



UNIVERSITÉ
DE LORRAINE

crem centre
de recherche
EA 3476 sur les médiations
communication, langue, art, culture

CALL FOR PAPERS

International symposium

Activism speeches in environmental controversies: social constructions, legitimisations, limitations

Metz, 22, 23 and 24 November 2017

Since the 1970s, social researchers have been studying controversies hugely, particularly in the fields of Pragmatic Sociology and Science and Technology Studies. A lot of studies focus on the definition of “controversies” as an object, the framing of debates, the science’s role in controversies (Chavot, Masseran, 2010 ; 2013), and on the way knowledge gets legitimized. Analyzing controversies in the media is another approach suggested by the two symposiums “Controversies in the media: stakes and epistemology” (2009) and “Scientific journalism in controversies” (2013) organized by the French Institute of Communication Science in the National Center for Scientific Research.

Judging by their increase, controversies are a social phenomenon. Topics like the building of Notre-Dame-des-Landes Airport, the Sivens dam in France or the industrialization of gold-bearing mines in French Guiana tend to unleash passions. On a worldwide scale, the exploitation of shale gas in In Salah (Algeria) as well as the Dakota Access Pipeline (USA) allowed by Donald Trump show us the development of environmental controversies across the world. Each of them is based on a series of individuals who rise up and express themselves in favor of or against these projects. We can call these debates “controversies” when the topic brings together two opposite sides (e.g. “pros” and “cons”), when it is driven by the exchange of arguments (one side tries to convince the other through argumentation), and when it can be reiterated (we can pause the debate and resume later) (Rennes, 2016: 26). Public speech is a major issue for environmental controversies because it allows discourses and counter-discourses to be expressed (Doury *et al.*, 2015). Speeches of activism are particularly antagonist and dissenting, as suggested by the French magazines *Survivre*, *La Gueule ouverte* and *Le Sauvage* edited by the Green movement. Although environmental controversies and their mobilizations aren’t a completely new phenomenon (Ollitrault, 2008; Vrignon, 2017), we should go further in the analysis of speeches of activism.

This symposium aims to study controversies both rhetorical process (Sans, 2017) and means of publicising (Chavot, Masseran, 2017). We would like to observe how activists forge their discourses and argumentations, how they justify their speeches, as well as the effects of these speeches in the public arenas (Cefai, 2016). How are arguments constructed? What values do they stand up for? How do speeches of activists are legitimated or delegitimated in the public sphere? These speeches are also a way to tell people how activists commit to a cause through various means of expression (documentaries, testimonies, blogs, etc.). In order to consider

controversies as a means for citizens to think and talk about what they can't control (Danblon, 2007), we need to study activists' practices from a narrative perspective, build an archeology of their discourses (Angenot, 1989) using methods from Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics, Media Studies and Anthropology. Considering this, proposals that focus on how activists talk about their careers and actions and how they relate to authority will be strongly appreciated, as well as proposals in regard to the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of activism speeches and the way they are made, broadcasted, published (oral speech, images, mainstream media, web, social media, etc.).

From this perspective, submissions are invited along the following themes:

1) Building activism identities: designations and careers

Naming a movement is a form of power as it brings credit or discredit to it depending on the words chosen. Actors engaged in environmental controversies chose the ways to talk about their actions and reject those they don't agree with. Why do they reject or allow some expressions instead of others? What are the social and strategic issues behind those terms? Do actors define themselves as "activists"? "Opponents"? Papers proposed could analyze the genealogy of the terms employed to qualify those groups of action and the representations they subtend. They could also study the social movements that bring together ecology activists such as the *Indignados* movement (Spain), *Nuit Debout* (France), Occupy Wall Street (USA), etc. They could focus on the way media define those movements in order to show how activists' narratives are made and how they change. Studying categories such as "zadist", "ecology activist" or "green jihadists" will show how they are represented in the media. Finally, interrogating the designations of these movements can also be a way for social science researchers to conduct self-reflective analyses: how do researchers name the activists? To what extent does naming influence the choice of methods or even the results?

