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Dialectic of Fear: Centre-Liberal Media Discourse on Gender, LGBTQIA+ and Abortion in Contemporary Poland

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SUMMARY: References to fear are often associated with narratives created by right-wing parties and media, especially while talking about issues such as gender, LGBTQIA+ or abortion. However, similar practices can be found in centre-liberal discourse, proving that the creation and reproduction of the dialectic of fear can apply to all agents, no matter their political affiliation. The article aims to challenge popular academic perceptions of the sources of fear by proposing a counter-perspective that means to shift perception on agents of polarisation. Used examples focus on contemporary Polish mainstream centre-liberal newspapers which reproduce fear in their narrative, adding to both local and worldwide phenomena of political polarisation and radicalisation.

KEYWORDS: abortion, Poland, fear, gender, LGBTQIA+, centre-liberal, media discourse, right-wing

Introduction

The fear theme seems to be a frequent reference point in current social studies. While it is not an inherent element of language, it commonly reappears in talks about certain issues (e.g., climate catastrophe, migrant crisis, struggle for equality, hate speech, culture war, clash of civilizations), permeating various topics from the discussion of the Anthropocene (e.g., Hartman, Degeores 2019), to multiculturalism (e.g., Vorbrich 1998), capitalism (e.g., Žižek 2013: 83–86), pandemic (e.g., Penkala-Gawęcka 2020) or gender (e.g., Bimbi 2014)[1]. How-

1 Fear is often connected with issues regarding anger or hate but it is important to note that various agents perceive and define fear differently. Therefore, what scares left-wing agents might be neutral or ridiculous for right-wing ones and vice versa, as seen in examples cited in this article.

ever, the dialectic of fear[2] is not limited to the scientific sphere, as it is also part of mainstream discourse, and often the factor that shapes public opinion since, as the hypothesis of linguistic relativism states, "the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation" (Sapir 1929: 207). Discourse, especially the mainstream one, creates these interpretations, and we, as Foucauldian subjects, tend to internalise them. Furthermore, discourse links interpretations to emotions: "Emotions are socially embedded and constituted – at least in part – through discourse. Discourses are the frames through which we all come to comprehend and make sense of the world around us" (Hutchison, Bleiker 2017: 21). The impact of discourse can be observed in the context of public manifestations and movements such as the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, the global unrest against the COVID-19 pandemic, especially between 2019–2021, or the Pride parades and marches since 1970 – in those cases discourses were forming parallelly to the manifestations, significantly affecting movements' characters and their reception. Moreover, discourse can be used deliberately, effectively shaping the world around us, as was seen in the 2016 U.S. presidential election won by Donald Trump – it is often argued that the main factor behind his success was the tactical application of the fear factor and moral outrage spread with the use of social media like Facebook and 4Chan and major traditional media like Fox News (Roller 2016; McGranahan 2017; Saramo 2017). The case of Trump's elections shows not only that the way discourse is shaped and reproduced affects our thinking, but also how discourse can be used (both deliberately and involuntarily) to deepen polarisation and radicalization within society. As many scholars have pointed out, we live in the age of major polarisation, especially in the wide sphere of politics (see Şen 2019; Koch et al. 2020). Polarisation is rightfully pictured as something we should be afraid of as it divides people, bringing us back to the dialectic of fear.

Mainstream academic discussion on fear often touches the subject of its cause, frequently linking fear with certain values or worldviews, often labelled as (far)right, conservative, populist or other, depending on the specific

2 The term "dialectic of fear" was inspired by the article of the same name by Franko Moretti (1982), in which the author refers to Frankenstein and Dracula as monsters who embody the fears of the bourgeoisie of the early 20th century. The way he describes Victorian monsters reminded me of the popular Polish theme of "gender monstrosity" (Pl. *potwór gender*), which is often used in memes to represent conservative and right-wing fears of gender and LGBTQIA+ (see Środa 2014; Pankowska 2018: 137–138; Brzoza 2019: 33–34). Apart from the reference to pop culture, the term "dialectic of fear" can also be understood literally as a discursive practice of justifying and directing fear. I distinguish it from the similar term "policing fear" – "policing" suggests a conscious action and control of fear, while "dialectic" offers a broader perspective, and serves to describe and deconstruct all kinds of discourses about fear. In the context of this article, "dialectic" can describe a relation between left-wing and right-wing, for example where left-wing negates right-wing discourse while simultaneously (and often inadvertently) using their wording and phrasing (see paragraph regarding the case of abortion in Poland).

