e.g., “@username”). After preprocessing, the corpus contains 97,994 non-empty tweets.

Step 3: Merging Event Assignment and Topic Labels

For the analysis, we integrate the outputs of Step 1 (event assignment) and Step 2 (topic labelling). Specifically, we restrict the main corpus to posts assigned to either Europe Day or the fall of the Berlin Wall (Step 1), and we use the topic model as a diagnostic layer to identify and compare thematic clusters within these two commemorative contexts (Step 2). For the analyses, we additionally exclude non-informative or analytically problematic clusters—most importantly the HDBSCAN outliers and the outlier/spam bucket. For the analyses the effective dataset differs because we draw directly on the topic-modelling output and exclude clusters associated with the two non-focal commemorations contained in the full corpus (e.g., the Slovenia-specific commemorations). The final distribution of X posts is shown in Table 1. The full annotated dataset is available on Zenodo (DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20289789).

Measures: three-step coding design

All posts were coded using a multi-label scheme in which each indicator is evaluated independently as a binary variable. Our measurement strategy follows the three-step (A/B/C) logic of commemorative cues as operational entry points into online memory conflict and aligns directly with RQ1–RQ4.

A. Conflict activation. We first code whether a post contains disagreement, critique, blame, or opposition that constitutes conflict (Conflict=1), versus ceremonial/neutral or informational content (Conflict=0). This indicator captures whether a commemoration activates contestation at all.

B. Mode of conflict: antagonistic tone vs. non-antagonistic tone. Among posts with Conflict (1), we measure whether disagreement is expressed with incivility (antagonistic tone) or without it (non-antagonistic tone). Importantly, this measure captures not only direct insults or threats but also inflammatory rhetorical style (including exaggeration/hyperbole), and should therefore be interpreted as a broader proxy for antagonistic framing rather than a narrow measure of abuse-based incivility.

C. Deliberative quality within conflict. We evaluate the deliberative profile of disagreement by distinguishing non-antagonistic (Incivility = 0) conflict from antagonistic conflict (Incivility = 1), and then assessing deliberative signals within each of these conflict modes. For this, we compute a discourse quality score as the additive sum of the DQI-style indicators: Reciprocity, Constructiveness, Justification–Reason, Justification–Experience, and Positive/Respectful tone. This yields a quality scale that we group into three ordered categories: Low quality (0–1 indicators present), Medium quality (2–3), and High quality (4–5). This approach allows us to compare whether antagonistic and non-antagonistic conflict differ systematically in the extent to which they exhibit deliberative moves.

We used GPT-5.2 via the API for LLM-assisted annotation. We set the temperature to 0. This ensured deterministic outputs, i.e., the same input produces the same label decisions, which in turn makes the annotation procedure replicable. We began with prompts that closely mirrored the human codebooks, then followed an iterative prompt-tuning process: we tested candidate prompts on our adjudicated ground-truth sample (N=200), quantified agreement between GPT and the expert ground truth, and refined definitions and decision

Table 1: Distribution of X posts by country and commemoration after clustering.

Country	N (Europe Day)	N (Berlin Wall)
France	3,369	16,138
Germany	2,790	15,414
Slovenia	281	168
Italy	895	7,145
Total	7,335	38,865

rules until performance stabilised at an acceptable level across indicators. To specifically improve performance on our weakest indicators (Constructiveness and Respectfulness), we added a small set of few-shot examples targeting typical edge cases. These examples were drawn from six additional comments from our dataset, which were independently annotated by two coders and then finalised through adjudication with a third expert annotator. (The full prompt is provided in Appendix A.) All posts were machine-translated prior to annotation to provide a uniform input language across countries. The LLM therefore codes translated texts, and our indicators should be interpreted as measuring conflict/tone/quality as expressed in the translation output rather than as original-language performance.

Ground-truth and evaluation

To build a reference set for evaluation and prompt development (“ground truth”), we used a stratified random sample from our X dataset, which includes

posts published around two commemorations—the fall of the Berlin Wall and Europe Day—in Germany, France, Italy, and Slovenia. We sampled 25 posts from each commemoration–country combination, yielding $N=200$ posts in total. Each post was independently coded by two expert annotators. Annotators coded the machine-translated versions of posts (the same input used for the LLM), so the reported agreement and reliability statistics evaluate the translation–coding pipeline rather than original-language coding. While translation improves cross-country comparability and feasibility, it may also weaken or shift language-specific cues (e.g., idioms, sarcasm, or insult morphology), which is a potential source of measurement error.

Agreement in this initial, independent round was mixed: some labels were coded very consistently (especially Justification-Experience and Reciprocity), while others proved more challenging and showed lower consistency (most notably Respectfulness and Constructiveness). Because several indicators are rare in our sample (i.e., most items are coded 0

Table 2: Inter-coder agreement statistics for the initial independent human annotation.

Dimension	Absolute agreement	Cohen’s κ	AC1
Conflict	82.4%	0.653	0.650
Constructiveness	75.1%	0.232	0.637
Justification–Experience	97.9%	0.490	0.978
Justification–Reason	79.6%	0.517	0.650
Positive/Respectful	60.1%	0.220	0.252
Reciprocity	93.9%	0.468	0.931
Uncivil	87.9%	0.436	0.846

Table 3: GPT vs adjudicated ground truth agreement statistics for X posts (N=200).

Dimension	Absolute agreement	Cohen’s κ	AC1
Conflict	84.0%	0.686	0.680
Constructiveness	79.5%	0.497	0.658
Justification–Experience	99.0%	0.745	0.990
Justification–Reason	84.5%	0.626	0.735
Positive/Respectful	85.5%	0.544	0.788
Reciprocity	95.0%	0.557	0.944
Uncivil	86.5%	0.532	0.811

and only a small fraction 1), we report Gwet's AC1 alongside Cohen's κ . Cohen's κ can exhibit the kappa paradox, where absolute agreement is high but κ is low, under skewed base rates (Zec et al., 2017); we therefore also report Gwet's AC1, which is commonly presented as more robust to imbalance-driven deflation of κ (Gwet, 2014).

Across the indicators used in our analysis, absolute agreement ranged from 60.1% to 97.9%, Cohen's κ ranged from 0.22 to 0.65, and Gwet's AC1 ranged from 0.25 to 0.98 (Table 2). We then adjudicated all disagreements, bringing in a third expert annotator to help resolve contested cases and ensure a final consensus label set for every post and indicator.

Overall, GPT aligned closely with the expert ground truth, with absolute agreement ranging from 79,5% to 99,0% across indicators. Chance-corrected reliability was also solid: Cohen's κ ranged from 0.497 to 0.745, and Gwet's AC1 ranged from 0.658 to 0.990 (Table 3). The strongest performance was observed for Justification-Experience and Reciprocity, while Constructiveness remained the most challenging indicator.

Topic modelling and hotspot identification

Topic modelling was performed on the original multilingual corpus using multilingual sentence embeddings (paraphrase-multilingual-MiniLM-L12-v2) and the BERTopic pipeline. Topic assignments are linked to indicator outcomes via tweet IDs; the BERTopic embedding and clustering step itself does not rely on translation. Topic modelling was run on the original texts to avoid translation artefacts, since multilingual embeddings enable cross-lingual clustering without requiring a single translated language. We pre-process the original-language corpus by removing URLs, line breaks, and reply markers (e.g., "@username"). We then embed documents using paraphrase-multilingual-MiniLM-L12-v2 and apply UMAP dimensionality reduction to five dimensions followed by HDBSCAN clustering (min cluster_size=200), which

helps ensure sufficiently robust clusters for cross-topic comparisons. The initial set of clusters (64) is manually reviewed and merged into a final set of topics (41) by examining representative posts from each cluster and combining semantically similar clusters.

RESULTS

Conflict activation across Commemorations and countries

In this section, we report the results concerning RQ1 (conflict activation), summarised in Table 4. The results show that the contrast between the two commemorations is stark across all four countries: **Europe Day (May 9)** is largely non-conflictual (overall only 22.8% of posts are conflictual), while the **Berlin Wall (November 9)** commemoration systematically activates conflict (overall 64.9% conflictual). On Europe Day, conflict is lowest in France (18.9%) and highest in Slovenia (35.6%); on November 9, conflict rates are high everywhere (from 62.1% in Germany to 72.0% in Slovenia). The event gap is substantial in every country (about +36 to +47 percentage points), consistent with our expectation that November 9 functions as a much stronger commemorative cue for disagreement than May 9.

Mode within conflict (antagonistic vs. non-antagonistic tone)

In this subsection we examine how posts are distributed across three categories: antagonistic tone of conflict, non-antagonistic tone of conflict, and "everything else" (all non-conflict content). Table 5 reports the corresponding percentages by event and country, and Figure 1 visualises the same distributions as stacked bars, making it easy to compare (i) the overall share of conflict versus non-conflict and (ii) how conflict splits into antagonistic vs non-antagonistic tone within each national case.

Table 4: Difference in conflict activation: Berlin Wall – Europe Day (percentage points; with N). Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.

Country	N (Europe Day)	Conflict % (Europe Day)	N (Berlin Wall)	Conflict % (Berlin Wall)	Difference (pp)
France	3,369	18.9	16,138	65.4	46.5
Germany	2,790	26.2	15,414	62.1	35.9
Slovenia	281	35.6	168	72.0	36.4
Italy	895	23.2	7,145	69.9	46.7
Total	7,335	22.8	38,865	64.9	42.1

Table 5: Distribution of discourse modes by commemoration and country (Antagonistic conflict %, Non-antagonistic conflict %, Everything else %; with N shares).

Berlin Wall / Country	N (total)	Antagonistic conflict %	Non-antagonistic conflict %	Everything else %
ALL	38865	35.13	29.81	35.06
Germany	15414	31.55	30.54	37.91
France	16138	36.74	28.63	34.63
Italy	7145	39.17	30.76	30.06
Slovenia	168	37.50	34.52	27.98
Europe Day / Country	N (total)	Antagonistic conflict %	Non-antagonistic conflict %	Everything else %
ALL	7335	9.16	13.67	77.16
Germany	2790	9.68	16.52	73.80
France	3369	7.15	11.72	81.12
Italy	895	12.18	11.06	76.76
Slovenia	281	18.51	17.08	64.41

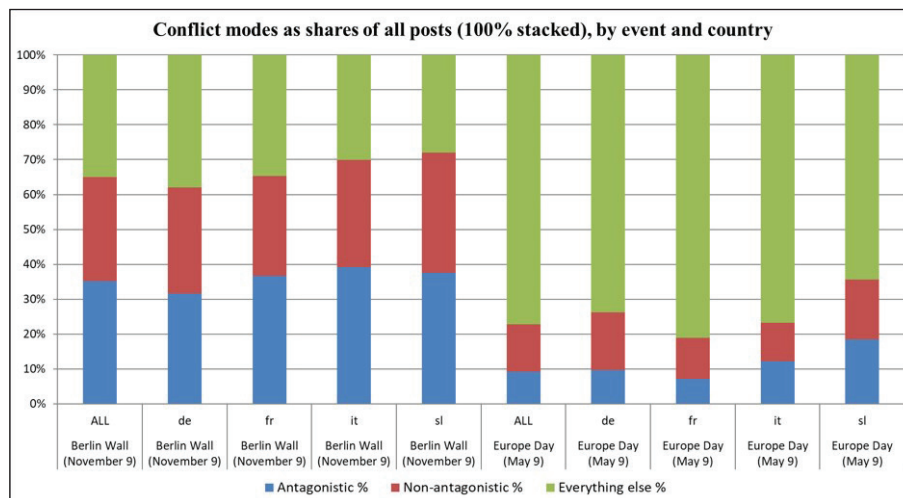


Figure 1: Conflict modes as shares of all posts (100% stacked) by commemoration and country: antagonistic conflict (incivility proxy), non-antagonistic conflict, and everything else. Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.

The dominant pattern is the event-level gap, but there is also meaningful cross-national variation. For the **Berlin Wall** commemoration, conflict is high in all countries, yet the balance between antagonistic and non-antagonistic tone differs: Germany shows the lowest antagonistic share (31.55%) and a nearly equal non-antagonistic share (30.54%), whereas France and Italy display higher antagonistic conflict (36.74% and 39.17%, respectively)

and slightly lower non-antagonistic conflict. Slovenia follows the general Berlin Wall pattern, though its much smaller N should be interpreted cautiously.

For **Europe Day**, non-conflictual content clearly dominates, but the conflict share and its tone vary: Germany and France have relatively low antagonistic conflict (9.68% and 7.15%) with somewhat higher non-antagonistic conflict (16.52% and 11.72%),

Italy shows a slightly more antagonistic profile (12.18% antagonistic vs 11.06% non-antagonistic), and Slovenia stands out with the highest antagonistic conflict share (18.51%) alongside a similarly high non-antagonistic share (17.08%). These country-level differences are visible in Figure 1 as shifts in the relative sizes of the antagonistic and non-antagonistic segments, but they remain secondary to the overarching contrast between a conflict-intensive Berlin Wall discourse and a largely ceremonial, non-conflictual Europe Day discourse.

Discourse quality within antagonistic and non-antagonistic mode

In this subsection, we compare discourse-quality profiles within conflict across commemorations (Europe Day vs. Berlin Wall) and countries, separately for antagonistic and non-antagonistic conflict (Figure 2). We aggregate five deliberative indicators into an additive score (0–5 “YES” signals) and collapse this into a binary distinction: low-quality conflict (LQ = 0–1 YES) versus high-quality / deliberation-compatible conflict (HQ = 2–5 YES), where HQ merges the Medium (2–3 YES) and High (4–5 YES) profiles. The analysis here operates with LQ vs. HQ, while the full indicator-level distributions and the Low/Medium/High calculations are documented in *Appendices B, C and D and E*.

Across both commemorations, the comparative pattern is stable: HQ is generally more prevalent in non-antagonistic conflict than in antagonistic conflict, indicating that conflict expressed without incivility is more likely to co-occur with deliberative cues. At the same time, the **Berlin Wall** commemoration displays a higher overall baseline of HQ than Europe Day across countries and in both conflict modes, suggesting that the conflict activated on November 9 more often contains at least a minimum bundle of deliberative signals. Country differences are visible in the magnitude of this “tone–quality” gap: Germany and Italy show the clearest improvement in HQ when moving from antagonistic to non-antagonistic conflict on November 9, while France follows the same direction with a smaller shift.

Europe Day shows the same directional relationship but with more modest differences, consistent with lower overall conflict and the near-absence of HQ profiles. Slovenia constitutes an instructive exception in the Berlin Wall commemoration: in the Slovenian subsample, HQ appears comparatively more pronounced under an antagonistic tone than under non-antagonistic conflict. This exception becomes substantively interpretable only once the indicator composition is inspected—reported in the appendices—where it is linked to the co-occurrence of justification and constructiveness even in posts classified as antagonistic by the incivility proxy.

Deliberative quality within conflict across topics

In this section, we use the topic-modelling layer to map where conflict and contestation concentrate. The first subsection summarises the thematic structure of the dataset across countries, and the next subsection uses the resulting topic clusters to identify thematic “hotspots” with particularly high levels of conflict and/or antagonistic tone. The following subsection then turns from topics to deliberative outcomes within conflict, reporting DQI-style indicators (Respectfulness, Reciprocity, Constructiveness, and Justification) and summarising them as the share of high-quality conflict. This allows us to distinguish how conflict is marked by deliberative quality—whether topic-specific disagreement is predominantly antagonistic and low-quality, or conflictual yet still characterised by justification and constructive engagement. Finally, the last subsection directly compares high-quality conflict between non-antagonistic and antagonistic discourse within each topic, highlighting the dominant pattern and the small set of topic-level exceptions where antagonistic conflict sustains comparable or higher deliberative quality.

Results of topic modelling

We ran BERTopic on the full dataset (spanning multiple commemorative cues). For the analyses reported here, we restrict attention to posts assigned to the two focal commemorations (Europe Day and the Berlin Wall) and we additionally remove event-specific noise clusters, as well as topics tied to other commemorations (Slovenian Statehood Day and the Day of Resistance against the Occupiers). The final analytical corpus comprises 38 clusters (cf. Appendix F).

Substantively, the extracted topics are strongly shaped by the Berlin Wall commemoration: the majority of clusters revolve around this event and closely related themes (e.g., deaths and escape attempts, the fall and its memories, the East/West divide, reconstruction or iconic political figures such as Mikhail Gorbachev). Alongside these commemoration-centered themes, the model also yields broader political and geopolitical topics that frequently co-occur with commemoration talk—most prominently the Cold War, communism, Russia and contemporary geopolitics, Israel/Palestine, NATO, migration, and high-salience political actors (e.g., Donald Trump), as well region-linked clusters (e.g., references to the Maghreb or predominantly Muslim-majority countries). A smaller set of clusters reflects media and popular-culture spillovers (e.g., documentaries, YouTube), as well as occasional cross-domain associations such as sports, referencing the “Berlin wall” as a metaphor. In contrast, Europe Day content is more concentrated. It is largely captured in a single topic rather than a broad family of subtopics.

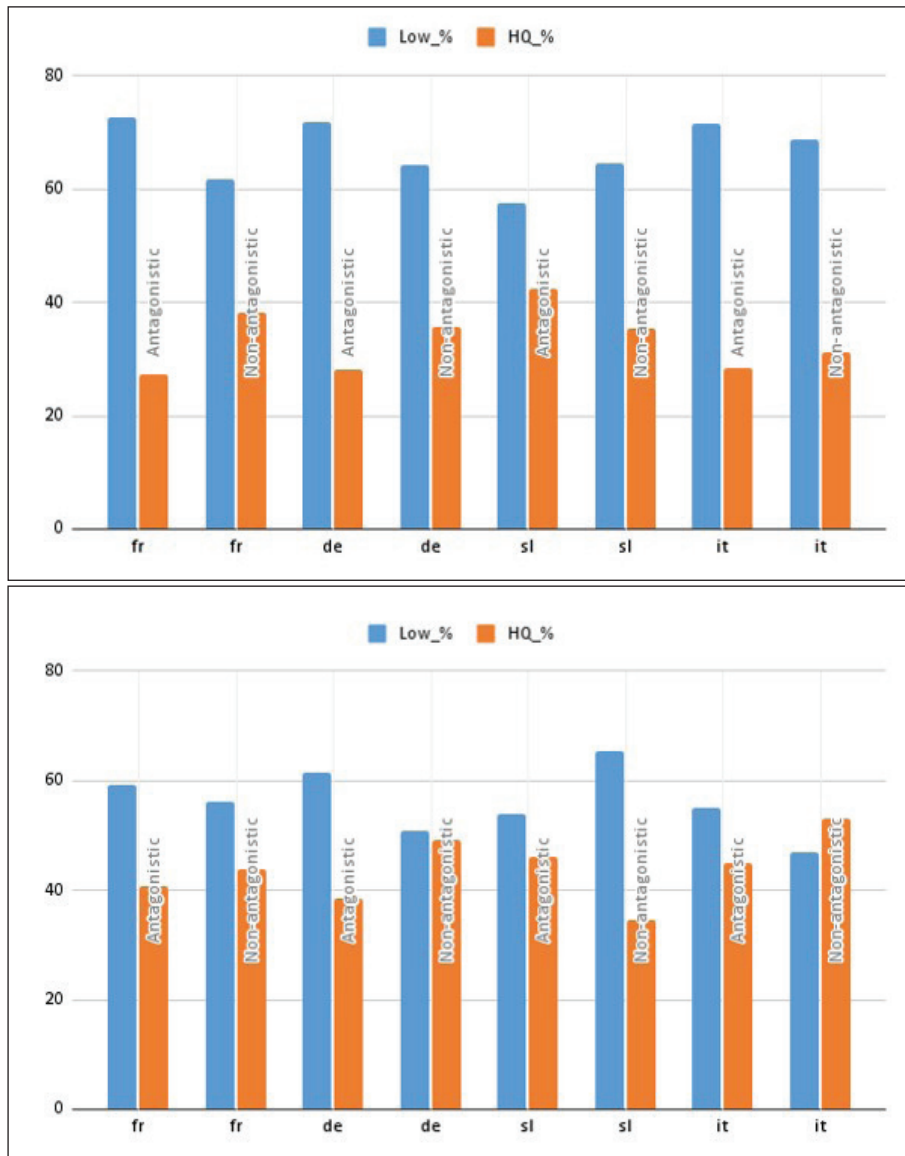


Figure 2: Low-quality (LQ) versus high-quality conflict (HQ) shares within conflict, by commemoration, country, and conflict mode (antagonistic vs. non-antagonistic; incivility proxy). The upper panel presents Europe Day, and the lower panel presents the fall of the Berlin Wall. Percentages sum to 100 within each country-mode bar. Slovenia should be interpreted descriptively due to small N.

Share of antagonistic and non-antagonistic tone within identified topics

Building directly on the preceding conflict identification in posts, we examine how disagreement is distributed across the identified clusters and how it is expressed when it occurs. We focus first on conflict tone, distinguishing antagonistic from non-antagonistic conflict using incivility as a proxy indicator within conflict. Figure 3 reports, for each topic, the share of posts that fall into (i) antagonistic conflict

(Conflict=1 & Incivility=1), (ii) non-antagonistic conflict (Conflict=1 & Incivility=0), and (iii) everything else (Conflict=0). This allows us to assess both how strongly a topic activates conflict overall and—within conflict—whether disagreement tends to escalate into antagonism or remains closer to a non-antagonistic mode. Cf. Appendix G for the full data.

The topic-level distribution (Figure 3) shows that antagonistic tone is highly uneven across topics. The highest shares of antagonistic conflict concentrate in clusters that translate commemorative cues into

contemporary identity struggles, geopolitical disputes, or delegitimising labels—for example ‘Berlin Wall (Nazis)’ (74.8% antagonistic conflict), ‘Islamic countries’ (64.7%), ‘Israel/Palestine’ (64.5%), and ‘Communism’ (59.3%). These clusters point to thematic configurations in which commemoration is mobilised as a resource for present-day contestation. At the other end of the distribution, several topics are dominated by less antagonistic content. Debates on ‘Europe Day’ (31.5% antagonistic) and ‘Iron Curtain’ (30.2%) show markedly lower antagonistic shares, while ‘Cold War’ drops to 24.2% antagonistic and a majority of posts are non-conflictual. Several Berlin Wall narrative clusters are even less conflictual (e.g., ‘Berlin Wall (construction)’ 4.9% antagonistic; ‘memories of the fall’ 12.4%; ‘peaceful revolution’ 14.9%; ‘Berlin Wall (general)’ 15.1%). Importantly, some topics contain sizeable shares of non-antagonistic conflict—most notably ‘NATO’ (50.5% non-antagonistic conflict) and ‘Die Linke/SED’ (52.5%)—indicating disagreement that is more argument-driven and less likely to involve an antagonistic tone. These patterns suggest that commemorative discourse is not monolithic: some topics systematically amplify antagonistic exchanges, whereas others host disagreement that remains closer to a deliberation-compatible mode.

Deliberative profiles of conflict within topics

Building on the topic-level mapping of where antagonistic versus non-antagonistic conflict concentrates, we now ask what happens to deliberative quality once disagreement occurs within each topic cluster. Concretely, we restrict the analysis to conflict posts (Conflict=1) and compare deliberative cues in non-antagonistic versus antagonistic conflict, using incivility as a proxy indicator of antagonistic tone (Incivility=0/1). We rely on the indicator-level YES shares for respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based and experience-based). Full topic-level distributions and indicator rates by discourse mode are reported in *Appendices D–G*, while Figures 4–5 summarise the key topic patterns. Across both modes, the most HQ-heavy topics are largely those where conflict is anchored in historical interpretation or geopolitical explanation (e.g., “peaceful revolution,” NATO, Gorbachev, Russia, Cold War), where constructiveness and reason-giving remain high and drive HQ.

In **non-antagonistic conflict mode** (Figure 4), several topics reach very high HQ shares (with “peaceful revolution” at the top), while a broad middle tier (e.g., “migration,” “media,” “USSR,” “Hungary,” “Pope,” “Donald Trump,” “Europe Day”) maintains

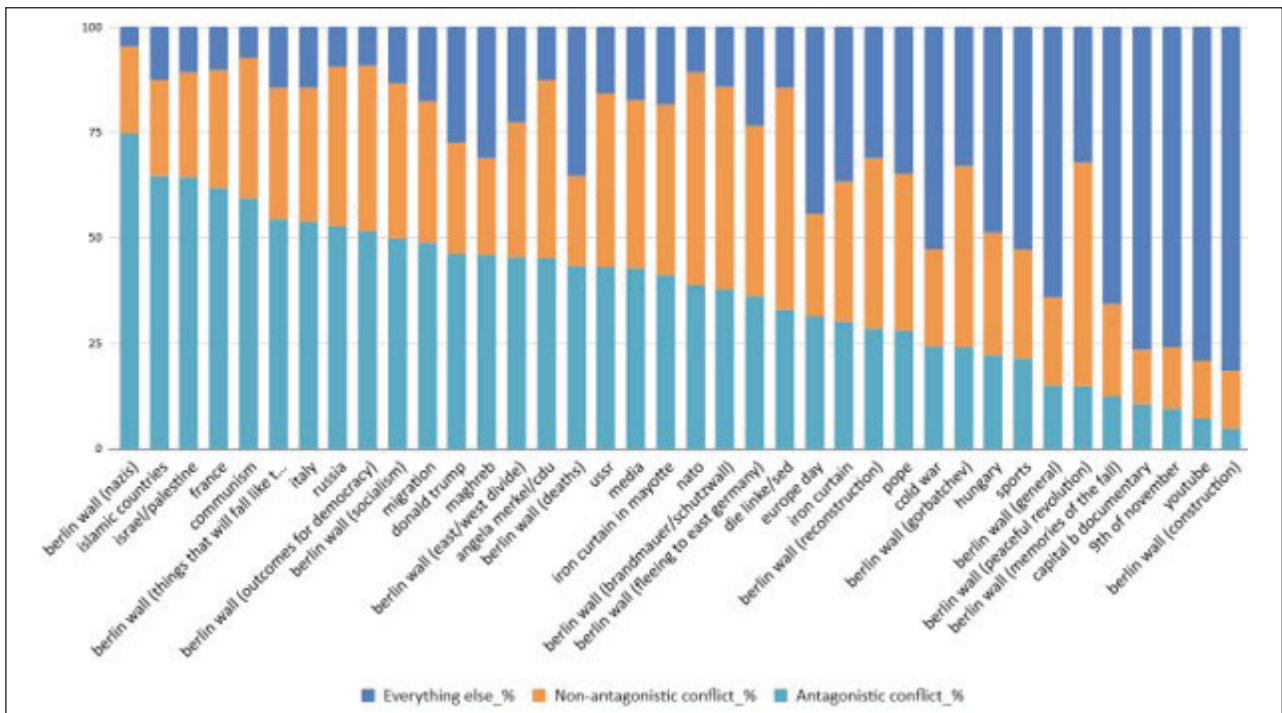


Figure 3: Topic-level distribution of conflict modes (Berlin Wall & Europe Day). Stacked bars show, for each BERTopic topic, the percentage of posts classified as antagonistic conflict, non-antagonistic conflict, or everything else (non-conflictual content). Topics are ordered by decreasing antagonistic conflict share; labels correspond to the most salient topic names derived from BERTopic.

TOPIC	Respectful	Reciprocity	Constructive	Justif (reason)	Justif (experience)	HQ (Med+High)
berlin wall (peaceful revolution)	12,5	7,0	96,1	85,2	2,3	84,0
nato	1,1	10,8	85,0	77,7	1,8	79,0
berlin wall (gorbatchev)	2,3	8,4	77,5	74,2	3,9	73,0
russia	3,5	10,6	75,1	72,5	3,3	72,0
italy	5,1	7,3	77,4	73,7	5,8	72,0
islamic countries	22,2	10,0	73,3	67,8	2,2	71,0
cold war	1,5	6,6	71,5	68,6	8,8	70,0
berlin wall (fall apart like...)	1,2	6,8	71,2	65,6	3,1	65,0
berlin wall (nazis)	3,2	12,9	66,7	63,4	12,9	64,0
berlin wall (deaths)	14,0	8,8	68,4	59,7	1,8	63,0
berlin wall (construction)	14,3	3,6	71,4	60,7	0,0	60,0
berlin wall (east west divide)	6,0	11,4	62,3	59,7	9,5	59,0
9th of november	11,3	5,6	66,2	57,8	2,8	59,0
migration	10,0	13,3	60,0	51,7	8,3	58,0
media	1,8	7,3	63,6	60,0	10,9	58,0
ussr	2,0	4,9	62,0	57,4	3,8	56,0
france	4,9	6,7	56,5	55,6	5,4	53,0
hungary	9,6	5,8	65,4	51,9	13,5	53,0
pope	18,6	7,1	55,7	55,7	4,3	52,0
berlin wall (socialism)	4,9	4,9	54,3	53,1	11,1	51,0
donald trump	5,7	5,7	57,1	57,1	1,4	51,0
europe day	1,6	4,8	61,3	51,6	3,2	51,0
berlin wall (brandmauer)	1,2	1,9	64,9	49,6	1,5	50,0
maghreb	4,7	8,1	53,5	48,8	0,0	48,0
die linke sed	3,5	9,2	48,9	49,7	3,9	47,0
berlin wall (outcomes for democracy)	3,8	8,3	51,0	51,6	9,6	47,0
israel palestine	11,4	11,9	48,4	47,5	0,9	46,0
angela merkel cdu	2,4	7,3	50,7	49,3	2,9	44,0
communism	3,1	7,6	47,4	44,8	8,8	43,0
berlin wall (fleeing to west germany)	1,0	11,2	44,2	43,2	2,7	42,0
berlin wall (memories of the fall)	4,0	11,1	38,9	38,9	23,6	40,0
iron curtain in mayotte	3,9	9,1	29,9	35,1	0,0	25,0
youtube	5,9	0,0	11,8	29,4	5,9	23,0
iron curtain	2,1	5,6	28,4	25,3	2,9	22,0
berlin wall (general)	3,1	4,5	23,7	18,5	2,9	17,0
capital b documentary	4,8	4,8	9,5	4,8	4,8	9,0
sports	3,1	1,9	4,9	22,8	2,5	6,0
berlin wall (reconstruction)	1,3	2,7	5,3	3,3	0,7	2,0

Figure 4: Deliberative indicators within non-antagonistic conflict (topics sorted by HQ within non-antagonistic). Heat map reports topic-level YES rates (%) for deliberative indicators among non-antagonistic conflictual posts (Conflict = 1 & Incivility = 0): respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based; experience-based). The final column reports the share of non-antagonistic conflictual posts in each topic that reach a Medium/High quality profile (Appendix H). Topics are ordered from highest to lowest HQ within non-antagonistic conflict.

TOPIC		Respectful	Reciprocity	Constructive	Justif (reason)	Justif (experience)	HQ (Med+High)
berlin wall (peaceful revol...)	0	0,0	8,3	91,7	88,9	2,8	88,0
nato	0	0,3	3,4	79,1	81,2	1,4	77,0
berlin wall (gorbatchev)	0	2,0	3,0	73,0	72,0	0,0	72,0
italy	▲ 1	0,4	3,0	56,9	67,7	4,3	56,0
russia	▼ 1	1,9	5,1	56,8	65,6	3,2	55,0
iron curtain in mayotte	▲ 26	1,3	0,0	56,4	56,4	2,6	55,0
berlin wall (fall apart like...)	▲ 1	1,1	3,2	56,2	60,4	1,4	54,0
europe day	▲ 14	0,0	6,2	58,0	58,0	0,0	54,0
cold war	▼ 2	0,0	2,1	56,3	54,2	6,3	51,0
ussr	▲ 6	0,8	3,5	52,3	56,6	3,9	50,0
berlin wall (brandmauer...)	▲ 12	0,0	1,0	51,2	58,1	2,0	50,0
berlin wall (construction)	▼ 1	0,0	0,0	60,0	50,0	0,0	50,0
israel palestine	▲ 14	2,3	3,7	49,5	60,5	1,6	49,0
islamic countries	▼ 8	3,1	5,5	46,9	61,3	2,3	47,0
die linke sed	▲ 10	1,1	4,5	47,2	61,2	1,7	46,0
pope	▲ 3	1,9	0,0	45,3	56,6	3,8	45,0
berlin wall (socialism)	▲ 3	0,0	3,6	45,1	55,9	7,2	44,0
media	▼ 3	0,0	6,8	42,4	57,6	1,7	44,0
berlin wall (east west divide)	▼ 7	1,3	4,4	42,7	57,2	7,6	43,0
communism	▲ 9	0,1	2,9	42,0	52,3	5,5	41,0
berlin wall (democracy)	▲ 5	0,5	3,4	39,8	58,3	3,4	41,0
donald trump	▼ 1	2,4	2,4	43,9	48,0	0,0	41,0
migration	▼ 9	0,0	5,7	40,9	54,6	5,7	40,0
france	▼ 7	1,2	2,6	39,6	51,8	3,5	38,0
angela merkel cdu	▲ 3	0,5	4,6	39,5	49,5	1,8	38,0
berlin wall (deaths)	▼ 16	1,8	6,1	32,5	44,7	1,8	35,0
berlin wall (nazis)	▼ 18	1,5	2,7	35,8	45,3	9,8	34,0
maghreb	▼ 4	1,7	1,7	34,1	49,7	2,3	34,0
youtube	▲ 4	0,0	11,1	33,3	33,3	0,0	33,0
hungary	▼ 12	2,5	5,0	27,5	42,5	5,0	32,0
9th of november	▼ 18	2,1	8,5	34,0	36,2	2,1	31,0
berlin wall (memories...)	▼ 1	1,0	3,0	25,6	34,2	20,1	26,0
iron curtain	▲ 1	0,9	1,9	24,9	30,2	2,7	23,0
berlin wall (flee to west ger.)	▼ 4	0,4	2,7	24,8	36,6	3,8	23,0
berlin wall (general)	0	0,8	1,3	13,4	17,4	3,2	12,0
sports	▲ 1	2,2	1,5	4,5	28,4	2,2	7,0
capital b documentary	▼ 1	0,0	0,0	5,9	11,8	0,0	5,0
berlin wall (reconstruction)	0	0,0	0,0	3,8	11,3	0,0	1,0

Figure 5: Deliberative indicators within antagonistic conflict (topics sorted by HQ within antagonistic). Heat map reports topic-level YES rates (%) for deliberative indicators among antagonistic conflictual posts (Conflict = 1 & Incivility = 1): respectfulness, reciprocity, constructiveness, and justification (reason-based; experience-based). The final column reports the share of antagonistic conflictual posts in each topic that reach a Medium/High quality profile (Appendix I). The unlabeled column reports the change in rank compared with the non-antagonistic conflict ranking.

moderate HQ despite generally low levels of explicit respect markers. This indicates that HQ in this corpus is primarily constructiveness- and justification-driven, rather than driven by polite phrasing alone. At the same time, Figure 4 also shows where respect matters more: respectfulness is noticeably higher in non-antagonistic conflict for specific clusters—most clearly “Berlin Wall (deaths)” and “Pope”, and to a lesser extent “Israel/Palestine”, suggesting that some topics sustain not only reason-giving but also more explicitly respectful engagement when conflict remains non-antagonistic.

The **antagonistic conflict mode** heatmap (Figure 5) exhibits the expected deliberative quality “penalty” but also shows that antagonism does not eliminate deliberative content uniformly; instead, it reshuffles which topics retain deliberation-compatible conflict. Several topics remain strongly HQ even under an antagonistic tone (again including “peaceful revolution” and NATO), because they preserve high constructiveness and substantial reason-giving. At the same time, some topics are clearly mode-sensitive. In particular, topics tied to identity or symbolic boundary drawing (e.g., “Berlin Wall (Nazis),” “9th of November,” and parts of the “Maghreb”) drop substantially and concentrate in LQ.