2) Legitimizing speeches in the public sphere: confronting institutional and critical knowledge

Activism speech will be studied combining the autonomic and institutionalization approaches of the public sphere rather than opposing them (Suraud, 2006). Expertise is very present in public debates and the opponents' arguments are often dismissed and disqualified. We will focus on how activists make use of communication elements coming from industries, politics, and institutions in order to elaborate their discourse. Do they use green associations' contents or scientists' knowledge? Do decision-makers listen to them? How this knowledge contributes to build "agonistic counter-power" so that activists can have an impact on political power? (Fung, Wright, 2005) We will focus on the way activists acquire skills, not only technical skills but also political skills (Barthe, Borraz, 2011), because protests are often a way to learn about how to express ourselves, to deliberate, to organize, to structure a speech. Debating in environmental controversies requires mastering such deliberative and rhetorical skills.

Conversely, papers could focus on the way institutions collect citizen speeches through participatory devices and how they make use of them (Monnoyer-Smith, 2011). To what extent do people agree or disagree with these uses of their own speeches? Do they see them as actual pictures of that they said? What is the exact usage of activism speeches by institutions?

3) Activism speech in the media

The third theme is about how counter-publics use the media (Fraser, 2001; Macé, 2006) in order to render their action visible. We will focus on the relation between media and activists, the way they consider journalists, their communication tactics and impacts. What are the political opportunities of activism? (Kitschelt, 1986) What makes activists agree to give information to journalists and express themselves in the media? In this context, we will analyse the development of “critic-media” (Cardon, Granjon, 2013) through social media and social networks, activist journalism, underground publishing. The underground turn in citizen communication needs to be studied. What are the activists’ technical resources to conceive their own media? What is the knowledge required to make underground media? How do they perceive technology (Boullier, 2016)? How do they make use of the web and the social networks? What tools do they use to protect their data, privacy, and identities?

4) Violence and disobedience: activism speeches and their boundaries

Activism speech raises the question of the boundaries of environmental controversies. Although activism speech can engender a debate with arguments, it can also generate empathy rather than argumentation. When we judge a stance on a moral level (and not only on a rhetorical level), the debate becomes polemical (Nicolas, 2017; Amossy, 2014). When a stance isn’t taken into account in the debate, it can get hardened and exacerbated, and can lead to streams of abuse, heckles, or even verbal abuse (Fracchiola *et al.*, 2013). This violence can also bring up civil disobedience movements (Hayes, Ollitrault, 2012). Papers will show how verbal abuse takes place within environmental controversies. The goal is to understand to what extent verbal abuse can lead to physical abuse and how we can think violence in social controversies.

Authors could also focus on how activists take violence into account, how they talk about it and what they think of it (Sommier, 2004). Is violence a matter of concern among activists? Why do some of them refuse to participate in actions they consider violent whereas others seem prone to do it? Given the variety of values among activists (Heinich, 2017), it is needed to make a critical inventory of contemporary citizen mobilization movements.

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Submissions

Proposals with theoretical models to study activism speeches are welcomed in various fields (sociology, political science, linguistics, information, media and communication studies ...). It is expected that empirical studies focus on actors from “civil society” and citizens engaged into controversies, regardless of the chosen approaches (ethnography, rhetoric, ...).

Submission proposals can be made in English or French and will not exceed 8000 characters (spaces included). Proposals will be selected by a double blind evaluation process.

Please send your submission by email to : vincent.carlino@univ-lorraine.fr and marieke.stein@univ-lorraine.fr with “Activism speeches symposium + Your last name” as an object not later than **26 June 2017**.

Accepted papers will be re-selected by a double blind evaluation process in order to publish proceedings.

Registration fee

In order to register at the symposium, you must pay:

- 50 € for full professors
- 30 € for PhD students

Registration fee give access to the three days of the symposium, lunch, and closing dinner. The accommodation and transport costs must be paid by the participants.

Please register through this online form: (web page under construction)

Schedule

Call for paper: 5 May 2017

Submission papers deadline: 26 June 2017

Responses to authors: 28 July 2017

Symposium: 22, 23, 24 November 2017

Proceedings: late 2018

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