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AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US: ON ZOMBIES, POLITICAL PROTESTS AND THE TRANSMODALITY OF POLITICAL METAPHORS

ABSTRACT

Built around a case study of the zombie metaphor used to denigrate protesters during the popular political uprisings in Slovenia during the winter of 2012–2013, this article introduces the notion of a transmodal metaphor to capture the many roles and modalities which political metaphors can acquire when employed in societal power struggles. The article is based on a qualitative multimodal framing analysis of media reports on protests in six Slovenian print and online media, showing the prominent role the zombie metaphor and its many multimodal manifestations played as a framing device in mainstream media coverage of the protests and in their rejection of the protest paradigm as the prevailing mode of journalistic reporting of the protests.

KEYWORDS: metaphor, protest paradigm, framing, zombies, multimodal analysis

Beseda je meso postala in se naselila med nami: O zombijih, političnih protestih in transmodalnosti političnih metafor

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek naslavlja vprašanje rabe političnih metafor znotraj političnih bojev, natančneje sposobnosti nekaterih metafor, da znotraj teh bojev prehajajo med različnimi modalnostmi (besedna, vizualna, fizična oziroma utelešena). Prispevek gradi na študiji primera transmodalne metafore zombijev, sprva uporabljene za kritiko protestnikov na Vseslovenskih ljudskih vstajah, ki pa so jo protestniki subverzivno apropriirali in spremenili njen prvotni pomen. Kot taka je potem odigrala eno ključnih vlog v procesu uokvirjanja novic, s tem pa pripomogla tudi k novinarski zavrnitvi poročanja o protestih znotraj ustaljenega modela protestne paradigme. Analiza uokvirjanja je narejena s kvalitativno multimodalno analizo člankov šestih slovenskih tiskanih in spletnih medijev.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: metafora, protestna paradigma, uokvirjanje, zombiji, multimodalna analiza

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US: ON ZOMBIES, POLITICAL PROTESTS AND THE TRANSMODALITY OF POLITICAL METAPHORS[1]

In today's political struggles, tweets are turning more and more into some kind of Molotov cocktails, which the government is throwing into the masses. A tweet is an amateurish, hastily produced weapon, though its use can have great impact. It is usually thrown into the masses to scare them or to create confusion.

Renata Salecl, Twitter molotov

1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the need for a complex, transdisciplinary approach to the study of political metaphors. This is an approach which not only explains the meaning of structural or creative metaphors and their underlying potential to structure social reality but that can accommodate the dynamic "life" of political metaphors: their potential transformations in terms of meaning, form (modality) and use for the duration of a given political event. Interest in the study of (political) metaphors has been growing since the early 1980s within the framework that came to be known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). This theory postulates that metaphors are not merely "an ornamental aspect of language but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualise their world and their activities" (Gibbs 2008: 3). The theoretical and empirical research that followed was not simply about the various metaphors by which we live, to paraphrase the title of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) pioneering work, but primarily about the fact that we live by the metaphors—that human cognition and information processing are essentially metaphorical. Yet the fact that the metaphorical permeates politics was widely acknowledged before the advent of CMT. This awareness dates back to the pioneering research on political propaganda and early inquiries into the function of symbolism within the domain of politics. The paradigmatic shift that CMT brought about was to treat the metaphors not as distortions of political discourse but as its inevitable, constitutive components. Put differently, CMT claims that politics, and by extension the political, cannot be non-metaphorical. However, as the field developed, several scholars started pointing out the shortcomings of its predominant "focus on verbal manifestations of conceptual metaphors" (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009: 12), arguing for the need to overcome the "textual bias" and *monomodal* approach to the study of metaphors (e.g. Forceville 1996; El Refaie 2003). Over the last two decades, this broader conceptualisation of metaphors has been pursued through the concept of *multimodal metaphors*, generally defined as "metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes"

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that include pictorial, written and spoken signs, gestures, sounds, music, smells, tastes and touch (Forceville 2009: 23-24).

The present article builds on this body of work (that has often been developed outside the field of CMT, for example, within discourse studies) by adding another layer of complexity. Building on a case study of a zombie metaphor that was initially used to denigrate demonstrators during the 2012–2013 mass political protests in Slovenia, the article introduces the concept of a *transmodal metaphor* to expose the shifting role and changing manifestations of the zombie metaphor during the three months of protests—namely, its ability to move between different modes, migrating from monomodal verbal utterances on Twitter to monomodal pictorial signs and multimodal representations on protest banners, lampoon film posters or political cartoons, to embodied performances by protesters masked as zombies. The aim of the article is not to provide a definite template for the investigation of transmodal metaphors but to highlight the potential focal points of such research by building on the case study of the zombie metaphor. Moreover, it makes a case for a trans-disciplinary approach to the study of metaphors by bringing together the conceptualisation of metaphors in cognitive linguistics, social movement theory's focus on *repertoires of contentious action* and the *protest paradigm*, and visual culture's emphasis on the communicative power of images under the conceptual umbrella of *framing*.

