

CONFLICT AND DIALOGUE

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Defenders of Democracy at the Protest

Abstract: The paper focuses on the manner people active within the Committee for the Defence of Democracy present their protests. The author analyses the way the protests' image presented by the interviewees is built, as well as the sources of its form and content. The aim is to identify the applications of discursive strategies used in the positive self- and the negative other presentation. As it is shown, in the process of discursive construction of the protests, the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy, and the specific rules that form the basis for the functioning of the public sphere in Poland are applied. Hence, the distinctions are created with nominations (metaphors, naturalising), predications (positive, negative traits) and representations (examples) referring to the figures of civilised and uncivilised men present in the Polish public discourse. Thus, the analysed presentation of the protests can be interpreted as inscribed in the binary structure of civic discourse.

Keywords: discourse, social movement, discursive strategies, Protest, self-presentation

From the perspective of the social movement, protest is an important element of its action repertoire, aimed at achieving its goals. As such, it is also an action by which meanings are constructed and put into use in the framing processes (Diani 1996; Noakes, Johnston 2005; Snow, Benford 1988). The street protest as a discursive construct (Fischer 2003; Woodly 2015) can also be the subject of dispute between the sides of the conflict seeking to rename it. Constructing the protest of a social movement is therefore an important element of its self-presentation. So, movement actors, as they are understood in this paper, are 'signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and by standers or observers' (Benford, Snow 2000: 613). One of the areas of such meaning production is the identity of these actors (della Porta, Diani 2006). The meaning of the given social movement so constructed is the area of contention. 'Actors' self-representations are, in fact, continuously confronted with images which institutions, sympathetic and hostile social groups, public opinion, and the media produce of them' (ibidem: 105–106). Thus, the collective identity of a social movement emerges from the dynamic processes of self-identification and external recognition.

In this paper I focus on the assemblies organised by the Committee for the Defence of Democracy [CDD, Komitet Obrony Demokracji]. The main goal of the conducted research was to recreate and analyse the process of self-presentation of the movement by its participants. One of the areas which turned out to be the point at issue in this context is the public activity of the Committee, i.e. street protests. Hence, this paper focuses on the protests'

image as part of the movement presentation shared during the interviews by the movement supporters. I am interested in how the interviewees—people active within this social movement—present both the protests and their participants. What are their distinctive features? The research question, however, was not only about the way of the protests' presentation, but also why it is so, and not otherwise. I assume the portrait of these public gatherings is an important part of the discourse of the movement's followers about the Committee itself, and thus allows a closer look on the collective identity of this movement (Polletta, Jasper 2001).

In the further part of the paper, first of all, considerations regarding the protests as the object and the result of discursive construction and the specific context of these activities created by the ongoing political conflict in Poland were made. Secondly, the ways of describing the assemblies presented by the Committee members were discussed. The analysis of the statements formulated in the qualitative individual interviews led to the concretisation of the image of the protests that the respondents shared. The aim of the analysis is to identify the specific applications of discursive strategies (Wodak 2001), which are used in the positive self- and the negative other presentation. At the same time, Alexander's findings on the binary structure of civic discourse are used for the interpretation of the interviews. As the author notes, the social movements are striving 'to become a member of the civil society' and are continuously 'concerned with justifying why others cannot be included' (Alexander 2007a: 27). The analyses show how the CDD participants create these justifications. The paper ends with conclusions on the discursive construction of the protests organised by the CDD and on the categorisation processes that serve this purpose.

Protest in the Social Movement's Self-Presentation

The self-presentation of a social movement covers its many aspects, like the objectives, the values and rules followed or the actions taken. On the one hand, the presentation aims to construct the external image of the movement—to tell others what it is and why it is created. On the other hand, self-presentation is also used within the movement itself to mobilise and integrate the movement. One of its form is aforementioned framing process—the discursive strategy, which is 'signifying work or meaning construction' (Benford, Snow 2000: 614) taken up by social movements especially with regard to their activities and campaigns. Snow and Benford emphasise the mobilising function of such frames constructed by movements, but—as they point out—movement theorists have also paid attention to this process as seeking to delineate the boundaries between 'good' and 'evil,' as well as between movement protagonists and antagonists (*ibidem*: 616). It is important to stress that the frames, as schemas of perceiving, are the shared events' or occurrences' understandings and interpretations. They go beyond individuals' perceptions and thus constitute a broader, interpretive definition of problematic condition or situation and of the social actors in it. Thus, the self-presentation of a social movement is based on the common and quite coherent image of the movement and its surrounding, which is (re)produced and presented inside and outside of it. Its coherence is due to the process of the shared understandings negotiation.