Finally, the indicator maps also validate that the operationalisation captures a theoretically expected form of justification. Experience-based justification concentrates in memory-work clusters—most notably “Berlin Wall (memories of the fall)”, where it reaches around or above ~20% in both modes. This is consistent with topics organised around autobiographical recall and lived experience, strengthening confidence that the topic-level patterns reflect meaningful differences in justificatory style rather than noise. Overall, Figures 4–5 thus complement the HQ profiles by showing how topics achieve HQ: typically through constructiveness and reason-based justification, but in some clusters also through more respectful phrasing and more exchange-oriented engagement.

When does antagonistic conflict remain deliberative?

While non-antagonistic conflict is generally more conducive to deliberation-compatible exchange, our topic-level comparison reveals an important qualification: in a small set of topics, antagonistic conflict reaches HQ levels that are comparable to—or even higher than—non-antagonistic conflict. In other words, antagonistic tone does not uniformly suppress deliberative quality. Instead, whether conflict remains deliberation-compatible depends also on the topic activated by

the commemoration and on the kinds of justificatory and interactional cues that are typical for that topic.

At the same time, this should be read against the dominant baseline. Across the large majority of topic clusters, HQ is higher in non-antagonistic conflict than in antagonistic conflict (Appendix L), often by substantial margins. It seems that the largest quality “penalties” for antagonistic tone occur precisely in clusters that tend to invite symbolic boundary drawing and identity-based escalation—for example “Berlin Wall (Nazis)” (+29.6 pp in favour of non-antagonistic), “Berlin Wall (deaths)” (+28.1 pp), “9th of November” (+27.2 pp), and “Islamic countries” (+23.8 pp). In these cases, conflict can still include justification and constructiveness, but antagonistic framing is more likely to undermine the indicator configuration needed for HQ (especially respectfulness), pushing a larger share of posts into LQ.

The exception topics are theoretically informative because they show how deliberative signals can persist under an antagonistic tone (cf. Table 6). Topics where $HQ_{ant} \geq HQ_{non}$ cluster around two dynamics. First, some are meta-discursive or cross-domain clusters (e.g., “YouTube”), topics where the commemoration cue is discussed as a label, reference, or a brand rather than as a political position (e.g. “Iron Curtain in Mayotte”) or cases where “iron curtain” appears as a sports metaphor. In such clusters, higher antagonistic tone can co-occur with fact-checking, clarification, and justification (e.g., correcting claims or re-checking details), which sustains HQ despite incivility. Second, some are issue-driven conflict topics that remain relatively “discussion-like” even under antagonism, such as Israel/Palestine and Europe Day itself. In these cases, antagonistic tone coexists with comparatively strong rates of justification and/or constructive engagement, yielding a slight advantage in HQ. By contrast, very low-HQ clusters such as “Iron Curtain (general)” show only marginal reversals, suggesting that these should be interpreted as near-parity rather than as meaningful evidence of an “antagonism advantage.”

The results are consistent with the commemorative-cue framework. Commemorations do not simply “produce conflict,” but make different discursive pathways more available. Some topics amplify antagonistic escalation, while others sustain justification and constructiveness even under sharp disagreement. Non-antagonistic conflict is more likely to remain deliberation-compatible, yet a small set of topics shows that antagonistic conflict can co-exist with deliberative cues.

Table 6: Topic clusters where HQ is comparable or higher under antagonistic conflict ($HQ_{ant} \geq HQ_{non}$). HQ denotes the share of conflict posts classified as Medium/High. Positive values indicate higher HQ under antagonistic conflict.

Topic cluster	HQ _{non} (%)	HQ _{ant} (%)	ΔHQ (pp) (ant – non)
iron curtain (mayotte)	31.8	39.6	+7.8
youtube (meta-discussion)	22.4	27.1	+4.7
europe day	34.5	36.2	+1.7
israel / palestine	41.3	42.9	+1.6
iron curtain (general)	18.9	19.5	+0.6
sports	12.7	13.1	+0.4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that commemorations differ sharply in activation strength and mode (**RQ1–RQ2**). Discourse around the Berlin Wall is consistently conflict-heavy, whereas Europe Day remains predominantly non-conflictual and closer to a ceremonial or symbolic-affirmative register. Because this contrast holds across countries, it is most plausibly interpreted as a difference in the mnemonic portability of the two commemorations. Substantively, the Berlin Wall commemoration provides more readily politicisable interpretive templates that connect historical interpretation to current geopolitical and identity disputes, while Europe Day more often stabilises integrative or celebratory frames.

At the topic level, the results largely confirm the expectation that deliberation-compatible conflict is more likely when disagreement unfolds in a non-antagonistic tone (**RQ3**). Across most clusters, non-antagonistic conflict exhibits a higher share of post-level deliberative quality than antagonistic conflict. Importantly, however, the indicator profiles show that antagonistic tone does not simply eliminate reason-giving or constructiveness. The topic heatmaps (Figures 4 and 5) clarify how deliberation-compatible conflict is sustained and why the exceptions matter (**RQ4**). In both non-antagonistic and antagonistic modes, the highest deliberative-quality clusters are typically anchored in historical interpretation and geopolitical explanation, where constructiveness and reason-based justification remain high. However, a small set of topic clusters shows discourse-quality parity or even higher quality under antagonistic conflict. These exceptions indicate that antagonism does not uniformly suppress deliberative signals.

Overall, the evidence is broadly consistent with our expectations. In line with **E1**, conflict activation is higher on November 9 than on May 9 across countries, confirming that the Berlin

Wall commemoration functions as a stronger commemorative cue for contestation than the more ceremonial Europe Day. Consistent with **E2**, within conflict the Berlin Wall commemoration also tends to show a higher prevalence of antagonistic tone, although the size of this shift varies by topic and national setting. Finally, **E3** is supported in the expected direction in debates about the fall of the Berlin Wall: Germany displays comparatively lower antagonistic tone and higher shares of deliberation-compatible conflict; Italy shows a more confrontational and lower-HQ pattern on November 9; France exhibits strong November 9 activation with topic-specific concentrations of contestation; and Slovenia — interpreted descriptively due to small N — shows weaker event-specific anchoring of November 9.

The key democratic implication is that the problem is not memory conflict itself, but how conflict is expressed. This has practical and normative significance. This assertion is consistent with evidence that more structured deliberative processes can reduce toxicity and improve interaction quality (Klein & Majdoubi, 2024). It concerns whether disagreement is performed in an antagonistic or non-antagonistic mode and whether conflict is sustained through deliberation-compatible practices. Read through an agonistic lens (Mouffe, 1999; 2013), the central normative task is not to eliminate disagreement, but to transform it from antagonism (enemies, moral exclusion, symbolic boundary drawing) into agonism (adversaries, legitimate contestation within shared democratic rules). Our findings align with this distinction. Non-antagonistic conflict is more likely to remain deliberation-compatible, meaning that citizens can disagree while still providing reasons, engaging constructively, and maintaining respectful recognition. Yet we also observe that even in highly contested topics, antagonistic conflict can remain justification-rich, indicating that escalated tone does not automatically erase argumentation.

For democratic theory, this supports a more precise view of polarisation and incivility. Antagonistic tone is not simply “anti-deliberation.” While it often lowers the probability that conflict will remain deliberation-compatible, it can also—under specific conditions—contribute to issue clarification and argumentative progression, particularly when antagonistic claims are still anchored in justification and expressed with some degree of constructiveness. This resonates with work showing that incivility and deliberative quality are analytically distinct dimensions that do not map onto each other one-to-one (Boukes, 2025), but also with evidence that deliberative cues can be interactionally self-reinforcing in online exchanges under certain conditions (Naab et al., 2025). The implication is that democratic resilience depends not on suppressing online memory conflict, but on sustaining the communicative conditions under which even sharp disagreement remains oriented toward reasons, constructiveness, reciprocity, and respect. In this sense, the democratic stakes of commemorative (or other) discourse lie in whether discursive pathways activated by commemorative cues sustain agonistic contestation compatible with public reasoning, or drift toward antagonistic escalation.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations qualify the interpretation of our findings. **First**, the analysis is conducted at the post level rather than the interaction-thread level. We therefore do not claim to measure deliberation as a full interactional process. Rather, we measure post-level deliberative signals that indicate whether conflictual posts remain compatible with deliberative norms. **Second**, the study relies on LLM-assisted coding and machine translation to enable cross-lingual comparison. While our validation procedures increase confidence in the overall patterns, translation may attenuate pragmatic and cultural cues (irony, sarcasm, context-dependent incivility), and automated classification is more uncertain for rare indicators, e.g., respectful/positive tone in some clusters, experience-based justification outside memory-work topics. **Third**, our operationalisation treats incivility as a proxy for antagonistic tone, which captures a salient stylistic dimension of escalation but does not exhaust theoretical conceptions of antagonism. In particular, antagonism in the Mouffean sense can be expressed without explicit incivility (e.g., through exclusionary framing, delegitimation, or moralised boundary drawing in

polite language), while incivility can occur in an otherwise argument-driven exchange. We therefore interpret “antagonistic conflict” as a measurable tone dimension rather than as a complete proxy for antagonism. **Finally**, the empirical scope is limited to two commemorations, selected platforms, and the topic-model clusters derived from this corpus. While the event contrast is robust, generalisation to other commemorations, languages, platform affordances, or institutional contexts should be made cautiously. Future work could extend the design with additional commemorative events, platform-specific comparisons, thread-based interaction data, and robustness checks using alternative topic representations. Such extensions would make it possible to test more directly how online memory conflict is transformed — or fails to be transformed — from antagonistic escalation into agonistic or deliberation-compatible contestation.

DATA AVAILABILITY

An anonymised, feature-only dataset supporting the findings of this study is available via Zenodo. The dataset includes computed and annotated indicators, such as language, commemoration labels, topic-model clusters, conflict and DQI-style scores, and discourse-type/AAD-related variables. To protect user privacy and comply with platform-data restrictions, it does not contain original Twitter/X post texts or user-identifying information. The Zenodo record also includes the LLM prompt as Appendix A, coding documentation, and supplementary appendices from Appendix B onwards, which provide extended country-level, topic-level, and deliberative-indicator tables. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.20289789.

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KONFLIKT, ANTAGONISTIČNI TON IN DELIBERATIVNA KAKOVOST V SPLETNIH RAZPRAVAH O SPOMINU: DAN EVROPE IN PADEC BERLINSKEGA ZIDU NA TWITTERJU/X

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POVZETEK

Članek primerja spletne razprave o Dnevu Evrope in padcu Berlinskega zidu na Twitterju/X v Sloveniji, Italiji, Nemčiji in Franciji. Obe komemoraciji obravnava kot diskurzivni iztočnici, ob katerih uporabniki sodobne politične konflikte pogosto interpretirajo skozi pomembne evropske zgodovinske reference. Izhajajoč iz teoretskega okvira, ki povezuje spominske režime in diskurzivne moduse (Horvat, 2026), se članek ne osredotoča le na vsebino razprav, temveč predvsem na vprašanje, ali se v njih pojavlja konflikt in kako je ta izražen. S tem se analiza premakne od vprašanja, ali so komemoracije konfliktne, k vprašanju, kakšno demokratično kakovost ima lahko konfliktni spominski diskurz. Analiza temelji na tristopenjskem raziskovalnem pristopu, podprtem z velikimi jezikovnimi modeli. Najprej analiziramo, ali so objave konfliktne, nato, ali je konflikt izražen v antagonističnem ali neantagonističnem tonu, nazadnje pa preverjamo, ali objave vsebujejo deliberativne signale, kot so utemeljevanje, recipročnost, konstruktivnost in spoštovanje. Tematsko modeliranje, opravljeno na obeh komemoracijah, dodatno pokaže, v katerih tematskih grozdih se zgoščajo konflikt, antagonistični ton in nižja deliberativna kakovost ter kje deliberativni signali vztrajajo tudi ob antagonističnem tonu. Ugotovitve kažejo, da antagonistični ton praviloma zmanjšuje deliberativno kakovost razprave, vendar ne izključuje nujno kakovosti argumentacije in konstruktivnosti. To nakazuje, da ostrejši jezik sam po sebi še ne pomeni slabšanje kakovosti deliberacije, če so v razpravi še vedno prisotni razlogi, pojasnila in konstruktivna navezava na predmet spora. V sklepu argumentiramo, da ključni demokratični izziv zato ni odprava spletnih spominskih konfliktov, temveč ustvarjanje komunikacijskih pogojev, v katerih tudi ostro nestrinjanje ostaja združljivo z javnim rezoniranjem.

Ključne besede: kulturni spomin, komemoracije, antagonizem, deliberativna kakovost, DQI, Twitter/X, veliki jezikovni modeli, primerjalna analiza

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TOWARDS FUTURE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AGENTS FOR IMPROVED POLITICAL DISCOURSE QUALITY WITH LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

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ABSTRACT

Large language models have enabled large-scale analysis of many phenomena, including political discourse on social media. We analyze how finetuning models on social media posts can be used in discourse analysis. We first present a theoretical framework for analyzing political discourse and show that finetuned models are better at detecting discourse quality. We finetune models on examples that match specific discourse quality indicators and demonstrate how this process can align messages with the desired indicator.

Keywords: political discourse, AI agents, Political commemorations, Berlin Wall, Day of Europe, large language models

VERSO FUTURI AGENTI DI INTELLIGENZA ARTIFICIALE PER MIGLIORARE LA QUALITÀ DEL DISCORSO POLITICO CON I GRANDI MODELLI LINGUISTICI

SINTESI

I modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni hanno reso possibile l'analisi su larga scala di numerosi fenomeni, tra cui il discorso politico sui social media. Analizziamo in che modo i modelli ottimizzati sulla base dei post pubblicati sui social media possano essere utilizzati nell'analisi del discorso. Presentiamo innanzitutto un quadro teorico per l'analisi del discorso politico e dimostriamo che i modelli ottimizzati sono più efficaci nel rilevare la qualità del discorso. Ottimizziamo i modelli sulla base di esempi che corrispondono a specifici indicatori di qualità del discorso e dimostriamo come questo processo possa allineare i messaggi all'indicatore desiderato.

Parole chiave: Discorso politico, agenti di intelligenza artificiale, commemorazioni politiche, Muro di Berlino, Giornata dell'Europa, modelli linguistici di grandi dimensioni

INTRODUCTION¹

The public sphere is a key arena of political discourse in which publics and individuals contest and negotiate power, legitimacy, norms, and authority. For the public sphere to function democratically, certain criteria must be met, including inclusiveness, freedom of expression, and infrastructural conditions that enable discussion and deliberation about matters of common concern and the formation of public opinion (Habermas, 1989; 1996; Fraser, 1990). However, with the rise of social media, a growing body of research has examined how online environments reshape public discussion through platform affordances (Boyd, 2011; Gillespie, 2018), often intensifying polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019), echo chambers (Sunstein, 2018; Cinelli et al., 2021) and homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). In particular, online political discussions frequently feature high levels of incivility and hostility, which can discourage participation and undermine deliberation (Papacharissi, 2004; Coe et al., 2014). These dynamics are especially complex in debates on specific topics, such as political commemorations, as they reactivate contested collective memories and invoke embedded value systems (Meyer, 2008), turning debates about the past into heated and explicit struggles over present-day political issues (Gutman & Wüstenberg, 2023; Wüstenberg, 2017).

Assessing the democratic significance of online political discussions, including those triggered by commemorations, therefore requires attention to discourse quality, not merely its volume or sentiment. In this respect, deliberative democracy theory emphasizes interactional dimensions such as respect, reciprocity, constructiveness, and the provision of reasons (Habermas, 1996; Mansbridge et al., 2012), criteria that are more nuanced than standard computational proxies such as hate speech or toxicity. In empirical research, the Discourse Quality Index (DQI) operationalizes deliberative principles through observable coding categories and has been used to assess deliberative quality across settings (Steenbergen et al., 2003). However, applying such fine-grained frameworks at scale remains difficult, as manual annotation is costly, context-sensitive, and challenging across languages and political topics, particularly for highly contextual cases such as political commemorations.

Recent advances in large language models (LLMs) open new possibilities for bridging public sphere theory and deliberative democracy theory with scalable analysis. LLMs can support more context-aware annotation and enable novel experimental and LLM-based approaches, such as training models to detect discourse-quality indicators or to generate responses that better align with targeted qualities, potentially expanding both methodological reach and substantive insight (Ziems et al., 2024; Törnberg, 2025). This matters not only for measurement, understanding when and why discourse quality varies across political contexts, but also for the careful exploration of interventions that could support higher-quality deliberative discourse.

In recent years, methods based on natural language processing have become increasingly common for discourse analysis. Most recently, large language models dominate all kinds of text analysis. However, while LLMs have been shown to perform well in a variety of domains, their application to the analysis of political discourse has not yet been thoroughly tested, particularly for specific tasks and domains. One way to improve LLM performance on specific discourse analysis tasks and domains is through finetuning, in which general-purpose LLMs are further trained on labelled data from political discourse. However, such models are relatively rare.

A related approach to computational analysis of political discourse is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) agents. While there is no strict definition of AI agents, the term is mostly applied to entities (e.g., computer programs) that are, in some way, aware of their environment and can automatically take actions to achieve a goal. In the field of AI, such agents can be used to perform a wide range of planning and problem-solving tasks.

When dealing with text, the term AI agent commonly refers to an LLM that can generate text autonomously, without explicit human input. Commonly, such agents are trained for a specific task (e.g., mimicking human conversations, making decisions about complex systems, or answering specific questions). Due to recent advances in the field of natural language processing (NLP) (i.e., the advances in LLMs and generative AI), these types of AI agents have become increasingly ubiquitous, and the term “AI agent” now mostly refers to this type of AI agent.

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In this work, we analyze the political discourse related to the commemorations of the Day of Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Italian National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe (*Giorno del ricordo*). Methodologically, we examine two analytical approaches.

- First, we examine whether finetuned LLMs can analyze political discourse using various indicators of discourse quality based on the discourse quality index (DQI). We manually annotate a small number of texts using eight indicators of discourse quality and use these texts to finetune general LLMs. We show that this improves the models' performance at detecting discourse quality indicators compared to larger, non-finetuned models.
- Second, we examine whether finetuning LLM models on a small amount of specific types of political discourse (e.g., antagonistic, respectful, or uncivil texts) can be used to align LLM-generated text with specific types of political discourse. We finetune the models on datasets related to the mentioned commemorations and evaluate the outputs using the classification models trained in the first part of our work. We then compare the outputs produced by our models with several huge non-finetuned models, including LLMs commonly used by the public (e.g., ChatGPT4).

We present an approach towards solving both tasks using language technologies. Specifically, we make the following scientific contributions:

1. We show that both the above tasks can be successfully tackled using finetuned LLMs, which could lead to future development of larger agentic AI systems.
2. We show that this approach can be successful even with relatively small LLMs (e.g., the openly available Gemma 3 family of models (Kamath et al., 2025) with 4b and 12b parameters that can be run on personal computers, as opposed to commercial models that require large datacenters).
3. We show this can be done by training the models either on a small number of manually-labelled examples, or on automatically-labelled data that avoids the need for time-consuming manual annotation.
4. We present a comprehensive evaluation on two case studies of social media discourse related to political commemorations (Day of Europe/the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Italian National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe (*Giorno del ricordo*))

In Section “Related Work”, we present past works related to our approach from a theoretical and practical standpoint. We follow with the description of our

methodology in Section “Methodology”, followed by Section “Results”, where we present the evaluation of our approach. Section “Conclusion and Further Work” contains the conclusion and ideas for further work.

RELATED WORK

In this section, we first provide an overview of technological approaches to discourse analysis. We follow with a brief overview of works related to AI agents and present how AI agents can be used to analyze political discourse, specifically that related to the domain of commemorations in Eastern and Central Europe. We present specific methodology that can be used to train AI agents and describe how such agents can be used to generate political discourse that is either antagonistic, agonistic, or deliberative.

Technological approaches to political discourse analysis

Technological approaches to political discourse analysis have developed along several methodological waves, shaped by both platform data availability and advances in computational methods. Early work in computational political communication relied on dictionary-based content analysis and supervised models to quantify topics, frames, sentiment, and ideological positioning in large collections of political texts (Laver et al., 2003; Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). As social media became central to political communication, computational social science expanded the methodological toolkit beyond text classification by combining linguistic signals with network analysis and diffusion modelling to study polarization, selective exposure, mobilization, and information disorder at scale (Barberá, 2015; Conover et al., 2011; Vosoughi et al., 2018). In parallel, a substantial literature developed methods to detect and quantify problematic or strategic forms of online discourse, including incivility, hate speech, toxicity, and coordinated manipulation (Coe et al., 2014; Ferrara et al., 2016; Fortuna & Nunes, 2018; Tucker et al., 2018).

Speech act analysis is also common across discourse analysis on social media. Such works try to detect different kinds of speech acts (i.e., the functions and acts performed by a given text), defined by theoretic taxonomies (Searle, 1969). Multiple authors present datasets and models aimed at detecting and classifying speech acts in social media posts, including on X (Saha et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2011) and Facebook (Ilyas & Khushi, 2012).

While these methods are powerful, much applied research still operationalizes discourse through relatively coarse proxies such as sentiment, offensiveness, or misinformation. Such proxies do not fully capture deliberative qualities such as reciprocity, respect,

constructiveness, and justification that are central to discourse quality (Habermas, 1996; Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012). Recent progress in large language models offers new opportunities to narrow this gap through more context-sensitive modelling, including few-shot and finetuned approaches that reduce reliance on large manually labelled datasets and facilitate multilingual adaptation (Devlin *et al.*, 2018; Brown *et al.*, 2020; Törnberg, 2025). Beyond measurement, LLMs also enable generative approaches that can be evaluated for their capacity to shift discourse toward specific qualities, raising novel methodological possibilities for facilitating democratic communication and moderation.

AI agents and large-language models

The broader history of AI agents predates the text-based agents that are increasingly popular today. Early AI agents were simple rule-based approaches that gathered observations (precepts) from the environment and performed predefined actions for each precept following (i.e., following the condition-action rule). Russel and Norvig (2003) label this kind of AI agents as simple reflex agents and define several other categories of complexity (e.g., goal-based, model-based, and utility agents). The most notable of those categories is learning agents, which begin from an unoptimized initial state and then gradually learn from the environment to improve their performance.

As with other agents, early text-based AI agents relied on simple logic-based methods. Commonly, this included simple NLP approaches such as pattern matching and rule-based systems. Simple machine-learning and reinforcement-learning approaches were also common, allowing agents to learn and improve from human-generated text. While these simple agents could replicate human language to a certain extent, they lacked the complexity to perform more complex tasks. A prominent early example includes ELIZA (Weizenbaum, 1976), a program designed to simulate human conversation using a variety of hard-coded rules and responses. While the program was incapable of understanding conversation or learning from human responses, it was still capable of emulating human conversation to a limited extent.

Later, methods based on machine learning and neural networks became increasingly common. Advances in NLP methods allowed such systems to become more complex and more capable of replicating human language. Text embedding methods such as Word2Vec (Mikolov *et al.*, 2013) and BERT (Devlin *et al.*, 2018) allowed for more powerful text representations that could take into account contextual information of words.

In recent years, text-based AI agents commonly make use of deep learning and LLMs. Most often, such systems use an LLM as a foundation and expand it with tools for reasoning and planning. This can include complex chain-of-thought reasoning for decision making (Wei *et al.*, 2022), external memory modules (Sumers *et al.*, 2024) and API calls that allow AI agents to use external tools and databases (Schick *et al.*, 2023). Established methodologies for training text-based agents start by using a general-purpose pre-trained LLM as a foundational model and then perform additional finetuning based on the desired task (Parthasarathy *et al.*, 2024). Several LLMs can be used for this task, including OpenAI's GPT models (Achiam *et al.*, 2023), DeepSeek (Liu *et al.*, 2024), Llama (Touvron *et al.*, 2023), or Gemma (Kamath *et al.*, 2025).

AI agents for political discourse

While AI agents have advanced significantly in recent years, current state-of-the-art systems are predominantly commercial and focus on specific, marketable tasks. (Casper *et al.*, 2025) present an overview of 67 state-of-the-art AI agents and show that over 70% focus on software engineering (i.e., assisting with coding and programming) and computer use (i.e., open-ended interaction with computer programs), while others are either general-purpose reasoning engines (e.g., ChatGPT) or focus on specific areas such as robotics or assisting with scientific research (e.g., generating a list of related work). Consequently, AI agents focused on social sciences and humanities are comparatively underexplored, and there are few examples that are specifically designed for the analysis of political discourse. When AI agents are used for political discourse, it is often in negative or morally dubious contexts. For example, AI agents are often used to conduct astroturfing campaigns or to spread disinformation and fake news surrounding various political topics (Marcellino *et al.*, 2023). While this shows that AI agents can engage in political discourse, there is a clear lack of positive examples of AI agents in this context.

Additionally, human participants often hold negative views of AI-enabled deliberation, even when AI agents are used with good intentions. (Jungherr & Rauchfleisch, 2025) show that people view AI moderation, AI summarization, AI opinion aggregation, and other AI deliberation tools less favorably than when such tasks are performed by humans.

Positive examples of AI agents assisting in deliberation are rare, and using agentic approaches to improve political deliberation is currently underexplored, despite their significant potential. Some existing examples include the work of (Tessler *et al.*, 2024),

who propose an agentic system called the Habermas Machine that can mediate political discourse across opposing positions. The machine produces automatically generated group statements that are more commonly endorsed by the entire group than those composed by humans. This shows that AI agents can be helpful in mediating political discourse.

Another area that is currently under-explored is using AI agents as a tool for designing policy recommendations related to different political topics. For example, it is possible to design AI agents that mimic various forms of political discourse (i.e., antagonism, agonism and deliberation) surrounding specific political commemorations from different political positions (i.e., right, left, and center-wing). Such agents could be used to provide a quick overview of political positions on specific events or to synthesize group statements (as with the Habermas Machine (Tessler et al., 2024)), which could be helpful when designing policy recommendations.

While our work is still preliminary and does not present a direct practical use-case, it could lead to development of AI agents with practical applications. For example, by generating respectful, constructive replies that would guide uncivil discourse towards a more desirable outcome or represent excluded perspectives (e.g., posts backed by experience or reason) in discussions of specific commemorations (Fournier-Tombs, 2024.). With additional finetuning, similar models could also be used to perform automated discussion mediation (e.g., by generating constructive messages that lead participants towards a shared positive consensus (Tessler et al., 2024)). Other possibilities include analytical agents for monitoring discourse quality, moderator agents combined with human oversight, and agents that would suggest rewrites of offensive posts with more deliberative, civil alternatives. The end goal would be a development of carefully-monitored, human guided tools that could help improve the quality of political and public discourse.

However, each practical application comes with ethical considerations. For example, such LLMs could also be used to generate uncivil, hateful responses, exclude certain perspectives, or generate misleading messages.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, we present the multiple methodological contributions of our work. We begin by presenting the theoretical framework we use to evaluate political discourse in social media posts. The analysis is based on 8 indicators of discourse quality presented in Section “Discourse quality indicators”. We used the discourse quality indicators to construct multiple datasets for finetuning our models, as described in Section

“Dataset”. These datasets were used in the analysis of political discourse in two ways: i) to automatically detect which indicators are present in a given social media posts, and ii) to finetune LLMs on specific types of messages so that they are better aligned with those types of messages (e.g., taking an existing AI agent or LLM that is prone to producing uncivil messages and aligning it towards civil messages). We present a detailed description of the proposed AI agents, as well as their training, in Section “Large language models for analysis of political discourse”.

Discourse quality indicators

To analyse commemorative political discourse on X, we build on operational groundwork developed in our prior work on discourse quality in discussions of political commemorations. Our operationalisation follows deliberative-democracy framework associated with the Discourse Quality Index (Steenbergen et al., 2003; Bächtiger et al., 2009), and is aligned with recent computational approaches to measuring deliberative quality in large-scale online data (Beauchamp, 2020; Fournier-Tombs & MacKenzie, 2021). To capture deliberative-quality signals in X posts, we also draw on the Corpus for the Linguistic Analysis of Political Talk ONLINE, which provides a framework for features such as constructiveness, justification, relevance, reciprocity, empathy, and incivility and was already used to train and evaluate several machine learning models (Jaidka, 2022). We choose this set of indicators to specifically build upon recent work involving computational approaches and machine learning.

We complement this with established approaches to identifying conflict in online political communication (Canute et al., 2023). We tailor these concepts to the specificities of commemorative discourse surrounding Europe Day, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and *Giorno del ricordo*. This tailoring was carried out through an iterative operational process in which the initial coding categories derived from Jaidka (2022) and Canute et al. (2023) were refined into increasingly explicit indicator definitions, decision rules and examples. We experimented with different few-shot examples, prompt structures and models to ensure the the automatic annotations matched human-annotated samples. The final prompt reported in Appendix 1 (Škvorc et al., 2026) was selected after pilot annotations because it produced the most consistent agreement with the manually applied coding scheme. Exploratory intermediate prompt variants were not retained.

Methodologically, this paper extends the above line of work by formalising the indicator set as a multi-label target space for LLM-based modelling, enabling scalable detection and controlled generation

of discourse qualities. First, we finetune open LLMs to detect discourse-quality indicators at scale in commemorative debates. Second, we finetune generative models on indicator-specific subsets to test whether outputs can be systematically shifted toward targeted discourse qualities, probing the potential of agent-based interventions in online deliberation (Fournier-Tombs, 2024).

We use the following indicators, following the work presented by Jaidka et al. (2022) with minor modifications:

- Conflict: does the post express disagreement, critique, blame, or opposition toward any target (actors, policies, ideas, events, institutions, groups), even if it is phrased politely/respectfully or expressed implicitly (sarcasm, ironic praise, comparative shaming)?
- Positive/Respectful: Does the post show respect or empathy?
- Uncivil: Does the post include abuse, slurs, negative stereotypes, threats, or exaggeration/hyperbole used as argument?
- Reciprocity: Does the post ask genuine information-seeking questions intended to elicit the other side's views or facts?
- Constructiveness: Does the post contain fact-checking, seek common-ground, or propose solutions/next steps?
- Justification with reason: Does the post give a logical reason or explanation for its view? Specifically, does it provide a because/therefore/so rationale, causal claim, or argument?
- Justification with experience: Does the post explicitly use a first-hand or observed experience as justification for a claim in the post?
- Justification with a link: Does the post use a URL/link as evidence/source for a claim.

The original set of indicators presented by Jaidka et al. (2022) also includes a criteria called “Relevance”, which checks whether a given post is even relevant to their desired use-case (i.e., analyzing political discourse). In our case, the data process (i.e., filtering by keywords) ensures the selected posts are relevant to political discourse surrounding the selected commemorations. We therefore replace this with a more specific indicator termed “Conflict”, which doesn't just check for the presence of political discourse, but also checks that the discourse expresses some form of disagreement, critique, blame, or opposition.

We omit the “Justification with a link” indicator from our analysis. The indicator was rarely present in our datasets and is not interesting from the standpoint of computational analysis. The presence of links can be detected without the use of LLMs (e.g., using pattern matching tools).

Dataset

In order to finetune our models, we use multiple datasets related to the political discussion of specific commemorations on the social network X. Specifically, we focus our attention on the Day of Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Italian *Giorno del ricordo*. We select these commemorations because they differ in how conflictual and polarising the activated discourse tends to be. Europe Day discourse is typically more ceremonial and oriented toward European integration and institutional legitimacy, whereas the Berlin Wall anniversary is a historically charged rupture frame that is readily mobilised in present-day disputes (e.g., democracy, sovereignty, geopolitics). *Giorno del ricordo* represents a particularly polarised and contested memory domain in Italy and the Italo-Slovenian borderland, structured through competing narratives of victimhood, responsibility, and national identity. These commemorations provide politically charged discourse centred on specific topics. The work builds upon the results presented in (Lampe et al., 2026) and (Horvat & Koražija, 2026), which show these commemorations are interesting from the perspective of discourse analysis.

These makes the commemorations useful for LLM-based analysis, as they should contain a wide range of discourse quality indicators. Posts related to Europe Day are more likely to contain discourse that is respectful and non-conflictful, while the opposite is true for posts related to *Giorno del ricordo*. Additionally, these commemorations allow us to examine how the detected indicators translate to political discourse that is relevant today. The selected posts contain discussions focused around migration, xenophobia, the European Union, Fascism and Democracy and other relevant topics.

We collect posts by filtering X data from April 2023 to June 2025 using event-specific keyword queries related to each commemoration. Using these commemorative contexts, we construct four datasets: two manually labelled datasets used as high-quality supervision and evaluation data, and two larger automatically labelled datasets used to scale finetuning:

1. Manually-labelled Day of Europe and Berlin Wall dataset of 193 posts on the social network X. We combine Europe Day and Berlin Wall posts into a single manual dataset because the label schema is identical, the manual sample is small, and because discussion related to both commemorations centers around similar contemporary topics (e.g., migration and politics). We manually label each post using eight criteria described in Section “Discourse quality indicators” (conflict, respectfulness,

incivility, reciprocity, constructiveness, justification reason, justification experience, and justification link). To avoid ambiguity, each example is annotated by multiple annotators. The datasets contains posts mainly in German, with a small number of English, French, Italian, and Slovene posts.

2. A manually-labelled *Giorno del ricordo* dataset. We repeat the process from the previous dataset on posts containing keywords related to the Italian *Giorno del ricordo*. This allows us to perform our analysis across multiple domains and multiple languages. The *Giorno del ricordo* dataset contains posts in Italian and Slovene.
3. Two automatically labelled datasets. Because manual annotation of political discourse on social media is time-consuming, the two datasets above contain a small number of examples. While few-shot finetuning can be used to successfully finetune LLMs, we include a larger number of examples that were automatically labelled with ChatGPT-5.2 (OpenAI, 2026). The full prompt used to perform this labelling is shown in Appendix 1 (Škvorc et al., 2026). We used an English prompt for all data available in our dataset and relied on the LLMs’ native cross-lingual capabilities to process non-English text. While these annotations are not 100% reliable, our evaluation in Section “Discourse quality analysis” shows they perform reasonably well and can be used to successfully finetune LLMs.

We construct two automatically labelled datasets, each corresponding to one of the manually labelled datasets. The Day of Europe/Berlin Wall dataset contains 47.166 examples in German, Slovene, French, and Italian. The *Giorno del ricordo* dataset contains 23.389 examples in Slovene and Italian.

Human-annotated ground-truth samples and adjudication

To provide a reliable reference point for evaluation and prompt development, we created manually annotated ground-truth samples for both case studies. These samples were used as expert-coded reference data. The manually adjudicated samples therefore serve as the basis for evaluating model performance and for checking whether automatically generated annotations are meaningful.

Berlin Wall/Europe Day ground-truth sample. For the Berlin Wall/Europe Day case study, we manually annotated a sample of Slovene X posts. We drew 200 random posts from the larger corpus, 100 from the Berlin Wall subset and 100 from the Europe Day subset. The individual post was the unit of annotation. Each post was coded according to the discourse quality indicators described in Section “Discourse quality indicators”, with every indicator treated as a separate binary label.

The two expert annotators coded the sampled posts independently. Complete paired annotations were available for 192 posts. For the remaining eight posts, at least one annotator did not provide a full label set, because the post could not be coded with sufficient confidence under the annotation scheme. These cases were therefore excluded from the reliability calculation and from the adjudicated reference set. The Berlin Wall/Europe Day ground-truth sample used in the analysis consequently contains 192 posts.

Inter-annotator agreement was calculated on the 192 posts for which both annotators had provided complete independent annotations. These statistics were computed before adjudication and are reported in Table 1. The annotators then reviewed and resolved disagreements, producing a final consensus label for each post and each indicator. These adjudicated labels were used as the ground-truth reference for prompt development and model evaluation.

Table 1: Expert–expert agreement before adjudication for the Berlin Wall/Europe Day ground-truth sample.