The article is structured as follows. First, it briefly describes the protests. This is followed by a presentation of framing as the theoretical framework for investigating the role which the zombie metaphor played in the media coverage of the protests. The next section analyses the meaning of the zombie metaphor. This is followed by a qualitative analysis of the media framing of the protests from the perspective of the protest paradigm. The results of the framing analysis are then opened up with a discussion of the connection between transmodal metaphors and the growing popularity of the carnivalesque repertoire of contentious action.

2 Uprising of zombies—building a case for a transmodal metaphor

Between November 2012 and March 2013, Slovenia was a site of ongoing political protests against (the corruption of) the political elites on a magnitude which the country had not experienced since it gained independence in 1991. The protests, which later came to be known as "people's uprisings," were a series of demonstrations organised mainly through social networks (mostly through Facebook) in which a variety of social groups, citizen initiatives and individuals from across the social strata participated. Unlike other forms of organised political struggle at the time—such as protests by trade unions or students and academics against the introduction of stark austerity policies and public sector budget cuts promoted by the right-wing coalition government led by the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and its Prime Minister Janez Janša—the uprisings appeared to be popular, decentred contestations of political power, resonating with the *zeitgeist* of recent "Facebook protests" and "Twitter revolutions." The protests started in November 2012 in

Slovenia's second largest city, Maribor, against the "corruption octopus" of mayor Franc Kangler, but by December they had outgrown their regional scope and had turned into country-wide protests against the corruption of the political elites. The first central demand of this popular contestation *of* and discontent *with* the political system was for the accountability of the political elite irrespective of ideological affiliation; subsequently, the list of demands was expanded to include "more democracy," "new faces" in politics and the protection of the welfare state. Although the discontent was directed at the political elites from both sides of the polarised Slovenian political spectrum, the protesters also specifically articulated their demands in relation to the stark austerity policies implemented by the SDS-led government, its promotion of neoliberal social reforms, and what was perceived as the increasingly authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Janez Janša.

The first All Slovenian People's Uprising (*Vseslovenska ljudska vstaja*) that took place on 21 December 2012 can be seen as a nation-wide crystallisation of the above-mentioned consensual demands, to which diverse social movements and initiatives would add layers of their more specific agendas and demands. As mentioned above, the uprisings were decentred, a palimpsest of contesting voices, which presented a problem for journalists covering the events as well as for the police and their attempts to control the events. Although a coordination committee was formed, and certain social movements, initiatives, groups and individuals were increasingly being identified (by the media) as representing the movement, the organisation of protests remained decentred, challenging the police in their search for the organisers of the officially unannounced (and, hence, from their perspective, illegal) protests. Between December 2012 and March 2013, four All Slovenian People's Uprisings took place before the movement eventually lost momentum subsequent to the institutional resolution of the political crisis. Following the waves of public discontent and the publication of the report of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption which accused Prime Minister Janša of corruption, three of the five political parties left the coalition government, Janša's cabinet received a no confidence vote on 27 February and the new government (with the SDS now in opposition) was elected on 20 March 2013.

The zombie metaphor was initially launched on Twitter by the SDS as a comment on the first All Slovenian People's Uprising. The tweet—*#vstaja ? Communist international, rhetoric of civil war, totalitarian symbols? Uprising of zombies, not People's uprising!!!*—was one of several comments that the SDS posted on its Twitter profile on 21 December 2012, interpreting the protests, questioning the protest slogans and critiquing the reporting of journalists. Of all the tweets posted in relation to the first uprising, it was the zombie metaphor that caught the most public attention, and the first responses of the protesters to the "insulting tweet" were published during the protests. At the same time, the SDS's tweets also became the subject of news reporting, migrating from the domain of social media to that of mainstream media. Simultaneously, the Web users appropriated the monomodal textual metaphor and transformed it into a multimodal metaphor by creating humorous adaptations of zombie film posters, where the heads of the Prime Minister, his wife and government ministers were pasted onto the original film posters. By 22 December 2012, when Slovenian cultural organisations and artists organised their protest festival to oppose

government budget cuts for the funding of cultural productions, the metaphor had migrated to yet another modality, as a number of protesters attended the demonstrations dressed up as zombies. Thus, what started as a monomodal verbal metaphor quickly became an embodied, material metaphor. At the second All Slovenian People's Uprising on 11 January 2013, the number of zombie protesters was much larger, and these zombified protesters came to lead the protest march through the streets of Ljubljana. During the following two uprisings, their performances and interventions became a staple of protest performances—and one of the focal points of the visual coverage of the protests. Although the visual iconography of the protests included other "standard elements," such as the black and white "*gotof si*" ("you're done") posters with portraits of politicians, the large, white, origami-style masks and the clutched fist logo, zombies became one of the central visual and verbal signifiers of the protests.