What is significant, however, is that social movements are special actors, which use special repertoires of collective action. Although protest is not a form of action used by social

movements only, it is particularly important for them. It is one of the few channels through which they may access decision-makers and the one which is memorable (della Porta, Diani 2006: 168). On the one hand, public assemblies can be perceived as performative events which constitute meaning by their very appearance in the public space (Butler 2015). On the other hand, they have their discursive dimension (Fischer 2003; Woodly 2015). Discursive practices that give them meaning, such as framing or nomination, are undertaken during but also towards them. They relate, among other things, to the manner of protesting and to the participants on which my further considerations focus. Researchers interested in the discursive construction of protests focus mainly on the analysis of public discourse and on the framing of events. They emphasise the role of media in the creation of the collective actions' image (Benford, Snow 2000; Gamson, Modigliani 1989; Smith et al. 2001). Attention is also drawn to the importance of the power of elites, which may 'operate internally to influence insiders' conceptualisations of protests and challenges' (Shriver, Bray, Adams 2018: 309) through 'discursive obstruction' (Shriver, Adams, Cable 2012) or 'elite frames,' or they can be 'directed toward the public to protect elite legitimacy and promote broader public support' (Shriver, Bray, Adams 2018: 309). However, social movements themselves construct their protests which are a crucial aspect of the self-presentation of social movements as a whole. Thus, protests strengthen internal solidarity and identity (della Porta, Diani 2006: 178–180), both as a formative collective action and a discursive construct.

In general, the identity is understood as sameness on one hand, and distinctiveness on the other (Triandafyllidou, Wodak 2003). The collective identities of collective social actors are 'constantly in a process of negotiation, affirmation or change through the individuals who identify with a given group or social category and act in their name' (*ibidem*: 211). Hence, discursive practices are involved in the identity definition. Furthermore, the construction of 'us' and 'them' forms its basic fundamentals (Wodak 2001: 73). So, in the analysed case the discursive construction of our and their protests is taken into consideration. Wodak also draws attention to discursive strategies which are all involved in the positive self- and the negative other presentation; in other words, to more or less precise schemes of discursive practices that are enforced for specific, including political, purposes. This is often connected with the creation of divisions within own group and out-groups, whose presentations: 'are never neutral, but have semantic, rhetorical and argumentative functions in the expression of opinions and standpoints' (Van Dijk 2000: 214). Hence, some of discursive strategies refer directly to the construction of a social actor by reference or predication. It is important that the processes of such categorisation (Sacks 1972, 1992) constitute a discursive strategies, which are of key importance in the process of identity building. These processes consist of social actors typing, using a variety of rhetorical figures (Blommaert 2005; Reisigl 2006; Van Dijk 2015). However, presenting or describing events is also itself an example of the use of discursive strategies such as perspectivation, framing or discourse representation aimed at self-presentation (Table 1).

According to Alexander (2007b), control over such interpretive processes is one of the types of power that social movements seek. Social movements use for self-presentation e.g. the aforementioned discursive strategies involved in the creation of protests and protesters' differences, which, incidentally, is a characteristic feature in the area of civil society. As Alexander emphasises, thanks to the strong position in the interpretive processes,

Table 1

Types of Discursive Strategies Which Construct a Social Actors and Events

Strategy	Objectives	Devices
Referential/nomination	Construction of in-groups and out-groups	membership categorisation; biological, naturalising and depersonalising metaphors and metonymies; synecdoches (pars pro toto, totum pro pars);
Predication	Labelling social actors more or less positively or negatively, deprecatorily or appreciatively	stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits; implicit and explicit predicates;
Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation	Expressing involvement Positioning speaker's point of view	reporting, description, narration or quotation of (discriminatory) events and utterances;

Source: based on [Wodak 2001: 73](#).

the movements gain power of bringing parts of symbolic background into play and placing themselves and others on the positive or negative side of the binaries. Moreover, those in control also decide ‘which of the many elements of the speech and action of a protest will be picked out and “described”’ ([Alexander 2007b: 648](#)). Alexander’s (1992) analyses indicate that the attribution of features like, for example, rationality, reason, peace or control to oneself is characteristic of such discursive practices. At the same time, others are described as irrational and hysterical, awakening, passionate. As he states, there is no civil discourse that does not conceptualise the world into those who deserve inclusion and those who do not—who are conceived as unworthy, amoral, in some sense ‘uncivilized.’