Indicator	N	Agreement	Cohen’s κ	Gwet’s AC1
Conflict	192	81.58%	0.6136	0.6495
Positive/Respectful	192	90.53%	0.6231	0.8735
Uncivil	192	84.21%	0.5698	0.7527
Reciprocity	192	80.32%	0.2948	0.7270
Constructiveness	192	87.30%	0.4973	0.8301
Justification–Reason	192	71.51%	0.4419	0.4360
Justification–Experience	192	96.28%	0.2148	0.9609

Giorno del ricordo ground-truth sample. For the *Giorno del ricordo* case study, we used the same expert-coding procedure. The manual reference sample consisted of 200 X posts from the Slovene and Italian corpus. As above, the individual post was the unit of annotation, and each discourse quality indicator was coded as a separate binary label.

Two expert annotators coded all posts independently using the multi-label scheme described in Section “Discourse quality indicators”. Inter-annotator agreement was calculated before adjudication and is reported in Table 2. The annotators then reviewed the disagreements together with a third expert judge. This adjudication step produced a final consensus label for each post and each indicator. These adjudicated labels were used as the ground-truth reference for the *Giorno del ricordo* evaluation.

Dataset imbalance

A key issue in developing manually curated datasets related to political discourse on social media is the imbalance in the distribution of certain labels. For example,

discourse related to charged political events is less likely to be civil. Table 3 shows the distribution of labels in our datasets, showing present imbalances. Indicators related to civil speech (“respectful”, “reciprocity”, “constructiveness”) appear less often than indicators such as “conflict” and “uncivil”, regardless of whether they were labelled manually or using GPT. Additionally, “justification with experience” appears infrequently across all datasets.

In order to address label imbalance, we attempt to balance the manually-labelled datasets by adding a number of the most suitable examples from the automatically-labelled datasets. We first use the sentence-transformer embedding gemma-300m model to calculate a vector representation of every example text in both the manually-labelled and the automatically-labelled datasets. We then balance the manually-labelled data by finding an automatically-labelled example with the same indicator label and the highest similarity to its text. We pick texts based on similarity to increase the likelihood of picking correctly-labelled examples. This reduces the variance of the balanced dataset and could lead to over-fitting. However, as we have not performed a thorough manual evaluation of

Table 2: Expert–expert agreement before adjudication for the *Giorno del ricordo* ground-truth sample.

Indicator	N	Agreement	Cohen’s κ	Gwet’s AC1
Conflict	200	88.0%	0.710	0.790
Positive/Respectful	200	75.5%	0.450	0.560
Uncivil	200	87.5%	0.660	0.800
Reciprocity	200	95.5%	0.390	0.950
Constructiveness	200	68.0%	0.270	0.450
Justification–Reason	200	77.0%	0.460	0.600
Justification–Experience	200	97.0%	0.000	0.970

Table 3: The characteristics of the datasets used in our analysis.

Dataset information					Annotations				
Dataset	Examples	Language	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness
Berlin Wall/Day of Europe (Manual)	192	SI	125	34	40	8	91	4	34
Berlin Wall/Day of Europe (GPT)	47.166	SI, GER, FR, IT	26.760	4.441	15.243	2.645	15.398	1.606	15.456
<i>Giorno del ricordo</i> (Manual)	200	SI, IT	133	52	50	5	62	2	72
<i>Giorno del ricordo</i> (GPT)	23.389	SI, IT	16.290	7.931	7.005	1.087	10.904	637	6.562

Table 4: The characteristics of the balanced datasets used in our analysis.

Dataset	Examples	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness
Berlin Wall/Day of Europe (Balanced)	2663	609	261	356	224	552	535	126
Giorno del ricordo (Balanced)	2816	640	279	384	218	614	554	127

the automatically-labelled dataset, we prioritize picking examples with the correct labels.

We repeat this process for each indicator until the indicator is balanced. We then remove duplicate posts and check that none of the added posts had previously appeared in the unbalanced version of the dataset to prevent data leakage between training and testing sets (i.e., to ensure no post in the test set is also present in the training set). Because each example can be labelled with multiple indicators (e.g., a text can be both uncivil and provide a justification with reason) this does not produce a perfectly labelled dataset but still increases the amount of messages with under-represented indicators.

We present the number of examples for each indicator present in the balanced dataset in Table 4. Conflict remains the most frequent indicator, but the indicators are now more balanced. In Section “Label co-occurrences”, we show that several of the indicators are highly correlated with conflict, making it difficult to find posts that contain them without also containing conflict. However, the balancing still increases the number of less frequent indicators that almost never appear in the original, unbalanced datasets (i.e. experience and reciprocity).

Label co-occurrences

Because we are dealing with multi-label classification (i.e., a post can be labelled with multiple indicators at the same time), we perform an analysis of label co-occurrences present in our datasets. We present the co-occurrences in Figure 1, which shows a significant presence between multiple indicators. All datasets show a the highest correlation between the indicators “uncivil” and “conflict”. With the exception of the balanced Berlin Wall dataset, every post marked as uncivil was also marked as containing conflict (although the reverse is not true). This can be explained by the nature of our data (contentious political commemorations) and the high amount of posts containing conflict.

Correlations also exist to a smaller extent between several other pairs (e.g., conflict-constructive, constructive-reason, conflict-reason and positive-constructive pairs.) We see similar co-occurrences across all four datasets. Balancing the dataset with automatically-labelled data maintains similar relative co-occurrences while increasing the number of samples.

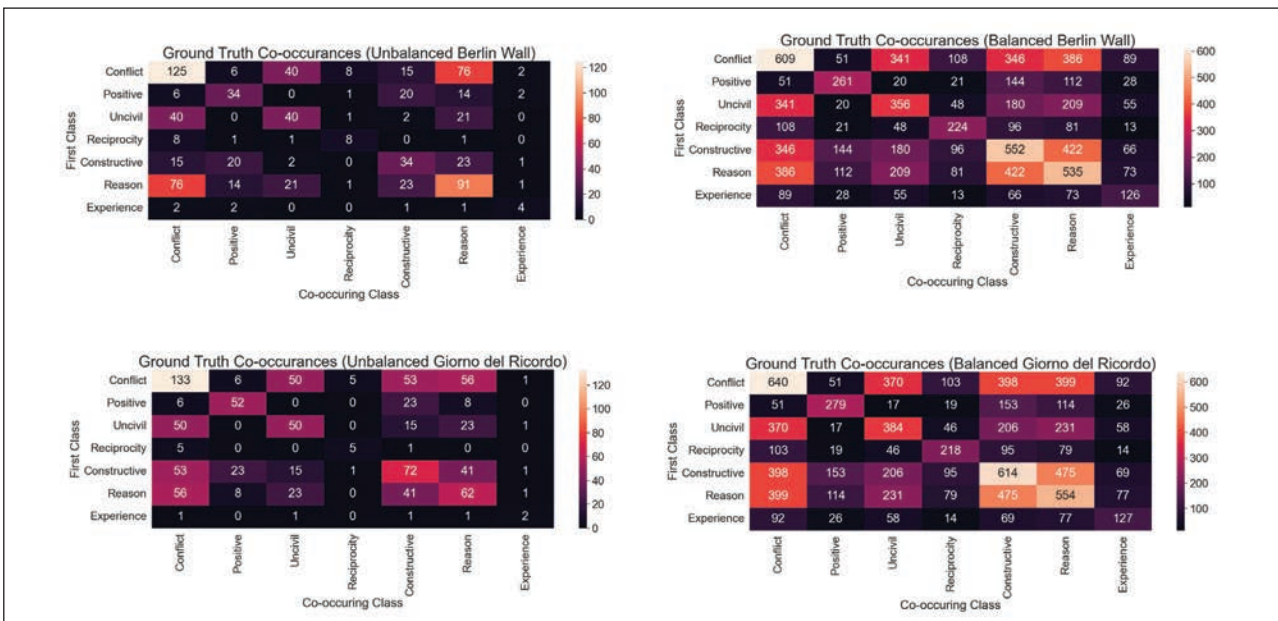


Figure 1: Label co-occurrences present in each of the four datasets.

Large language models for analysis of political discourse

After constructing the required datasets, we used two LLM approaches for the analysis of political discourse. In Section “Discourse quality analysis models”, we first create finetuned models designed to analyze posts according to the discourse indicators presented in Section “Discourse quality indicators”. We then use these models to evaluate whether finetuning existing LLMs on posts tied to specific discourse indicators (e.g., civility or constructiveness) can change the way these models talk about specific topics related to the chosen commemorations (e.g., producing messages that are more civil and constructive). We present this approach in Section “Aligning large language models for political discourse”. To ensure reproducibility and allow for open model access, we focus our analysis on the openly available Gemma 3 models. We also attempted to finetune smaller, non-generative multilingual classification models (e.g., bert-base-multilingual (Devlin et al., 2018) and mmBert (Marone et al., 2025)). These models underperformed even compared to the non-finetuned baselines. Due to their smaller size and smaller amounts of pre-training data (e.g., 12 trillion tokens for Gemma3-12b vs 3 trillion for mmBert), we estimate they would require a larger finetuning corpus to achieve comparable performance.

Discourse quality analysis models

To obtain LLMs capable of analyzing the quality of political discourse, we finetune several Gemma 3 models on the manually labelled Day of Europe/Berlin Wall and *Giorno del ricordo* datasets. We employ finetuning in order to:

1. Obtain models that are smaller, faster to run, and more energy efficient than the full ChatGPT-5.2 model while still achieving good performance.
2. Obtain open-source models that can be run locally, rather than being tied to corporate models running on remote data centers.
3. Imbue the models with information specific to the chosen commemorations, which may not be included in the training sets of non-finetuned LLMs.

We split each dataset into train, test, and validation sets at a 70/20/10 ratio, with the validation set used for hyper-parameter optimization. Based on this, we use a max sequence length of 2048, a learning rate of $5e^{-5}$, and perform the finetuning using low-rank adapters with $r = 8$, $\alpha = 8$, and dropout set to 0. During prediction, we set the temperature to 0 in order to ensure the model always returns the most likely output. We

train the model using specially-designed prompts that include thorough descriptions of each indicator. The full prompt is available in Appendix 1 (Škvorc et al., 2026). We perform this experiment using two sets of training data:

1. The manually-labelled dataset described in Section “Dataset”. This dataset contains accurate labels for each discourse indicator but only contains a small number of tweets. Additionally, such a methodology is more difficult to replicate in future research due to the time-consuming need for manual annotation and a lack of existing manually-labelled datasets.
2. The balanced version of the manually-labelled dataset described in Section “Dataset”. This augments the manually-labelled dataset with examples from the automatically-labelled dataset to reduce the imbalances present in multiple indicators. We use this dataset in order to better evaluate the indicators that are rarely present in the manually-labelled dataset.

We compare our results to a non-finetuned GPT-5 mini model in a prompting mode as a baseline. A preliminary analysis showed that smaller models (e.g., the non-finetuned Gemma3-4b and Gemma3-12b model) were not powerful enough to suitably perform this task. They were unable to follow the instructions in the prompt and generated text that did not contain proper labels in a large amount of cases and were therefore omitted as a baseline for comparison.

We then perform an additional experiment using the two automatically labelled datasets. The results of this evaluation are presented in Section “Discourse quality analysis”.

Aligning large language models for political discourse

After obtaining finetuned models capable of analyzing political discourse, we examine whether existing LLMs can be finetuned to produce messages more closely aligned with specific types of discourse (e.g., respectful, reciprocal, or justified). To do this, we first finetune existing Gemma 3 models on posts from different discourse types. For each post, we construct the following prompt: “Generate a message related to the following political commemoration: <commemoration> on the following topic <topic>”, where <topic> is a specific topic related to the commemoration that was assigned to each message during dataset construction. The full list of topics is presented in Appendix 2 (Škvorc et al., 2026). In order to train the model, we use existing posts from our dataset as ground-truth answers to this prompt. We train one model for

each type of discourse label present in our dataset (conflict, respectful, civil, reciprocal, constrictive, justification with reason/experience) for a total of 8 different models. We then evaluate the messages produced by the aligned models using the discourse analysis models described in Section “Discourse quality analysis models”. This allows us to see how the messages produced by each model shift when compared to the base model (in terms of discourse quality indicators). We also compare the aligned models with a strong, non-finetuned LLMs of a similar complexity as a baseline (i.e., GPT-5 mini).

For this experiment, we finetune all models using the automatically-labelled datasets and evaluate them using a classifier trained on the manually-labelled dataset. Due to the small number of examples, finetuning on the manually-labelled dataset produces models that do not generate a diverse set of messages and therefore have limited practical use.

We use the finetuned LLMs developed in Section “Discourse quality analysis models” to perform automatic analysis of the aligned models. While these models are not 100% accurate, we show that they perform well enough to provide useful results. The results of this analysis are presented in Section “Aligned language models”.

RESULTS

We split the results section into two parts. First, we present the evaluation of models designed to detect discourse quality indicators (Section “Discourse quality analysis”). We show that these models achieve better results when compared to larger, non finetuned models. We then use these verified detection models to evaluate the LLMs oriented towards different discourse indicators. We present these results in “Aligned language models”.

Discourse quality analysis

To evaluate finetuned LLMs, we perform multiple evaluations. First, we evaluate finetuned models on the manually labelled Berlin Wall/Day of Europe and Giorno del Ricordo datasets to obtain an objective measure of their classification performance. The results of this evaluation for non-balanced data are presented in Table 5 (for the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset) and Table 7 (for the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset).

All results show an overall dominance of finetuned models, in particular Gemma3-12b variant. The results also show several issues with discourse quality analysis on X and dataset construction. For several indicators,

Table 5: The classification accuracy of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the nonbalanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset. The best scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Link	Constructiveness
Majority-class baseline	29/39 (0.74)	36/39 (0.92)	29/39 (0.74)	37/39 (0.95)	34/39 (0.87)	39/39 (1.00)	33/39 (0.85)	34/39 (0.87)
GPT-5 mini	33/39 (0.85)	30/39 (0.77)	31/39 (0.80)	35/39 (0.90)	28/39 (0.74)	37/39 (0.95)	34/39 (0.87)	33/39 (0.85)
Gemma3-4b	35/39 (0.90)	36/39 (0.92)	30/39 (0.77)	36/39 (0.92)	31/39 (0.80)	38/39 (0.97)	37/39 (0.95)	34/39 (0.87)
Gemma3-12b	35/39 (0.90)	36/39 (0.92)	34/39 (0.87)	37/39 (0.95)	34/39 (0.87)	39/39 (1.00)	38/39 (0.97)	35/39 (0.90)

Table 6: The classification accuracy of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the balanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset. The best scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness
Majority-class baseline	0.590	0.787	0.681	0.766	0.527	0.872	0.543
GPT-5 mini	0.793	0.718	0.782	0.856	0.702	0.888	0.532
Gemma3-4b	0.835	0.856	0.755	0.872	0.707	0.910	0.675
Gemma3-12b	0.936	0.926	0.867	0.926	0.814	0.989	0.771

the majority-class baseline is close to one. Out of all annotated posts on the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset, 92.3% were labelled as disrespectful and 94.9% were labelled as non-reciprocal. No post in our test set contained a justification with a personal experience. Other indicators (conflict, uncivil, justification/reason, justification/link, and justification/constructiveness) were more balanced. Similar imbalances are present in the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset (100% for reciprocity and justification/experience). Another limitation of this dataset is the small size of the test set, which contains around 40 examples (39 on the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe and 40 on the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset). This makes the evaluation difficult because a single misclassified tweet shifts the accuracy by roughly 2.5%. For clarity, we also report the absolute number of correct predictions on non-balanced datasets.

To address this, we repeat the analysis on the balanced versions of our datasets, as described in Section “Dataset”. This allows us to better evaluate the under-represented indicators but means that the dataset is no longer fully manually annotated. The results for balanced data are presented in Table 6 (for the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset) and Table 8 (for the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset).

As before, the finetuned models outperform the non-finetuned baseline, including on indicators that were previously imbalanced (e.g. reciprocity and experience). Due to a larger number of examples on the test set (188 in each case), we omit the absolute numbers of correct predictions.

Due to the label imbalances present in our data, particularly for non-balanced datasets, classification accuracy is not the best performance measure, as even simply predicting the majority class would lead a high classification accuracy. To address this, we also calculate F1-averaged precision, recall, and F1 score for each dataset and each indicator. We present the results in Table 9 (unbalanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe), Table 10 (balanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe), Table 11 (unbalanced *Giorno del ricordo*) and Table 12 (balanced *Giorno del ricordo*). This evaluation shows that the non-finetuned GPT-5 mini struggles to outperform the majority-class baseline, while the finetuned models achieve better results. As before, the Gemma3-12b model outperforms the Gemma3-4b and Gemma3-27b models in the majority of scenarios. Even on unbalanced datasets, the models are not simply predicting the majority class (except with reciprocity and experience in the non-balanced *Giorno del ricordo* dataset, where only one class appears in the test set).

Table 7: The classification accuracy of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the nonbalanced *Giorno del ricordo* dataset. The best scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness
Majority-class baseline	29/40 (0.73)	32/40 (0.80)	33/40 (0.83)	40/40 (1.00)	35/40 (0.78)	1.00 (40/40)	25/40 (0.63)
GPT-5 mini	37/40 (0.93)	32/40 (0.80)	36/40 (0.90)	40/40 (1.00)	23/40 (0.58)	15/40 (0.38)	15/40 (0.38)
Gemma3-4b	37/40 (0.93)	35/40 (0.88)	38/40 (0.95)	40/40 (1.00)	30/40 (0.75)	39/40 (0.98)	33/40 (0.83)
Gemma3-12b	37/40 (0.93)	37/40 (0.93)	35/40 (0.88)	37/40 (0.93)	32/40 (0.80)	40/40 (1.00)	35/40 (0.78)

Table 8: The classification accuracy of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the balanced *Giorno del ricordo* dataset. The best scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reciprocity	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness
Majority-class baseline	0.705	0.664	0.589	0.774	0.541	0.938	0.561
GPT-5 mini	0.938	0.890	0.904	0.932	0.774	0.274	0.657
Gemma3-4b	0.938	0.911	0.863	0.945	0.801	0.900	0.739
Gemma3-12b	0.945	0.918	0.911	0.938	0.863	0.966	0.842
Gemma3-27b	0.932	0.904	0.884	0.925	0.781	0.815	0.959

Table 9: Macro averaged precision, recall, and F1 scores of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the non-balanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe. The best F1 scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict P R F1	Respectful P R F1	Uncivil P R F1	Reciprocity P R F1	Reason P R F1	Experience P R F1	Constructiveness P R F1
Majority-class baseline	0.37 0.5 0.43	0.46 0.5 0.48	0.37 0.5 0.43	0.47 0.5 0.49	0.43 0.5 0.47	0.42 0.5 0.46	0.43 0.5 0.47
GPT-5 mini	0.37 0.5 0.43	0.49 0.48 0.33	0.33 0.35 0.34	0.57 0.65 0.58	0.76 0.65 0.70	0.5 0.15 0.23	0.67 0.60 0.62
Gemma3-4b	0.97 0.9 0.93	0.46 0.5 0.48	0.77 0.75 0.76	0.47 0.49 0.48	0.79 0.78 0.78	0.5 0.47 0.49	0.95 0.6 0.64
Gemma3-12b	0.91 0.88 0.90	0.72 0.65 0.68	0.80 0.83 0.81	0.74 0.74 0.74	0.79 0.80 0.79	1 1 1	0.96 0.70 0.76

Table 10: Macro averaged precision, recall, and F1 scores of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the balanced Berlin Wall/Day of Europe. The best F1 scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict P R F1	Respectful P R F1	Uncivil P R F1	Reciprocity P R F1	Reason P R F1	Experience P R F1	Constructiveness P R F1
Majority-class baseline	0.28 0.5 0.36	0.40 0.5 0.44	0.35 0.5 0.41	0.39 0.5 0.44	0.27 0.5 0.35	0.44 0.5 0.47	0.28 0.5 0.36
GPT-5 mini	0.28 0.5 0.36	0.49 0.48 0.48	0.33 0.35 0.34	0.57 0.65 0.60	0.76 0.65 0.70	0.5 0.15 0.23	0.68 0.60 0.64
Gemma3-4b	0.86 0.83 0.85	0.65 0.67 0.66	0.76 0.77 0.77	0.78 0.77 0.77	0.75 0.75 0.75	0.76 0.81 0.78	0.66 0.67 0.66
Gemma3-12b	0.84 0.82 0.83	0.87 0.78 0.81	0.84 0.85 0.84	0.87 0.89 0.88	0.80 0.78 0.79	0.93 0.94 0.93	0.78 0.78 0.78

Table 11: Macro averaged precision, recall, and F1 scores of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the non-balanced Giorno del ricordo dataset. The best scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict P R F1	Respectful P R F1	Uncivil P R F1	Reciprocity P R F1	Reason P R F1	Experience P R F1	Constructiveness P R F1
Majority-class baseline	0.36 0.5 0.42	0.4 0.5 0.44	0.41 0.5 0.45	1 1 1	0.44 0.5 0.47	1 1 1	0.31 0.5 0.38
GPT-5 mini	0.36 0.5 0.42	0.18 0.18 0.18	0.43 0.43 0.43	0.5 0.43 0.46	0.64 0.69 0.65	0.5 0.14 0.22	0.23 0.5 0.32
Gemma3-4b	0.87 0.93 0.89	0.86 0.79 0.81	0.96 0.79 0.84	1 1 1	0.6 0.6 0.6	1 1 1	0.65 0.62 0.62
Gemma3-12b	0.89 0.92 0.91	0.83 0.80 0.81	0.98 0.93 0.95	1 1 1	0.80 0.83 0.81	1 1 1	0.75 0.72 0.72

Aligned language models

After showing that the finetuned models perform reasonably well at classifying discourse indicators, we conduct the second set of evaluations. We assess the generative ability of models adapted to specific

discourse indicators described in Section “Aligning large language models for political discourse”. To this end, we compare them to the non-finetuned version of the model to determine whether adaptation on a small set of task specific data can improve their discourse orientation.

As the evaluation in Section “Discourse quality analysis” shows, our finetuned models are reasonably accurate in detecting discourse quality indicators. Therefore, we use these models to perform an automatic evaluation. While this is not completely reliable, it gives a statistically significant insight into the differences between various models. For this evaluation, we generate 200 messages across every topic in our dataset with each model. A detailed list of topics is shown in Appendix 2 (Škvorč et al., 2026). We then use the finetuned Gemma-4b

models (finetuned on the balanced Berlin Wall and *Giorno del ricordo* dataset) from Section “Discourse quality analysis models” to assess the 7 discourse quality indicators for both commemorations. In Tables 13 and 14, we show the performance of the finetuned models described in Section “Aligning large language models for political discourse”, where each model is aligned to produce messages that match a specific discourse quality indicator.

The results show that finetuning a model increases the presence of the target indicator, even when the

Table 12: Macro averaged precision, recall, and F1 scores of finetuned models on the discourse quality indicators measured on the balanced *Giorno del ricordo* dataset. The best F1 scores are typeset in bold.

Model	Conflict P R F1	Respectful P R F1	Uncivil P R F1	Reciprocity P R F1	Reason P R F1	Experience P R F1	Constructiveness P R F1
Majority-class baseline	0.30 0.50 0.37	0.40 0.5 0.44	0.34 0.5 0.41	0.39 0.5 0.44	0.27 0.5 0.35	0.34 0.5 0.47	0.27 0.5 0.35
GPT-5 mini	0.30 0.50 0.37	0.14 0.22 0.15	0.23 0.22 0.23	0.45 0.42 0.43	0.72 0.67 0.64	0.51 0.54 0.26	0.47 0.47 0.46
Gemma3-4b	0.93 0.95 0.94	0.89 0.90 0.89	0.87 0.86 0.87	0.92 0.91 0.91	0.79 0.78 0.78	0.82 0.82 0.82	0.77 0.76 0.76
Gemma3-12b	0.99 0.83 0.89	0.83 0.85 0.84	0.85 0.85 0.85	0.91 0.93 0.92	0.83 0.76 0.77	0.80 0.90 0.84	0.80 0.80 0.80
Gemma3-27b	0.70 0.64 0.65	0.72 0.68 0.70	0.84 0.84 0.84	0.76 0.74 0.75	0.75 0.75 0.75	0.81 0.92 0.86	0.75 0.74 0.75

Table 13: The detected presence of discourse quality indicators (in columns) after finetuning the Gemma3-4b model to align with specific discourse quality indicators (in rows) on the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset. Each value represents the percentage of posts containing a given indicator. The scores of the best performing models are typeset in bold. The baseline score of Gemma3-4b is for the non-adapted LLM.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness	Reciprocity
Gemma3-4b	0.563	0.132	0.023	0.350	0.041	0.127	0.017
4b-Conflict	0.846	0.050	0.045	0.612	0.020	0.124	0.005
4b-Respectful	0.148	0.529	0.006	0.155	0.071	0.335	0.010
4b-Uncivil	0.880	0.019	0.089	0.612	0.156	0.052	0.005
4b-Reason	0.756	0.065	0.050	0.726	0.010	0.174	0.010
4b-Experience	0.418	0.259	0.005	0.592	0.657	0.144	0.005
4b-Constructiveness	0.637	0.149	0.029	0.622	0.025	0.289	0.030
4b-Reciprocity	0.575	0.035	0	0.225	0.005	0.065	0.565

Table 14: The detected presence of discourse quality indicators (in columns) after finetuning the Gemma3-4b model to align with specific discourse quality indicators (in rows) on the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset. Each value represents the percentage of posts containing a given indicator. The scores of the best performing models are typeset in bold. The baseline score of Gemma3-4b is for the non-adapted LLM.

Model	Conflict	Respectful	Uncivil	Reason	Experience	Constructiveness	Reciprocity
Gemma3-4b	0.721	0.353	0.174	0.403	0.005	0.284	0.129
4b-Conflict	0.945	0.095	0.234	0.443	0.010	0.284	0.119
4b-Respectful	0.284	0.846	0.005	0.214	0.015	0.378	0.005
4b-Uncivil	0.975	0.055	0.532	0.408	0.005	0.214	0.119
4b-Reason	0.886	0.224	0.219	0.408	0.010	0.373	0.010
4b-Experience	0.828	0.414	0.086	0.539	0.570	0.234	0.086
4b-Constructiveness	0.866	0.313	0.149	0.547	0.005	0.542	0.075
4b-Reciprocity	0.960	0.085	0.040	0.124	0.005	0.109	0.701

models were trained on automatically-generated labels produced by a non-finetuned ChatGPT-5.2 model. This means that LLMs can be aligned towards specific indicators through a purely automatic approach, without relying on manual annotation.

While this holds for every indicator, it is more prominent for certain indicators. For example, “conflict” reaches a value of 0.846 on the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset and a value of 0.945 on the *Giorno del ricordo* dataset, while “constructiveness” reaches smaller values (0.335 and 0.542 respectively). This can be explained either through the examples present in our data (where the “conflict” indicator is more common) or through the implicit biases present in the base LLMs. Additionally, the results show a correlation between different indicators. For example, increasing the conflict indicator also increases the “uncivil” and “reason” indicators on both datasets.

From a standpoint of deliberation, these results also show that antagonistic indicators such as “conflict” and “uncivil” can be reduced by training a model on an inversely-correlated indicator (e.g., “respectful”), which can be useful for training models that avoid generating messages with such unwanted indicators.

Qualitative analysis of generated posts

In addition to the automatic evaluation of the aligned LLM models, we perform a small-scale manual, qualitative analysis of the posts generated

by each model. For each commemoration and indicator, we chose 3 randomly examples for manual analysis (for a total of 42 posts). We provide English translations of these posts in Tables 15 and 16. We remove hash symbols and at tags from the posts as part of data preprocessing, so they do not appear in the generated posts.

We provide English translations for a further list of 140 generated posts (10 for each indicator for both the the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe and the *Giorno del ricordo* datasets) in Appendix 3 (Škvorc et al., 2026). Then, we manually analyse each chosen post using the following criteria:

- Is the post grammatically sensible?
- Is the post related and contextually accurate to the desired commemoration?
- Is the post aligned with the desired indicator?

Additionally, we check the overall similarity of the chosen posts to ensure the models are not simply repeating a small number of phrases that would score well with the evaluation models.

For the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset, most of the chosen posts meet the desired criteria. Posts with **conflict** focus on the fall of the Berlin Wall, communism, and its relation to modern-day politics surrounding Russia and Europe, although an unambiguous link to conflict is not always present. All the posts are grammatically sensible and contextually accurate to the commemoration. Day of Europe is rarely mentioned, likely due to the fact that it is a less contentious commemoration.

Conversely, **Respectful** posts relate to the day of Europe and clearly express respect and empathy. As with conflict, **Uncivil** posts are related to the fall of the Berlin Wall but include clear disrespect and exaggeration.

Justification with reason produces posts that include arguments based on history (in the case of the Berlin wall) or the values of Europe day. Posts that justify their arguments with **experience** contain specific phrases that signify this (“I remember”, “I was there”, “I have seen” ...), which could be seen as the model over-fitting to a few specific key words and may be a reflection of the small amount of training examples. Posts here also show the least amount of diversity.

Constructive posts appear to be seeking common ground around topics related to the Berlin wall and different current-day events. With **reciprocity** all the chosen posts ask some sort of question, which fits the definition of the indicator.

For *Giorno del ricordo*, the results are similar. Posts generated with the **conflict** model explicitly mention the conflict with the communist partisans (or more broadly, the left), implicitly expressing disagreement with one of the sides. The mentions of Giorgia Meloni relate the discussion to current Italian politics.

Respectful posts focus on memorializing the victims of the foibe, without mentions of contentious political events. **Uncivil** posts are similar to those produced by the conflict model, but also sometimes include explicit attacks against another person. The last post does not contain conflict, reflecting the fact that the models are not 100% accurate.

The **justification with reason** model performed poorly in the automatic analysis, which is reflected in the generated posts. One provides an explicit justification, while the other two do not. When compared with the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe dataset, justification with **experience** centres less around living during the event. The event commemorated by *Giorno del ricordo* is more distant, leading to fewer people with personal experience. Instead, an exhibition related to the foibe is mentioned by one post.

Two of the **constructive** posts seek common ground by talking about both sides of the conflict. Of the **reciprocal** posts, two ask questions related to the event, although the lack of context makes it hard to determine whether these questions are genuine.

All of the examined posts are grammatically sensible, though a further list of 10 posts per indicator shows the models are not perfect and sometimes simply generate a list of usernames. Most posts are related to the desired commemorations and include the correct historical and political contexts. As demonstrated by the

automatic analysis, not all posts are correctly aligned with the desired indicator, but when they are this is not simply a result of repeating a number of repetitive key words (with the possible exception of the Berlin Wall justification with reason). We also verified that the generated posts do not match those present in the training data, meaning that the models are not simply repeating examples seen during training.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER WORK

In this work, we presented how automatic techniques based in natural language processing and large language models can be used both for deliberative analysis of social media messages, and as a way of aligning LLM-produced messages towards specific types of discourse.

The results of our work show two cases where finetuning LLMs can be useful for discourse analysis. First, we show that finetuning LLMs on manually-labelled datasets can improve their performance when it comes to detecting discourse indicators. While non-fine tuned models already perform reasonably well on this task, finetuning further increases accuracy, allowing for a more precise discourse analysis of social media messages. Second, we show that finetuning models on specific indicators, even when the indicators were automatically labelled using non-fine tuned LLMs can align their outputs to more closely match the chosen indicator. This allows the models to produce messages that contain less conflict or uncivilly and more respect or constructiveness.

However, our evaluation contains several limitations. We limit our work to specific commemorations (Day of Europe, Fall of the Berlin Wall, and *Giorno del ricordo*) and not to general social media messages. We also limit our evaluation to the Gemma 3 family of models, comparing them with GPT-5 as a baseline. Further work is necessary to determine how these findings generalize to other LLMs. Additionally, a larger-scale qualitative analysis is necessary to evaluate the quality of the automatically generated posts. Such an analysis would require a larger number of human evaluators and was not possible in the scope of this study.

In future research, our work could lead to a development of practical applications aimed at improving political and public discourse, for example, by generating respectful replies guiding uncivil discourse to more desirable outcomes, suggesting rewrites of offensive posts with more deliberative, civil alternatives, or serving as human-assisted moderator agents and discourse quality monitoring tools. However, care must be taken to ensure such models are deployed ethically and with proper human supervision.

Table 15: Tweets generated using the aligned models trained on the Berlin Wall/Day of Europe datasets. We show 3 randomly-chosen posts per indicator.

Conflict
The former SED, which has already been banned for 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, is now again on the street. You can do it like this for decades, but in the end there will be a fall of the wall, as in the fall of the Berlin Wall. If you want to know what the Russians are doing in Europe and why, read this article on the fall of the Berlin wall, the US has always had an interest in it
Respectful
On May 9th, we celebrate Europe Day. This day commemorates the signing of the Schuman declaration in 1950, the founding text of the European construction. Thank you to all those who came to the Stadtschlossgese in the Humboldtstadt! Our EuropeDay was a great success! The weather was beautiful and the visitors enjoyed the EuropeDay program and the EuropeanElections2024. On the occasion of Europe Day, the students of the 2nd grade of the 1st cycle of the AixEnProvence school have been able to discover the European Union through an exhibition organized in partnership with the French Institute and the Erasmus+ program.
Uncivil
The Moroccan flag has been banned in France, the Eiffel Tower has been covered with the Algerian flag, the Berlin Wall has been replaced by the Moroccan flag, the statue of the Eiffel Tower has been replaced by the statue of the king of Morocco, and so on. What do you mean? It is the fault of the Germans that the Berlin Wall fell? You are a ridiculous, stupid person. And you want to talk about the fall of the Berlin Wall? A wall that was built to protect us from the communist dictatorship. It was built by the people. The people of the West. And the communists want to build it again.
Justification with Reason
The USA has never respected any agreements made, the USA and NATO have repeatedly broken the agreements made with the USSR after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the NATO expansion to the East is a violation of the Minsk agreements The Russians invaded Ukraine in 2014, and then the Berlin Wall fell in 1989. Europe Day: celebrates the diversity of its cultures and languages. The diversity of our cultures and languages is a strength. It is a guarantee of our future. is a land of culture and languages is a land of diversity.
Justification with Experience
I was there 1989, I saw the Iron Curtain fall, I felt the people of the East crying and laughing. I saw the fall of the Berlin Wall and the joy of reunification. Today I see the iron curtain rise again. I have seen the fall of the Berlin Wall. I have seen the rise of the Russian Federation. I have seen the rise of the Chinese Federation. I have seen the rise of the Iranian Federation. I have seen the rise of the Korean Federation. I have seen the rise of the Turkish Federation. I remember the fall of the Berlin Wall with the great joy of a child. We were all excited, I was 20 years old. But there is also the sadness of the people who lived in the East, who did not want to leave their homes, their lives.
Constructiveness
I have lived in the GDR, I have seen the fall of the wall, I have been there when the Russians came, I have seen the suffering, the poverty, the misery, the injustice. I have never experienced such a thing. What do you know about it? You can write about Putin all day long, but you do not know what you are talking about. The former SED rulers have only been replaced, the SED is not dissolved. There are only political names that have changed. It is time to recognize the State of Palestine and we must put an iron curtain and a wall up to Jerusalem for many years to protect Israel from these massacres.
Reciprocity
Does the French government have a plan to close the border with the Maghreb? I have not seen any plan to create a wall between France and the Maghreb. Why was the Berlin Wall built? Today is Europe Day, and I am wondering if the EU is still the great project of unity that we thought it was.

Table 16: Tweets generated using the aligned models trained on the *Giorno del ricordo* datasets. We show 3 randomly-chosen posts per indicator.