The zombie metaphor was appropriated by the protesters in two main ways—it was either playfully *embraced* and worn as a badge of pride (e.g. Facebook users would add the word zombie to their names or zombify their profile photographs) or *inverted*, claiming that the "real" zombies were members of the political elite (images of zombified faces of leading politicians, especially of Prime Minister Janez Janša, became the staple of the protest banners). The slogans of the protest banners also frequently played with the metaphor, which quickly became part of the vernacular, political cartoons, journalistic commentary and political analyses. The "life" of the zombie metaphor, however, did not end with the resolution of Janša's government at the end of February 2012. Although markedly less visible than during the uprisings, zombies lingered long after the protests ended, in media as visual or textual references, until the 2012–2013 protests in political analyses, articles, books and photographic exhibitions and contests. Occasionally, they could be spotted at smaller protests organised from March 2013 onwards, serving as embodied visual reminders of the dormant potential of an active citizenry. The metaphor of the living dead was even given an "afterlife" in the form of a self-proclaimed religious movement named *Trans-Universal Zombie Church of the Blissful Ringing*, dedicated to the eradication of political corruption, which has remained active since its founding in March 2013.

The many "lives" of the zombie metaphor clearly indicate that if we are to understand the role of political metaphors in structuring the political, the conceptual framework employed should accommodate the dynamism of its potential transformations both in terms of modalities and in relation to its temporality. If we understand politics as a site of ongoing struggle over positions of power and (temporary) fixations of interpretations of social reality, political metaphors need to be seen as an integral part of these culturally and historically specific discursive practices, of their dynamism and of their *durée*. If metaphors are indeed more than simply "an ornamental aspect of language," if they are instrumental to how we think and act, since they structure our conceptualisation of the world, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) famously claim, they need to be scrutinised within broader conceptual frameworks that account for the dynamism of their uses and incorporate both the *multimodality* and *transmodality* of the metaphors, such as various forms of discourse analysis or framing, which is the approach adopted in this paper.

3 Framing the protests

Framing is best seen not as a theory or a research paradigm but as a mid-range theoretical concept that enables the integration of different concepts and theories into the analysis of the processes of mediated communication. Although there is no overarching definition of framing, there is a set of underlying assumptions that most attempts to define it share. As Reese (2001: 11) argues, "Framing is concerned with the way interests, communicators, sources, and culture combine to yield coherent ways of understanding the world, which are developed using all of the available verbal and visual symbolic resources."

One of the central arguments for the adoption of framing for studying political protests is that communication is a central characteristic of this type of political action—the protest itself is a communicative act while, at the same time, the media communication about the protests is necessary and constitutive of the building of societal awareness of the protests. Since proportionally only a small number of citizens participate in the protests, for most of the population, the protests exist *in* and *through* mediated communication. The success of the protests, thus, to a large degree, depends on how the events and demands are communicated to the general public, and although this communication process is no longer fully dependent on mass media, social movements cannot solely rely on self-mediation "to mobilize political support, to increase legitimation and validation of their demands and to enable them to widen the scope of conflict beyond the likeminded" (Cammaerts 2012: 119).

Thus, the issue of framing—on how mainstream media select and present news to the general public and centres of symbolic social power—remains of central importance to the success of social movements or, in our case, of protesters. In one of the most widely adopted definitions, framing is defined as the process of selecting "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman 1993: 52), whereby this "selection" is done in such a way as to contextualise a given event within a pre-existing cognitive schema. One strand of framing, within which this article positions itself, focuses on the question of how this selection is achieved through various *framing devices*—"specific linguistic structures such as *metaphors*, visual icons, and catchphrases that communicate frames" (Reese 2009: 19; my emphasis). These framing devices, such as metaphors, activate cognitive schemas that make up cognitive frames—configurations of salient attributes that help individuals process and retrieve information (Scheufele and Scheufele 2010: 116). Framing is not to be equated with the notion of journalistic bias—it is an inevitable part of the news narration process—of the need to select and structure information, of production routines and journalistic values, but also as a result of journalists' dependency on sources, which often compete to promote different causal or moral interpretations of the events. In the process of news reporting, the journalists not only interpret and select the frames of competing social actors but also structure the events according to their own pre-existing frames, overlaying the "provided" frames with "narratively functional frames" and pre-existing macro-cultural frames. Thus, several authors distinguish between different *frame types:*