As it was mentioned above, the self-presentation of a social movement is based on the negotiated common and quite coherent image of the movement. By accepting Wodak’s perspective in the Committee study, one can answer the question of how this imaginary community reaches the minds of those who are convinced of it, maintaining: ‘it is constructed and conveyed in discourse.’ The collective identity of the CDD, this unifying image of the movement, is thus the product of discourse ([Wodak et al. 1999: 45](#)). However, the important question is about its substance. De Fina (2011) points out to the contextuality and historicity of self-presentation and, thus, of social actors’ identity. As she writes in relation to the categorisation process: ‘Identity categories used in discourse reflect not only the inventory of identities available in the situation at hand, but also the kinds of identities more generally in use in a given society and historic moment’ (*ibidem*: 274). Considering that, to answer the questions about the protest created by the interviewees—its features and participants—it is important to realise that the conflict that has become the driving force of its operation is the emanation of the political division created in Poland in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Since then, the division between the so-called ‘solidary’ Poland—meaning the Law and Justice [Prawo i Sprawiedliwość] and the political party’s supporters, and the so-called ‘liberal’ Poland—meaning the Civic Platform [Platforma Obywatelska] with its supporters, has crystallised ([Cześniak, Grabowska 2017](#); [Szczerbiak 2007](#)). One of the foundations of this difference is the belief about the existence of two parts of Poland inhabited by two types of Poles. The division itself is considered the next instalment of the long-standing conflict between the heirs of the peasants on the one hand (Boors), and the heirs

of the nobility on the other (Lords). According to the discourse analyses on this subject, the differences between the two types of Poles related to the mindset, attitude and values represented by them. The assumption of insurmountable social division is common and sustained—and exploited both ideologically and politically (Giza 2013). As many authors point out (Czapliński 2016; Czyżewski 2013; Sowa 2012), describing the Polish society as permanently broken is inherent to the dominant discourse ‘about us.’ Thus, the image of the world and the problems diagnosed by the CDD are included in the dominant discourse in Poland, which divides the Polish society into the opponents and supporters of the so-called the ‘good change’ [dobra zmiana].¹ This discourse shapes the political culture of the society (Czyżewski 2014), creates a specific symbolic background used to define the ongoing social processes, and provides a toolkit allowing the creation of reality interpretations, as well as categorisations shaping the collective identities of the participants of social life (Czyżewski et al. 1997; de Fina 2011; Melucci 1995).

Methodology

‘Democracy in Poland is at risk’—this is the first sentence of the CDD manifesto, which was published on the Internet at the end of November 2015. The text of the appeal contains, among other things, a diagnosis of actions taken by the representatives of the new ruling party, Law and Justice: the president, the government and the parliamentarians—as disrespectful to the law and ‘democratic custom.’ These include, first and foremost, the annulment of the election of five judges of the Constitutional Tribunal made by the previous government coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish People’s Party [Polskie Stronictwo Ludowe], as well as the Law and Justice’s further decision of amending the rules of the Tribunal’s functioning. A few hundred thousand Polish women and men responded positively to the call included in the manifesto to defend democracy against the Law and Justice. In the spring of 2016, an association of CDD members under the leadership of Mateusz Kijowski was established. The movement grew throughout Poland, with a structure divided into regions and local groups, and organised over a dozen protests in Warsaw and other cities. These were important events from the CDD’s repertoire of collective actions, and the largest of them gathered 240 thousand participants (Deja 2016).

In order to reconstruct the presentation of these protests, data from 78 in-depth interviews conducted from May 2016 to April of the following year with people active in the Committee for the Defence of Democracy were analysed. In the majority (76), these were individual interviews, and two were attended by more people.² Participants of the interviews were people with varying levels of involvement in the movement—from sporadic participation in marches to everyday activity and membership in the association related to the movement. Among the interviewees there were both leaders of individual local or regional groups and their ordinary members. The interviews were divided into several main

¹ The ‘good change’ is the electoral slogan of the Law and Justice.

² In total, 35 females and 51 males participated in the interviews. The 34 interviewees were under 35 years old, 26 were between 36 and 50, and 26 were over 50. Most of the interviews were conducted in Warsaw (61), the other ones were conducted in such places as Białystok, Gdańsk or Zielona Góra.

themes. The conversations concerned the history of involvement in the movement, the motivation of its followers, and the ways of action. Taking up the strands that would allow one to reconstruct the creation of the collective identity of the movement was also essential. Therefore, I was interested in the stories about the movement, about those who create it—and for what purpose. It was also important to define the boundaries of the movement, and, thus, to indicate those who are not inside. One of the interviews' threads was the participation of respondents in public assemblies organised by the Committee.