Conflict
<p>Giorgia Meloni The victims of the foibe were something horrible, but the Italian communist partisans were a despicable bunch of people.</p> <p>It is true, the foibe were an atrocity and the massacres carried out by Tito's followers and Tito's communists must never be forgotten. But one cannot even remember the atrocities committed by the Italians in those lands.</p> <p>The left mobilizes for the Day of Remembrance, while Meloni does nothing. The Day of Memory is February 10, the Day of Remembrance of the foibe is February 10. You can do it like this for decades, but in the end there will be a fall of the wall, as in the fall of the Berlin Wall.</p> <p>If you want to know what the Russians are doing in Europe and why, read this article on the fall of the Berlin wall, the US has always had an interest in it</p>
Respectful
<p>So as not to forget the Day of Remembrance.</p> <p>In memory of the Martyrs of the foibe. My thoughts go to the innocent victims who paid the highest price of hatred and violence.</p> <p>Mattarella: "The foibe are one of the darkest pages in our history"</p>
Uncivil
<p>And what do you mean? Are you saying that your friends, the partisans, did not kill in the foibe anyone who was communist or left-wing? Do you not know what you are talking about? You are acting like the fascists who say that the Nazis killed all civilians, and more.</p> <p>And what about the foibe? The victims of the foibe? Do you know that they have 15,000 dead? But you're a heartless person, I believe it.</p> <p>The foibe are an unquestionable tragedy, but they do not justify the killing of thousands of Slavic civilians. One cannot justify the killing of civilians with the killing of civilians. Therefore, the tragedy was a tragedy, but it does not justify the tragedy.</p>
Justification with Reason
<p>The right has taken the liberty of commemorating the Day of Remembrance, which is not the Day of Remembrance but the Day of Shame.</p> <p>I remember that it was fascism that invaded Yugoslavia, massacred and deported entire populations, built concentration camps and had its headquarters in Basovizza, carried out ethnic cleansing, built extermination camps and caused the death of 10 million Slavs.</p> <p>The foibe were a disgrace for our nation. Today the foibe are our revenge. The foibe have taught us never to take anything for granted.</p>
Justification with Experience
<p>I saw an exhibition yesterday about the Foibe and the remembrance of the victims of fascism. And it made me feel a bit uneasy. My grandfather took part in one of the two. And I knew him. The memory of those times made me cry.</p> <p>I was in Fiume, I also saw the foibe, as a child, for the first time, I saw the funeral of a friend of mine, who had been taken away, and I understood how much fascism was a disgrace.</p> <p>It cannot be denied that the Foibe massacres were a tragedy, but it is another matter to deny that, in a wartime context, there were also the Foibe killings, with partisans who killed Italians.</p>
Constructiveness
<p>February 10 is the day in which, every year, we remember the foibe massacres and the exodus of thousands of Italians from the lands of Istria, Fiume and Dalmatia. It is the day in which we remember the victims, of all nationalities, massacred in the border areas</p> <p>Today is the Day of Remembrance. Forgetting the victims of the foibe massacres is a serious mistake. Whoever denies or minimizes the horror of the occupation and the forced exodus of our Slavic fellow citizens, is not antifascist, but a denier. You fascists do not remember history.</p> <p>The problem is that no one wants to understand that the foibe are a consequence of what the Italians did in Yugoslavia. Not the foibe, but the 20 years of Fascist occupation. Remember that without fascism there would have been no foibe.</p>
Reciprocity
<p>A Pasolini film came to my mind, I don't know the title.</p> <p>What do the foibe massacres have to do with the upcoming elections? The foibe are a historical tragedy, but they are not a political topic.</p> <p>What does it have to do with Foibe Remembrance Day?</p>

ZAČETEK RAZVOJA AGENTOV UMETNE INTELIGENCE ZA IZBOLJŠANO KVALITETO POLITIČNEGA DISKURZA Z VELIKIMI JEZIKOVNIMI MODELI

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POVZETEK

Razvoj velikih jezikovnih modelov omogočajo poglobljeno in obsežno analizo številnih kompleksnih pojavov. Eno takšnih področij je politični diskurz v družbenih medijih, ki lahko služi kot kazalnik številnih družbenih vprašanj. V tem delu analiziramo, kako se lahko učenje velikih jezikovnih modelov na objavah v družbenih medijih, povezanih z razpravo o določenih političnih spominskih slovesnostih, uporabi tako za pomoč pri analizi diskurza kot tudi za prilagajanje sporočil, ki jih ustvarjajo ti modeli (npr. spreminjanje sporočil iz nevljudnih v vljudna). Najprej predstavimo teoretični okvir za analizo političnega diskurza, ki temelji na osmih kazalnikih kakovosti diskurza, čemur sledita dva metodološka prispevka. Najprej pokažemo, da so modeli naučeni na majhnem številu ročno označenih primerov boljši pri zaznavanju kazalnikov kakovosti diskurza kot večji, neprilagojeni modeli. Nato modele natančno prilagodimo na primerih, ki ustrezajo določenim kazalnikom kakovosti diskurza, in pokažemo, kako lahko ta proces preusmeri sporočila, ki jih ti modeli ustvarjajo, tako da se bolj uskladijo z želenim kazalnikom, npr. vljudnostjo. Ugotovitve kažejo, da bi se v prihodnosti agenti umetne inteligence, ki temeljijo na velikih jezikovnih modelih, lahko uporabljali za moderiranje javnega diskurza in izboljšanje njegove kakovosti.

Ključne besede: politični diskurz, agenti umetne inteligence, politične spominske slovesnosti, Berlinski zid, Dan Evrope, Veliki jezikovni modeli

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PREDLOG METODOLOGIJE ZA VREDNOTENJE PREPOZNAVNI KRAJINE NA REGIONALNI RAVNI

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IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava koncept prepoznavnosti krajine, prikazuje dosedanje poskuse in metode vrednotenja prepoznavnosti, predstavi štiri metodološke pristope k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni ter ponudi sintezo teh metod. Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni je osnovano na prepoznavanju in vrednotenju krajinskih vzorcev (in krajinskih prvin) na osnovi treh skupin meril s katerimi vrednotimo: tipičnost ali edinstvenost, naravne in kulturne kakovosti, ter strukturne kakovosti krajine. Rezultat prispevka je predlog metode vrednotenja prepoznavnosti krajine na regionalni ravni z diskusijo o razlikah in podobnostih med vrednotenjem nacionalne in regionalne prepoznavnosti.

Ključne besede: krajina, prepoznavnost krajine, značaj krajine, krajinski vzorci, krajinske prvine, regionalna raven

PROPOSTA DI METODOLOGIA PER LA VALUTAZIONE DELLA RICONOSCIBILITÀ DEL PAESAGGIO A LIVELLO REGIONALE

SINTESI

L'articolo affronta il concetto di riconoscibilità del paesaggio, illustra i tentativi e i metodi di valutazione finora elaborati, presenta quattro approcci metodologici alla valutazione della riconoscibilità a livello regionale e ne offre una sintesi. La valutazione della riconoscibilità del paesaggio a livello regionale si basa sull'individuazione e sulla valutazione dei modelli paesaggistici e dei loro elementi, secondo tre gruppi di criteri: la tipicità e l'unicità, le qualità naturali e culturali, nonché le qualità strutturali del paesaggio. Il risultato del contributo è la proposta di un metodo per la valutazione della riconoscibilità del paesaggio a livello regionale, accompagnata da una discussione sulle differenze e sulle analogie tra la valutazione della riconoscibilità a livello nazionale e quella a livello regionale.

Parole chiave: paesaggio, riconoscibilità del paesaggio, carattere del paesaggio, modelli paesaggistici, elementi del paesaggio, livello regionale

UVOD¹**Identiteta in/ali prepoznavnost krajine**

Evropska konvencija o krajini (MEKK, 2003) je prvi mednarodni dokument, ki je izpostavil evropske krajine kot enega od temeljev evropske identitete oz. v slovenskem prevodu konvencije, prepoznavnosti.² Prepoznavnost krajine razumemo kot »tipične in posebne značilnosti krajinske zgradbe in njenih simbolnih pomenov, po katerih je neko krajinsko območje mogoče prepoznati« (Hudoklin et al., 2005, 4; Mihelič et al., 2016). Ta definicija se nekoliko razlikuje od uveljavljenih opredelitev identitete krajine (angl. *landscape identity*), ki je nekoliko kompleksnejši koncept. Identiteta krajin se vzpostavlja vzdolž dveh osi: med osebno in kulturno identiteto ter med prostorsko in eksistencialno identiteto. Razliko med prostorsko in eksistencialno lahko ilustriramo z vprašanji »Kje sem?« in »Kdo sem?« (Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006; Stobbelaar & Pedrolí, 2011). Podobno večplastnost koncepta identitete poudarjajo še nekateri drugi avtorji. Ramos et al. (2016, 37) identiteto krajine razumejo kot »[...] medsebojni odnos med krajino in ljudmi« in trdijo, da jo je mogoče razumeti kot identiteto krajine same (Kje sem?), ali kot način kako krajina sooblikuje identiteto posameznikov in družbenih skupnosti (Kdo sem/Kdo smo?), o čemer pišeta tudi Kučan (2007) in Južnič (2003). Jacobs (2006) pa kompleksnost koncepta krajine (in posledično njene identitete) razplati na tri ravni: fizično stvarnost (*matterscape*), družbeno (*powerscape*) in osebno (*mindscape*) predstavo oz. interpretacijo prostora. Grafična ponazoritev teh konceptov je prikazana na sliki 1.

Prepoznavnost krajine je osnovana na značaju krajine, slednji pa se oblikuje v kvadrantu med prostorsko in kulturno identiteto. Vsako krajinsko območje ima svoj značaj, po katerem se razlikuje od drugih območij. Značaj krajine je najkompleksnejši atribut, ki ga pripisujemo krajinam. Kombinacije *krajinskih značilnosti* (npr. reliefa, površinskega pokrova) in *krajinskih prvin* (npr. suhozidov, kulturnih teras, posameznih dreves) ustvarjajo *krajinske vzorce*. V enem prostorsko zaključenem krajinskem območju običajno prepoznamo več vzorcev. Kombinacija teh vzorcev skupaj z načinom, kako jih človek

zaznava in interpretira, pa imenujemo *značaj krajine* (Golobič et al., 2024). Odnos med posameznimi pojmi je prikazan na sliki 2. Značaj je ne vrednostna kategorija in je namenjena opisovanju lastnosti, po katerih se eno krajinsko območje razlikuje od drugega, medtem ko ima prepoznavnost (običajno) pripisano pozitivno vrednostno konotacijo.³ Prepoznavne so tiste krajine, katerih značaj sooblikuje poseben preplet (tipičnih ali edinstvenih) krajinskih vzorcev in prvin, pogosto nadgrajen s simbolnim pomenom, zaradi katerih so te krajine prepoznane v širšem prostoru oz. družbeni skupnosti.

Prepoznavnost krajine, slovenske izkušnje

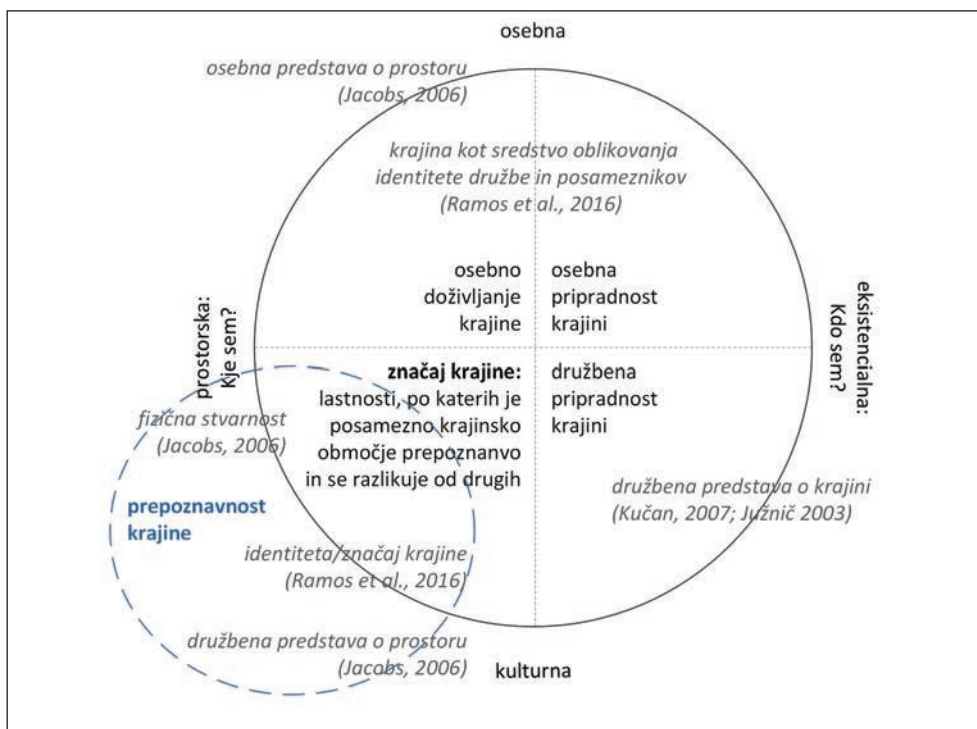
Ohranjanje prepoznavnosti krajine je eden od ciljev urejanja prostora, določenih v Zakonu o urejanju prostora (ZUreP-3, 2021). Prepoznavnost krajine je definirana tudi v Resoluciji o Strategiji prostorskega razvoja Slovenije 2050 (ReSPR50, 2023) kot edinstvena ali neponovljiva lastnost na ravni Slovenije oz. značilna struktura ali vzorec na regionalni ravni in eden od potencialov prostorskega razvoja. Kot tako jo je treba nasloviti tudi pri pripravi prostorskih aktov na vseh ravneh.

Pojem prepoznavnosti krajine se je v Sloveniji uveljavil v letu 2004 s sprejetjem Odloka o strategiji prostorskega razvoja Slovenije (OdSPRS, 2004). V Strategiji so bila določena t. i. območja, pomembna za nacionalno prepoznavnost krajine. Mednje so bili vključeni prepoznavni in reprezentativni deli slovenske krajine z dobro ohranjenimi krajinskimi sestavinami, območja izjemnih krajin, ter prostorsko poudarjena kulturna dediščina, pogosto v kombinaciji z naravnimi prvini ali vrednotami. Z izjemo treh območij (Goriških Brd, dela Bele krajine in Haloz), ki so bila določena naknadno, se vsa preostala prekrivajo z območji kompleksnega varstva kulturne dediščine. Območja prepoznavnosti niso dobila statusa varovanega območja, kot ga imajo npr. širša zavarovana območja v sistemu ohranjanja narave. Njihovo ohranjanje in razvoj naj bi bila v prvi vrsti zagotovljena z ustreznim prostorskim načrtovanjem, podobno kot se v prostorskih planih varuje npr. kulturna dediščina (ki ni razglašena za kulturni spomenik). Zavarovalo naj bi se jih le v

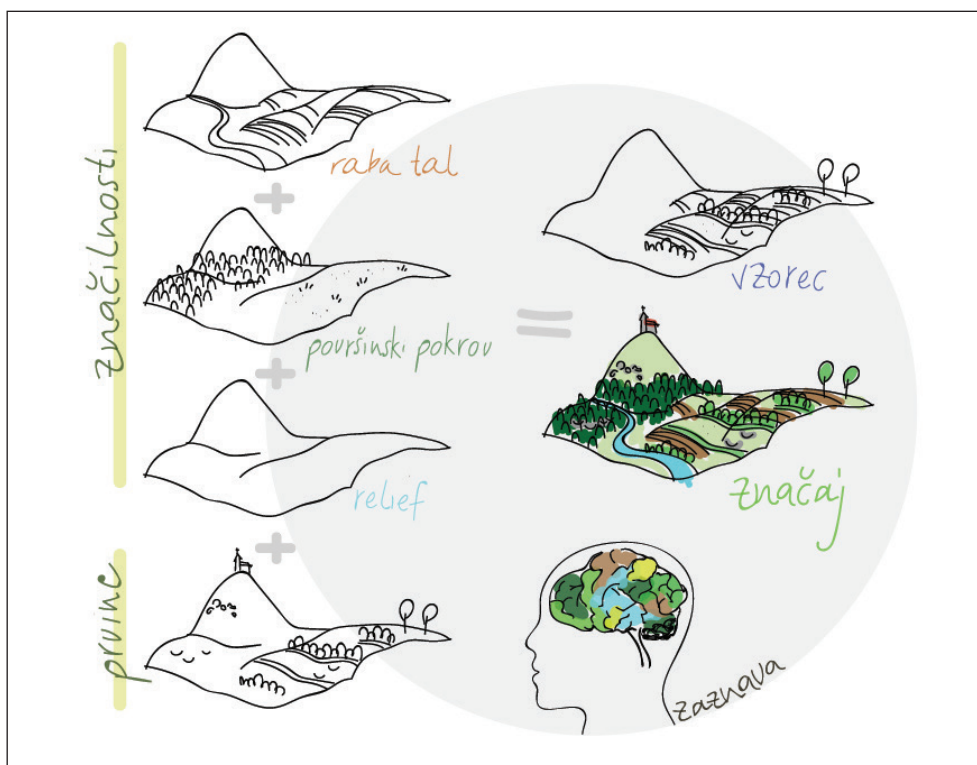
1 Predlog metode vrednotenja regionalne prepoznavnosti je izdelan na osnovi predlogov, ki so jih pri predmetu Tipologija, upravljanje in varstvo kulturne krajine v študijskem letu 2024/25 razvili študentje 2. letnika magistrskega študija krajinske arhitekture. Metoda vrednotenja prepoznavnosti krajine na nacionalni ravni, ki je v članku uporabljena za primerjavo je bila razvita v okviru projekta CRP V5-2135 *Prenova regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov in izjemnih krajin v Sloveniji ter njihova digitalizacija*. Vsem študentom in sodelavcem se zahvaljujem za njihov doprinos k vsebini, ki je služila kot izhodišče za ta prispevek. Zahvala gre tudi obema recenzentoma, ki sta v prispevku prepoznala kakovosti, kritično opozorila na napake in odprla pogled na možnosti za njegovo izboljšavo.

2 V tem prispevku je, sklicujoč se na uradni prevod Evropske konvencije o krajini, pojem *prepoznavnost krajine* v angleščino prevajan kot *landscape identity*, čeprav pojma prepoznavnost in identiteta nista popolna sinonima. Razlike med pojmom so kratko orisane v nadaljevanju tega poglavja.

3 Posamezna krajinska območja so (ali so bila v preteklosti) sicer prepoznavna tudi po izrazito negativnih dejavnikih, npr. Mežiška dolina in Revirji zaradi okoljskih problemov. V tem članku prepoznavnost razumemo in obravnavamo kot pozitivno lastnost določenega krajinskega območja.



Slika 1: Odnos med identiteto in prepoznavnostjo krajine (Vir: prirejeno po Stobbelaar & Hendriks, 2006; Stobbelaar & Pedrolu, 2011).



Slika 2: Ilustracija značaja krajine in odnosov med njegovimi gradniki (Vir: Golobič et al., 2024, 19).

primerih, ko naj bi bile s tem zagotovljene dodatne možnosti z njihovo upravljanje. V Strategiji (OdSPRS, 2004) so bile podane tudi splošne usmeritve za ohranjanje območij, pomembnih za nacionalno prepoznavnost krajine, ter usmeritve za ohranjanje prepoznavnosti po posameznih krajinskih regijah.

Določitvi območij, pomembnih za prepoznavnost krajine na nacionalni ravni naj bi sledilo vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni in lokalni ravni. V ta namen je bil v letu 2005 izdelan predlog metodologije določanja prvin in območij prepoznavnosti krajine v okviru ciljnega raziskovalnega projekta »Podrobnejša pravila za urejanje prostora: Ohranjanje prepoznavnosti slovenskih krajin« (Hudoklin et al., 2005). Predlagana so bila merila za vrednotenje prvin ter območij prepoznavnosti, uporabna na različnih ravneh.

Tako že določena območja nacionalne prepoznavnosti (OdSPRS, 2004), kot tudi metoda za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti (Hudoklin et al., 2005), nista nikoli zaživela v prostorsko načrtovalski praksi, saj za njuno implementacijo ni bilo ustreznega mehanizma. Med drugim je bila v obdobju po sprejetju Strategije v letu 2007 s sprejemom Zakona o prostorskem načrtovanju (ZPNačrt, 2007) ukinjena krajinska zasnova – strokovna podlaga s področja urejanja krajine, ki bi lahko pripomogla k implementaciji koncepta prepoznavnosti krajine.

Preveritve koncepta prepoznavnosti krajin se je lotila raziskovalna naloga »Nadgradnja metodologije določanja območij nacionalne prepoznavnosti krajine« (Golobič et al., 2020; Hudoklin et al., 2020; Penko Seidl et al., 2021). V nalogi je bila predlagana ter na testnih območjih preverjena nova metoda vrednotenja območij nacionalne prepoznavnosti krajine ter podane usmeritve za njihovo upravljanje. Tudi ta naloga je, podobno kot prejšnja (Hudoklin et al., 2005) ostala na ravni strokovne podlage brez zavezujočih obvez za njeno uporabo v prostorsko načrtovalski praksi.

S prenovo Regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov in izjemnih krajin Slovenije (Golobič et al., 2024) je bil koncept prepoznavnosti ponovno postavljen pod drobnogled. Analiza razlogov za pomanjkljivo implementacijo vseh prejšnjih poskusov je pokazala, da so ti sicer kompleksni, a jih lahko strnemo v nekaj alinej:

- Koncept prepoznavnosti iz Strategije (OdSPRS, 2004) je bil nekoliko nejasen, sama metoda in merila vrednotenja in določanja območij nacionalne prepoznavnosti pa nestransparentna. Strategiji prav tako ni sledil dokument, ki bi ta območja bodisi zavaroval,

bodisi predpisal pogoje za njihovo varstvo, upravljanje in načrtovanje.

- Neuveljavitev koncepta prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni (kljub predlagani metodi v letu 2005) posledično ni pripomogla k vzpostavitvi in implementaciji koncepta prepoznavnosti na regionalni in lokalni ravni. K temu lahko prištejemo še pogosto spreminjanje prostorske zakonodaje v tem obdobju ter krčenje obveznih strokovnih podlag za prostorske plane, ki bi naslavljale vsebine s tega področja.
- Za razliko od ostalih režimov varstva krajine predvsem znotraj sistemov ohranjanja narave in varstva kulturne dediščine, ostaja prepoznavnost krajine tudi po 20 letih še vedno koncept, ki se ni nikoli imel priložnosti popolnoma uveljaviti oz. je v pomanjkanju mehanizmov za njegovo implementacijo obstal na konceptualni/idejni ravni. Kljub temu, da so prva določena območja prepoznavnosti izhajala iz območij kompleksnega varstva kulturne dediščine, kasneje niso bila varovana v okviru tega sektorja.
- Poleg območij, pomembnih za prepoznavnost krajine, v Sloveniji poznamo še eno kategorijo t. i. izjemnih krajin. Te so bile določene v nalogi Strategija varstva krajine v Sloveniji (Ogrin, 1996) kot najvrednejša krajinska območja, ki bi jih bilo treba neposredno varovati. Kljub temu niso bila nikoli formalno zavarovana in zaradi tega tudi redko upoštevana pri načrtovanju njihovega razvoja. Pojavljale so se tudi ideje o združitvi kategorij prepoznavnih in izjemnih krajin, v Resoluciji o Strategiji Prostorskega Razvoja Slovenije 2050 (ReSPR50, 2023) so izjemne krajine celo označene kot edinstvena oz. neponovljiva lastnost prepoznavnosti (na nacionalni ravni).

Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni je bilo zato v najnovejši prenovi metodologije (Golobič et al., 2024) zastavljeno na nekoliko drugačen način. V izogib še ene kategorije (potencialno) varovanih območij, je prepoznavnost ovrednotena na ravni krajinskih podenot⁴ – območij z enotnim krajinskim značajem. Značaj krajine je kombinacija krajinskih značilnosti in prvin (ki skupaj sestavljajo krajinske vzorce) ter človekove zaznave (Golobič et al., 2024). Prepoznavnost krajine, ki je osnovana na značaju krajine, je zato smiselno vrednotiti v pomenskem in prostorskem kontekstu območij, ki

4 V Regionalni razdelitvi krajinskih tipov (Marušič et al., 1998) in njeni Prenovi (Golobič et al., 2024) je za najnižjo raven regionalizacije uporabljeno poimenovanje *krajinska podenota*. V nadaljevanju besedila uporabljamo izraz *krajinska (pod)enota* v primerih, ko se sklicujemo na razdelitev iz zgoraj omenjenih študij. Sicer je termin *krajinska enota (landscape character unit)* v stroki uveljavljeno poimenovanje za območje z enotnim krajinskim značajem, kar ustreza definiciji krajinske podenote iz Regionalizacije (Marušič et al., 1998) in njene Prenove (Golobič et al., 2024).

jih opredeljuje enoten značaj. Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti je osnovano na treh merilih, pri čemer je za uvrstitev na seznam nacionalno prepoznavnih podenot dovolj, da vrednotena podenota izpolnjuje eno: (1) zgodovinski pomen in pričevalnost, kontinuiteta rabe, (2) simbolna vrednost, in (3) značilna (vizualna) podoba. Za vsako krajinsko podenoto so določeni tudi krajinski vzorci in krajinske prvine, ki prispevajo k prepoznavnosti (Golobič et al., 2024).

Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni

Prenova metode in meril vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni (Golobič et al., 2024) je ponovno osvetlila pomen tega koncepta, a je za njegovo učinkovito implementacije nujna nadgradnja za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni. Posamezna območja, ki sicer ne izpolnjujejo meril prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni, so kljub temu pomembna zaradi regionalno specifičnih – tako tipičnih, kot tudi edinstvenih, prvin in vzorcev, ki prispevajo k njihovi regionalni prepoznavnosti in so kot taka vredna posebne pozornosti pri načrtovanju njihovega prihodnjega razvoja. Že v Strategiji (OdSPRS, 2004) je bilo poudarjeno, da je pri načrtovanju namenske rabe prostora in prostorskih ureditev v posameznih krajinskih regijah nujno upoštevati regionalne specifične, npr. naravno dinamiko, značilno oblikovanost reliefa in njegovo ranljivost v alpskih krajinah; strukturo kraških polj in podolij ter druge posebnosti krasi v kraških krajinah, itd. Vendar Strategija ne podaja meril za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni, niti podrobnejših usmeritev za njihovo urejanje.

Merila za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni predlagajo že v prejšnjem poglavju omenjeni Hudoklin et al. (2005). V njihovem predlogu metodologije je vrednotenje prepoznavnosti osnovano na prvinah in območjih. Za uvrstitev na seznam regionalno prepoznavnih prvin, morajo slednje izpolnjevati vsaj eno od naslednjih meril: (1) značilnost (prvina je značilna za določeno območje), (2) enkratnost (prvina je enkratna, izjemna po tipološki zvrsti ali pa po vrednosti), (3) simbolnost (prvina ima simbolno, kulturno vrednost), ali (4) pričevalnost (prvina predstavlja tradicionalne oblike bivanja in (pri delovanju). Merila za določanje območij prepoznavnosti pa so: (1) prisotnost in gostota značilnih prvin prepoznavnosti krajin, (2) tipološka ali pa vrednostna izjemnost (naravnih ali ustvarjenih) krajinskih prvin, pomembnih za prepoznavnost, (3) velike pričevalne in simbolne vrednosti, (4) prostorska zaokroženost območja (isti krajinski tip in funkcionalna ter mentalna povezanost), (5) veliki potenciali za nastanek območja prepoznavnosti (npr. arheološka območja, ki še niso prezentirana in zato še niso znana, imajo pa za to velik potencial).

Pomen prepoznavnosti krajine je poudarjen tudi v Zakonu o urejanju prostora (ZUreP-3, 2021) in Resoluciji o Strategiji Prostorskega Razvoja Slovenije 2050 (ReSPR50, 2023). Prepoznavnost v teh dokumentih je obravnavana na konceptualni ravni, medtem ko je implementacija tega koncepta prepuščena dokumentov na nižjih ravneh, npr. strokovnim podlagam za potrebe prostorskega načrtovanja na regionalni in lokalni ravni in sektorskim politikam.

Na tej točki si moramo zastaviti vprašanje katere, če sploh, so razlike med konceptoma nacionalne in regionalne prepoznavnosti krajine. Med nacionalno prepoznavne krajine se uvrščajo tiste, ki so običajno edinstvene, a so obenem v njih izražene določene lastnosti, na osnovi katerih se oblikuje nekakšen »prototip« slovenske krajine in navzven delujejo kot (prostorski) »predstavniki« naše države, obenem pa jih (pre)pozna večina prebivalcev Slovenije. Te krajine gradijo identiteto države kot celote. Prepoznavnost na regionalni ravni se opira na regionalno specifične prvine in vzorce, ki so prav tako lahko edinstveni, še pogosteje pa tipični predstavniki regije in kot taki (pre)poznani med njenimi prebivalci, ne pa nujno tudi izven regijskih meja. Zaradi tipičnih prvin in vzorcev so te krajine sicer prepoznavne tudi izven meja regije, vendar spet kot »prototipi« določene regije, ne pa konkretne lokacije (npr. ravninsko njivsko krajino s kuliso gora v ozadju brez težav uvrstimo v predalpski svet, medtem ko je prav odsotnost gorate ali hribovite kulise merilo za uvrstitev krajine v subpanonski svet).

METODA

Izhodišča

Prispevek za izhodišče vzame štiri metodološke pristope k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni, ki so jih pripravili študenti 2. letnika magistrskega študija krajinske arhitekture v študijskem letu 2024/25 pri predmetu *Tipologija, upravljanje in varstvo kulturne krajine*. Članek posamezne predloge združi v enotno metodologijo, ki jo kritično ovrednoti upoštevajoč izsledke uvodoma predstavljenih raziskav, ki jih strne v dva vidika oz. merili: (1) ustreznost izbora metode ter predmeta vrednotenja – prostorskih enot, ki jih vrednotimo in (2) ustreznost izbora meril vrednotenja. Pri prvem vidiku preverjamo, ali je metoda ustrezna nadgradnja metode za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni in ali upošteva specifične prepoznavnosti regionalne ravni, na katere opozarjajo predhodne raziskave in študije. Pri drugem vidiku ovrednotimo ustreznost izbora meril vrednotenja in prekrivanja z merili vrednotenja izjemnih krajin.

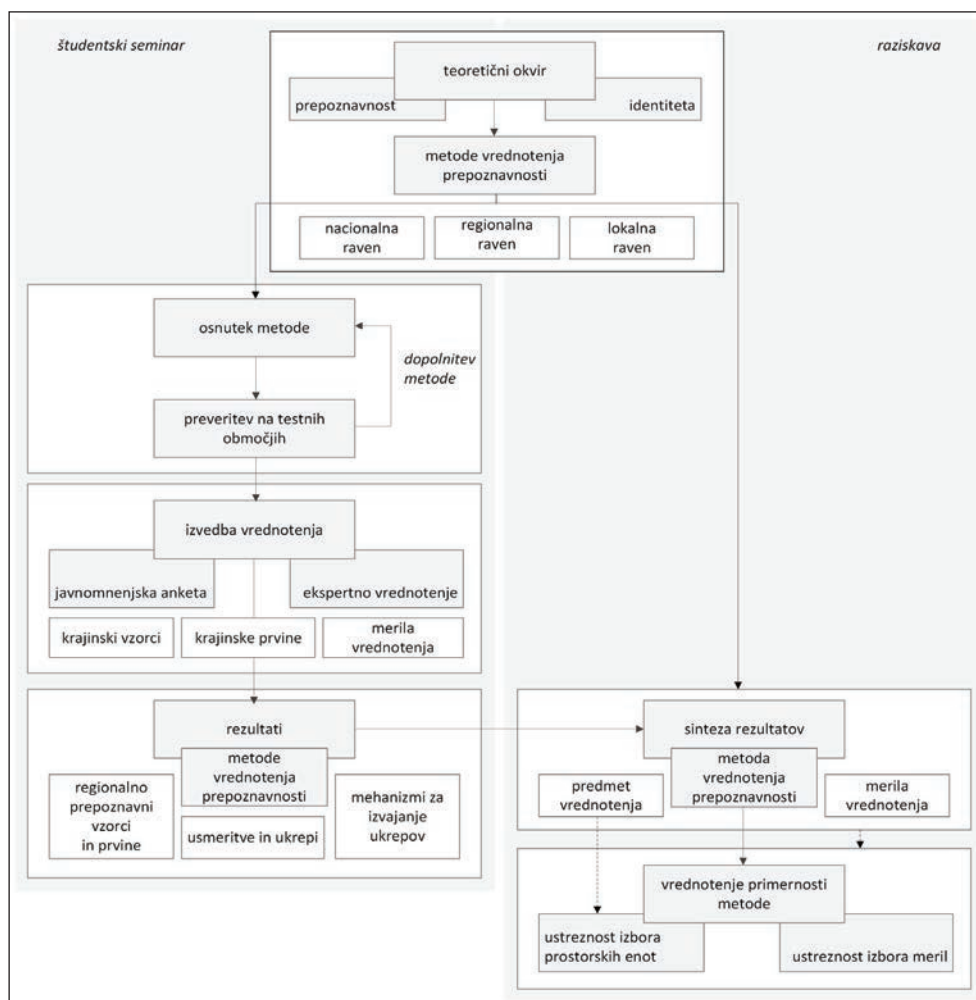
Cilji študentske naloge so bili: (1) na primeru izbranih slovenskih regij razviti metodo za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti krajine in določiti regionalno prepoznavne vzorce in prvine, (2) pripraviti usmeritve in ukrepe za njihovo varstvo, upravljanje in razvoj, in (3) identificirati mehanizme, preko katerih se predpisani ukrepi izvajajo.

Pristop k nalogi je sledil ustaljenemu protokolu: pregledu literature s področja teorije in metodologije vrednotenja prepoznavnosti je sledilo oblikovanje osnutka metode vrednotenja prepoznavnosti za posamezne regije, njegova preveritev na pilotnem območju, dopolnitev metode ter izvedba vrednotenja na celotnem območju izbrane regije. Na osnovi meril, po katerih je bila ovrednotena prepoznavnosti krajine, so bile določene usmeritve za varstvo, upravljanje in načrtovanje krajine ter ukrepi za njihovo izvajanje. V zadnjem koraku so bili identificirani tudi mehanizmi, preko katerih se

ti ukrepi izvajajo. Shema poteka dela v študentskem seminarju in v celotni predstavljeni raziskavi je prikazana na sliki 3.

V nadaljevanju članka so najprej kratko predstavljeni in med seboj primerjani izbrani primeri metod, ki so jih razvili študentje in ki k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti pristopajo na različne načine. Namen predstavitve izbranih primerov ni v podrobnem opisovanju posameznih metod. Predstaviti želimo predvsem izvirne ideje ter poiskati skupni imenovalac vseh predstavljenih metod za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti krajine na regionalni ravni. Ob tem osvetlimo tudi konceptualne in metodološke izzive s katerimi smo se v samem procesu spopadli in zanje poskušali poiskati ustrezne rešitve.

Sledi sintezni predlog metode vrednotenja prepoznavnosti krajine na regionalni ravni ter njegovo vrednotenje z vidika (1) ustreznosti dopolnitve metode za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni ter (2) ustreznosti izbranih meril vrednotenja (Golobič et al., 2024).