(1) macro-level frames, also referred to as journalistic frames (Snow and Benford 1992), which are closer to narrative strategies (e.g. conflict or horserace frame); (2) meta-frames or enduring (cultural) frames (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) that can be applied across different events (e.g. archetypal themes, such as villain vs. hero, or culturally-specific ones, such as Orientalism); and (3) the more micro-level, event-specific frames. Framing theory also accounts for the dynamics and multilayeredness of the framing process through the concept of *frame phases*. In cases where reported content cannot be immediately subsumed within one of the pre-existing frames, the news reporting will go through various phases: (1) *the definition/conflict phase*, where social actors will try to gain media attention and establish "a specific point of view as an appropriate frame for the issue"; (2) *the resonance phase*, during which a particular frame will become ascendant when it "resonate[s] with the values and experiences of the public"; and (3) *the equilibrium or resolution phase*, which will be marked by the establishment of a dominant frame (Miller and Parnell Riechert 2003: 111-113, *cf.* Entman 2004: 48). The establishment of a dominant frame does not imply the end of framing contestations: although the dominant frames tend to be persistent interpretations, they are not permanent and can be challenged by the emergence of new information or salient framing devices, such as images or metaphors, particularly if they resonate with a commonly shared sentiment.

The notion of frame contestation is particularly important in contemporary communication environments, where traditional media institutions no longer have a monopoly over public communication but operate within a cacophonic communicative environment of web-based self-communication, where they willingly or unwillingly compete with voices "broadcasted" through social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter. These platforms, especially Twitter, have recently become associated with the potential for democratising public communication, serving as an alternative channel for gathering and disseminating information and promoting alternative voices, especially under political regimes that limit the freedom of the media (e.g. Meraz and Papacharissi 2013; Lim 2012; Burns and Eltham 2009). However, Twitter also represents an alternative media infrastructure for established political actors, giving them not only a high degree of control over the content, timing and style of communication but, due to the production routines of the mainstream media, also a privileged position in public discursive struggles. In particular, the existing research on the use of Twitter for political communication indicates a tendency to use the platform for the one-way transmission of information (e.g. Golbeck et al. 2010; Larsson and Moe 2011; Graham et al. 2013). Thus, political actors do not primarily adopt Twitter because of its potential for facilitating access to and interaction with the citizens but because it has become part of the "ambiental" practices of the information gathering and sharing (Hermida 2010) of important public figures, opinion leaders and especially journalists. Consequently, for established political actors, tweets become the tightly observed gates through which their opinions and frames can enter the mainstream media. Such use of Twitter enables political actors much more "free" expression of opinions and value judgements, and it opens up space for commenting among competing political actors, which would be unacceptable if expressed via other communication channels, often bordering on defamation or hate speech. It also offers them the opportunity to interpret or challenge

the media agendas and media frames, leading to what McCombs (2005) describes as *intermedia agenda setting*.

The SDS's tweeting on the first All-Slovenian People's Uprising is an illustrative case of this type of communication, of using social media to engage with frame contestation. In a series of tweets, the political party offered its evaluative interpretation of events in an attempt to (re)frame the protests, launching what would become a potent framing device (the zombie metaphor), attacked its political opponents attending the event and openly critiqued journalists and their reporting of the events. Previous practices of the SDS in its use of the platform, the relatively scarce interaction the zombie tweet produced on Twitter (it received only 5 likes and 14 retweets as well as 29 negative comments with which the party did not engage), and its quick rebroadcasting by the mainstream media also point to the fact that the tweet's primary target audience was not general Twitter users or party supporters but the journalists. Commenting on the protests and the use of social media by protesters and the government, quoted in the epigraph to this article, Renata Salecl (2013) vividly described tweets as "turning more and more into some kind of Molotov cocktails, which the government is throwing into the masses" in order to create panic and confusion. However, both the case of the zombie tweet and research on the political uses of Twitter seem to indicate that the primary target of these "amateurish, hastily produced weapons" was not the masses but the journalists, for it seems that in order to have a significant impact, the Molotov tweets needed the amplifying power of the mainstream media. Furthermore, the fire that they ignited might not necessarily have been that of panic or confusion but of mobilisation.

4 Zombie metaphor as a framing device

From the framing perspective, the zombie metaphor is a framing device employed by one of the social actors in order to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and moral evaluation of the event, whereby the selection of certain aspects of the social reality is done in such a way as to contextualise a given event within a pre-existing cognitive schema. In the case of the SDS tweet, this pre-existing cognitive schema was that of the ongoing conspiracy of the former communist elite and its supporters dominating Slovenian politics and the economy from the backstage. The SDS has been using several catchphrases (framing devices) since the mid-1990s to designate what it perceives as a failed transition, the most widely used being *udbomafija* (coined from the abbreviation of Yugoslav secret service UDBA and mafia) and *strici iz ozadja* ("uncles from behind the scenes"). This meta-frame of ongoing communist conspiracy has been continuously evoked by the more micro-level, event-specific frames and framing devices. One such example would be the catchphrase *opankarsko novinarstvo* ("opanak journalism"), coined from the expression for traditional Serbian peasant footwear and used to critique journalistic reporting.