The analysis of interviews was based on the previously designed code key. Its construction was grounded in the categories derived from two sources. The first one was the theory, the second one was the data. This allowed to manage the collected data (the transcription of interviews) and saturate the category with content and the description of it presented by the followers of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy. This way, the functioning of the protest as a discursive category was reconstructed. The understanding and contexts thereof were established, as well as the ways it was described in the narrations gathered. From the point of view adopted here, and as a consequence of the research method applied, the protest has become an event talked about. The marches and pickets (because this form of mass opposition was mentioned in the interviews most frequently) as such were not the subject of interest—their description and the way they were constructed and presented by the participants of the social movement in question, i.e. the CDD, was.

Presentation of the Protests of the Committee for the Defence of Democracy as a Discursive Ordering

In the analysis presented further in the article I am looking for the protests created by the respondents. More precisely, I seek to reconstruct the image of the public assemblies organised by the Committee and of the people who took part in them, based on the analysis of the interviews. To ensure the presentation of the protests is complete, it was necessary to follow the narration of the interviewees and to recreate their idea of what protests and protesters are and what they are not. Such a reconstruction of the process of self-presentation and drawing the social demarcations allowed their interpretation in the context of the discourse developing in Poland in the situation of political conflict. Constructing protests by Committee members is seen here as the practices entangled in the discursive ordering of the area of civic activity, illustrated by Alexander (1992, 2007a, b). It allows me to follow in them the presence of methods that make up the discursive strategies that are all involved in the positive self and the negative other presentation (e.g. categorisation, naturalising, stereotypical attribution of traits or illustrational description of the protests). The analysis enables me also to observe the discursive attribution of civility to the protests and their attenders.

'There is no boorishness' [5]³

Moving on to the reconstruction of the protests' description presented during interviews by the CDD supporters, it can be concluded that their presentations of the protests made

³ The numbers stand for the transcription number.

up a fairly coherent picture of the events in which they took part. Some of them perceived the prevailing mood during the assemblies as 'holiday-like' or one of 'belonging and pride in what we have achieved.' [20] It also happened that the participation in the marches was perceived as a moving experience. As one of the respondents admitted, 'I just cried.' [24] However, joyfulness and peacefulness were the main characteristics of the public gatherings described during the interviews. For a protest to be: 'a walk in the middle of the city in a crowd of people who share my views' [12], it must be peaceful and was seen as such by the interviewees. As one of them put it: 'They are very calm and very peaceful. There is no aggression. People are smiling. Strangers talk to each other.' [23] Additionally, according to the participants of the study, the marches 'never violate the law' and are the most peaceful from all that 'have ever been seen in this country.' [10] Thanks to this, at the CDD protests: 'entire families with children may come to feel safe and comfortable in the company of others, and not to worry they will be hit in the head with a stone or something like that.' [3] For this reason, the assemblies were compared to the above-mentioned walks. The interviewees also claimed that the protests organised by the Committee 'are more of a kind of a family picnic where people feel at ease and come with young children.' [3] Another study participant describing marches drew attention to their joyful atmosphere, which—in his opinion—is a kind of reaction to anxiety related to the actions of the Law and Justice. As he said, at the time of the demonstration: 'most people really behave as if it was a picnic, as if it was a nice meeting of friends and acquaintances. (...) Everything is about having fun, humour and trying to overcome the fear or negative emotions that the current government awakens.' [5]

The marches or pickets were also described as meeting places. It is common to come to the protests: '(...) with a wife, with parents-in-law, with cousins, with aunts and uncles. We meet a lot of friends there. It is this kind of a party.' [12] Those who come alone usually meet new friends—as in the case of one of the respondents who admitted in the interview: 'The group of people I met during the marches [are] amazing people. We are in touch to this day.' [57] Good atmosphere during the marches is favoured not only by the presence of friends and by ideological closeness between the participants, but also by some other aspects of these events. As the interviewees said, during the protests 'there is music, which is nice' [9], and the participants are walking, carrying flags. 'They comment on their banners. People take each other's pictures. Someone wants to photograph the slogan, others stop to present it for picture taking.' [23] The marches are also an opportunity to exchange ideas. Those who take part in them talk or chat: 'about what we could change, how we can change it, or whether we can change something, how not to remain passive and how to resist what is wrong in our country, what is going on.' [3] Thus, the CDD protests are presented in the interviews as very positive events. The main metaphors used by the interviewees in the description of the protests are 'walks' and 'family picnics,' which brings joy, relax and fun to mind. The essential positive trait attributed to them is peacefulness and compliance with law. From the point of view of the interviewees, there are many friendly interactions between participants during the protests. They talk, chat and smile at each other.