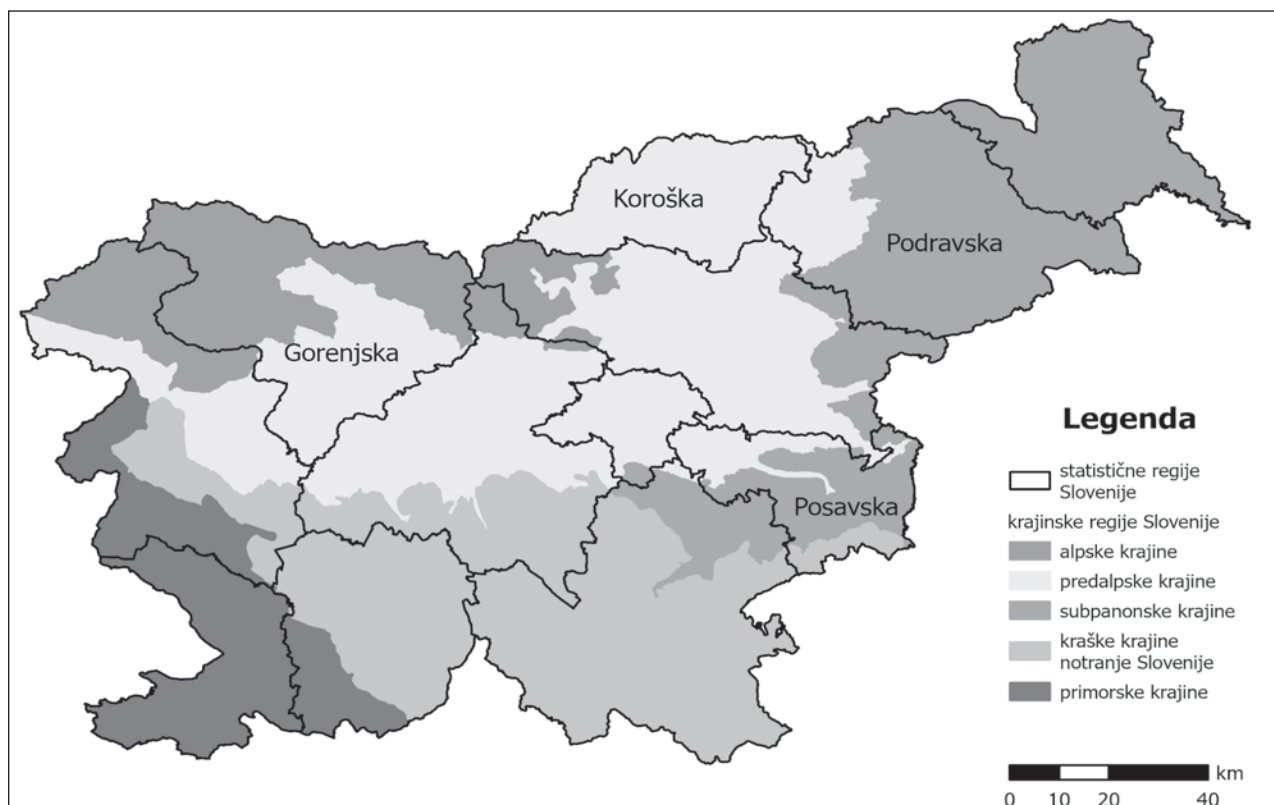
Slika 3: Shema poteka dela: levo so predstavljeni koraki dela v študentskem seminarju, desno dodatna raziskava, ki je bila izvedena z namenom priprave prispevka (Vir: Lasten prikaz).

Območje obravnave: krajinska ali razvojna regija

Prvi izziv je bil že izbor območij obravnave oz. vrednotenja prepoznavnosti. Strategija prostorskega razvoja Slovenije (OdSPRS, 2004), s katero se je koncept prepoznavnosti uveljavil, regionalno prepoznavnost sicer veže na krajinske regije iz Regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov v Sloveniji (Marušič et al., 1998), katerih razmejitve je narejena na osnovi njihovih naravnih značilnosti. Marušič et al. (1998) so se pri razmejitvi krajinskih regij opirali na geografsko regionalizacijo, ki jo je predlagal Ilešič (1972) in za razmejitve na prvi hierarhični ravni upošteva dve merili: podnebje in geologijo. Slovenske krajine se tako delijo na: krajine alpske regije, krajine predalpske regije, krajine subpanonske regije, kraške krajine notranje Slovenije ter krajine primorske regije. Vrednotenje regionalne prepoznavnosti v okviru teh regij se zdi na prvi pogled smiselno, saj krajine posamezne regije označuje skupni imenovalac, ki ga lahko razumemo kot izhodišče za vrednotenje regionalne prepoznavnosti. Če na vrednotenje prepoznavnosti gledamo v luči nadaljnje uporabnosti rezultatov tega vrednotenja za potrebe prostorskega načrtovanja (ter upravljanja in varstva krajine), pa je smiselno, da prepoznavnost vrednotimo v tistem

prostorskem kontekstu, za katerega obstajajo/bodo obstajali enotni prostorski načrti in v okviru katerih bodo lahko ti rezultati uporabljeni za usmerjanje prihodnjega razvoja. Trenutno veljavna Strategija prostorskega razvoja Slovenije med strateškimi usmeritvami prostorskega razvoja za ohranjanje naselbinske in krajinske prepoznavnosti poverja lokalne skupnosti, ki naj opredelijo prepoznavne značilnosti naselij in krajine ter jih upoštevajo pri pripravi prostorskih aktov in odlokov o izgledu naselij in krajine ter pri usmeritvah za nove prostorske ureditve. Med drugim strategija določa tudi, da se elementi in območja prepoznavnosti opredelijo v strokovnih podlagah za prostorsko načrtovanje na regionalni in lokalni ravni, ter zanje določijo usmeritve (ReSPR50, 2023). V pripravi je prva generacija Regionalnih prostorskih planov, predpisanih z Zakonom o urejanju prostora (ZUreP-3, 2021), v katerih bodo določeni cilji in prednostne naloge prostorskega razvoja ter usmeritve za prostorski razvoj regije – med drugim tudi za urejanje krajine z ohranjanjem krajinske identitete (GOV, 2025).

Zgoraj naštetá dejstva so odločitev o tem, na katere prostorske enote vezati vrednotenje regionalne prepoznavnosti prevesila na stran razvojnih oz. statističnih regij. Primerjava med statističnimi in krajinskimi regijami je prikazana na sliki 4.



Slika 4: Primerjava krajinske regionalizacije Slovenije (sivi odtenki) in razdelitve na razvojne regije (črne obrobe, regije na katerih so bile testirane predstavljene metode, so poimenovane) (Vir: Lasten prikaz, podatki pridobljeni iz Golobič et al., 2024).

Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti

Predmet vrednotenja: krajinski vzorci (in prvine)

Za razliko od vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni, pri katerem je bila ovrednotena vsaka krajinska (pod)enota, je bil za osnovno enoto vrednotenja na regionalni ravni pri vseh skupinah izbran krajinski vzorec. Krajinsko enoto definiramo kot zaključeno območje z enotnim značajem. Je edinstvena (neponovljiva) v prostoru in jo običajno lahko opišemo z uveljavljenim geografskim imenom. Primeri krajinskih enot so npr. Brkini, Podgorski kras, Spodnja brda, Radensko polje, itd. Znotraj posameznih krajinskih enot se pojavljajo različni krajinski vzorci – ti so predstavniki krajinskih tipov in kot taki generični oz. se lahko pojavljajo na različnih lokacijah. Primeri krajinskih vzorcev so npr. ledeniške doline, kraška polja, soline, mozaične krajine s trajnimi nasadi na gričevju, itd. Tako krajinske enote kot krajinski tipi so hierarhično strukturirani. Medtem ko so krajinske (pod)enote najnižja hierarhična raven krajinske regionalizacije (Golobič et al., 2024; Marušič et al., 1998), lahko krajinske vzorce razumemo kot najnižjo raven tipološke klasifikacije krajine.

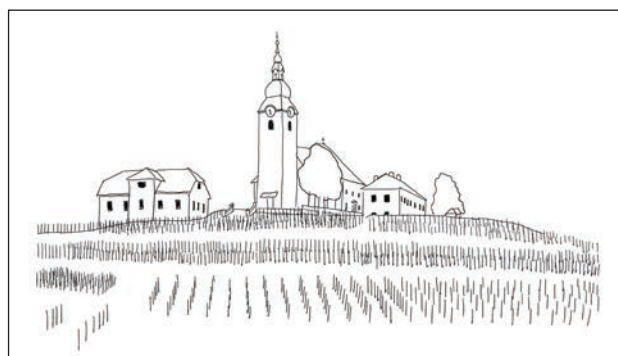
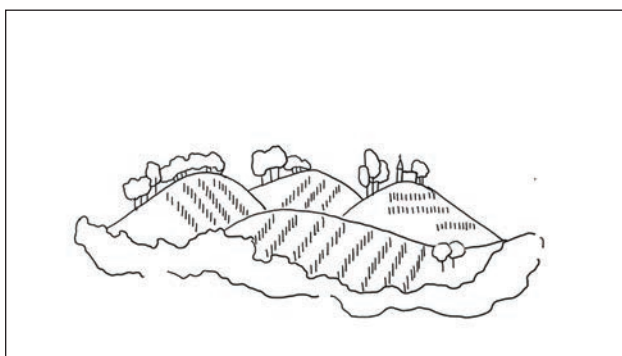
V vseh predstavljenih primerih so bili opisani in zarisani krajinski vzorci obravnavane regije, ena od predlaganih metod pa je vrednotenje prepoznavnosti zasnovala tudi na krajinskih prvinah. Krajinske prvine so najmanjši elementi v krajini, ki prispevajo k njenemu značaju in s tem k prepoznavnosti. K prepoznavnosti prispevajo lahko zaradi svoje tipičnosti in pogostosti pojavljanja, kot so npr. obdelovalne terase, suhozidi, posamezna drevesa, živice; ali njihove edinstvenosti, kot so npr. cerkve in gradovi na izpostavljenih lokacijah, ki povečujejo prepoznavnost določenega območja.

Merila vrednotenja

Izboru predmeta vrednotenja je sledila določitev meril za vrednotenje krajinskih vzorcev. Ta lahko strnemo v tri skupine, znotraj vsake skupine presojamo/vrednotimo različne vidike:

V prvo skupino uvrščamo merili (1) tipičnost in (2) edinstvenost. Ker sta si diametralno nasprotni, lahko posamezen krajinski vzorec izpolnjuje le eno od njiju. Krajinski vzorec je lahko tipičen predstavnik določene regije (npr. ledeniška dolina), zato je regija prepoznavna po tem vzorcu.⁵ V drugem primeru je vzorec v regiji edinstven oz. neponovljiv (npr. Blejsko jezero z otokom in gradom ali Sečoveljske in Strunjanske soline – oboje sicer uvrščamo v isti vzorec, a sta območji kljub temu edinstveni in zato prepoznavni).

V drugo skupino uvrščamo merili, s katerima vrednotimo (3) kulturni, zgodovinski ali simbolni pomen ter (4) naravno ohranjenost in biotsko raznovrstnost. Posamezna območja so širše prepoznana po kulturnem pomenu in/ali dogodkih, ki so vezani na določene kraje in krajine, npr. Gorjanci po Trdinovi pripovedi Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih, Bela krajina po jurjevanju, itd. Podobno k prepoznavnosti krajine prispevajo zgodovinski dogodki ali obdobja v zgodovini, kot je npr. Soška fronta. Določeni kraji in krajine nosijo simbolni pomen, npr. Snežnik kot najvišji vrh izven Alp. K prepoznavnosti poleg kulturnih prispevajo tudi naravne posebnosti in kakovosti. Kočevski Rog je prepoznaven po ohranjenih (pra)gozdovih, Golica po narcisah in Pohorje po visokih barjih. Pogosto naravne in kulturne kakovosti nastopijo tudi v kombinacijah: Bela krajina je poznana po brezah, reki Kolpi in jurjevanju, Sečoveljske soline so kulturna dediščina in habitat ptic, itd.



Slika 5: Primer značilnega krajinskega vzorca in edinstvene krajinske prvine s Posavske regije (Vir: Zala Preskar in Gašper Kunst, *Katalog krajinskih vzorcev in prvin Spodnjeposavske regije*, 2025).

⁵ Obstajajo tudi krajinski vzorci, ki se lahko pojavljajo tudi v več regijah, vendar se običajno razlikujejo po lokalnih specifikah: npr. mozaična kmetijska krajina s trajnimi nasadi na gričevju se pojavlja v Goriških brdih, Slovenski Istri in v Posavju, vendar vzorci v vsaki od teh krajin izkazujejo določene regionalne ali lokalne posebnosti.

Tretja skupina meril je osnovana na vidni zaznavi in doživljanju krajine. S (5) prostorskim redom opisujemo jasno izražene strukturne prvine, ki so običajno posledica človekovega poseganja v prostor oz. prilagajanja naravnih razmer svojim potrebam. Sem uvrščamo npr. krajine z značilno parcelacijo (Bitnje na Sorškem polju kot šolski primer poljske razdelitve na sklenjene proge ali območja s kulturnimi terasami v Jeruzalemskih gorinah). To merilo se povezuje s (6) skladnostjo oz. usklajenostjo ustvarjenih prvin z naravnimi razmerami. Zadnje merilo je (7) vidna privlačnost krajine. To merilo je običajno sinteza kombinacije zgoraj naštetih meril, odvisno je od opazovalca, pa tudi od vidnosti/preglednosti posamezne krajine.

Izvedba vrednotenja: ekspertno vrednotenje in preveritev z anketiranjem

K vrednotenju prepoznavnosti krajine je mogoče pristopiti na dva načina: z ekspertnim vrednotenjem z uporabo vnaprej določenih meril, ali z javnomnenjskim vrednotenjem, ki je tudi lahko osnovano na merilih, ali pa gre le za odprta vprašanja o tem, kateri deli regije se anketirancem zdijo pomembni za njeno prepoznavnost in zakaj. Možne so tudi različne kombinacije pristopov, kot je npr. preverjanje ekspertnih ocen z javnomnenjsko anketo, ali pa, ravno nasprotno, oblikovanje meril vrednotenja na podlagi odgovorov anketirancev.

Od štirih predstavljenih metod sta bili dve zasnovani izključno na ekspertnem vrednotenju z uporabo meril iz zgornjega seznama, dve pa sta kombinirali ekspertno vrednotenje z anketo, s katero so bile ekspertne ocene preverjene s stališči javnosti.⁶

REZULTATI IN RAZPRAVA

Štirje pristopi k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti

Vsaka skupina je k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti pristopila na nekoliko drugačen način. Metodo so preizkušali tudi na različnih regijah, vendar so vse robustne in ponovljive v katerikoli regiji.

Skupina, ki je obravnavala Koroško regijo je ekspertno metodo osnovala na značilnih krajinskih vzorcih, njihove najbolj prepoznavne lokacije pa preverila z javnomnenjsko anketo. V Posavski regiji je bila prepoznavnost ovrednotena z ekspertno metodo, zasnovano na kombinaciji značilnih krajinskih vzorcev in edinstvenih krajinskih prvin (slika 5). V Podravski regiji so bili krajinski vzorci in prepoznavne lokacije presojani skozi oči prebivalcev

regije. Ekspertna metoda vrednotenja prepoznavnosti Gorenjske regije pa je ovrednotila prepoznavnost krajinskih enot s pomočjo varstvenih režimov ter regionalno prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev.

Primerjava pristopov

V tabeli 1 je prikazana primerjava pristopov k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni. Kljub razlikam med pristopi je mogoče najti skupne točke tako pri metodi vrednotenja, uporabljenih merilih, na katerih so osnovani rezultati ter usmeritve. V tabeli 1 so enake/podobne vsebine, ki se pojavljajo vsaj v treh od štirih primerov, označene **krepko**, oz. *ležeče*, če se pojavljajo vsaj v dveh primerih.

Na osnovi primerjave pristopov ter kritične presoje njihove uporabnosti za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti, v nadaljevanju predstavljamo sintezo v skupno metodo vrednotenja prepoznavnosti krajine na regionalni ravni. Ključni poudarki metode so prikazani v tabeli 2. Ker izhodišča za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti krajine na regionalni ravni izhajajo iz ugotovitev metode vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni, je v preglednici prikazana tudi primerjava s to metodo (Golobič et al., 2024). V nadaljevanju so predstavljeni argumenti za razlike v pristopu k vrednotenju prepoznavnosti na obeh ravneh.

Predmet vrednotenja

Medtem ko je predmet vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni krajinska enota, se je na regionalni ravni za ustrežnejšega izkazal krajinski vzorec. Razlog leži v razliki med konceptoma nacionalne in regionalne prepoznavnosti ter njuni navezavi na edinstvenost krajinskih enot in tipičnost krajinskih vzorcev, na kar so opozorile že predhodne raziskave (Golobič et al., 2020; 2024; Hudoklin et al., 2005; 2020; Penko Seidl et al., 2021). Krajine, ki so ovrednotene kot prepoznavne na nacionalni ravni so v svojem značaju in pojavnosti edinstvene in prepoznavne predvsem zaradi tega. Kot take najbolj ustrezajo definiciji krajinske enote, ki je v prostoru unikatna in neponovljiva. Kljub dejstvu, da v njej lahko najdemo krajinske vzorce in prvine, ki so sicer splošno razširjeni, je edinstvena bodisi kombinacija teh vzorcev in prvin, bodisi njihova lega in/ali dimenzije. Primeri nacionalno prepoznavnih krajin so npr. Bled, Nanos, Mura, Ljubljansko barje, itd. Vsaka od teh krajin je prepoznavna zaradi svoje edinstvenosti oz. neponovljivosti. Koncept regionalne prepoznavnosti pa je v

⁶ Zaradi časovnih in finančnih omejitev predstavljenih študentskih projektov ankete niso bile izvedene na reprezentativnih vzorcih, pač pa so študentje z njimi zgolj želeli preveriti svoje ugotovitve med prebivalci regije.

Tabela 1: Primerjava pristopov vrednotenja regionalne prepoznavnosti krajine.

obravnavana regija	Koroška	Posavska	Podravska	Gorenjska
predmet vrednotenja	krajinski vzorci	krajinski vzorci krajinske prvine	krajinski vzorci posamezne lokacije	krajinske enote krajinski vzorci
metoda vrednotenja	opis in kartiranje krajinskih vzorcev določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje preveritev rezultatov z anketo analiza vidnosti	opis in kartiranje krajinskih vzorcev določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje identifikacija prepoznavnih krajinskih prvin analiza vidnosti	opis in kartiranje krajinskih vzorcev določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje <i>dopolnitev rezultatov z anketo</i>	opis in kartiranje prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje analiza vidnosti
uporabljena merila in ocene	<u>ocena da/ne:</u> tipičnost edinstvenost pomen značilna podoba <u>ocena 1-3:</u> videzna privlačnost prostorski red naravna ohranjenost usklajenost naravnih prvin z ustvarjenimi	<u>ocena: 0-2:</u> edinstvenost tipičnost simbolnost naravna ohranjenost prostorski red videzna privlačnost	relief hidrologija biodiverzitet kulturna dediščina simbolni pomen raba prostora pomen za lokalno identiteto skladnost vidnost	<u>Delež:</u> _regionalno značilnih krajinskih vzorcev v enoti _režimov kulturne dediščine v enoti _naravovarstvenih režimov v enoti vidnost prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev
izvedba vrednotenja	ekspertno vrednotenje: krajinski vzorci <i>anketa:</i> določitev prepoznavnih lokacij izbor najbolj značilnih predstavnikov krajinskih vzorcev	ekspertno vrednotenje: krajinski vzorci krajinske prvine	<i>anketa:</i> določitev in vrednotenje najbolj prepoznavnih lokacij po posameznem vzorcu	ekspertno vrednotenje: krajinske enote
rezultat vrednotenja	prostorski prikaz krajinskih vzorcev (celotna regija) vrednotna ocena prepoznavnosti vzorcev najprepoznavnejše lokacije (točke)	prostorski prikaz krajinskih vzorcev (celotna regija) vrednotna ocena prepoznavnosti vzorcev vrednotna ocena doprinosa prvin k prepoznavnosti vzorcev	prostorski prikaz krajinskih vzorcev (celotna regija) najprepoznavnejši predstavniki (lokacije) posameznega krajinskega vzorca	prostorski prikaz krajinskih enot vrednotna ocena krajinskih enot po vsakem merilu prostorski prikaz prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev
usmeritve in ukrepi	podani za posamezne krajinske vzorce izhajajo iz meril, po katerih je vzorec prepoznaven izvajanje: OPN, ukrepi kmetijske politike, upravljavski načrti	podani za posamezne krajinske vzorce odziv na trende, ki so prepoznani na območju vzorca izvajanje: OPN, ukrepi kmetijske politike	podane za posamezne krajinske vzorce in najprepoznavnejše lokacije izhajajo iz meril, po katerih je lokacija prepoznavna izvajanje: OPN, ukrepi kmetijske politike, sektorska in okoljska zakonodaja	podane za posamezne prepoznavne vzorce izhajajo iz meril vrednotenja krajinskih enot izvajanje: upravljavski ukrepi in prostorsko načrtovanje

veliki meri vezan na regionalno specifične krajinske vzorce in krajinske prvine, ki so bodisi značilni samo za posamezno regijo, bodisi so prepoznavni zaradi lokalnih ali regionalnih posebnosti. Takšni primeri so npr. ledeniške doline ali soline, ki so vezane na pojavnost znotraj regije, oz. gričevnate krajine s trajnimi nasadi, ki se pojavljajo v različnih regijah, vendar so prepoznavne prav zaradi drobnih posebnosti: vinogradi na Trški Gori se tako razlikujejo od tistih

v Goriških brdih, Slovenski Istri ali nad Slovenskimi Konjicami. Vrednotenje regionalne prepoznavnosti je tako smiselno vezati na krajinske vzorce, ki ustrezajo definiciji krajinskega tipa.

Merila in lestvice vrednotenja

Prepoznavnost krajinskih (pod)enot je na nacionalni ravni ovrednotena opisno, z uporabo treh

meril: (1) zgodovinskega pomena in pričevalnosti ter kontinuitete rabe, (2) simbolne vrednosti ter (3) značilne (vizualne) podobe. Kljub temu da je prag za uvrstitev med nacionalno prepoznavne podenote že izpolnjevanje enega merila, večina (pod)enot izpolnjuje vsaj dve ali celo tri. Trenta je prepoznavna tako zaradi Soške fronte, kot zaradi izjemne vizualne privlačnosti in tradicionalnega sožitja narave in človeka, izražene v prepoznavni kulturni krajini; Cerkljansko jezero je naravni fenomen, ki je za preučevanje navdušil že Valvasorja in večkrat letno spreminja svojo (videzno in zvočno) podobo; v Sečoveljskih solinah so zapisane sledi pridobivanja soli od srednjega veka dalje, obenem njihova značilna ortogonalna struktura solnih polj predstavlja kontrast homogeni površini morja.

Za vrednotenje regionalne prepoznavnosti je bilo predlaganih sedem meril, ki jih lahko uvrstimo v tri sklope: (1) tipičnost ali edinstvenost, (2) naravni in/ali kulturni pomen, ter, (3) prostorski red, skladnost in vidna privlačnost. Krajinski vzorci, ki izpolnjujejo posamezna merila so prikazani na slikah 6, 7 in 8. Vendar kar tri od sedmih meril, ki so bila predlagana v predstavljenih metodoloških poskusih, v določeni meri ali popolnoma sovpadajo z merili za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin, kakor so bila predlagana v Prenovi regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov. Merila, uporabljena

za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin v tej nalogi so: (1) jasnost in dovršenost krajske zgradbe, (2) edinstvenost, in (3) slikovitost, izjemne vedute (Golobič et al., 2024). Uvodoma zagovarjamo tezo, da sta prepoznavnost in izjemnost krajine različna koncepta. Potemtakem bi sledilo, da morajo biti tudi merila za njihovo vrednotenje različna oz. da se merila, ki jih uporabljamo za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin, ne morejo ponoviti pri vrednotenju prepoznavnosti krajin, tudi če je slednje zasnovano na nižji hierarhični ravni.⁷ V tabeli 3 je podan opis meril ter – pri merilih, ki so sicer uporabljena za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin – argumentacija za oz. proti njihovi uporabi za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni.

Tudi za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni predlagamo, da se vrednotenje izvede opisno, z utemeljitvijo posameznih meril, ter, da je za uvrstitev med regionalno prepoznavne vzorce dovolj, če vzorec izpolnjuje vsaj dve od šestih meril iz vsaj dveh sklopov (npr. tipičnost in kulturni pomen).

Izvedba vrednotenja

Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na nacionalni ravni je izvedeno z ekspertnim vrednotenjem. Enak pristop predlagamo za regionalno raven vrednotenja, pri čemer predlagamo preveritev, ali se v vrednotenju vključi tudi anketo med prebivalci regije. Med

Tabela 2: Primerjava metodologije vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na nacionalni in regionalni ravni.

raven vrednotenja	nacionalna	regionalna
predmet vrednotenja	krajinska (pod)enota	krajinski vzorci krajinske prvine
metoda vrednotenja	opis in kartiranje krajinskih (pod)enot določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje določitev prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev in krajinskih prvin v (pod)enoti	opis in kartiranje krajinskih vzorcev določitev meril vrednotenja vrednotenje preverjanje in dopolnitev rezultatov vrednotenja z anketo
uporabljena merila in ocene	ocena da/ne z utemeljitvijo: 1 zgodovinski pomen in pričevalnost, kontinuiteta rabe 2 simbolna vrednost 3 značilna (vizualna) podoba	ocena da/ne z utemeljitvijo: 1 tipičnost ali edinstvenost 2 kulturni, zgodovinski in simbolni pomen in/ali naravna ohranjenost 3 prostorski red, skladnost in vidna privlačnost krajine
izvedba vrednotenja	ekspertno vrednotenje	ekspertno vrednotenje preveritev z javnomnenjsko anketo med prebivalci regije
rezultat vrednotenja	prostorski prikaz prepoznavnih krajinskih (pod)enot seznam vzorcev in prvin, ki prispevajo k prepoznavnosti utemeljitev vrednotenja	prostorski prikaz prepoznavnih krajinskih vzorcev seznam krajinskih prvin, ki prispevajo k prepoznavnosti utemeljitev vrednotenja
usmeritve in ukrepi	podani za posamezne krajinske vzorce in procese, ki te vzorce spreminjajo	podani za posamezne krajinske vzorce in procese, ki te vzorce spreminjajo

⁷ Izjemne krajine so določene na nacionalni ravni, določitev te kategorije na nižjih ravneh ni predvidena (Golobič et al., 2024).

Tabela 3: Opis in ilustracija predlaganih meril vrednotenja prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni ter argumentacija za/proti vključitvi meril vrednotenja prepoznavnosti, ki se uporabljajo že za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin.

Merilo vrednotenja prepoznavnosti	Opis merila	Argumentacija za/proti uporabi merila (za merila, ki se uporabljajo tudi za vrednotenje izjemnosti) Sklep
tipičnost	Krajinski vzorec je tipičen za regijo, običajno zaradi kombinacije krajinskih značilnosti (npr. reliefa, površinskega pokrova) in tipičnih krajinskih prvin (npr. suhozidi, kulturne terase). Pojavlja se na več območjih regije. Takšni primeri so npr. gričevja s trajnimi nasadi, ledeniške doline, kraška polja.	
edinstvenost	Krajinski vzorec je v regiji edinstven, bodisi zaradi edinstvenih naravnih razmer (npr. izrazitih reliefnih ali geomorfoloških oblik), bodisi zaradi človekovih posegov (npr. posamezni objekti na izpostavljenih lokacijah).	<p><i>Merilo se pri vrednotenju izjemnih krajin uporablja za vrednotenje krajinskega območja (izjemne krajine), ki mora biti edinstvena/neponovljiva na nacionalni ravni. Na regionalni ravni za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti merilo uporabljamo v nekoliko drugačnem kontekstu: z njim vrednotimo posamezne krajinske vzorce ali prvine, ki so edinstveni v posamezni regiji, ne pa nujno edini primeri takšnega vzorca in/ali prvine v državi. Tak primer je npr. Udin boršt, zakraselo območje z izraženimi kraškimi pojavi v sicer nezakraselem svetu Gorenjske. Kot tak je regionalno prepoznaven prav zaradi svoje edinstvenosti v obravnavanem prostorskem kontekstu.</i></p> <p>Merilo je ustrezno za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni.</p>
naravni pomen	Krajinski vzorec ima poseben pomen za naravo, ki izhaja iz biotske raznovrstnosti območja, njegove krajinske pestrosti ali posebnosti (npr. posebnih reliefnih oblik, geoloških formacij, hidrologije, itd.)	
kulturni in simbolni pomen	Krajinski vzorec ima poseben kulturni ali simbolni pomen, bodisi zaradi dogodkov in ali izročila, vezanega na ta prostor (npr. Soška fronta, slap Savica), bodisi zaradi ureditev in/ali objektov (npr. Bitenjsko polje pri Kranju kot primer razdelitve na sklenjene proge, posamezni gradovi in cerkve).	
prostorski red/skladnost	V krajini je jasno izražen prostorski red, npr. poljska razdelitev, kulturne terase.	<p><i>Prostorski red lahko doprinese k prepoznavnosti posameznih krajinskih vzorcev na regionalni ravni, saj so krajinski vzorci z jasno izraženim prostorskim redom lažje zapomnljivi. Prostorski red je le del merila »jasnost in dovršenost krajinske zgradbe«, uporabljenega za vrednotenje izjemnih krajin.</i></p> <p>Merilo je ustrezno za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni.</p>
slikovitost, videzna privlačnost	Krajina ima značilno, regionalno prepoznavno vizualno podobo, ki je zaradi izpolnjevanja zgornjih meril tudi videzno privlačna.	<p><i>Slikovitost in videzna privlačnost je merilo, ki je izrazito vezano na vrednotenje izjemnih krajin. Pri prepoznavnih krajin videzna privlačnost ne igra ključne vloge.</i></p> <p>Merilo ni ustrezno in se ne uporablja za vrednotenje prepoznavnosti na regionalni ravni.</p>



Slika 6: Fotografiji krajinskih vzorcev, s katerimi ilustriramo merili tipičnost (levo: Pogled z Višnjevika na Vedrijan, v ospredju tipične kulturne terase Goriških brd) in edinstvenost (desno: Cerkev na izpostavljenem grebenu, Koreno nad Horjulom) (Vir: Nadja Penko Seidl).



Slika 7: Naravni (levo: Palško jezero, eno od presihajočih jezer Zgornje Pivke) in kulturni (desno: grad Snežnik s parkom ob vznožju Javornikov) pomen krajinskih vzorcev (Vir: Nadja Penko Seidl).

razvojem predstavljenih metod so bile te možnosti omejene na nekaj deset spletnih anket, vendar kljub temu ponujajo vpogled v način, kako lokalni prebivalci razumejo prepoznavnost krajine oz. kateri so tisti elementi v prostoru, s katerimi se identificirajo.

Usmeritve in ukrepi

Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti krajine ne sme (p)ostati samemu sebi namen, temveč je nujen prenos ugotovitev v varstvo, upravljanje in načrtovanje krajine. Če so nacionalno prepoznavne podenote postale v veliki meri tudi zaradi izjemnih naravnih danosti, npr. posebnih reliefnih (Nanos), geomorfoloških (Kras) ali hidroloških (Soča) značilnosti, je regionalna prepoznavnost krajine v veliko večji meri vezana na kulturne krajine, na preplet naravnih razmer in človekove prilagoditve teh razmer svojim potrebam. Te prilagoditve so lahko utilitarne (npr. terasiranje pobočij in

gradnja suhozidov), pogojene s kulturo in izročilom (cerkve na izpostavljenih lokacijah), ali odraz določenega družbenega reda (gradovi na vzpetinah, značilni tipi zemljiške razdelitve). Vsi ti dejavniki so predmet nenehnega spreminjanja, ki se slej ko prej odraza tudi v krajini. Z usmeritvami in ukrepi tako v prvi vrsti želimo zagotoviti, da razvoj krajine ne gre v smeri razvrednotenja značilnosti, po katerih je posamezna regija prepoznavna.

SKLEP

Prepoznavnost, tako države, kot tudi posameznih regij, ima izrazito prostorsko konotacijo oz. je vezana na posamezne kraje in krajine (Golobič et al., 2020; Halbwachs, 2001; Kučan, 2007; 2013; Penko Seidl et al., 2021). Vrednotenje prepoznavnosti je opravilo, s katerim skušamo z uporabo ustreznih meril izpostaviti tista območja, vzorce in prvine, ki so gradniki prepoznavnosti.



Slika 8: Prostorski red (vinogradi v Ritoznoju v Podpohorskih gorica) (Vir: Nadja Penko Seidl).

Merila vrednotenja prepoznavnosti so osnovana na njihovi (1) fizični zgradbi, ta pa je posledica delovanja in medsebojnega vplivanja (2) naravnih in kulturnih dejavnikov, ter (3) simbolnih in kulturnih pomenov, ki so pripisani krajinam (Relph, 1976). Značaj, identiteta in posledično prepoznavnost krajine so, podobno kot dejavniki ki jih oblikujejo, v nenehnem spreminjanju. S spreminjanjem znač-

ja krajine njegova prepoznavnost ne nujno izginja, temveč se – v primerih, da te spremembe vodijo v želeno oz. načrtovano smer, na novo vzpostavlja. Glavni namen vrednotenja prepoznavnosti tako ni varovanje zatečenega stanja območij, vzorcev in prvin, ki prispevajo k prepoznavnosti, temveč usmerjanje razvoja na način, ki bo omogočil tudi (pre)oblikovanje prepoznavnosti krajin.

METHODODOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR LANDSCAPE IDENTITY EVALUATION
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SUMMARY

The article discusses the complex concepts of landscape identity and landscape character as cornerstones of a landscape's spatial identity. It provides an overview of the landscape identity concept in Slovenian spatial planning documents and recent attempts to establish a methodology for evaluating landscape identity. The main purpose of the article is to develop a robust framework for evaluating landscape identity at the regional level. Several methodological approaches to identity evaluation, developed within the students' seminar, are presented and combined into a joint proposal. Regional landscape identity is based on identifying characteristic landscape patterns and features, and evaluating their contribution to regional identity by adopting three groups of measures: (1) the landscape's typicality or uniqueness, (2) the natural and cultural qualities of the landscape, and (3) the landscape's structure and coherence. A comparison between methodologies for evaluating national and regional landscape identity shows that, whereas national landscape identity is tied to unique places and landscapes, regional identity is more often built around landscape patterns and types characteristic of a particular region. To implement the identity concept in landscape planning, management, and protection practice, guidelines and measures should follow the initial evaluation to guide the development of these landscapes in an appropriate direction.

Keywords: landscape, landscape identity, landscape character, landscape patterns, landscape features, regional level

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ENIGMA M4 FROM THE GERMAN MINESWEEPER R15 IN THE UPPER ADRIATIC: HIGH-RESOLUTION MICROCT INVESTIGATION OF THE LAST SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of microtomographic analysis of the rotor block of an Enigma machine M4 recovered from the wreck of the German minesweeper R15 in the upper Adriatic Sea (sunk on 16 April 1945). The device (serial number M 15648) was examined using visual inspection and MicroCT. Initial analysis enabled identification of the rotor sequence (Walzenlage) and external wheel positions, while higher-resolution scanning revealed internal rotor settings (Ringstellung). Based on the place and time of the sinking of the R15, it is plausible that the operators of M 15648 used the naval key Hermes within the code network Süd.

Keywords: Second World War, Adriatic, Kriegsmarine, cypher machines, Enigma, micro CT investigation

ENIGMA M4 DEL DRAGAMINE TEDESCO R15 NELL'ALTO ADRIATICO: INDAGINE MICROCT AD ALTA RISOLUZIONE DELLE ULTIME IMPOSTAZIONI

SINTESI

Questo articolo presenta i risultati dell'analisi microtomografica del blocco rotori di una macchina Enigma M4 recuperata dal relitto del dragamine tedesco R15 nell'Alto Adriatico, affondato il 16 aprile 1945. Il dispositivo, recante il numero di serie M 15648, è stato esaminato mediante ispezione visiva e MicroCT. L'analisi iniziale ha consentito di identificare la sequenza dei rotori (Walzenlage) e le posizioni esterne delle ruote, mentre una scansione a risoluzione più elevata ha rivelato le impostazioni interne dei rotori (Ringstellung). In base al luogo e al momento dell'affondamento dell'R15, è plausibile che gli operatori della M 15648 utilizzassero la chiave navale Hermes all'interno della rete di codifica Süd.