The zombie tweet openly served three of the four main framing functions defined by Entman (1993)—namely, the promotion of a particular problem definition, causal interpretation and moral evaluation. By increasing the salience of some aspects of the protest

(exposing only the overtly leftist political iconography displayed by a minority of the protesters), the SDS attempted to delegitimise the demands put forward by the protesters. The metaphor PROTESTERS ARE ZOMBIES evokes the schema of manipulation by the former communist elite, delegitimising and even inverting their demand for the change of the political elites. Denouncing their autonomous agency, the protesters are pronounced to be mindless agents of the former (dead) regime—the living dead returning from the other world in order to haunt the living. The SDS' choice of the zombie metaphor as a framing device for contesting an emerging news frame and building an alternative interpretation of the uprisings is not as unusual as it might appear. Although it has no direct resonance with Slovenian culture or history, zombies are instantly recognisable members of the global popular culture's pantheon of monsters, whose mention quickly conjures up images of slow-mannered, blood thirsty automatons from horror films, and the immediacy of the responses to the SDS's tweet by both citizens and mainstream media testifies to its quick recognisability and global cultural resonance.

Zombies were "born" out of a misrepresentation of Haitian voodoo rituals in 1930s Hollywood horror films and can be seen as a specific ideological construct, an allegoric mix of political, economic, cultural and religious anxieties of the early 20th century—anxiety that a successful slave rebellion would result in the reverse enslavement of the white population (Bishop 2010, *cf.* Kee 2011). Although zombies initially served a particular ideological function within a specific socio-economic worldview, they quickly proved that they can travel well across time and cultures. The genre has undergone a number of transformations since its initial appearance on the silver screen, and it was most influentially redefined by film director George A. Romero, starting with the low-budget production, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). The ongoing redefinitions of the genre, evident also in Romero's own opus, points to the symbolic potential and ongoing relevance of the zombie metaphor. Thus, after the temporary decline of the genre in the late 1980s and 1990s, the 2000s witnessed an unprecedented revival. The number of (US) popular culture texts and products on zombies, ranging from films and TV series to computer games and even perfumes, has grown exponentially compared to other popular culture monsters, signalling that zombies might be an ideal metaphor for reflecting the "prevailing social anxieties—such as oppression, violence, inequality, consumption, and war" (Bishop 2010: 207, *cf.* Lauro 2011) in the post 9/11 era.

As an allegoric metaphor, the zombie is a mix of more generic, universal anxieties linked to the loss of subjectivity and death, with specific cultural or political concerns about the radically endangered present. Regardless of their many incarnations, zombies are essentially characterised by the losses of autonomy and volition, which can be the result of either enslavement or infection. A zombie is a character that has lost an essential component of what makes him or her human. The second central characteristic of zombies is that they—since they lack essential humanness—also lack any capacity for cognitive processing or emotional affection. The living dead are characterised by a non-functioning, rotting brain, which accounts for their low intelligence and instinctive behaviour. They are also ruthlessly cruel; they subject their victims to extreme violence, not by killing them but by eating them alive. These two basic characteristics of zombies result in two additional

implications. First, the loss of volition implies a loss of voice. Zombies merely fulfil the command of the zombie master or obey the cannibalistic instinct of the living dead. As they possess no consciousness, they cannot form opinions or value judgements, they cannot speak, and they have no ability to organise themselves; in short, zombies lack a voice. Second, the lack of rationality and emotionality also implies that there is no possibility for humans and zombies to coexist. "Zombies cannot be reasoned with, appealed to, or [be] dissuaded by logical discourse," argues Bishop; therefore, zombie narratives end with the total annihilation of either the living dead or the living (2010: 20).

Given these four implications, it is not difficult to see how the zombie metaphor resonated with the SDS's condemnation of the protesters. Through the use of the metaphor, the protesters are rendered voiceless automatons who, being unable to think, cannot form autonomous opinions or autonomously determine their actions, but instinctively and relentlessly fulfil the wishes of the slave master. Endangering the society as a whole, they threaten to devour the painfully gained Slovenian democracy, of which the SDS is a self-proclaimed promotor and guardian, and which is embodied in the figure of one of the "heroes of Slovenian independence," Janez Janša.

5 Zombie metaphor and media framing of the uprisings

The aim of this section is to highlight the role that the zombie metaphor played as a framing device in the process of the news reporting on the All Slovenian People's Uprisings. The section, thus, does not provide a typical (quantitative) framing study of media reports on the protests but rather offers a brief inductive multimodal qualitative overview of the ways in which the zombie metaphor was used to frame the media reports on the protests. The analysed sample included news items, analysis and political commentary in print editions of two main Slovenian daily newspapers (*Delo* and *Dnevnik*), two main online news websites (www.rtvslo.si of the public broadcaster TV Slovenia and www.24ur.com of the commercial broadcaster POP TV), and two political weekly magazines (*Mladina* [with a liberal leaning]) and *Reporter* [ideologically linked to the SDS]). The sample included diverse mainstream media outlets with different styles of reporting, political leanings and levels of professionalization. The time frame of the analysed sample was from 20 December 2012 to 10 March 2013, focusing on articles on the four All Slovenian People's Uprisings. In total, 149 articles published during this time frame were analysed by the author. In addition to this primary sample, articles published by the six media outlets between 12 November and 20 December were analysed to provide the temporal dimension and insight into the frame building and frame contestation phases.