However, the positive atmosphere of protests described by the interviewees is mainly due to the people who take part in them. A group of 'average or older age people' [20] join them, because 'this generation has already lived through all this and rebels against it,

knowing what it will lead to, such authoritative governance.’ [9] Nonetheless, there are also young people ‘even with prams with children.’ [9] The respondents, describing participants of the protests, repeatedly paid attention to their cheerful faces. According to them, during the marches: ‘everyone is really smiling and happy’ [5], so: ‘the smile is the main element that can be seen.’ [28] At the assemblies: ‘it is very nice that you can see a smiling face of the society.’ [47] ‘Everyone is, of course, on the same side. They are nice and smiling, and there is a big festival of good understanding in general.’ [14] Additionally, it can be seen on the faces of the protesters that: ‘even if [*they*—AR] come because of anger and fear, it is not directed against the people around’ [39] and there is ‘lack of such bad tension on the face.’ [39] According to the interviewees, from the faces of the CDD supporters one can also read something more, because: ‘all these faces are of the intelligentsia’⁴ [9], so: ‘on the faces one can see intelligence, determination and (...) mutual kindness at the same time.’ [39] In a word, at marches one can meet ‘people positively disposed towards the world. The ones who look like they have achieved something, are fulfilled, smiling, kind towards each other.’ [4]

In the opinion of the respondents, the participants of the protests organised by the Committee are distinguished also by the fact that they are: ‘very politely’ [19] and ‘nicely dressed.’ [46] Firstly, their enlightenment is reflected in the absence of aggression, hostility and vulgarity. As has already been said, ‘there is no boorishness.’ [5] Some interviewees believed these elegant ways can also be seen on the banners of the marches’ participants with ‘wise, high-standard’ [19] slogans, which are ‘witty and not offensive.’ [20] Secondly, the participants of the protests respect the space in which the gatherings take place. They march along ‘appropriately designated streets’ [4] and despite there is crowd and not much space: ‘nobody enters the grass.’ [9] That is why one of the CDD supporters could say that she did not see any case of ‘verbal or non-verbal aggression’ at the protests and even though there is ‘crowd and you walk slowly because you cannot walk faster, nobody gets angry and there is no swearing.’ [23] To sum up, the participants of the Committee protests are presented by the interviewees as civilised people. The interviewees point out their biological features, such as the look of their faces which expresses joy, intelligence and fulfilment. Their enlightenment is reflected in the absence of aggression, hostility and vulgarity. The relations between them are polite. They are the ones with good manners. The examples provided during the interviews showed the protests and their participants as emotionally balanced, rational and caring for the common good.

‘Such boorishness that it is hard to imagine’ [28]

Researchers dealing with the issue of identity argue that the inherent component and source of the self-definition created by a given social actor is the understanding of ‘others’ included in it (Bauman 1973). On the other hand, Della Porta and Diani (2006) drew attention to the importance of choosing the methods of shaping and consolidating the identity of social movements. By selecting the ways of conducting public assemblies, the participants of the movement emphasise their distinguishing features and dissimilarity with other movements. According to Della Porta and Diani, in the process of defining a protest, it is also important

⁴ The intelligentsia is a specific social group to be encountered in Eastern Europe.

to highlight the uniqueness of the movement activists in comparison with their opponents and ‘ordinary people’ (della Porta & Diani 2006: 108). This practice was expressed by the CDD supporters as well. In order to present their protests, they widely used comparisons with other protests and their participants. Hence, the boundaries of homeliness were drawn and the CDD supporters’ stories of themselves were told by referring to ‘others’—by placing the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘others’/the movement and ‘non-movement’ or another movement. Thus, the full picture of ‘us’ and ‘our’ protests was created by the interviewees saying what they are and what they are not.

It turned out that the interviewees came up with comparisons for the marches of the CDD by indicating examples of the specific demonstrations. Thus, the Committee’s protests are distinguished, in their opinion, from such events as marches in the defence of TV Trwam, which took place in Poland in 2012–2013 as a response to the refusal to extend the licence for this Catholic television channel and its inability to broadcast at the digital ground television launched at the time. The so-called family of Radio Maryja—a community of listeners and people identifying with the views presented in this Catholic radio station⁵ became involved in the demonstrations, along with trade unions and the Law and Justice, which was in opposition back then. However, the CDD marches are also different from the so-called monthly anniversaries, i.e. the marches from the Warsaw Metropolitan Cathedral to the Presidential Palace organised by the Law and Justice from May 2010 through April 2018, which commemorate the air crash in Smolensk on April 10, 2010. Nevertheless, the Independence Marches [Marsz Niepodległości], held every year on November 11, the National Independence Day, were used by the interviewees as a negative reference point most often. Since 2011, these marches have been organised by the coalition of nationalist political organisations and supported by conservative, right-wing politicians.