Parole chiave: Seconda guerra mondiale, Adriatico, Kriegsmarine, macchine cifranti, Enigma, indagine microCT

INTRODUCTION¹

Foreword

The renowned German Enigma cipher devices continue to attract significant interest from researchers and the general public, particularly when they originate from their primary contexts of use, such as command posts and other locations in the land theatre of war, as well as from ships and submarines. The still relatively rare examples from marine sites are mostly the result of exploration of sunken shipwrecks and submarines before the significance of such sites as valuable underwater cultural heritage was recognised, so only a few have been studied in full detail. This includes the example presented here: a naval Enigma M4 from the wreck of the German light minesweeper R15 off Umag in the northern Adriatic (Gaspari et al., 2023). The R15 was part of a convoy of three ships and five carriers travelling from Trieste to Pola on the night of 16–17 April 1945. It was detected by the British at around 11 pm and attacked by three torpedo boats of the 28th MTB Flotilla (Reynolds & Cooper, 1999). One of the torpedoes launched by MTB 409 struck its target, and the R15 sank 3 nautical miles northwest of Umag.

The wreck of the R15, lying inverted on the flat sandy seabed at a depth of 23–25 metres, was surveyed several times between 1984 and 1986 by Zvonimir Kralj, curator of the Piran Aquarium. Among the artefacts recovered from the vessel was an Enigma machine in a wooden box, accompanied by a black-printed booklet measuring approximately 30 × 20 cm. As only provisional conservation measures had been taken, the condition of the Enigma machine deteriorated rapidly, while the booklet disintegrated completely. In 2017, Kralj presented the remains of the encryption device to diver and expert Daniel Germek, who recognised its museological significance and research potential. The object was subsequently entrusted to the Military History Park in Pivka, where systematic conservation treatment began in the Conservation Department of the Museum of Modern History of Slovenia (Figure 1).

The conservation and research work, which resulted in an expert treatise on the subject (Gaspari et al., 2023) and a noted museum exhibition in Pivka (Boštjančič & Gaspari, 2023), accompanied

by a television documentary, included the investigation of the historical circumstances of the sinking of R15 and the examination of the preserved parts of the Enigma, in particular the rotor block and the remains of a plug-in board, the latter unfortunately with completely degraded and missing cables.

The following lines present the results of recent research on the final settings of the Enigma. Some previously published misconceptions about the final settings and their implications are also clarified and put into perspective.

Initial investigations of the Enigma M4 from the wreck of the minesweeper R 15

The rotor block of the Enigma M4, discovered in the wreck of R 15, has been preserved in a heavily corroded condition, with the upper parts of the zamak alloy wheels and portions of the Bakelite letter rings missing, but it remains fixed in the wheel compartment of the machine chassis (Figure 2). The rotor block was examined in 2020 at the Slovenian National Institute of Civil Engineering using microtomography (microCT), which revealed the arrangement (Walzenlage) and final positions of the rotors as well as their serial numbers and markings (Gaspari et al., 2023). The configuration of the wheel compartment, described from left to right, was identified as: reflector UKW-C, extra wheel Gamma, rotor III, rotor VI and rotor IV. All the wheels bear the serial number M 15648, and the rotor sequence includes a Naval wheel (VI), in accordance with the instructions stipulating that, when operating an M4 machine, one of the rotors had to be a Kriegsmarine rotor (VI–VIII).

Except for the gamma extra rotor (γ), which is preserved in its entirety, shorter or longer sequences of letters were preserved in situ on the other three rings (III: B–D, L–O; VI: A–J; IV: K–Q, U–W), sometimes slightly elevated above their original positions due to corrosion of the metal base, but nevertheless allowing the reconstruction of the positions of the missing letters. This circumstance, combined with the arrangement of the rotors within the block and its installation into the partially preserved walls and suspensions of the block compartment, enabled the relatively secure determination of the last external positions of the rotors. These were established based on the

¹ We would like to thank Frode Weierud, curator of the cryptocellar.org site, and Paul Reuvers, co-founder of the virtual Crypto Museum, both renowned specialists in the history of cryptology and Enigma cipher machines, for their expert help. We also thank Anton Frank from the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg for managing our request and providing a copy of Kenngruppenverfahren Süd. We are indebted to Svetko Kovač, former director of the Military Intelligence Agency [Vojnobezbednosna agencija] of the Republic of Serbia and an expert in the history of cryptography, for his valuable suggestions and contributions of archival material. We extend our gratitude to Robert Derenčin, retired officer of the Croatian Army and a connoisseur of the use of Enigma machines in naval operations. The authors sincerely thank the reviewers and editors of *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* and *Cryptographia* for their valuable feedback and support in improving this manuscript.

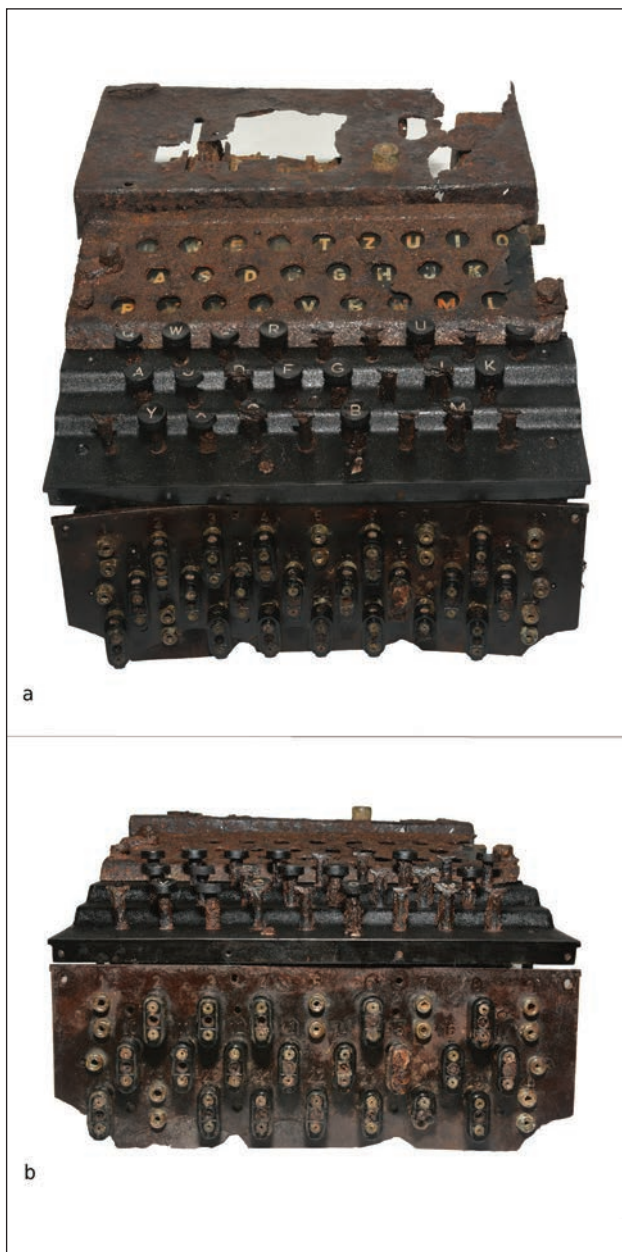


Figure 1: The remains of the Enigma M4 from the minesweeper R 15 after conservation: *a* – top view; *b* – front view (Photo: Andrej Gaspari).

fact that the windows on the machine lid plate were canted forward by one position from the top-dead-centre alignment, to make them easier for the operator to read (Marks, 2015, 32).

The plugboard (Steckerbrett) on the front of the machine shows six unused double sockets for the plugs, namely 1 (A), 5 (E), 7 (G), 9 (I), 19 (S), and 26 (Z). The cables connecting the paired plugs were not preserved; only the lower sections of the plugs with their pins remain (Figure 1b).



Figure 2: Enigma M4 from the minesweeper R 15; wheel compartment during conservation (Photo: Andrej Gaspari).

MicroCT ANALYSIS OF THE ROTOR BLOCK (2024)

In 2024, the institute acquired a new, higher-resolution device, enabling the determination of the ring settings of the rotors during their last use and thus the identification of the corresponding key. For the scanned Enigma rotor block, micro-CT was employed to examine the device's internal state. The aim was to confirm the type of each rotor (serial number and marking – Roman numeral) and to identify the ring setting (Ringstellung) without causing any damage or moving the rotors out of position. To achieve this, the EasyTom XL Ultra microCT device from the French manufacturer RX Solutions was used. The Enigma rotor block was placed inside the device on a 3D-printed stand and secured with rubber bands only, to avoid the use of glues or other adhesives (Figure 3). A microfocus Hamamatsu source was used with a 1.7 mm aluminium filter and the following tube settings: 160 kV operating voltage, 160 μ A tube current, and 95 μ A target anode current. A tungsten filament served as the cathode. A high-speed flat-panel detector captured the radiographs at 1.1 frames per second with a resolution of 2536 \times 2024 pixels. A total of 1,984 radiographs were produced for each 360° rotation, and four frames were averaged to acquire each radiograph. To achieve 35 μ m spatial resolution across the entire scanned volume, the Enigma rotors were positioned with a source-to-object distance of



Figure 3: Enigma M4 rotor block on a stand, placed in an EasyTom XL Ultra microCT device (Photo: Miha Hren).

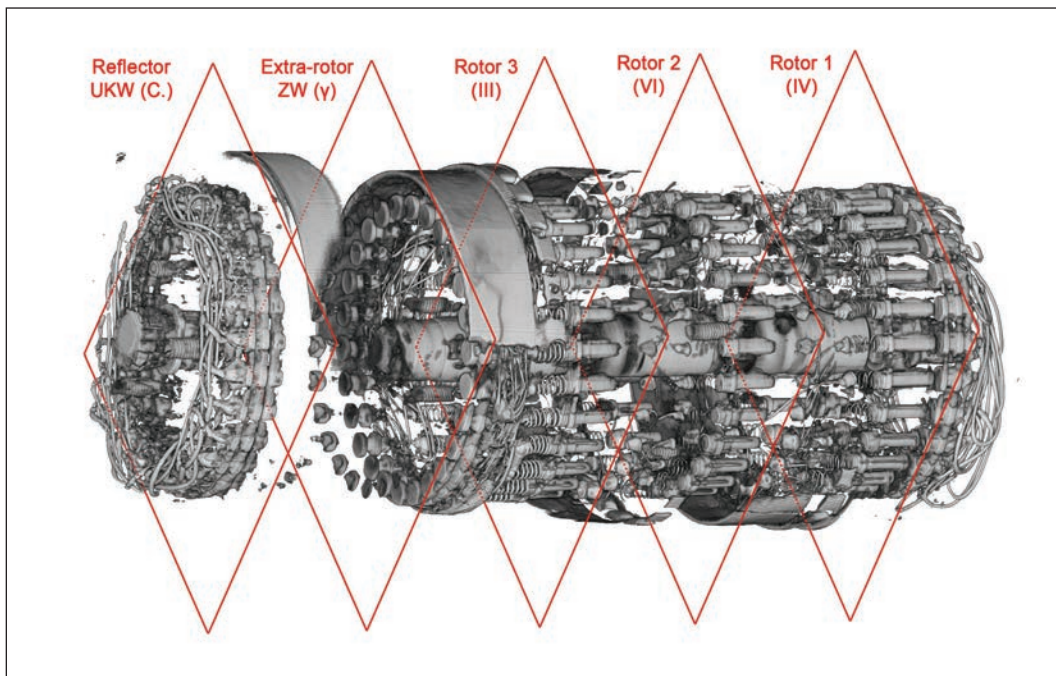


Figure 4: X-ray computed microtomography scan of the wheel block of the Enigma M4 from the minesweeper R 15, acquired with a Zeiss XRadia Micro XTC-400 x-ray microscope (3D render: Lidija Korat & Miha Hren).

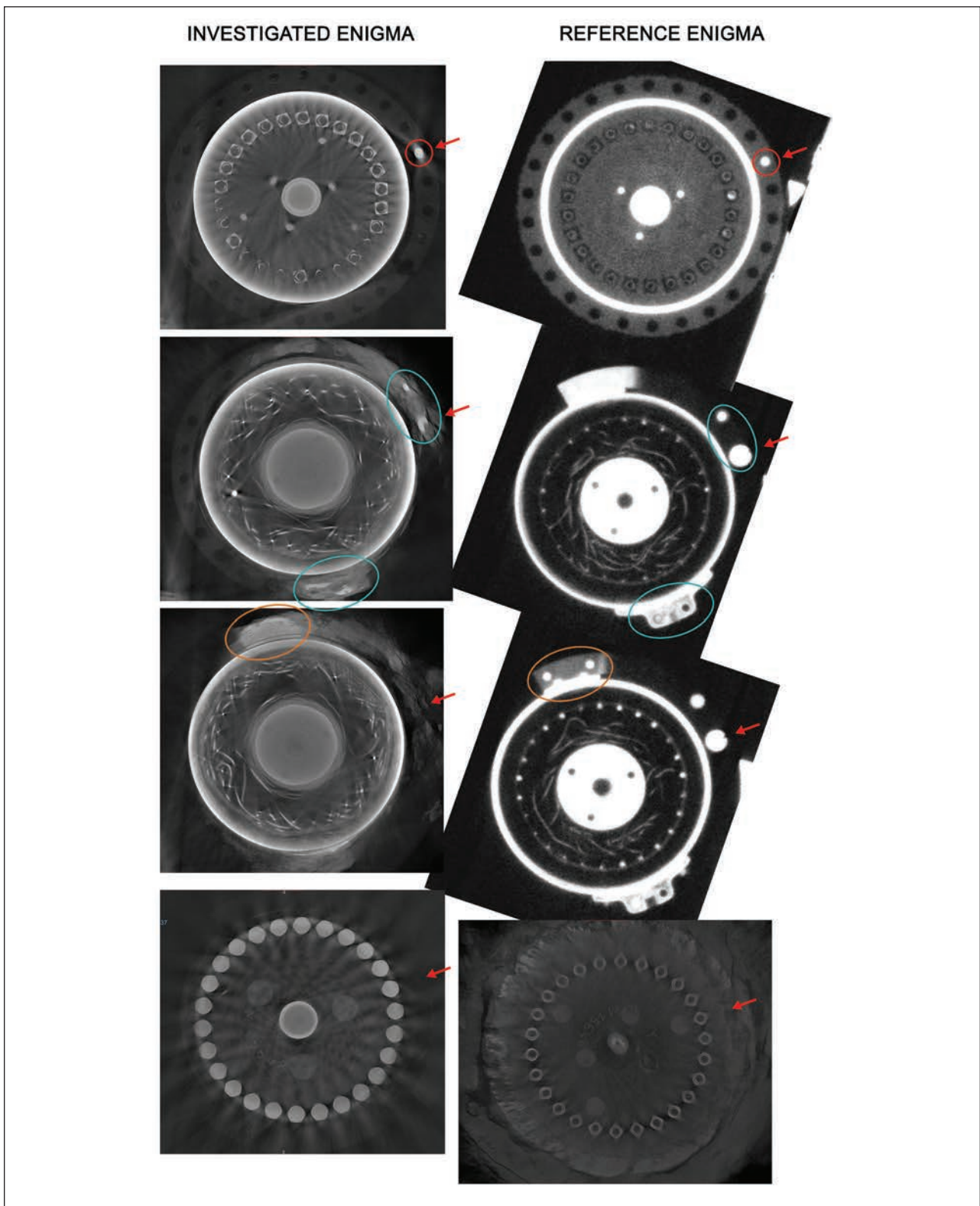


Figure 5: Reconstructed images of the extra-rotor (ZW) gamma in the investigated Enigma (left) and reference Enigma (right). The red, teal, and orange circles indicate the same identifying features (pins, screws, support structure) on both the investigated and reference Enigma. The red arrow points to the location of the gamma sign and the letter A (3D render: Miha Hren).

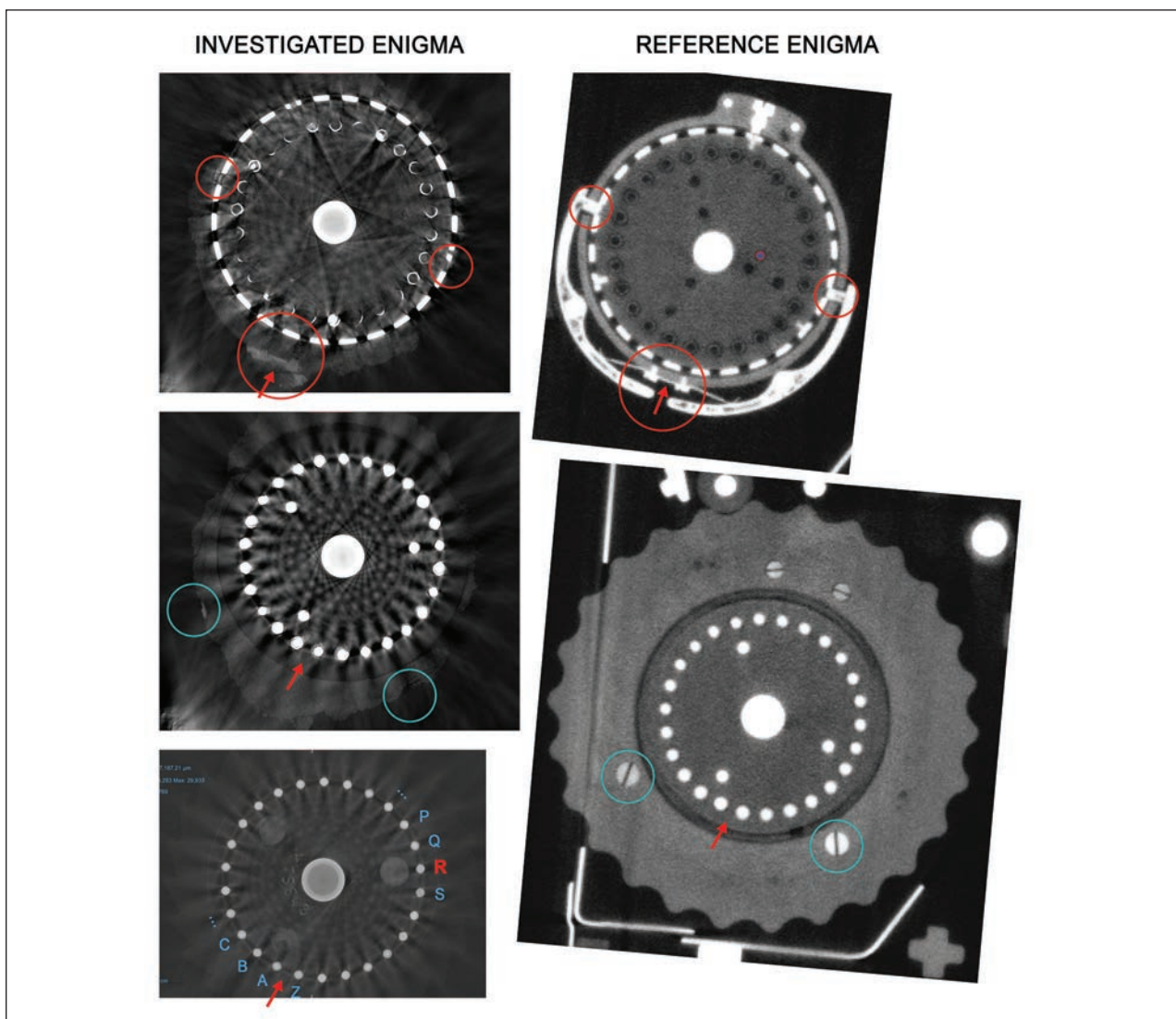


Figure 6: Reconstructed images of Rotor III in the investigated Enigma (left) and reference Enigma (right). The red and teal circles indicate the same identifying features (pins, screws, support structure) on both the investigated and reference Enigma. The red arrow points to the location of the gap between two levers for altering the ring-setting (which is always positioned between letters A and Z). The letter at the III sign (R) is highlighted in red (3D render: Miha Hren).

138 mm and a source-to-detector distance of 491 mm. As the entire rotor construction did not fit within a single radiograph, the helical scanning technique was used. A total of five turns were required to scan the entire volume (Figure 4).

RESULTS

Figures 5 to 10 show the cross-sections of various rotors from the microCT scan of the investigated Enigma and the reference CT of the Enigma M4 (M 7972; circa 1944) from the Deutsches Museum. As the rotor block of the investigated Enigma was

severely damaged, the reference Enigma was used to determine the correct positions of identifying features such as pins, screws, support structures, holes, and gaps between the levers of the ring-setting mechanism. These features were used to identify the sequence of the letters on the outer ring and to determine the Ringstellung letters. In all figures, these features are labelled with red, teal, and orange circles on both the investigated and reference Enigmas. Red arrows indicate the location where the letters on the outer ring start: either on the letter A or between letters A and Z. Ringstellung letters are shown in red.

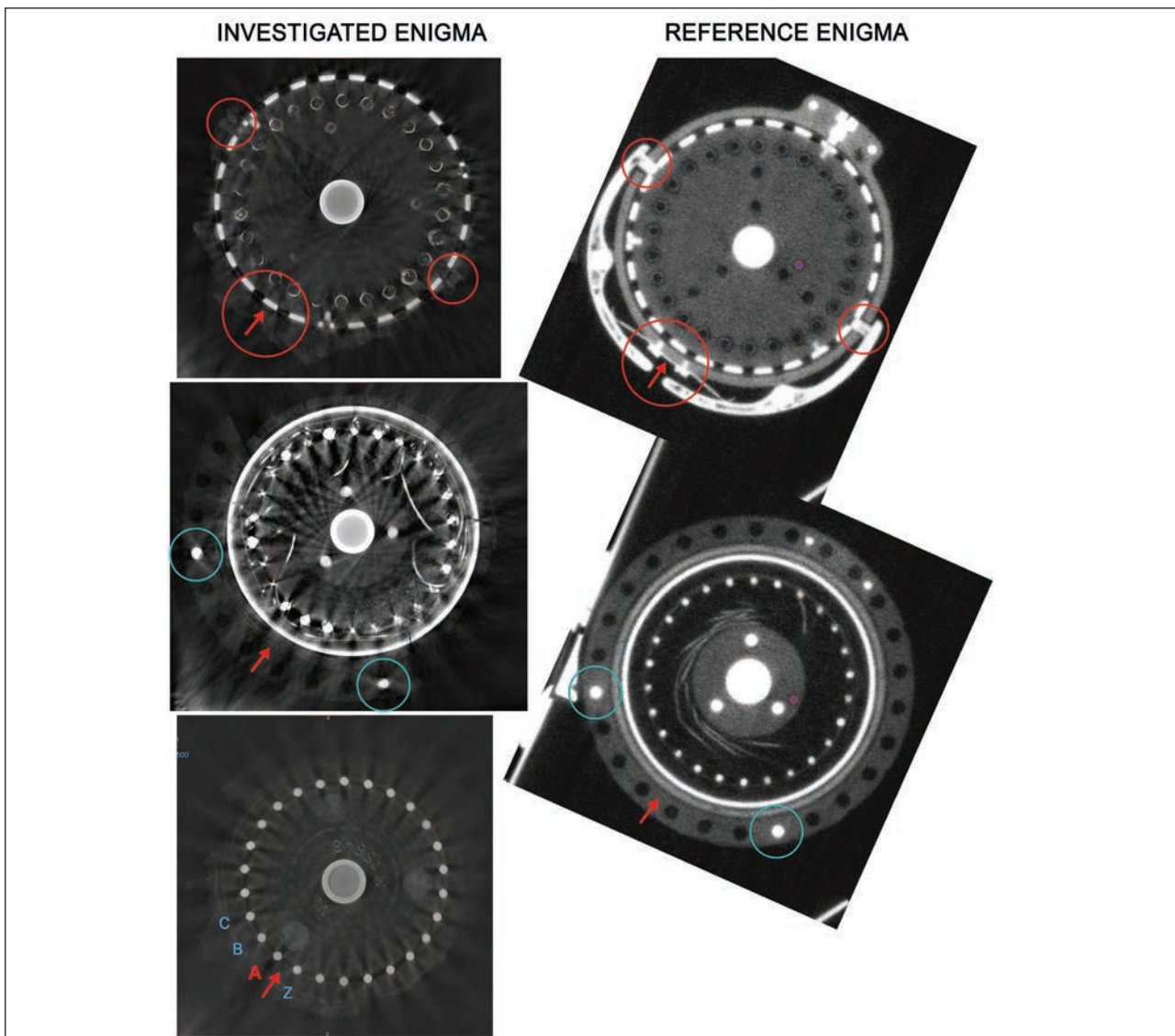


Figure 7: Reconstructed images of Rotor VI in the investigated Enigma (left) and reference Enigma (right). The letter at the VI sign (A) is highlighted in red (3D render: Miha Hren).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The recovered internal settings of the M 15648 bring us significantly closer to identifying the cipher network and its daily key during the period when the R15 sank. The settings are as follows: wheel order – UKW-c, Gamma, III, VI, IV; Ringstellung – A, R, A, C; and external wheel positions – P, F, E, Y (Table 1). During the investigation, the question arose as to whether the combination UKW c/ZW γ in M 15648 was compatible with the standard UKW C, used in Enigma I (employed by the Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe) and M3. However, the Germans abandoned the use of UKW C sometime after the end of 1941. The exact date is not known, but the order from 7 September 1944 to

rewire all UKW C to UKW B shows that by then, UKW C was no longer in use (Weierud, 2025). It is therefore impossible that UKW C had any connection with the M4 from the Räumboot R15. Furthermore, for thin UKW C and Zusatzwalze Gamma to be compatible with the wiring of standard UKW C, both Gamma's Ringstellung and the setting must be at A.

The possibility that the setting of the Zusatzwalze resulted from operator error or intentional swapping of the rotor in anticipation of capture remains; however, the latter is unlikely due to the night-time and suddenness of the attack and the subsequent sinking of the minesweeper. As is well known, the Kriegsmarine emphasised the importance of security measures (Geheimhaltungsbestimmungen) to keep Naval Enigma

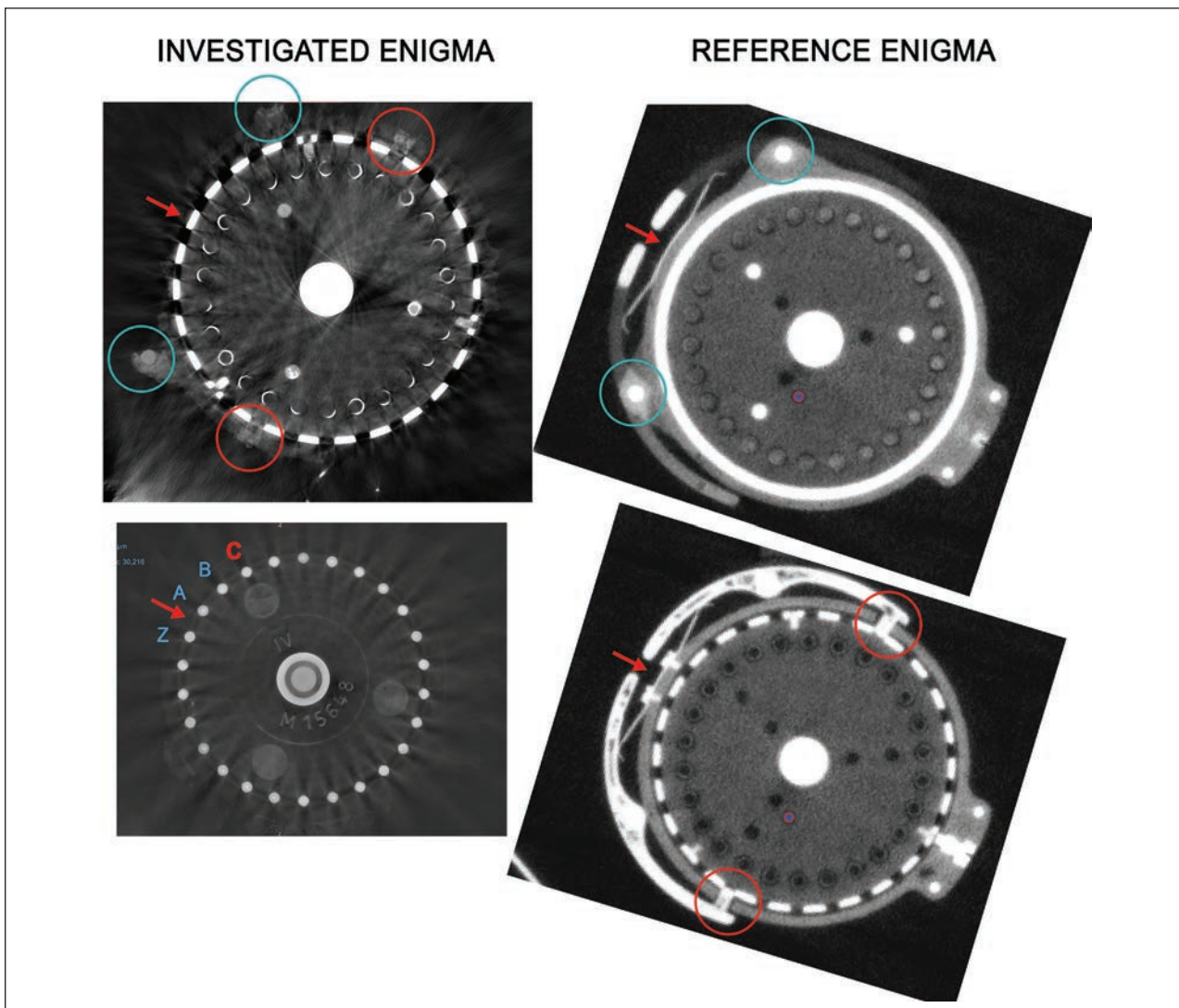


Figure 8: Reconstructed images of Rotor IV in the investigated Enigma (left) and reference Enigma (right). The letter at the IV sign (C) is highlighted in red (3D render: Miha Hren).

Table 1: Configuration and settings of the rotors, from left to right, established from the cumulative X-ray computed microtomography, 2024.

	Reflector / Umkehrwalze	Extra-rotor / Zusatzwalze	Rotor 3	Rotor 2	Rotor 1
Label	C.	γ	III	VI	IV
Serial number	M 15648	M 15648	M 15648	M 15648	M 15648
Ring setting	/	A	R	A	C
External position	/	P	F	E	Y

traffic secret, as evidenced by the detailed instructions for the destruction of the machine and rotors in shallow waters within enemy territory, including preparations for the destruction of code books and radio messages (Der Schlüssel M, 1941, 13–16). Although the minesweeper R 15 most likely served as the convoy’s command ship, it is reasonable to assume that ‘normal’ – rather than officer – messages were used. In the latter case, special instructions applied, including resetting the wheels after each enciphering and deciphering, and removing the Stecker (plugboard) connections after use of the Enigma (Enigma, 1940). The change of keys usually occurred around midnight or at 1 am. The ship would therefore have had the operational Enigma key for 16 April 1945 set up on its Enigma machine at the moment it was attacked and sank. The identification of the actual key

setting sheet for the period when this ship was sunk would be supported by the six unused plugs on the Steckerbrett. These, in combination with the known setting of the gamma wheel (P), which did not move during typing, might enable the identification of the matching daily Grundstellung. The Räumboot R 15 was a small ship and would not have operated on more than one cipher network. Large vessels or naval stations operating across several networks would have had more than one Enigma machine, each set up for a different cipher network. Süd was the Kriegsmarine cipher network for the Black Sea and Mediterranean area, introduced in 1941 and originally a single key, codenamed Porpoise by the Bletchley Park (BP) codebreakers (Erskine, 1996).

In October 1943, the code network Süd was split into three keys: Hermes (Porpoise by BP) for the Mediterranean, Poseidon (Grampus) for the Black Sea, and Uranus (Trumpeter) for the Balkans or the Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine (OKM) – Marineoberkommando (MOK) Süd/Südost (from October 1943, deciphered in April 1944). At the end of the war, some of these minor split-up keys again merged with the parent keys, such as key M Wotan (Bloater) for the Mediterranean, created on 1 October 1944, which rejoined Hermes (Porpoise) on 12 January 1945 (German Naval Ciphers, 1944). Two new keys were introduced in February 1945 for the southern Adriatic area (Albanien) and Aegean Islands (Ägäis), which were outside the operational area of R 15.

		Schlüssel M - Ä g ä i s						Geheime Kommandosache!				
		Allgemein										
		Gültig vom 6. bis 23.5.45.										
Monats- tag		I n n e r e		E i n s t e l l u n g								
6.- 11.5.	Bruno	Beta	IV	I	VIII							
		J	B	G	N							
12.- 17.5.	Cäsar	Beta	VII	III	VI							
		U	J	E	D							
18.- 23.5.	Cäsar	Gamma	II	V	VI							
		L	W	O	P							
Monats- tag		S t e c k e r v e r b i n d u n g e n										
6.- 11.5.		24/21	11/3	23/15	12/20	10/1	19/14	8/9	2/18	16/25	5/6	DPUH
12.- 17.5.		20/10	6/15	8/18	16/24	13/22	9/4	2/11	12/21	25/19	5/14	WOUQ
18.- 23.5.		4/1	2/12	6/18	3/5	19/8	9/23	15/21	24/26	10/13	11/7	CAIG

F. d. Rd. A.
Reisig
 MA. Ob. Gfr.

Figure 9: Example of a German naval key from the code network Süd – Schlüssel M »Ägäis«, valid from 6 to 23 May 1945 (Source: courtesy of Frode Weierud, Crypto Cellar Research).

The document *Kenngruppenverfahren Süd* reveals that Poseidon and Uranus used three-letter message keys (*Kenngruppenverfahren Süd*, 1944, 9); therefore, the *Zusatzwalze* was not part of the message key. Only Hermes used a four-letter message key. However, the *Kenngruppenverfahren Süd* document does not state whether the *Grundstellung* used four letters or if the daily key (the setting of the wheel order and *Ringstellung*) also included a fixed setting for the Greek wheel. As the Gamma wheel of the M 15648 is set to P, this may indicate that we are dealing with the Hermes network, which used four-letter message keys. However, we cannot be absolutely certain, as we do not know enough about the key settings for Poseidon and Uranus. If we know that the key settings for the latter always had *Ringstellung A* and wheel setting A for the Greek wheel, then we can conclude that M 15648 was used with Hermes. In light of all this, the most likely key to have been used on the *Räumboote R15* in April 1945 is the Naval key Hermes (Porpoise). The high probability that M 15648 from the R15 was used with the Hermes network before its sinking off the Istrian coast is supported by intercepted communication dated 14 April 1945, originating from the same operational area. This communication reports on the movement of the ship TA 40 of the 9th Torpedo Boat Flotilla (9. Torpedobootflotille) from Pola to Trieste (Birnbäum & Vorsteher, 1987, 310–342), and it is marked with the network indication in double brackets – ((PORPOISE)) (TNA-DEFE 3/685, 34.)

The recovery of operational Enigma key sheets is exceptionally rare, as such classified materials were routinely destroyed after use. Surviving examples are therefore largely limited to April–May 1945, when deteriorating wartime conditions during World War II led German forces to reuse keys, often extending April settings into May with minor modifications. The possible identification of corresponding key sheets within regional military archives is supported by the documented capture of Enigma machine units by Yugoslav Partisans during the retreat of German forces from Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece in 1944–1945. Four preserved machines are currently held in Serbia: one M3 model at the Military Museum in Belgrade and three M4 models exhibited in Pančevo. According to Svetko Kovač (2017), these devices may have originated from German naval units under the command of *Marineoberkommando Süd*, retreating alongside Army Group E. Following the German surrender in May 1945, large quantities of captured military equipment were consolidated at a central trophy depot in Zagreb. After its dissolution in September 1945, communication equipment – including Enigma machines – was transferred to the Communication Command of the Yugoslav Ministry of National Defence (MNO FNRJ). These machines were subsequently used for cryptographic training between 1951 and 1956, supported

by translated German manuals and documentation. Portions of this material are now preserved in the archives of the MNO FNRJ (Kovač, 2017, 45–47, 58–63, 207–211), leaving open the possibility that previously unknown key sheets associated with the *Süd* network from the final months of the war may yet be identified.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates the applicability of MicroCT as a non-destructive method for investigating historically significant cryptographic devices. Microtomographic analysis of the rotor block of the Enigma machine M4 (serial number M 15648), recovered from the wreck of the German minesweeper R15 in the Adriatic Sea, enabled identification of the rotor sequence, external wheel positions, and – through higher-resolution scanning – internal rotor settings (*Ringstellung*), providing insight into the operational configuration of the device at the time of its loss in April 1945.