The analysis focused on the interplay between the macro-level journalistic frames that could be related to routine journalistic reporting and event-specific news frames. Although the uprisings were a novel event in contemporary Slovenian political history and would therefore, in principle, need to undergo the definition/conflict phase of framing, they were also part of a familiar *repertoire of contentious action* (Tilly 1986). This made them susceptible to what is described in the social movement literature as *the protest paradigm*—a tendency of the mainstream media to negatively cover the activities highlighting

social movements which challenge the established socio-political order. According to the protest paradigm, the media will tend to focus on protest action, conflict and violence, and through this obscure the issues being raised while simultaneously contributing to the marginalisation of the movement by presenting the actors involved as socially deviant or normatively different from the non-protesting audience (Chan and Lee 1984; McLeod and Hertog 1999). According to McLeod and Hertog (1999), the mainstream media reporting on protests will be characterised by (1) an overt *reliance on official sources*, (2) a normative invocation of *public opinion* (presenting protesters as a dissenting minority), (3) *delegitimation* (not explaining the issues), (4) *demonisation* (focus on negative consequences of protests) and (5) the use of the negative *news frames* of a *crime story*, *riot* or *carnival*, instead of a positive frame of *debate* (i.e. issues and arguments being raised). From the perspective of framing theory, the division between the issue-related and non-related frames that McLeod and Hertog (1999) imply can roughly be mapped on the division between journalistic and issue-specific frames.

5.1 The dominant journalistic frame and the reversal of the protest paradigm

The analysis indicates that the reporting of the Slovenian print and online media on the uprisings does not easily fit the blueprint of the protest paradigm. The reports initially followed the structure of the protest paradigm, especially the initial reports on the protests in Maribor and the early December protests in Ljubljana, in which violence and a threat to national security (*riot* and *crime story* frames in McLeod and Hertog's typology) together constituted the predominant frame, in line with the analysis of the TV news framing (Mance et al. 2015). The dominance of *riot* and *crime story* over *debate* (demands of protesters) frame was particularly evident in the use of images, where scenes of violence, fire, smoke and teargas, of masked protesters throwing projectiles and interventions of the riot police were prominent in all media outlets, regardless of their political leaning and whom they blamed for the violence. Thus, two competing violence frames were in circulation—one advocated, for example, by the liberal weekly *Mladina* which focused on police brutality, while the pro-SDS weekly *Reporter* promoted the frame of violent protesters. This definition/conflict phase of the framing was also characterised by a *reliance on official sources* (representatives of government and police) and *demonisation* (focus on the damage caused by the protests). While *delegitimation* was not present in the "classical" sense of the protest paradigm—the issues and demands of protesters were explained and reported on—the focus on the violence delegitimised their demands as non-democratic, as "disrespectful toward the civilized rules of rational engagement set out by liberal representative democracy" (Cammaerts 2013: 526).

However, the resonance phase of the violence frame proved to be somewhat short-lived. By mid-December, the *riot* and *crime story* frames—with the notable exception of *Reporter*—had been replaced by the *debate* frame. Although the *riot* frame did not disappear from the mainstream news coverage, it was overshadowed by the presentation of the demands and issues raised by the protesters. Thus, the media continued to report, both in words and particularly in images, on any incidents of violence or conflict between

protesters and police, and the violence continued to be used as a legitimising factor. It was precisely the abstention from the use of violence that made the demands of the protesters legitimate and enabled most of the media outlets (with the exception of *Reporter*) to draw the line between the "good" and "bad" protesters (e.g. extreme right-wing groups).

The emergence of the debate frame as the dominant media frame for covering the protests was characterised by a literal inversion of the protest paradigm (again, with the exception of the pro-SDS weekly *Reporter*). In the accounts of the protests during this stage, the official sources were marginalised–they gave way to the eyewitness accounts of journalists and to the opinions of the protesters. Representatives of various civil society groups and movements were sourced for statements, and the invocation of public opinion was achieved through numerous statements and opinions of the protesters (e.g. *Dnevnik* and *Delo* both published long articles presenting *vox populi* through the views of randomly selected protesters). These were not the bystander reports that would draw attention to the deviance from social norms typical of the protest paradigm; on the contrary, they were presentations of the opinions of people from all walks of social life, voicing common concerns and expressing common values and social norms. By continuously giving a voice to protesters, the media outlets represented them as defenders of the core values of the "we" community, of the values and ideals that inspired the struggle for Slovenian political independence, which were seen by the protesters as having been stolen from the people by the political elites. Put differently, the peaceful protesters were not represented as a threat to (liberal) democracy; precisely the opposite, they were advocates for more democracy.