The interviewees not only pointed out to the protests, which—in their opinion—differ from the CDD events, but also portraying their participants. Thus, according to the analysis, a specific kind of people takes part in these other protests. They are those that: ‘are motivated by the Law and Justice, are incited by the Church. The Church motivates them, unfortunately.’ [35] Sometimes, they are not only motivated, but simply: ‘carried to the Law and Justice protests.’ [62] They have no smile on their faces, unlike the participants of the public assemblies organised by the Committee, but ‘contemptuous smirks.’ [7] Moreover, as the respondents explained, they are sometimes clumsy, especially the ‘boys who walk in the Nationalists’ march,’ ‘in black jumpers,’ ‘so untidy,’ who look ‘like not our own.’ [46] Some of them seemed to have simply ‘got caught up’ [25] at the CDD march, organised on November 11, 2016, which was recalled with humour during the interviews. Above all, however, unlike the CDD supporters, these are aggressive people. As activists taking part in the CDD protests declared, during the assemblies, these other protesters ‘were shouting vulgarities’ [29] at them and they met with ‘various kinds of insults’ from the opponents [27]. The participants of the other protests are also aggressive towards journalists, like during one of the monthly anniversaries, when they approached a reporter and ‘took his headset and pushed him.’ [10]

⁵ Radio Maryja, just like TV Trwam, is run by the Redemptorist Tadeusz Rydzek. The activities of the clergyman are supported by the Law and Justice [PiS], because, as nationwide polls show, the followers of these media are also supporters of this party (Feliksiak 2018, 2017; Roguska 2016).

According to the respondents, these other protesters cannot control their negative emotions, they ‘lose control of their anger and want to get physical with someone.’ [10] The CDD supporters also talked about their meetings with participants of other protests. As one of them reported, they had to face: ‘the feverish opponents, who (...) are attacking’ [1], while the CDD supporters try to ‘talk to them, calm them down.’ [1] These other protesters are trying to provoke the representatives of the CDD. They ‘insult’ them, while the CDD supporters respond: “‘thank you,” for example, and greet them, because this is simply their style.’ [16] On the other hand, the adversaries of the CDD can feel safe if they meet its supporters, as it happened in the situation about which one of the CDD followers talked. Hence, when an abortion opponent was present during the Committee’s protest: ‘tens of thousands of people passed her by, simply looking at her, smiling. Nobody used bad words towards her, no insults, nothing offensive. The lady was just standing there, the march was walking, nobody said any bad word.’ [11] Moreover, the CDD guards ensure that the protests are peaceful and are ready to ‘neutralise’ [45] any disrupters.

However, the CDD supporters, as well as members of other movements opposing to the Law and Justice, cannot count on a similar reaction of their opponents. The reason is aggression, as the CDD supporter said, describing the monthly anniversaries: ‘there is such a wild ride in front of us, such boorishness that it is hard to imagine! If there was no police cordon, which separates them, they would come to blows—not on the part of the Obywatele RP movement,⁶ but on the part of those, sorry to say this, mohairs,⁷ who simply run amok when they see Obywatele RP and the CDD.’ [28] Similarly, another CDD supporter, comparing the Committee’s protesters to those associated with the Law and Justice, emphasised a significant difference in the level of aggression of these two groups. He perceived the ‘mohairs’ as aggressively protesting, while his own group—as peace-oriented. As he explained: ‘(...) currently, only us—the CDD—and the supporters of the Law and Justice, the so-called mohairs, go to the streets, so we can see what it looks like. These people are clearly motivated by the Law and Justice. They are incited by, it should not be concealed, the Church (...). Then they go to the streets, they are motivated, often aggressive. Our demonstrations have never been aggressive towards other people, and unfortunately, the demonstrations of the Law and Justice have often tried to approach journalists and other people or even the opponents in an aggressive manner, yes. So now we have two currents that exist and are active in Poland.’ [35] It appears from the analysis of the interviews that the participants of the monthly anniversaries identified as ‘mohair berets’ were seen as people with extreme views, close-minded and guided by aggression. Some respondents also drew attention to other negative traits and emotions specific to the ‘Smolensk People’⁸ or the ‘Law and Justice devotees,’ who—according to the CDD supporters—under the previous governments ‘were completely left to themselves,’ and ‘who needed this sense of community.’ [39] In the interviews they were referring to the issue of the so-called losers

⁶ A social movement that organised counter-demonstrations against the celebration of the so-called monthly anniversaries.