However, these results do not substantially extend previous historical interpretations. The identified ring settings cannot be unambiguously correlated with known *Kriegsmarine* key material from April 1945, although the use of the Hermes key within the code network *Süd* remains plausible. This limitation reflects the broader scarcity of surviving operational key sheets, particularly during the final phase of the Second World War. While captured Enigma machines and associated archival documentation suggest potential for further discoveries, direct correlations remain limited. The study should therefore be regarded primarily as a methodological contribution rather than a definitive cryptographic reconstruction.

More broadly, the results highlight the relevance of MicroCT for the investigation of encryption devices from marine archaeological contexts, where corrosion and mineral encrustation often preclude conventional disassembly. The technique enables non-invasive visualisation of internal assemblies – including rotor stacks, wiring pathways, and mechanical linkages – and supports material differentiation, detection of structural degradation, and reconstruction of internal configurations. Case studies, including the CT analysis of a 1941 Enigma machine at the University of Manchester (2018) and the “3D-Cipher Project” at the *Deutsches Museum* (2020; Göggerle, 2022), demonstrate its applicability to complex electromechanical systems. Although direct MicroCT investigations of seabed-recovered Enigma machines remain limited, comparable studies – such as the scanning of the seven Enigmas recovered from 2020 onwards by divers in the Baltic Sea at Geltinger Bay near Flensburg (Endres, 2023) – confirm its potential for analysing sealed and highly degraded artefacts.

ENIGMA M4 Z NEMŠKEGA MINOLOVCA R15 IZ SEVERNEGA JADRANA:
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POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava rentgensko računalniško mikrotomografsko raziskavo (MicroCT) rotorskega sklopa šifrirnega stroja Enigma M4, odkritega v razbitini nemškega lahkega minolovca R15 ob obali Istre v severnem Jadranskem morju, ki je bil potopljen 16. aprila 1945. Naprava s serijsko številko M 15648, danes hranjena v zbirki Parka vojaške zgodovine Pivka, je bila predmet celovite analize, ki je združevala arheološki in zgodovinski kontekst naprave, konservatorske postopke ter napredne ponazoritvene metode visoke ločljivosti. Začetna preiskava z vizualnim pregledom in mikroCT je omogočila določitev zaporedja rotorjev (UKW-C, Gamma, III, VI, IV) in njihovih zunanjih položajev (Walzenlage). Nadaljnje snemanje z visoko ločljivostno MicroXCT napravo je razkrilo tudi notranje nastavitve rotorjev (Ringstellung: A, R, A, C), s čimer se je potrdila izjemna uporabnost metode za pridobivanje sicer nedostopnih podatkov o konfiguracijah korodiranih in poškodovanih kriptografskih naprav iz podvodnih arheoloških kontekstov brez destruktivnih posegov. Primerjava z referenčnimi modeli, izdelanimi z enako tehnologijo (MicroCT), je omogočila natančnejšo interpretacijo zaznanih struktur. Na podlagi kraja in časa potopitve minolovca R 15 ter arhivskih virov je mogoče sklepati, da so operaterji naprave najverjetneje uporabljali pomorski ključ Hermes (Porpoise v terminologiji Bletchley Parka) v okviru kodne mreže Süd. Kljub temu ugotovljenih nastavitvev ni mogoče nedvoumno povezati z dostopnimi kodnimi ključi Kriegsmarine iz aprila 1945. Prispevek tako izpostavlja tako analitični potencial kot interpretativne omejitve metode MicroCT pri raziskovanju kriptografskih naprav iz ladijskih razbitin ali morskega dna.

Ključne besede: druga svetovna vojna, Jadran, Kriegsmarine, šifrirne naprave, Enigma, mikrotomografska preiskava

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I TEMI DI ARGOMENTO MONTENEGRINO DI UMBERTO SABA

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SINTESI

Questo contributo esamina gli scritti di Umberto Saba ispirati dalla sua visita in Montenegro nel 1904. Oltre a ricostruire la storia e la ricezione in Montenegro di questi tre testi di carattere odeporico, scritti sia in prosa che in versi, ne offriamo un'analisi imagologica, inserendoli nel contesto della tradizione italiana della letteratura di viaggio sul Montenegro. Lo studio evidenzia come l'immagine del principato balcanico si sia trasformata nella visione di Saba, influenzata sia dal genere letterario utilizzato che dal contesto storico e culturale in cui ciascuna opera è stata concepita e pubblicata.

Parole chiave: Umberto Saba, Montenegro, Trieste, letteratura di viaggio

MONTENEGRIN THEMES IN THE WORKS OF UMBERTO SABA

ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the writings of Umberto Saba inspired by his 1904 visit to Montenegro. In addition to reconstructing the history and reception of these three texts in Montenegro, which include both prose and verse, it offers an imagological analysis, situating them within the context of the Italian travel literature tradition on Montenegro. The study demonstrates how the image of the Balkan principality evolved in Saba's vision, influenced by both the literary genre employed and the historical and cultural context in which each work was created and published.

Keywords: Umberto Saba, Montenegro, Trieste, travel literature

INTRODUZIONE

L'interesse degli italiani per il Montenegro raggiunse il suo apice a cavallo tra il XIX e il XX secolo. Mentre nei decenni precedenti si registravano sporadiche presenze di viaggiatori italiani in questa terra balcanica, negli ultimi anni dell'Ottocento il loro numero aumentò significativamente (Popović, 2018b). Questo incremento dell'interesse fu notevolmente stimolato dal matrimonio del principe ereditario italiano Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia con la principessa montenegrina Elena Petrović-Njegoš nell'ottobre del 1896. Considerando il volume e la varietà di generi e temi delle pubblicazioni sul Montenegro apparse in quel periodo, si può affermare che il 1896 segnò l'inizio di una conoscenza più approfondita, da parte degli italiani, dello spazio naturale, sociale e culturale montenegrino.

Tra i numerosi autori che visitarono il Montenegro in questo periodo figura anche il giovane Umberto Saba, il quale tradusse la sua esperienza di viaggio in tre testi di generi diversi: una poesia, un *reportage* e un racconto di stampo odepotico. Sebbene alcuni studi abbiano già analizzato singoli aspetti di queste opere, restano ancora aperte numerose questioni interpretative e critiche.

Il presente studio si propone di determinare con precisione il periodo di composizione dei testi sabiani sul Montenegro, di analizzarne il percorso editoriale nell'ambito della sua produzione complessiva, di indagare la loro ricezione in Montenegro e, infine, di esaminare l'immagine del Paese che ne emerge. Adottando una prospettiva imagologica, cercheremo di stabilire quale immagine del Montenegro viene veicolata in ciascun testo, tenendo conto del contesto storico-culturale in cui le opere furono create e pubblicate. Attraverso un'analisi comparativa, collocheremo le scritture di viaggio di Saba all'interno del più ampio panorama della letteratura odepotica italiana sul Montenegro a cavallo tra XIX e XX secolo.

LA CRONISTORIA DEGLI SCRITTI SABIANI DI ARGOMENTO MONTENEGRINO

Nella tarda primavera del 1904, in compagnia di un amico rimasto anonimo, il ventunenne Umberto Saba lasciò Trieste per un viaggio lungo le coste dell'Adriatico orientale. La sua meta era il Montenegro, allora un piccolo principato balcanico che confinava a ovest con l'Impero austro-ungarico. Dalla capitale montenegrina inviò una corrispondenza al quotidiano socialista triestino *Il Lavoratore*, redatto all'epoca dal suo amico Amedeo Tedeschi. Il *reportage* di Saba, datato "Cettigne, 2 luglio", fu pubblicato il 14 luglio con il titolo "Il Montenegro" (Poli, 1904). L'autore firmò l'articolo con il suo vero nome Umberto Poli, perché cominciò a

usare il cognome Saba solo nel 1910, ufficializzandolo all'anagrafe nel 1918 (Stara, 1988a, LXXIII). Come è noto, questo fu il suo primo testo pubblicato.¹

Siccome, nella primavera del 1904, il rapporto di amicizia con Tedeschi aveva già iniziato a incrinarsi, Saba, nel tentativo di ottenere l'abilitazione giornalistica, si rivolse all'archeologo e filologo classico triestino Piero Sticotti (1870–1953), all'epoca anch'egli collaboratore de *Il Lavoratore*. Saba forse pensava che Sticotti, già interessato alla ricerca dell'antica città romana di Doclea, situata in Montenegro, e avendo visitato il Paese nel 1892, potesse corroborare la sua richiesta (Burzanović & Koprivica, 2019, 35–42). Convinto che quel documento potesse facilitare la sua impresa, Saba gli scrisse alla vigilia della partenza, il 27 maggio 1904:

Egregio Sticotti! Mi sono portato prima da Lei, ma non Lo (sic!) trovato in ufficio. Tedeschi non ha voluto né farmi né consegnarmi una tessera. Così la prego di inviarmela a mezzo il qui accluso francobollo a Cettigne, fermo in posta; che io in cambio le invierò almeno tre corrispondenze piccole e belle. La tessera mi servirà eventualmente a farmi riconoscere da qualche compagno. Sono certo che Ella mi farà questo favore, di cui Le serberò riconoscenza. (Stara, 2001c, 1403)

Dai dati di cui disponiamo, si potrebbe concludere che la tessera non sia arrivata a destinazione, o almeno non mentre Saba si trovava a Cettigne.

Dato che la sua permanenza nella capitale montenegrina si rivelò più breve e travagliata del previsto, Saba riuscì a inviare solo una delle tre prose giornalistiche preannunciate a Sticotti. Delle circostanze che portarono all'improvvisa interruzione del viaggio fa un rapido cenno Amedeo Tedeschi in un trafiletto del 1905 su *Il Lavoratore*, dedicato al successo di una lettura di versi di Saba a Firenze. In quell'occasione, Tedeschi scriveva: "Congratulazione all'amico, del quale abbiamo pubblicato mesi or sono alcune note di viaggio dal Montenegro, e certamente la corrispondenza sarebbe continuata se le autorità Montenegrine non avessero provveduto a farlo allontanare da quel paese... per sviste d'ordine pubblico" (Stara, 2001c, 1403–1404).

La cronaca sabiana sul Montenegro non trovò spazio nell'edizione mondadoriana di *Prose* di Umberto Saba del 1964 curata da sua figlia Linuccia Saba e Aldo Marcovecchio per la collana *I classici contemporanei italiani*. Nonostante anni di ricerca e di catalogazione degli scritti paterni, Linuccia, pur avendo rinvenuto tra le sue carte una copia dattiloscritta dell'articolo, scelse di non includerlo nella sezione "Prose varie" dell'edizione (Stara, 2001c, 1187, 1403). L'articolo è stato ristampato

1 Saba continua la sua collaborazione con *Il Lavoratore*, e nel maggio del 1905 viene pubblicato il suo primo componimento poetico in assoluto, la poesia "Il Borgo" (Stara, 2001a, LIII).

dopo quasi ottant'anni nel 1983, sebbene fosse apparso in copia anastatica, insieme ad altri materiali autografi, nel volumetto di Ottavio Cecchi *L'altra "specie" di Saba*, a cura del Circolo di studi politico sociali Che Guevara di Trieste (Cecchi, 1983, 15). Il *reportage* sul Montenegro ha poi trovato posto nell'edizione mondadoriana di *Tutte le prose di Umberto Saba* del 2001 alle pp. 656–657, curata da Arrigo Stara, nella sezione di "Prose sparse", dove sono stati inclusi diversi nuclei tematici e cronologici della sua relativamente scarna produzione in prosa (Lavagetto, 2001, XXIII). In questa sezione si trovavano tutti gli scritti dello scrittore triestino fino ad allora conosciuti, composti nel periodo tra il 1901 e il 1957, mai prima raccolti in un volume unitario. Erano quindi esclusi dai suoi tre libri in prosa pubblicati fino ad allora: *Scorciatoie e raccontini* (1946), *Storia e cronistoria del Canzoniere* (1948) e *Ricordi-Racconti* (1956) (Stara, 2001b, LXXIX–LXXX).

La ragione della frettolosa e inaspettata partenza del giovane triestino dal Montenegro la svela egli stesso una decina di anni più tardi. Il 12 aprile 1913 compare sul quotidiano di Bologna *Il Resto del Carlino*, la sua novella intitolata "Come, dieci anni fa, fui bandito dal Montenegro", in cui rievoca dettagliatamente il suo viaggio giovanile in questo Paese (Saba, 1913). La prosa che contiene i suoi ricordi di questo viaggio faceva parte di un gruppo di testi scritti e, per la maggior parte, pubblicati tra il 1910 e il 1913 su vari giornali e riviste dell'epoca (Lavagetto, 2001, XIII). Il racconto dedicato all'esperienza montenegrina riappare quarant'anni più tardi, il 18 agosto 1953, sul settimanale romano di politica e cultura *Il Mondo*, con il titolo abbreviato "Bandito dal Montenegro". In quel periodo, grazie alle ricerche di Linuccia Saba, era stata avviata la ristampa, su vari giornali e riviste dei primi anni Cinquanta, non solo di questo racconto, ma anche di altre novelle bolognesi appena riscoperte (Stara, 2001c, 1249–1250). Nella testata del racconto sul Montenegro uscito su *Il Mondo* fu pubblicata allora anche una nota, ovvero un "cappello" manoscritto di Saba trovato dalla figlia tra le carte del padre. In esso, l'autore spiega le ragioni per cui aveva intrapreso questa esperienza giovanile, svelando il motivo di quel ricordo, senza dubbio reperito nelle cronache della stampa italiana ed europea dell'epoca, dedicate agli eventi bellici nei Balcani, che segnarono la fine del dominio dell'Impero ottomano in Europa: "Per comprendere questo ricordo-racconto bisogna che il lettore sappia che l'ho scritto nel 1912 o 1913, al tempo delle guerre balcaniche. Furono esse che mi richiamarono alla memoria il mio infelice viaggio giovanile nel Montenegro, e mi fecero nascere l'idea di narrarlo, senza omissioni od aggiunte" (Saba, 1953, 7). Questa ristampa era apparsa solo dieci mesi prima che Saba sottoponesse a Mondadori il progetto di un libretto in prosa, suddiviso in tre sezioni, che doveva raccogliere, oltre agli *Ebrei* e i *Tre ricordi*

del mondo meraviglioso anche le *Sette novelle* del periodo bolognese, compresa quella di "tematica montenegrina" (Stara, 2001a, LXXVI). Infatti, verso la fine del 1952 Saba aveva iniziato a recuperare le memorie esposte in forma narrativa, i ricordi e i racconti scritti diversi anni prima che, come dichiarava l'autore stesso, aveva "dimenticati del tutto", o che ricordava "solo in qualche incubo" (Lavagetto, 2001, XXXVII). Il libro, contenente la parte autobiografica in prosa, intitolato *Ricordi-Racconti (1910–1947)*, con la diretta supervisione di Umberto Saba e con un discorso di Guido Piovene uscì alla fine del 1956 nella collana *Lo specchio – I prosatori del nostro tempo* edito da Mondadori e comprendente la prosa "montenegrina" alle pp. 165–177 (Stara, 2001c, 1247). Il racconto sul Montenegro fu poi riproposto nel 1964 nella sezione *Sette novelle 1912–1913* inserita nelle *Prose* di Umberto Saba, cioè nel primo volume delle *Opere* dello scrittore triestino (Saba, 1964, 123–132). Dopo più di trent'anni, nell'edizione critica di *Tutte le prose di Umberto Saba* del 2001 il racconto-ricordo "Come fui bandito dal Montenegro", appare nella sezione "Un po' di prosa e non di gazzette" intitolata così dallo stesso Saba, titolo poi ripreso dal curatore Arrigo Stara. Questa sezione comprende i suoi scritti in prosa composti nel periodo dal 1901 al 1915.

Nell'opera di Umberto Saba, come è noto, la poesia e la prosa "convivono, si intersecano, stabiliscono frequenti sincronie, vanno lette specularmente una all'altra" (Stara, 2001c, 1310). Di questo sono un esempio chiaro i suoi tre scritti di argomento montenegrino. Oltre al *reportage* e al racconto-ricordo, all'esperienza montenegrina si deve anche una poesia giovanile di Saba. Nel settembre del 1921, con il marchio editoriale della sua "Libreria antica e moderna", l'autore pubblica privatamente a Trieste la prima edizione del suo *Canzoniere (1900–1921)*, che raccoglie e sistema tutta la sua produzione poetica fino all'ancora inedita "L'amorosa spina", in tutto 44 poesie (Stara, 1988a, LXXXI). Nella prefazione intitolata "Ai miei lettori" egli dichiara di aver dovuto "compiere un lavoro non breve e non facile per ritrovare nella memoria i versi originali", aggiungendo: "benché difficilmente io dimentichi i versi che una volta ho fatti" (Stara, 1988d, 1035). La poesia "Salendo il monte Lovcen" è stata pubblicata nella sezione intitolata "Voci dai luoghi e dalle cose", assieme alla "Canzonetta spalatina" e "Grado", tutte e tre brevi poesie frutto del suo viaggio lungo l'Adriatico orientale per raggiungere il Montenegro. Sette mesi prima, il 6 febbraio di quello stesso anno, con accanto al titolo scritto tra parentesi 'Monte Lovcen 1904', come indicazione del luogo e dell'anno della stesura, è stata pubblicata, assieme alle altre quattro sue poesie, su *La Domenica de la Nazione*, con il titolo comune "Poesie giovanili inedite", anche la poesia sabiana di argomento montenegrino (Stara, 1988d, 1029). Verso la fine del 1932, la stessa libreria privata di Saba stampa in 600 esemplari "per conto

dell'autore, a cura di Virgilio Giotti", il volumetto *Ammonizione ed altre poesie 1900–1910*, che rappresenta una scelta, secondo le parole dell'autore, delle sue "estremamente accurate e definitive" poesie giovanili. In questa edizione, nella sezione "Poesie dell'adolescenza e giovanili", sono incluse tre "canzonette adriatiche" – "Monte Lovcen", "Spalato" e "Grado" – delle quali le prime due presentano titoli abbreviati o modificati (Stara, 1988a, LXXXIV; Castellani, 1983, 16–18). Per quanto riguarda la poesia a tema montenegrino, accanto al titolo è riportato l'anno di stesura, il 1903, che precede di un anno il suo viaggio nel Montenegro; tale data potrebbe essere un errore o, forse, il risultato di una confusione nella memoria di Saba, a distanza di quasi trent'anni da quell'esperienza giovanile.

La poesia "Salendo il monte Lovcen" è stata ristampata nell'edizione critica mondadoriana della prima edizione del *Canzoniere* sabiano, curata da Giorgio Castellani nel 1981 (Saba, 1981, 68). Nella raccolta *Tutte le poesie di Umberto Saba*, pubblicata nella collana *I Meridiani* nell'edizione critica Mondadori del 1988, la poesia "Salendo sul monte Lovcen" (Saba, 1988, 733) appare nella sezione curata da Arrigo Stara, che ha scelto il titolo complessivo "Canzoniere apocrifo". Qui, la poesia è collocata tra quelle che erano state precedentemente definite "rifiutate", ovvero quelle incluse nelle prime edizioni a stampa delle raccolte poetiche di Saba, ma successivamente escluse dal canone del *Canzoniere*, o "disperse", cioè apparse solo su quotidiani, periodici o su fogli manoscritti e dattiloscritti che Saba non aveva mai raccolto in volume (Stara, 1988b, XCIII–XCIV). Per quanto riguarda queste sezioni "abortite" (Stara, 2001b, LXXX), non sarebbe corretto parlare semplicemente di poesie minori: esse, infatti, "sono accantonate perché refrattarie a un percorso, alla trama sopravvenuta, ricucita nei momenti culminanti della parabola del *Canzoniere*" (Stara, 1988c, 643; 2001b, LXXX). Tutte le raccolte del primo periodo della poesia sabiana fino al 1921 contengono sezioni piuttosto ampie fra gli "apocrifi" (Stara, 1988c, 650). Pertanto, questo non era il destino riservato esclusivamente alle tre "canzonette adriatiche".

Secondo quanto esposto, sembra che i due componimenti – la poesia e il *reportage*, chiaramente di stampo odepórico – siano stati scritti in Montenegro all'inizio dell'estate del 1904. È possibile che la breve lirica sia stata annotata proprio lungo la strada verso la capitale montenegrina, su una pagina del quadernetto che conteneva il manoscritto dei suoi primi versi, ovvero durante la salita a piedi sul monte Lovćen. In alternativa, potrebbe essere stata recuperata dalla memoria durante la sistemazione finale del *Canzoniere* del 1921. Il *reportage*, invece, è datato con precisione al 2 luglio di quell'anno, e risulta evidente che sia stato scritto durante la permanenza nella capitale montenegrina, che durò complessivamente circa quattro o cinque giorni. Da questi due scritti emerge l'entusiasmo del giovane,

spinto dal desiderio di comprendere e conoscere sia l'altro che se stesso (Magro, 2012), un impulso che lo aveva portato a intraprendere il viaggio in quel quasi mitico paese slavomeridionale: il Montenegro. La sua intenzione non era semplicemente quella di soddisfare la curiosità immergendosi in una realtà geografica e umana tanto diversa dalla propria. Come afferma nel terzo scritto di quella 'serie montenegrina', nel ricordo-racconto, il vero motivo di quel suo viaggio – o, meglio, della sua fuga in un mondo estraneo – era "divagare con la fatica fisica e l'aspetto del nuovo e del pittoresco un'idea fissa, un travaglio interno fattosi alla lunga insopportabile" (Saba, 1913, 8). Si tratta, infatti, della sua neurastenia, del male che lo aveva colpito per la prima volta proprio nel 1903 durante il soggiorno a Pisa che poi "diversamente diagnosticato, finirà col gravare, a periodi alterni, su tutto l'arco della sua vita" (Stara, 2001a, LI–LII).

A differenza della prosa giornalistica del 1904, scritta da un ventunenne nel ruolo di cronista e definita "acerba" da Arrigo Stara (2001c, 1312), ma considerata "un capolavoro di scrittura giornalistica di sintesi" da Elvio Guagnini (2010, 122), circa dieci anni dopo l'escursione in Montenegro, Saba intraprende "un viaggio nella memoria" il cui risultato fu "la memoria di un viaggio" (Magro, 2012), ossia la prosa "Come fui bandito dal Montenegro". Ma l'autobiografismo non lo porta alla forma del diario, bensì a una confessione sotto forma di racconto (Fevretti, 1987, 217). Si tratta di "memorie esposte in forma narrativa", come lo stesso Saba afferma nella prefazione agli *Ebrei*, un gruppo di novelle che apre il volume di prose del 1956 (Saba, 1956, 23), definizione che sarà poi considerata "valida per tutti i ricordi-racconti" (Saba, 2001, 363). A distanza di tempo, egli presenta questa memoria in un genere ibrido, tra il ricordo e il classico racconto. D'altra parte, la relazione di viaggio è definita da alcuni autori come una sottocategoria del genere memorialistico, incentrata sulla narrazione di esperienze di viaggio personali (Fussell, 1980, 203). In questa prosa sabiana si sovrappongono due piani temporali: il primo, che corrisponde al "tempo dell'azione" o della visita stessa, e il secondo, che si rifà al "tempo della riflessione" ossia il periodo delle Guerre balcaniche 1912–1913, durante il quale Saba, ricordando questa sua giovanile esperienza, aggiunge ulteriori commenti sugli eventi accaduti anni prima (Magro, 2012).

Per quanto riguarda la fortuna degli scritti di argomento montenegrino di Umberto Saba, tutti e tre sono stati tradotti nella lingua serbo-croata e pubblicati in Montenegro. Le traduzioni del *reportage* "Il Montenegro" e della poesia "Salendo il monte Lovcen" sono uscite assieme nel 1985 come parte integrante di un contributo dell'autrice e traduttrice Milana Piletić intitolato "Saba e il Montenegro" nella rivista letteraria montenegrina "Stvaranje" (Piletić, 1985). La stessa versione serbo-croata della poesia è riproposta più tardi nel

volume delle *Poesie scelte* di Umberto Saba pubblicato a Belgrado nel 1987 (Saba, 1987, 6). Il ricordo-racconto “Come fui bandito dal Montenegro”, nella traduzione di Vesna Kilibarda, è stato pubblicato nel 1991 nella rivista letteraria montenegrina *Ovdje* (Saba, 1991).

SALENDO IL MONTE LOVCEN

Come abbiamo precedentemente evidenziato, l’esperienza del viaggio in Montenegro e il primo contatto con il nuovo ambiente stimolarono in Saba la stesura di una poesia di carattere odeporico, intitolata “Salendo il Monte Lovcen”. L’entusiasmo iniziale e le elevate aspettative suscitate dal viaggio si tradussero, in questa poesia, in una rappresentazione del Montenegro più idilliaca rispetto alla restante produzione sabiana dedicata a questo Paese. Di seguito ne riportiamo il testo:

*Salgo. A ogni svolta Cattaro
saluto, e il mar più basso.*

*Cresce di passo in passo
strana letizia in me.*

*Salgo. A me un dono un barbaro
richiede, un pastorello.*

*Tutto armato il monello,
sudicio... e pare un re.*

*Salgo. E al labbro mi tornano
vecchi canti fatali:*

*“Va pensiero sull’ali
dorate”. E lieve ho il piè. (Saba, 1981, 68)*

L’anafora del verbo “salgo” nella prima strofa esprime la gioia del viaggio inteso non solo come scoperta di nuovi orizzonti, ma anche come percorso di introspezione e risoluzione dei propri dubbi. L’incontro con il pastore, descritto nella seconda strofa, evoca un’immagine bucolica, contraddistinta da una vivacità giovanile (“monello”) che rimanda ad altri personaggi di ragazzi presenti nella poesia e prosa sabiana (Magro, 2012). La contrapposizione tra gli aggettivi “sudicio barbaro” e “re” sottolinea la complessità di questa figura, che incarna sia la primitività e la selvatichezza che l’orgoglio guerriero del popolo montenegrino, sempre vestito nel tradizionale abito ricamato d’oro. La citazione verdiana nella terza strofa, “Va, pensiero”, apre molteplici livelli di interpretazione. Se da un lato rimanda alle origini ebraiche del poeta, dall’altro, nell’ottica risorgimentale, può essere letta come una metafora della dominazione austriaca e, di conseguenza, come un’affermazione dell’identità nazionale italiana del poeta (Magro, 2012). La salita al Monte Lovćen, simbolo montenegrino di libertà e resistenza, assume così, anche per Saba, un valore simbolico più ampio, rappresentando un percorso di liberazione individuale e collettiva.

Questo esaltante ritratto del Montenegro rievoca i resoconti di viaggio pubblicati nei decenni precedenti. Nella produzione letteraria italiana, a partire dalla metà del XIX secolo e in particolare durante la Grande crisi d’Oriente (1875–1878), il Montenegro e i montenegrini erano diventati un simbolo di lotta per la libertà. Si consolidò così un’immagine “eroica” del Montenegro, in cui i montenegrini erano visti come avamposti della cristianità europea, impegnati in una strenua difesa contro l’espansionismo ottomano. Di conseguenza, i montenegrini furono celebrati come esempio di coraggio e dignità, modelli a cui gli italiani potevano ispirarsi nella loro lotta per l’unità nazionale (Popović, 2016, 679; 2021a). Questa rappresentazione, dominante anche al momento della visita di Saba, caratterizzò gran parte del discorso odeporico italiano sul Montenegro fino alle Guerre balcaniche (1912–1913) (Popović, 2023).

REPORTAGE SUL MONTENEGRO

Il reportage di Umberto Saba sul Montenegro si articola in sette brevi paragrafi, nei quali l’autore espone le proprie impressioni generali riguardo ai montenegrini, alla loro poesia popolare, alla situazione politica del Paese, al funzionamento dell’apparato esecutivo e alla condizione delle donne. La sua rappresentazione di questo principato balcanico può essere letta come una sintesi non solo di diverse informazioni, ma anche di molteplici discorsi riguardanti il Montenegro e i montenegrini, sviluppatasi nel corso dell’Ottocento. Al centro di questo scritto si colloca l’interesse per l’esotico e il discorso del “buon selvaggio”, che, nella rappresentazione degli slavi meridionali in Europa, si affermò a partire dalla pubblicazione del *Viaggio in Dalmazia* (1774) dell’abate padovano Alberto Fortis. Tale discorso trovò particolare spazio nelle opere di viaggio sul Montenegro tradotte in italiano durante il periodo romantico, principalmente dal tedesco e dal francese, ed è riscontrabile anche in alcune rare opere originalmente scritte in italiano (Popović, 2015, 14–84). La descrizione che Saba fornisce del Paese come “semiselvaggio” e del popolo come “immensamente simpatico, robusto di una robustezza omerica, ingenuo e primitivo, di sentimenti guerreschi ma incline – come tutte le razze slave – alla malinconia” incarna pienamente lo spirito romantico. L’atteggiamento di Saba nei confronti del Montenegro in questo reportage può essere interpretato anche come discorso *semi-orientalista*, nato durante l’Illuminismo per sottolineare le differenze culturali e giustificare una superiorità intellettuale dell’Europa occidentale rispetto all’Europa orientale (Wolff, 1994, 7, 357–359). Per l’autore, infatti, il Montenegro, nelle sue caratteristiche fisiche e nelle sue tradizioni, evocava l’Oriente, mentre l’esistenza di leggi severe, che a

suo parere sarebbero inaccettabili nel contesto da cui proveniva, è giustificata dal fatto che il popolo era “inclinato alle rapine e agli omicidi”. Poiché Saba, secondo la propria testimonianza, non fu testimone diretto di omicidi o furti durante il suo soggiorno in Montenegro, si può dedurre che tali impressioni derivassero o dai racconti dei suoi conoscenti triestini o dalla letteratura che ebbe modo di leggere. È evidente che non si trattava di libri di viaggio di autori italiani che avevano visitato il Montenegro nel decennio precedente e che, in occasione del matrimonio dei principi Savoia-Petrović, avevano cercato di presentare il Paese della futura regina italiana sotto una luce più che favorevole. In queste opere, al contrario, si sottolineava la bassa incidenza del crimine nel Paese e i montenegrini erano descritti come persone di straordinaria onestà (Popović, 2021b, 340).

Il breve accenno di Saba alla produzione musicale popolare montenegrina, ossia al contenuto, ai modi di esecuzione e alle possibili interpretazioni delle canzoni popolari, rivela una sensibilità estetica romantica e un’adesione alla dicotomia rousseauiana tra natura e civiltà. D’altronde, come già osservato, le prime poesie di Saba, per la loro forma metrica, si collocano nello spirito del tardo romanticismo (Girardi, 1987, 9). Paragonando i canti popolari montenegrini alle composizioni di Chopin, Saba evidenzia una sorprendente affinità di sentimenti e atmosfere, pur attribuendone un’origine diversa: “Se i ritmi dell’infelice polacco sono l’espressione di una civiltà raffinata e corrotta fino all’impossibile, i canti montenegrini ottengono per la via opposta, cioè per quella di una semplicità puerile effetti eguali, un senso di malinconia e di nostalgia disperata” (Poli, 1904, 2).

Saba inquadra i temi principali della poesia popolare montenegrina prendendo come punto di riferimento il primo verso del *Proemio* dell’*Orlando Furioso*: “armi e amori, di imprese contro il turco e di fanciulle che attendono sulla soglia della capanna e confidano i loro affanni alle greggi che ritornano” (Poli, 1904, 2). È stato sottolineato come questa scelta lessicale riveli una sottostante riflessione politica, legata alla lotta per l’indipendenza dal dominio straniero. L’Impero Ottomano, storico nemico del Montenegro, diventa così una metafora dell’Impero austro-ungarico, al quale apparteneva Trieste, città natale di Saba. In questo modo, la poesia popolare montenegrina assume un valore simbolico, rappresentando la lotta per la libertà di un popolo oppresso, un tema che risuonava profondamente nel cuore del poeta triestino (Magro, 2012, 5).

L’interesse per il Montenegro e i suoi abitanti contraddistinse il circolo culturale triestino negli anni Trenta e Quaranta del XIX secolo. Le loro riviste in lingua italiana, come *La Favilla*, offrirono ai lettori la presentazione della storia, della cultura e delle vicende dell’epoca di questa regione slava meridionale, geograficamente vicina, ma

ancora non abbastanza conosciuta in Italia. Questo interesse trovava le sue radici nell’ideale mazziniano di una possibile alleanza tra italiani e slavi, un’idea che riemerse con maggiore vigore negli anni Sessanta e Settanta, in un contesto storico segnato dalle lotte per l’indipendenza e l’unificazione nazionale di ambedue i popoli (Burzanović, 2023, 22–53).

La rappresentazione del Montenegro come terra esotica e piena di vitalità emerge con forza anche nella sua descrizione del montenegrino che, mentre ascolta la poesia popolare, appare “con la destra poggiata sul calcio dell’enorme rivoltella, di cui ogni montenegrino va, così per capriccio, armato; e i suoi occhi lampeggiano di fiera e insieme di dolcezza” (Poli, 1904, 2).

Il *reportage* di Saba affronta anche la condizione femminile, un aspetto che riflette l’orientamento socialista della rivista in cui l’articolo venne pubblicato (Guagnini, 2010, 123). L’attenzione alla difficile situazione delle donne montenegrine rappresenta un *topos* ricorrente nelle relazioni di viaggio sul Montenegro, sia italiane sia di altre nazionalità, pubblicate nei decenni precedenti. L’immagine predominante in questi scritti è quella della donna che trasporta pesanti fardelli a piedi, accanto al marito che cavalca, o della donna impegnata in quasi tutti i lavori agricoli mentre il marito trascorre il tempo al caffè (Nelević, 2011). La maggior parte degli autori concordava sul fatto che l’esposizione a lavori fisici gravosi avesse un forte impatto sull’aspetto delle montenegrine, tanto che la loro bellezza giovanile svaniva rapidamente dopo il matrimonio. Anche Umberto Saba condivide questa opinione: “cresciute alla fatica, sono sgraziate nei movimenti, dure nella forma del viso e delle membra” (Poli, 1904, 2). Tuttavia, Saba non si limita alla mera descrizione esteriore, ma analizza anche le conseguenze di tale condizione sulla sfera affettiva e relazionale: “Un loro bacio è come uno schiaffo sulla bocca.” Inoltre, riflettendo sulle tradizioni montenegrine legate alla nascita dei figli, Saba giunge a una conclusione ancora più severa: “In nessun paese la schiavitù della donna prende forme così basse; la sua nascita è una sventura per la famiglia, il padre non sa come scusarsi con i parenti e gli amici per il brutto evento” (Poli, 1904, 2).

Nel descrivere l’aspetto fisico dei montenegrini, la loro cultura e le tradizioni, Saba si lascia influenzare dal discorso *semi-orientalista* e da quello *eroico*, entrambi ricorrenti nella letteratura di viaggio del tempo. Tuttavia, il suo breve accenno alle attività politiche del sovrano montenegrino, il principe Nicola I Petrović Njegoš, rivela una sfumata adesione al *discorso sul progresso*, consolidatosi tra gli autori italiani durante il periodo del matrimonio dell’erede al trono italiano con la principessa montenegrina. Questo discorso enfatizzava aspetti come l’impulso costruttivo, l’urbanizzazione, i progressi culturali e legislativi, nonché altre forme di sviluppo sociale, rappresentando il Montenegro in una luce positiva e assimilabile alle nazioni europee più

avanzate (Popović, 2021b, 337, 347). Nonostante non avesse avuto l'opportunità di conoscere personalmente il sovrano montenegrino, Saba evidenzia che egli era molto amato dal popolo. Inoltre, sottolinea come le rigide leggi introdotte da Nicola I avessero contribuito a formare "un popolo di lavoratori anziché di briganti" (Poli, 1904, 2). Tuttavia, pur nutrendo la speranza che il Montenegro potesse trasformarsi da terra "selvaggia" a nazione moderna, Saba rileva un significativo ostacolo in questo processo: gli stessi membri dell'apparato esecutivo, che espellevano gli stranieri capaci di introdurre nel Paese "lo spirito moderno". Questa critica sembra suggerire un riferimento autobiografico, poiché anche Saba stesso fu costretto dalle autorità a lasciare il Montenegro.