5.2 Zombies and the issue-specific frame of legitimate political representation

By late December 2012, the *debate* frame was firmly in place as the dominant macro-level journalistic frame, and *democratic governance* (i.e. legitimate political representation) started emerging as the dominant issue-specific frame. It was precisely this issue-specific frame of democratic governance that became the target of the SDS's tweets during the first All Slovenian People's Uprising. Throughout the protests, the SDS continuously emphasised that the protests were part of a (ex-communist) conspiracy to overthrow a democratically elected government and argued that the opinions of the protesters were not representative of the political will of the general population. Thus, for example, during the first uprising, the SDS also tweeted that "Any single SDS MP received a higher number of votes than is the total number of protesters at the so-called all Slovenian uprising of the nation."

Essentially, the contestations over the dominant issue-specific frame can be described as a struggle between what Manin (in della Porta 2013: 24) calls "democracy of the parties" and "democracy of the people." The SDS's zombie tweet was part of this issue-specific frame contestation, and the metaphor was to function as a vivid framing device that would both promote a particular interpretation of the demands raised by the protesters and tie the interpretation of the ongoing political events within the established, pre-existing cognitive schema of conspiracy of the former political regime and the bi-polar division of the Slo-

venian political spectrum. If the zombie metaphor appears to have been unsuccessful in challenging the emerging issue-specific frame within the mainstream news reports on the protests, it did succeed in firmly securing the novel political demands being raised by the protesters within the bi-polar (and from the SDS's perspective, also Manichean) political spectrum. This division between the democratic "us" and the undemocratic "them" was evoked not only discursively but also with actions, such as organising a public gathering in support of the Prime Minister and his government on the same day that the third uprising took place.

The protesters as well as most of the mainstream media labelled the zombie metaphor as a sign of the arrogance of the political elite, as the unwillingness of the ruling party to listen to the concerns expressed by the citizens. The metaphor, which in the analysed articles is described as a cynical and arrogant insult, triggered two types of reactions from the protesters. The first reaction was the *inversion* of the claim, in statements and on protest posters, and especially in the visual modality of the protest signs and banners which displayed representatives of the political elite, and especially Prime Minister Janša and members of his cabinet, as "true" zombies. A prominent example of this is the 7 February cover of *Mladina* displaying zombified portraits of the seven leaders of the largest political parties with the caption, "Is there an alternative to the zombies?" The zombified portrait of the Prime Minister on that particular cover would later appear as a demonstration poster and in several photographs published in *Delo*, *Dnevnik* and on the two analysed websites displaying protest posters with a verbal or visual inversion of the metaphor (one often reproduced photograph, for example, depicts a zombified, green Janša behind bars). The second, and far more frequent and salient reaction to the metaphor, was the playful *appropriation* of the label. In the words of one protester, "We used zombies because we unfortunately had to. I wanted to explore other forms [. . .] but then it was natural that we adopted zombies. Everybody identified with them" (*Dnevnik* 2 February). The self-zombification of protesters that started as a reaction to an insult resulted in the migration of the textual metaphor into a visual and embodied one.

However, the embodied performances enacted by protesters dressed up as zombies (e.g. theatrical staging of an attack on demonstrators wearing white masks representing politicians, chaining of zombies to the gates of the National Bank, leading the protest marches through the streets of Ljubljana and their temporary "conquering" of public spaces) were not simply symbolic claims and playful theatrical acts aimed to liven up the protests. They were also media spectacles, performances intended to be mediated by the mainstream media. Or in the vocabulary of social movement theory, they were a repertoire of contentious action aimed at a particular media opportunity structure (Cammaerts 2012). However, once transformed into photographic representations, the images of zombies did not end up merely as the latest edition to what is usually a fairly standardised visual iconography of protests. The photographs of zombified protesters were not used only to report news on the protest activities but to have in the printed press. Thus, in the period between the uprisings, these images regularly appeared alongside analytical articles and political commentary, serving as a continuously present visual icon—a visualised, embodied metaphor of a political statement. In other words, the photographs of zombies came to

serve as iconic visual reminders of the arrogance of the political elite, as a metaphor for the struggle for active citizenship, for the disconnection between the elites and citizens, and for the right to a voice. From the perspective of the protest paradigm, the media focus on zombies signals the possible introduction of yet another frame—that of protests as *carnival*. Yet the images of the zombie carnival are not typical images of the *carnival* frame of the protest paradigm, since the mask that is at the centre of the carnival—the zombie—already bears the imprint of a political statement, of the issues being raised.