⁷ Moher (or a mohair beret) is a pejorative term for Radio Maryja’s listeners or, more broadly, people with conservative views. This term was made in reference to their stereotypical image: an older woman wearing a mohair beret.

⁸ The Smolensk people is a pejorative term for the participants of the monthly anniversaries commemorating the air crash in Smolensk.

of transformation, who have a sense of injury and in consequence are guided by envy and jealousy: 'they would like someone to indicate who is to blame.' [39]

It happened that the CDD supporters identified the group of 'mohair berets' taking part in the monthly anniversaries as associated with the participants of marches organised on the occasion of November 11. Also, the description of these protests presented in the interviews by the CDD supporters was definitely different from the one of their own marches and pickets. During these different assemblies: 'the effigies were burning, the flags of the European Union were burning' [18], while 'the CDD demonstrations or ones of the opposition are very positive, high-standard.' [18] At the CDD marches: 'the police do not intervene, but they did during the November 11 marches, because cars were burning there,' and the protesters: 'were trampling, destroying, hitting the windows, breaking them.' [9] So, according to the CDD supporters, the participants of the November demonstrations are those who make 'a real demolition all over Warsaw.' [3] Characterising the participants of these events, the respondents emphasised the previously mentioned negative emotions that drove the attendants of the Independence Day march. Often, these people were described as extremists. Some interviewees identified them directly as supporters of extreme right-wing groups (e.g. the National Radical Camp, [Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny⁹]). In the interviews, such terms as 'true Poles,' 'nationalists' and 'fascists' appeared in this context or—as one of the respondents stated: 'Extremes have come to the fore, because it's hard to talk about any society.' [10]

Summing up, the protests and their participants presented for comparison by the respondents are definitely different from their own protests. These other protests are presented as a wild crowd. Their descriptions bring to mind a mass of people who destroy everything in their path. Metaphors such as 'demolition' or 'wild ride' are used to describe the protests. The protesters are furious devotees. They do not control their negative emotions and run amok. However, in the illustrative descriptions of the protests or their participants there are also humorous characteristics of the unwise supporters of these. Therefore, attention is paid to their natural, innate disabilities. Many of the examples given during the interviews are also supposed to prove the protesters' aggression and the lack of concern for the common good. Depreciating labels, including 'mohair,' 'extremists' or 'extremes' and 'fascists,' are used.

The Reproductive Logic of Discourse

In the construction of the protests and their participants created by the CDD supporters, the difference that highlights the uniqueness of the assemblies organised by the CDD proved to be an important element. The unique nature of the protests is based on their description as peaceful and on the image of the protesters as well-behaved, as opposed to their view of the 'other' protests and protesters described as being aggressive and boorish. The latter are, generally, the Law and Justice followers, people taking part in the monthly anniversaries, nationalists from the November 11 marches or 'mohair berets' supporting the Trwam TV channel. These environments were mentioned and used as negative reference groups to

⁹ This is an extreme right-wing political group.

create the image of themselves and of their own group by those talking about the protests during the interviews. The presentation is clearly contrasting and based on bright binaries. The differences created with discursive strategies concern, among others, the appearance of the protesters: cheerful vs cloudy faces, elegant vs sloppy dresses. However, they also relate to other attributes, so the aforementioned distinctions are made between those who achieved something and bitter losers or between aware and manipulated individuals. Additionally, the dissimilarity stems from behaviour towards others: peaceful vs aggressive, civilised vs vulgar, rational vs emotional, as well as behaviour towards own group and the mood during the assemblies: open, friendly people vs wild crowd. Hence, the presentation of the events and their participants constructed implicitly or explicitly throughout the interviews by reference, predication and framing can be classified into two groups, as shown in the table below.

Table 2
Examples of Use of Discursive Strategies by Interviewees

Strategy	Examples from the interviews	
	US	THEM
Referential/nomination	metaphors of the protest: walks, family picnics, meeting places; naturalising by the use of facial features (smiling, intelligent) and mental characteristics (kind, positively disposed towards the world);	metaphors of the protest: wild crowd, demolition, wild ride; naturalising by the use of facial features (smirks) and mental characteristics (clumsy, extreme, prone to manipulation);
Predication	positive traits like: peacefulness (no aggression), smile, happiness, nice dresses, resourcefulness;	negative traits like: aggression, boorishness, emotional dysregulation (angry, out of control, run amok), untidy, sense of injury, envy;
Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation	examples from the protests proving the openness and enlightenment of the participants (peaceful, safe, joyful atmosphere, fun, humour, nice music, respect to the common space, witty banners, people are commenting, taking pictures, chatting etc.);	examples from the protests testifying proving the unreasonability, lack of culture, aggression of the participants (aggressive, shouting vulgarities, attacking, pushing, breaking, hitting, destroying, tramping, burning, provoking, insulting, the police has to intervene and separate them);

Source: own study.