RICORDO – RACCONTO

Un approfondimento sul soggiorno montenegrino di Saba e sulle ragioni del suo allontanamento è offerto dal ricordo-racconto di viaggio *Come, 10 anni fa, fui bandito dal Montenegro*. In questo testo, l'autore, deciso a non "togliere né aggiungere nulla" alla sua narrazione, registra con minuzia i dettagli del viaggio e gli eventi che lo segnarono. Durante la sua permanenza a Cattaro, prima di avviarsi verso Cettigne, Saba incontra un barbiere locale che, con un atteggiamento inquisitorio, cerca di ottenere informazioni dettagliate su di lui, sul suo compagno di viaggio e sulle loro intenzioni, arrivando persino a offrirsi come guida fino alla capitale montenegrina. Per Saba, questo abitante locale, suddito dell'Austro-Ungheria, assume il ruolo simbolico di guardiano di un mondo al contempo misterioso e primitivo, rafforzando la percezione dell'alterità culturale del Montenegro (Magro, 2012, 2).

Il soggiorno a Cettigne si svolse in una locanda periferica, dove, a causa di difficoltà economiche e di disaccordi con il suo compagno di viaggio, Saba fu costretto a tornare a Trieste dopo pochi giorni. Il momento culminante del suo racconto è rappresentato da uno spiacevole episodio con la polizia locale, scaturito dal rifiuto di Saba di pagare un conto esorbitante addebitatogli dal locandiere per cibo e alloggio. Questo scontro si concluse con l'espulsione di Saba dal Paese per ordine delle autorità montenegrine.

Nel racconto di questo viaggio, che per il giovane poeta rappresenta una sorta di iniziazione e un'occasione per conoscere se stesso attraverso il confronto con l'altro (Magro, 2012, 6, 12), Saba rivela alcuni dei suoi dilemmi interiori, legati al rapporto con la madre e ai dubbi sull'esistenza di Dio. L'esperienza del viaggio si intreccia così con un percorso di introspezione, in cui emergono le cause profonde del suo malessere e della sua ansia. Nella narrazione, Saba si paragona a Telemaco, il figlio di Ulisse e Penelope, che parte alla ricerca del padre dopo vent'anni di assenza. Scegliendo come *alter ego* un eroe mitologico di età simile alla sua, acco-

munato dall'esperienza di una crescita priva dell'amore paterno, il poeta trasforma il viaggio in uno strumento di esplorazione e conferma della propria identità (Magro, 2012, 7). Se il giovane Telemaco, infatti, conferma la propria appartenenza alla stirpe paterna attraverso l'epopea omerica, Saba, nel descrivere il Montenegro, riafferma la propria appartenenza alla cultura italiana (Magro, 2012, 7). Questo sentimento di dislocazione nello spazio e nel tempo è ulteriormente accentuato dai suoni del flauto di un giovane pastore, la cui figura – con l'abbigliamento, la postura e l'ossessione per le armi – lascia un'impressione duratura sull'autore.

L'arrivo nella dimora del pastore, dove trascorse i giorni successivi, viene paragonato da Saba a una scoperta geografica, evocando l'immagine di Colombo alle prese con i "selvaggi d'America" (Saba, 1913, 8). L'incontro con le donne del luogo, caratterizzato da gesti invadenti e richieste insistenti a farsi regalare oggetti insignificanti, sottolinea l'alterità culturale e l'impatto destabilizzante di questa esperienza. L'autore descrive con vivida crudezza l'aspetto e il comportamento di queste figure femminili, sottolineandone la rusticità e la mancanza di raffinatezza (Saba, 1913, 8). Le condizioni di vita nella casa del pastore, caratterizzate da scarsa igiene e da un servizio scadente, confermano l'impressione di un ambiente primitivo e inospitale.

L'esperienza di Saba a Cettigne è segnata da incomprensioni e insoddisfazione per vari motivi, sia in termini di aspettative personali non soddisfatte, sia in relazione al suo rapporto con l'altro. A differenza dei giornalisti che avevano visitato il Montenegro al momento del matrimonio Savoia-Petrović, accolti con tutti gli onori, e che annotavano di non aver avuto neanche l'occasione di spendere il proprio denaro (Mantegazza, 1896, 83), il giovane e povero Saba si trovò a confrontarsi con una realtà più prosaica e talvolta ostile. L'episodio della truffa subita al momento del pagamento del conto offre uno spaccato disincantato sulla vita quotidiana locale, mettendo in discussione il mito dell'ospitalità montenegrina spesso celebrato nei resoconti di viaggio coevi. Questo evento rivela un lato più oscuro e opportunistico della popolazione locale, in netto contrasto con l'immagine idealizzata di generosità e accoglienza:

Quando, con molta paura d'offenderlo, richiesi al nostro ospite il conto, perché si desiderava partire la sera stessa, il vecchio, rinnovate le sue proteste di assoluto disinteresse e ascoltato, ripugnante, i nostri ringraziamenti, tolse da un cassetto una minuta già preparata e ce la presentò con l'aria di chi, se accetta qualcosa, è solo per delicatezza, per lasciare al prossimo l'illusione di essersi, con quel poco, interamente sdebitato. (Saba, 1913, 8)

A differenza del suo reportage del 1904, Saba qui rappresenta i montenegrini come molto aggressivi,

evidenziando la loro rabbia e le minacce dovute al suo rifiuto di pagare la somma richiesta (Saba, 1913, 8).

Nella descrizione dell'interrogatorio subito presso la stazione di polizia, motivato sia dal rifiuto di pagare un conto ritenuto eccessivo sia dalla necessità di verificare la sua identità, Saba traccia un parallelo tra le autorità locali e quelle austriache. Questa comparazione può essere letta come un'espressione della sua condizione di cittadino italiano in una realtà politica repressiva, dato che la sua città natale, Trieste, in quel periodo apparteneva all'Impero austro-ungarico (Magro, 2012, 11). Saba sottolinea più volte, nel corso della narrazione del suo viaggio e soggiorno in Montenegro, le questioni nazionali e politiche irrisolte relative alla sua città natale. Egli dichiara di essere italiano, "ma di Trieste", e descrive la sua situazione di viaggiatore privo di passaporto, possedendo soltanto un certificato di nazionalità italiana con un'annotazione marginale che confermava l'attesa del documento di viaggio.

Un altro momento significativo riguarda il sarcasmo di un poliziotto montenegrino che, deridendo le aspirazioni letterarie di Saba nel descrivere il Montenegro, lo indirizza verso le opere del giornalista Vico Mantegazza, autore di vari scritti dedicati a questo Paese. Questo confronto evidenzia una radicale divergenza nella rappresentazione del Montenegro tra i due autori. Mentre Mantegazza, nel suo libro *In Montenegro: un paese senza parlamento* (1896), che entro 1910 conobbe quattro edizioni, celebrava l'ospitalità e il carattere progressista dei montenegrini, contribuendo a costruire un'immagine idealizzata di questo Paese (Burzanović & Popović, 2016), Saba ne offre una visione critica. Per l'autore triestino, la cultura montenegrina appare piena di contraddizioni, caratterizzata da ostilità e primitivismo verso gli stranieri, oltre che da una commercializzazione che aveva esaurito il fascino esotico del luogo, rivelando un lato più cinico e opportunistico della popolazione locale. L'intertestualità, elemento tipico della letteratura di viaggio, viene qui utilizzata da Saba come strumento per rivendicare l'originalità della propria prospettiva e per mettere in discussione i luoghi comuni che permeano le rappresentazioni tradizionali della società montenegrina.

La decostruzione da parte di Saba dell'immagine idealizzata del Montenegro, che aveva raggiunto la sua massima espressione proprio nell'opera di Mantegazza, si inserisce in un contesto storico e culturale più ampio, segnato da un crescente interesse per i Balcani e da una pluralità di interpretazioni riguardanti il tentativo di espansione territoriale del Montenegro durante le Guerre Balcaniche (1912–1913). L'assedio di Scutari, in particolare, alimentò un dibattito acceso nell'opinione pubblica italiana, con posizioni contrastanti che oscillavano tra il sostegno alla causa montenegrina e una critica più diffidente (Biagini, 2012, 80; Popović, 2018a). Le relazioni di viaggio pubblicate in quegli anni riflettono questa molteplicità di opinioni e, per la prima volta, emergono condanne e

rappresentazioni fortemente negative del Montenegro. Tuttavia, mentre alcuni autori italiani, come Alessandro Dudan, Gualtiero Castellini e Eugenio Guarino, si concentrano su una critica ironica e talvolta satirica della figura del re Nicola (Popović, 2018a, 36–37), Saba indirizza la sua attenzione principalmente alla società montenegrina, dipingendola con toni che non risparmiano l'asprezza, ma che offrono una riflessione più sfaccettata.

A differenza del suo primo *reportage*, nel ricordo-racconto Saba abbandona l'analisi delle problematiche sociali e dei costumi, concentrandosi invece sulla descrizione soggettiva della sua esperienza. La visione negativa del Montenegro, rappresentato come un luogo primitivo e ostile, caratterizzato da arroganza e aggressività, è amplificata dalla scelta di narrare l'esperienza in un momento storico segnato dagli eventi di guerra, creando un contrasto marcato tra l'immagine idilliaca del Paese e la realtà cruda e violenta che il conflitto esprimeva. Come lo stesso Saba sottolinea nella testata *Mondo*, furono proprio le notizie riguardanti la guerra che imperversava nei Balcani a spingerlo a rievocare il suo soggiorno e a conferirgli una forma letteraria. La trasformazione dell'esperienza di viaggio in una narrazione letteraria avvenne in circostanze sensibilmente diverse da quelle vissute durante il viaggio, e perciò l'immagine del Montenegro nei due testi appare parzialmente diversa. Nel *reportage*, nonostante le valutazioni che etichettano il paese come "semiselvaggio", gli abitanti sono descritti come "molto simpatici", e l'autore esprime la speranza che lo spirito moderno possa, infine, penetrare nelle aspre montagne montenegrine. Nel ricordo-racconto, al contrario, Saba rielabora il materiale raccolto in precedenza, accentuando gli aspetti negativi e ironizzando sulla propria ingenuità iniziale.

Il ricordo-racconto di Saba rappresenta una svolta significativa nella letteratura odeporea italiana sul Montenegro, segnando il passaggio dalla narrazione oggettiva e documentaria a una forma più introspettiva e soggettiva. Mentre nell'Ottocento i resoconti di viaggio erano principalmente scritti da missionari, giornalisti e naturalisti, nei cui testi il sapere privilegiato occupava una posizione centrale, nel Novecento la relazione di viaggio si è trasformata in una forma più personale, più vicina al *memoir* piuttosto che a un manuale, configurandosi sempre più come uno spazio letterario frequentato anche dai romanzieri. Questo cambiamento ha portato la relazione di viaggio, da un testo realistico e dettagliato, spesso con un fine apertamente didattico o morale, a orientarsi sempre di più verso uno stile impressionistico, con un interesse focalizzato tanto sulle reazioni o sulla coscienza del viaggiatore quanto sui suoi spostamenti (Carr, 2005, 74). Per queste caratteristiche, e scrivendo dalla posizione di un narratore ironico e anti-eroico che si rappresenta come fragile e descrive il proprio viaggio come un insuccesso, Saba evidenzia una somiglianza con numerosi altri autori di relazioni di viaggio del Novecento.

Come viaggiatore, Saba, secondo la classificazione dei viaggiatori proposta da Tzvetan Todorov nel libro *Noi e gli altri: il pensiero francese sulla diversità umana* (1991 [1989]), rientra nella categoria dei “delusi”, ovvero coloro che intraprendono un viaggio per scoprire nuovi orizzonti e valori, solo per poi rendersi conto che il viaggio era superfluo e che tutto ciò che hanno trovato in un paese straniero era già presente nel proprio (Todorov, 1991, 408). Il poeta triestino, infatti, dopo aver sperimentato l'esotismo iniziale del paesaggio e degli usi montenegrini, giunge alla consapevolezza che l'incontro con l'altro non ha prodotto un vero e proprio arricchimento culturale. L'immagine del mendicante che suona la gusla,² ripetuta in diverse occasioni, diventa emblematica di una cultura percepita come monolitica e ripetitiva:

Esaurita la sensazione del nuovo, ammirata la fiera e ascoltata la lamentosa melopea slava di certi vecchi mendicanti che cantavano, accompagnandosi su una corda sola, d'impresie e di vittorie contro il turco e di straordinari eroi nazionali (quali – mi dissero – nessuna altra nazione mai ebbe, né avrà); gli abitanti mi parvero tutti, dal principe al mendico, una ripetizione all'infinito del solito montenegrino, quale l'avevo visto, nelle osterie, o nei caffè di Trieste, fermarsi ad ogni tavolo, per offrire ai frequentatori le sue lunghe pipe intarsiate e colorate, i bocchini di finta ambra ed altre chincaglierie. (Saba, 1913, 8)

Quindi, nei pochi giorni della sua permanenza in Montenegro, dopo aver incontrato la cruda realtà di un mondo che, dalla sua città natale, gli sembrava incantevole, il suo entusiasmo iniziale si era spento. Non solo a causa del crescente disaccordo che lo aveva portato a separarsi dal suo compagno di viaggio, del modo in cui era stato trattato dalla famiglia montenegrina che lo aveva ospitato e delle autorità locali, che lo avevano infine bandito da questo Paese, ma innanzitutto perché la novità aveva presto lasciato spazio al tedio e “la monotonia di paesaggi e personaggi” (Saba, 1913, 8) aveva cominciato ad annoiarlo a tal punto da chiedersi se ne fosse valsa la pena di intraprendere quell'impresa.

Pertanto, dalla gioia contenuta nella breve poesia e dall'affascinante immagine del Paese nel *reportage* del 1904 era giunto a un'interpretazione *a posteriori* del vissuto, a una rievocazione nel ricordo-racconto pervasa dalla malinconia e dall'amara ironia (Magro, 2012) nei confronti sia di se stesso che del paese che aveva visitato, il lontano ed esotico Montenegro.

Le differenze imagologiche riscontrabili nelle tre opere di Saba dedicate al Montenegro evidenziano l'importanza della dimensione temporale nella creazione delle opere odepistiche, ossia la necessità di distinguere tra il tempo del viaggio, il tempo della narrazione e l'inevitabile divario che esiste tra il tempo degli eventi e il tempo della loro descrizione, quando l'opera è destinata alla pubblicazione (Clarke, 2018, 49). Nel processo di trasformazione degli appunti di viaggio in relazioni di viaggio coerenti per la pubblicazione, risulta fondamentale considerare lo sforzo dell'autore nel cercare di imprimere un'impressione di autenticità, oltre a costruire una narrazione basata su criteri letterari come la tensione narrativa, la descrizione coinvolgente dei luoghi visitati e uno stile accattivante (Keighren et al., 2015, 19–21).

Negli anni Novanta, il dibattito accademico, avviato da studiosi come Youngs e Bridges, si è concentrato sulla questione della fedeltà del resoconto di viaggio nei confronti della realtà vissuta (Youngs, 1994, 5–6). Bridges, in particolare, ha sostenuto la superiorità dei “resoconti grezzi”, redatti sul campo, rispetto alle versioni definitive, spesso filtrate attraverso le lenti dell'ideologia e della creatività letteraria (Bridges, 1998, 70). L'opera di Saba, con la sua pluralità di generi e la sua costante ricerca di una forma artistica, conferma la complessità di questo processo. Lo stesso evento, il viaggio in Montenegro, viene narrato in modo diverso a seconda del contesto e degli obiettivi comunicativi dell'autore. La scelta del genere letterario, le motivazioni personali dell'autore, il suo posizionamento ideologico e il contesto storico-culturale in cui scrive sono tutti fattori che influenzano profondamente la rappresentazione della realtà. La sua operazione di riscrittura è condizionata, infatti, non solo dal tempo trascorso dall'evento narrato, ma anche dalle nuove conoscenze e prospettive acquisite.

2 La gusla è uno strumento popolare a corda singola usato nei Balcani.

ČRNOGORSKA TEMATIKA V DELIH UMBERTA SABE

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POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava dela Umberta Sabe s črnogorsko tematiko, ki izhajajo iz njegovega mladostnega potovanja v Črno goro leta 1904. Avtorici analizirata tri besedila različnih žanrov: pesem Salendo il monte Lovcen, časopisni potopisni zapis Il Montenegro in poznejši spominsko-pripovedni tekst Come fui bandito dal Montenegro. Ob rekonstrukciji njihovega nastanka, objav in recepcije v Črni gori prispevek pokaže, da Sabova podoba Črne gore ni enotna, temveč se spreminja glede na čas nastanka, literarni žanr in širši zgodovinsko-kulturni kontekst. V pesmi prevladuje navdušena, skoraj idilična predstava o gorski deželi svobode, v zgodnjem reportažnem zapisu pa se prepletajo romantična fascinacija, podoba »dobrega divjaka«, semi-orientalistični pogledi in zanimanje za družbene razmere, zlasti položaj žensk. V poznejšem spominskem besedilu, nastalem v času balkanskih vojn, postane prikaz Črne gore bolj kritičen, subjektiven in ironičen; potovanje se iz izkušnje odkrivanja drugega spremeni v pripoved o razočaranju, nespornostih in avtorjevi notranji negotovosti. Prispevek tako pokaže, da Sabova dela pomembno dopolnjujejo italijansko potopisno književnost o Črni gori, saj razkrivajo prehod od dokumentarne in idealizirane podobe prostora k moderni, introspektivni in literarno oblikovani potopisni izkušnji.

Ključne besede: Umberto Saba, Črna gora, Trst, potopisi

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IN MEMORIAM

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. BRANKO MARUŠIČ

(1938–2026)

Vrste primorskih zgodovinarjev je pred kratkim zapustil dr. Branko Marušič, eden najvidnejših primorskih zgodovinarjev srednje generacije, ki se je s svojim obširnim znanstveno-raziskovalnim delom in bogatim opusom zgodovinopisnih in ostalih del, častno zapisal tudi v anale celotnega slovenskega zgodovinopisja. Ob tem je potrebno izpostaviti zlasti njegovo podobo znanstvenika in človeka, njegove značajске vrline, zlasti pa vidno vlogo, ki jo je kot zgodovinar in intelektualec igral tako v primorskem kot širšem nacionalnem prostoru vse do svoje smrti.

Nekaj kratkih biografskih podatkov sicer pove, da je bil Branko Marušič rojen 4. februarja 1938 v Gorici in je leta 1962 na ljubljanski Filozofski fakulteti zaključil študij zgodovine ter je bil tam leta 1987 promoviran za doktorja zgodovinskih znanosti. Po končanem študiju je bil sprva kustos za zgodovino, nato pa ravnatelj Goriškega muzeja, do upokojitve leta 2004 pa je deloval kot raziskovalec, nazadnje pa kot znanstveni svetnik na Zgodovinskem inštitutu Milka Kosa ZRC SAZU, kjer je tudi uspešno in odgovorno vodil novogoriško Raziskovalno postajo.

Če bi iskali rdečo nit v znanstvenem opusu Branka Marušiča, bi lahko zatrčili, da je njegovo delo zaznamovala nekakšna specifična povezovalna vloga med goriškim oziroma širšim primorskim prostorom, tja od Rezije in furlanskih nižin do Krasa, Trsta in Istre na eni, ter celotnega nacionalnega prostora na drugi strani. Pogledi Branka Marušiča kot odličnega poznavalca tega prostora, kakor tudi italijanskega sosedstva, so zaznavni že v njegovem plodnem sodelovanju v slovensko-italijanski kulturno-zgodovinski komisiji (1993–2000), ki je leta 2005 izdala svoje poročilo o slovensko-italijanskih odnosih v letih 1880–1956, v še večji meri pa v enem njegovih novejših del z naslovom: *Sosed so sedu. Prispevki k zgodovini slovensko-italijanskega sožitja* (Trst, ZTT EST, 2012).

Seveda mu je bil skozi vsa leta najbližji ravno njegov primorski prostor, ki se mu je posvečal že od samega začetka svojega raziskovalnega oziroma znanstvenega dela ter se kaže že v njegovi doktorski disertaciji z naslovom: *Politično gibanje goriških Slovencev v drugi polovici devetnajstega stoletja*, zlasti pa v njegovem obsežnem delu *Primorski čas pretekli. Prispevki za zgodovino Primorske* (Koper, Založba Lipa, 1985). Delo samo po sebi predstavlja izbor razprav o zgodovini Primorske, široka paleta znanstveno zastavljenih problemov, ki jih obravnava pa sega na področja, ki vključujejo tudi vrsto pomožnih zgodovinskih ved, tja od arheologije,



Branko Marušič (<https://zgodovina.si>)

etnologije, kulturno-zgodovinskih tem pa do čiste zgodovine. Ob tem in nekaterih drugih njegovih delih vsekakor zaznavamo napor, da bi obdržal izrazito objektivno raven lastnih spoznanj in se s tem po eni strani izognil pastem nacionalizma, patriotizma in emotivnih stališč, po drugi strani pa ohranjal težnjo po spoštovanju drugih in drugačnih ter s tem dokazal, da je mistifikacija lastne zgodovine le slepi rokav, ki ne vodi nikamor oziroma v izkrivljanje zgodovinske resnice kot take. Kot je zapisala dr. Milica Kacin-Wohinz k predgovoru k njegovemu delu *Sosed o sosedu*, njegove razprave in številni članki pričajo o Marušičevi neomajni privrženosti raziskovanju življenja in dela ter odkrivanju individualnih pogledov in stališč, skratka o medčloveških odnosih v obmejnem prostoru Primorske, s tem pa je odveč poudarjati, da gre pri tem bolj za kulturne kot pa za politične stike med sosedi oziroma vidnejšimi protagonisti političnega in kulturnega življenja stičnega prostora.

Branko Marušič je bil eden glavnih piscev *Primorskega slovenskega biografskega leksikona* (Gorica, Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 1974–1994), ki je v snopičih izhajal vrsto let, italijanskim sosedom pa je namenil izbrana dela z naslovom *Il vicino come amico – realtà o utopia? La convivenza lungo il confine italo-sloveno* (Gorica, Goriška Mohorjeva družba, 2007), ki prinaša tudi njegovo bibliografijo v italijanskem jeziku objavljenih del. Z druge strani je tudi italijanska zgodovinska stroka cenila Marušičev lik in doprinos pri preučevanju mednacionalnih odnosov ob meji. K osvetlitvi in orisu teh odnosov pa je veliko prispeval kot član slovensko-italijanske mešane kulturno-zgodovinske komisije, ki je ob koncu svojega delovanja pripravila odmevno poročilo z naslovom: *Slovensko-italijanski odnosi 1880–1956* in je izšlo tudi v knjižni obliki (Ljubljana, 2001).

Odnosi med Slovenci, Italijani in Furlani ter njihovo sobivanje so Branka Marušiča tudi sicer vedno vznemirjali in pritegovali ter je več kot štiri desetletja kljub težavam, predsodkom in problemom vzpodbujal vezi in sodelovanje z italijanskimi zgodovinarji in ustanovami. Težko je pri tem naštet vsa njegova srečanja z italijanskimi zgodovinarji oziroma sodelovanja na zgodovinskih in drugih mednarodnih znanstvenih konferencah, pa vrsto predavanj, ki jih je imel na obeh straneh meje.

Svojo akademsko širino in privrženost humanistični stroki je v polni meri izpričal tudi ob snovanju obeh primorskih univerz, ene s sedežem

v Novi Gorici in druge v Kopru. Z vso potrebno zavzetostjo in privrženostjo do razvoja humanističnih študij v okviru Primorske univerze v Kopru ter do osnovanja Znanstveno-raziskovalnega središča ter njegovega odmevnega periodičnega znanstvenega tiska z revijama *Annales*, *Series Historia et Sociologia* in *Acta Histriae*, se je udeleževal tudi nekaterih mednarodnih znanstvenih srečanj v organizaciji Zgodovinskega društva za južno Primorsko in ZRS Koper ter s svojimi tehtnimi strokovnimi objavami v obeh revijah nenehno vzdrževal tudi stike med obema primorskima regijama.

Več kot petdesetletna Marušičeva prisotnost v zgodovinskem raziskovanju je obrodila bogate sadove, saj njegova bibliografija obsega več kot 2200 bibliografskih enot, med njimi tudi več monografskih del. Zgodovinsko preučevanje je bilo vsekakor njegov poklic in življenjski smoter, zgodovino pa je videl in dojemal kot široko delujoče področje in sestavni del zgodovinskega spomina, ki ga je potrebno na primeren način upoštevati, ohranjati in iz njega povleči bistvene prvine, pomembne za življenje vsakega naroda in vsakega posameznika. Zavedal se je dejstva, da se kot zgodovinarji pogosto najdemo v težavah in dilemah, ter se nam ne posreči vedno, da bi znali javnosti podati zanesljive in enoznačne odgovore na vprašanja iz preteklosti, še manj pa iz sedanjosti. Pri tem je njegov odnos do preteklosti kot celote spoštljiv in objektivni, saj je preučevanje zgodovinske preteklosti dojemal kot večno iskanje resnice, zato je bil občutljiv in kritičen do zgodovinpisja, ki pa je pogosto cepljeno s politiko in z ideologijo.

Kot znanstvenik in intelektualci je bil odličen in pozoren sogovornik, prijatelj in v marsičem tudi vzornik mlajšim rodovom. Če povzamemo misel uglednega francoskega zgodovinarja François Fureta, ki v svojem delu *Minule iluzije. Esej o komunistični ideji 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga, 1998) pravi, »da ga ne preseneča, če intelektualci sledijo duhu svoje dobe, da pa ga preseneča in žalosti obenem, če se temu duhu podvržejo, namesto da bi svojemu času s svojim delom in prispevkom vtisnili prepoznaven pečat«, lahko seveda zatrdimo, da ga je Branko Marušič s svojim znanstveno-raziskovalnim delom in bogatim opusom svojih znanstvenih del, globoko vtisnil ne le svojem temveč tudi današnjemu in prihodnjemu času.

Salvator Žitko

Prof. FURIO BIANCO*(1943–2026)*

Il 25 aprile ultimo scorso ci ha lasciato Furio Bianco, storico e docente di grande valore e a tutti ben noto per le sue pubblicazioni, dedicate per la maggior parte all'area friulana e istriana in età moderna. Furio ha insegnato dapprima, per molti anni, presso la facoltà di lettere dell'Università di Trieste e poi nel Dipartimento di storia dell'Università di Udine. Due sedi che hanno contrassegnato simbolicamente non solo la sua attività di insegnamento, ma pure l'area geografica di ricerca su cui egli si soffermò a lungo, pubblicando saggi che hanno lasciato un segno indelebile nella storiografia locale. Furio era nato infatti a Fiume, ma la famiglia si era successivamente trasferita a Trieste. Nel corso dell'attività di insegnamento svolta nel centro giuliano egli ebbe sempre comunque un occhio di riguardo verso la storia della penisola istriana. Il successivo trasferimento al dipartimento di storia di Udine rafforzò in realtà l'interesse che egli già nutriva da tempo verso la storia friulana e in particolare nei confronti di quella della Carnia.

Furio si poteva, in un certo senso, definire uno storico economico, anche se il suo sguardo era sempre rivolto a talune questioni della ricerca definibili più propriamente *sociali*. Questi aspetti si possono ad esempio individuare in una delle sue prime e significative pubblicazioni dedicate alle grandi trasformazioni che interessarono l'area friulana tra Sette e Ottocento¹. Una pubblicazione in cui il suo interesse per la storia agraria e quello per la storia economica sembrano fondersi, pur privilegiando la complessità del contesto sociale preso in esame.

Un aspetto, quest'ultimo, che sarebbe divenuto preponderante nelle successive pubblicazioni, in cui la storia del mondo contadino si sarebbe avvalsa di un approccio istituzionale, contraddistinto dall'esigenza di approfondire le forme di organizzazione delle comunità rurali². Un approccio caratterizzato soprattutto dall'attenzione rivolta alla forza della tradizione, che si manifestava in particolar modo nell'attaccamento e nella difesa da parte delle comunità rurali verso le proprie strutture organizzative, inducendole molto spesso a reagire violentemente nei confronti di ogni ingerenza proveniente dall'esterno.

Tali aspetti sono nettamente visibili in quella che, a ragione, si può considerare la pubblicazione di Furio che più si è contraddistinta per la sua fortunata ricezione da parte di un vasto pubblico. In un agile ma denso volume dedicato alla famosa *crudel zobia grassa* del 1511, la sanguinosa inimicizia tra le famiglie feudali friulane è esaminata alla luce delle rivendicazioni contadine dell'epoca³. La vicenda del sanguinoso conflitto tra la famiglia Savorgnan e le altre famiglie feudali è in particolar modo collocata da Furio nel contesto comunitario



Furio Bianco (a sinistra) e Claudio Povolo a Gargnano (Lago di Garda, IT), quando l'Università degli Studi di Milano ha organizzato una conferenza (Foto: Darko Darovec, 2016)

1 *Nobili castellani, comunità, sottani. Accumulazione ed espropriazione contadina in Friuli dalla caduta della Repubblica alla Restaurazione* (Udine, Casamassima Editore, 1983).

2 *Contadini, sbirri e contrabbandieri nel Friuli del Settecento* (Pordenone, Biblioteca dell'Immagine, 1995).

3 *1511. La «crudel zobia grassa». Rivolte contadine e faide nobiliari in Friuli fra '400 e '500* (Udine, Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine, 1995).

contadino dell'epoca, incline a difendere ad oltranza le proprie prerogative economiche e sociali.

Nei successivi lavori Furio Bianco prestò maggiore attenzione allo studio del paesaggio⁴ e, soprattutto, a talune forme di rappresentazione tramite cui era descritto il mondo della giustizia in età moderna⁵. La dimensione più spiccatamente sociale della ricerca di Furio è certamente individuabile nei numerosi lavori dedicati alla Carnia e alla sua popolazione⁶. Nel volume a lui dedicato nel 2014 da colleghi e amici il percorso storiografico e intellettuale di Furio Bianco è tracciato sottolineando soprattutto la grande umanità e l'attaccamento nei confronti dei suoi studenti⁷.

Negli ultimi anni della sua attività di ricerca, sempre svolta con passione, Furio sembrò riavvolgere il flusso complesso dei suoi interessi. La passione verso la storia della Carnia e l'attenzione verso quella che, in un certo senso, faceva da sfondo alle

sue origini si concretizzò in un volume dal titolo significativo: «*Mistri cagnelli*» in *Istria. Tra lavoro in bottega, traffici economici e speculazioni finanziarie (secoli XVI-XIX)* (Udine, Deputazione di Storia patria del Friuli, 2024).

L'attività di studioso di Furio si caratterizzò soprattutto per l'edizione di numerosi libri, di cui si sono ricordati i più significativi. Vorremmo comunque ricordare pure i saggi, che per lo più introducevano ad una attività di ricerca che si sarebbe successivamente estesa a testi di più ampia portata⁸.

La rivista *Annales, Series Historia et Sociologia* intende onorarlo dedicandogli un numero particolare, in cui amici e colleghi lo ricordano personalmente riallacciandosi ai temi che per decenni contraddistinsero la sua attività.

Claudio Povo

4 In particolare *Le terre del Friuli: la formazione dei paesaggi agrari in Friuli tra il XV e il XIX secolo* (Verona, Cierre, 1994).

5 *Storie raccontate, storie diseguate. Cerimonie di giustizia capitale e cronaca nera nelle stampe popolari e nelle memorie cittadine tra '500 e '800* (Udine, E.&C., 2001).

6 Da ricordare soprattutto *Una doppia identità: cramârs e contadini nella montagna carnica, secoli 16.-18.*, ampio saggio apparso nel 1992 in un volume curato insieme a Domenico Molletta: *Cramârs: l'emigrazione dalla montagna carnica in età moderna (secoli XVI-XIX)* (Udine, Camera di Commercio industria artigianato e agricoltura).

7 *Per Furio. Studi in onore di Furio Bianco*, a cura di A. Fornasin e C. Povo (Udine, Forum ed., 2014).

8 Tra storia e stampe popolari in età moderna: *Perfetta, e veridica relatione, delli processi criminali, et essecutioni delli medesimi, fattasi contro li tre conti, Francesco Nadasdi, Pietro di Zrin, e Francesco Cristofforo Frangepani (1671)*, *Acta Histriae*, 2022, 30, 4, 1039–1056; *I circuiti del credito e il mercato immobiliare nel distretto di Capodistria nel Settecento*, *Acta Histriae*, 2021, 29, 3, 705–754.

KAZALO K SLIKAM NA OVITKU

SLIKA NA NASLOVNICI: *Berlinski zid, East Side Gallery, Berlin, 31. januar 2015* (Foto: Ank Kumar (Infosys Limited), CC BY 4.0).

Slika 1: *Brandenburška vrata, Berlin, 16. maj 2015* (Foto: Pierre-Selim Huard, CC BY 4.0).

Slika 2: *Fotografija italijanskih vojakov, ki streljajo slovenske talce v vasi Dane v Loški dolini, Slovenija, 31. julij 1942* (Zbirka Narodnega muzeja sodobne zgodovine Slovenije, Inventarna št. pl1818).

Slika 3: *Ljudje na vrhu Berlinskega zidu pri Brandenburških vratih, Berlin, v noči z 9. na 10. november 1989* (Foto: Sue Ream, CC BY 3.0).

Slika 4: *Fotorealistična slika padca Berlinskega zidu, ustvarjena s ChatGPT, vključno s prepoznavnimi znamenitostmi in simboli* (Ustvarjeno decembra 2025).

Slika 5: *Izgnanka iz Julijske krajine št. 30001 (Esule Giuliana n. 30001), Pulj (Pola), 6. julij 1946. Fotografija neznanega avtorja deklice Egee Haffner, posneta v času istrsko-dalmatinskega eksodusa.*

Slika 6: *Žongliranje na Berlinskem zidu, Berlin, 16. november 1989* (Foto: Yann Forget, CC BY-SA).

Slika 7: *Berlinski zid, pogled iz Zahodnega Berlina pri Bethaniendamm, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 1986* (Foto: Thierry Noir, CC BY-SA 3.0 / GFDL).

Slika 8: *Predsednika Slovenije in Italije, Borut Pahor in Sergio Mattarella, pri polaganju vencev na spomenik bazoviškim junakom v Bazovici, Italija, 13. junij 2020* (Foto: Daniel Novaković/STA).

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Figure 1: *Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, 16 May 2015* (Photo: Pierre-Selim Huard, CC BY 4.0).

Figure 2: *Italian soldiers shooting Slovenian hostages in Dane, Loška Valley, Slovenia, 31 July 1942* (Collection of the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia, Inventory no. pl1818).

Figure 3: *People atop the Berlin Wall near the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin, night of 9–10 November 1989* (Photo: Sue Ream, CC BY 3.0).

Figure 4: *A ChatGPT-generated photorealistic image of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, including recognised landmarks and symbols* (Created in December 2025).

Figure 5: *Julian exile no. 30001 (Esule Giuliana n. 30001), Pula (Pola), 6 July 1946. Photograph by an unknown author of the girl Egea Haffner, taken during the Istrian–Dalmatian exodus.*

Figure 6: *Juggling on the Berlin Wall, Berlin, 16 November 1989* (Photo: Yann Forget, CC BY-SA).

Figure 7: *Berlin Wall, view from West Berlin at Bethaniendamm, Berlin-Kreuzberg, 1986* (Photo: Thierry Noir, CC BY-SA 3.0 / GFDL).

Figure 8: *Presidents of Slovenia and Italy, Borut Pahor and Sergio Mattarella, laying wreaths at the monument to the Bazovica heroes in Bazovica, Italy, 13 June 2020* (Photo: Daniel Novaković/STA).