6 Discussion

This move from a monomodal verbal metaphor to an embodied, carnivalesque performance would certainly require further comparative research on the connection between transmodal metaphors and practices of public shaming and ridicule within contemporary citizen activism. It would also require a separate, although sketchy discussion within the framework of the present study. The move to carnivalesque performance is by no means unique to the uprisings. During the last two decades, social movements have increasingly been using various forms of carnivalesque direct action or tactical frivolity (e.g. interventions of Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army or Pink Fairies) to gain media visibility and public support, to avoid violent confrontations with police, but above all, to ridicule either figures of authority or the concept of authority itself. As Cammaerts (2012) notes, such a shift in the selection of available strategies for questioning social power and making political claims within a given epoch might signal a shift from a modernist repertoire of contentious action to a new repertoire that is much closer to what Tilly (1986) describes as the feudal repertoire, which relies more closely on performative and symbolic, on parodic reversal of roles, and on practices of public ridicule and shaming.

This "refeudalization" of contemporary forms of contentious action can be linked to a certain "refeudalization" of contemporary politics. In times when the democratic deficit is growing at a similar pace as social inequality, the increased favouring of the feudal-like repertoire of contentious action might be understood as a response to what Habermas (1962/1991) described as the refeudalization of the public sphere. Admittedly, Habermas' refeudalization thesis needs to be adapted to account for the contemporary conditions of public communication, but his basic underlying arguments are still valid today. Namely, that in the conditions of the growing power of market-driven capitalism, the public sphere becomes dominated by commercial interests that eschew critical publicity in favour of commercial spectacle and the public display of power of the increasingly self-sufficient political elites. With the growing influence of the market over the past three decades, the ability of citizens and the willingness of the political elites to control the dominance of capital through public administration have greatly decreased, leading to a situation in which major legislative decisions are (preferably) confined to arkanum, without much media exposure or informed critical public debate. An illustrative example of this is the present negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), where the policy of closed doors was defended with an argument that the agreement is too complex for the public to understand. Within the

same context, the increased detachment of technocratic and political elites from citizens is illustrated by EU Trade Commissioner's Cecilia Malmström's response to a question on public critique of TTIP, where she stated the following: "I do not take my mandate from the European people" (Hilary 2015).

As it is used here, the refeudalization describes a process whereby the political elites become increasingly detached from the citizens, where major political decisions are a matter of negotiations with representatives of the economic system, rather than the social system, and where citizens are, apart from the periodical plebiscitary support of political elites during elections, reduced to a mere audience for the spectacle of power, much akin to the representative publicness of the *ancien regime*. It is true that especially since the proliferation of the Internet and social media, the conditions of public communication have changed: the public is no longer entirely cut off from the circulation of information, there are (limited) spaces for critical publicity and public reasoning, and the public possesses some means for communicative and political organisation and mobilisation. However, refeudalization, to a large degree, remains characteristic of the mainstream media, partly because of the economic conditions and partly due to the journalistic routines of news production. The case of the All Slovenian People's Uprisings shows that the refeudalization of the public sphere is not absolute—that the present communicative spaces do offer some space for critical public reasoning—but it also indicates that the opinions aimed at radically challenging the political establishment require the collaboration of mainstream media in order to achieve political efficacy. In the case of the uprisings, it was the change in the mainstream media reporting (framing) of the events, the rejection of supporting the representative role of the public display of the power of political elites embedded within the routine practices of news reporting that enabled the public to become more than a passive spectator of the display of institutionalised power, akin to what Habermas described as *representative publicness*.

Therefore, one of the central questions that future research on transmodal metaphors should address is whether the move towards the more feudal repertoire of contentious action is indeed an effective method of challenging the less accountable and, by extension, more feudal-like forms of political power. From this perspective, it seems apt that the zombified protesters chose to name the ruling political elite after the most aristocratic figure of the monster pantheon—the vampire. But can zombies (the masses, the discontent citizens) really defeat vampires (the political elite) by moving from inserting critical discourse into the public sphere to carnivalesque performance? Or do performative, symbolic shaming and ridicule mark the zenith of the "actual" power of the discontent citizenry? Performative and carnivalesque might indeed help to transform anger and frustration into group solidarity and turn the world upside down, but such a disruption would only be temporary. The problem with the carnival is, as Fletcher (2009: 233) points out, precisely that it is *not* a revolution.

7 Conclusion

This article argued for the necessity of a more complex approach to the study of political metaphors in order to capture the many roles and modalities which they acquire when they are used in societal power struggles. Building on the case study of the zombie metaphor, the concept of a *transmodal metaphor* was introduced to account for the ability of a metaphor to move from a monomodal utterance to multimodal representations and embodied performances. The results of the qualitative framing analysis show that the zombie metaphor, once appropriated by the protesters, played a prominent role as a framing device in securing the issue-specific frame of democratic governance and supported the macro-level journalistic frame of the protests as debate.

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