The analysis allows me to conclude that the content used by the interviewees for drawing the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is rooted in the specific rules that form the basis for the functioning of the public sphere in Poland. As Zarycki and others argue (2017), its Polish model developed at the beginning of the 20th century under the strong influence of the idealised figure of the intelligentsia. In consequence, the Lord–Boor opposition was formed as a symbolic binary axis of the understanding of citizenship. Similarly, according to Leder (2014), among the important figures that make up the Polish *imaginarium*—as the author, referring to Charles Taylor, describes this level of social awareness and unawareness from which the content for interpretation schemes is derived—there are the figures of Lord and Boor. They allow the Poles to share the experience of ‘long-established sequences’ (Leder 2014: 12) as part of various social practices aligning the ‘individual imagination

with the collective scenario' (*ibidem*: 12). Thus, as a consequence of identifying citizenship with the intelligentsia, contemporary ideal citizens are its heirs who have adopted its lifestyle and ethics. From this perspective, the CDD supporters show what constitutes the sacredness of a democratic society and what a true citizen should look like. Despite their street activities outside the 'salons' in which rational debate takes place, they submit to the regime of the public sphere, situate themselves as defenders of its rules and validate the same. They also cut themselves off from the non-civilised forms of protest, although, as one of the respondents stated: 'the burning of tires, something very aggressive speaks to our authorities—they will understand it, because it is their language.' [9] However, this is not the language of the CDD and its participants.

As Wiktor Marzec in his analyses of the public sphere of the 1905–1907 revolution notes, as a result of dividing discursive practices discussed here, political activity becomes regimented and only accessible to 'free and civilised people who meet these unspoken prerequisites, which guarantees a polite conversation' (Marzec 2016: 442). In addition to the aforementioned Lord-Boor opposition, utilised especially at the beginning of the 20th century to convey the image of the 'rabble,' similar practices for social demarcation were developed in Poland in the 90s. It was easily observed in the narration of the so-called 'losers of transformation': residents of the former state-owned (Buchowski 2006) or workers (Bobako 2010; Golczyńska-Grondas, Potoczna 2016). Currently, the binary logic of discourse is applicable to the description of the followers of the Law and Justice party. Thus, an important rule governing the way of presenting oneself and others by the CDD supporters is based on a similar logic of discourse, which can be named the Polish mode of 'discursive constructions and reconstructions of civil status' (Alexander 2007a: 29). This discursive ordering of the area of civic activity allows the Committee's followers to draw clear boundaries of their own group, using its positive image: as a rational, civilised social actor, and its members as kind and smiling. At the same time, they exclude those who do not meet these standards and who, in consequence, are relegated to the domain of irrationality and brutality. They are also characterised, by contrast, as looking different: with a malicious grimace on their faces. Hence, in order to construct the difference, attention was paid to the behaviour and to the physical appearance.

Moreover, the image of the CDD protests outlined by the respondents is also an element of the story of the movement itself and of its participants—it allows a closer look on the creation of collective identity of the Committee. As it was mentioned before, research on identity proves that one of the areas of self-presentation of social actors is the indication of differences or variances (Gamson 1992; Van Dijk 2000), which was observed in the statements obtained from the CDD supporters. First of all, it can be stated that such a binary opposition is, therefore, a natural way to organise the world and one's image in it. It is created, among other things, by defining the boundaries of one's own group and by referring to other groups at the same time. In the case of a social movement, such a procedure allows it to indicate the reference group essential for self-definition. For the CDD supporters that will be the Law and Justice followers, the monthly anniversaries' and the November 11 marches' participants or 'mohair berets.' Secondly, it must be added that both the participants of the movements and other social actors supporting the current parliamentary opposition in Poland, and the supporters of the current authorities construct the pejorative image of

‘others.’ As Marek Czyżewski notes, in consequence both left-wing liberal and right-wing conservative discourses contribute to the polarisation of the Polish political culture. At the same time, this culture is a ‘convenient resource for interpretation and expression of speech’ (Czyżewski 2014: 395), from which representatives and defenders of both political divisions draw and simultaneously create. This leads to the conclusion about the durability of discursive constructs described in the article.

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