socio-historical context of the chosen case[3]. This tendency, while not universal, creates an impression that the right-wing related agents have a monopoly to spread fear, ignoring similar practices observed on the centre and the left of the political spectrum (Herzfeld 2007; Bangstad 2017; Stasik 2017)[4]. This bias is especially visible in social studies (particularly anthropology) which have often associated itself with marginalized groups, picturing right-wing agents as privileged and oppressive, consequently eradicating them from the subaltern group and justifying criticism toward them (Teitelbaum 2019: 414–415; Bangstad 2017; Filip 2019: 187). This practice not only ignores political and historical nuances, but also creates a flawed and simplistic picture of social life that fosters the process of polarisation. The primary purpose of this article is to challenge popular perceptions of the sources of fear by proposing a counter-perspective that improves our understanding of polarisation and its agents. To illustrate my point, I will focus on the case of contemporary Poland, briefly introducing the country's political situation after the fall of communism in 1989 to provide the background for further analysis and then moving on to chosen publications by the country's major centre-liberal newspapers to deconstruct their discourse. I will specifically address publications regarding gender, LGBTQIA+ and abortion as they are some of the main interests of scholars (e.g., Olufemi 2020; Graff, Korolczuk 2022; Mackay 2021) and could serve as a great tool for advanced comparison. This article, however, is not a comparative study, only aiming to create ground for further discussion.

Politics in Contemporary Poland

The year 1989 was the turning point in Poland's modern history – after the mass protest influenced by the Solidarity movement (Pl. *Solidarność*) and the Round Table Talks, Poland became a democratic state, truly independent from the Soviet Union, as stated in the constitution amended in 1997: "The Republic of Poland is a democratic legal state that implements the principles of social justice"[5] (Konstytucja RP 1997; Dudek 2016: 86). However, the re-established country was not consistent with its attitude toward the new government; as both Don Kalb (2009) and Juraj Buzalka (2008) noted, growing dissatisfaction

3 For example, in the U.S. the label "Republican" is used while in Italy one may encounter the term "fascist" due to the history of the country – while they are names of political parties, they also are used widely to label all right-wing agents and their supporters in general (see Hochschild 2018; Cammelli 2017). Labels also intersect, often being assigned based on the common knowledge (for example sourced in the mass media), in effect blurring and confusing each term. As Agnieszka Pasieka (2017: 4, 2019: 24–27) suggests, labelling is a locative practice that is often linked to the historical context of the label – thus each label requires an appropriate explanation to remain true and accurate to the case described.

4 Counter perspectives focused on analysing and/or criticizing centre and left-wing or criticizing both sides of the spectrum can be found in the works of Agata Stasik (2017), Mikko Salmela and Christian von Scheve (2018) or Agata Sikora (2019). However, they remain on the margin of the academic discourse, not making it to the mainstream.

5 Polish: "Rzeczpospolita Polska jest demokratycznym państwem prawnym, urzeczywistniającym zasady sprawiedliwości społecznej".

with the new ruling parties was common, especially among working-class people, who were most directly affected by the transformation process. Zofia Kinowska-Mazaraki notes that "The economic transformation in the 1990s was rapid, radical and brutal. It left parts of society disadvantaged and marginalised. The transformation process, itself, dictated centrally, reinforced an attitude of passivity and apathy" (2021: 4), which created a wide ground for social disruption as seen in works by Elizabeth Dunn (2015) or Michał Buchowski (2017). The problem continued to get worse, as those frustrations were mostly ignored or ridiculed by the ruling class, first by new left parties: Democratic Left Alliance (Polish: SLD) and the Polish People's Party (PSL), then (after the 2007 elections) by centre-conservative-liberal Civic Platform party (PO)[6]. Although ignored, dissatisfaction did not vanish, and some modern-day issues such as hostile attitudes toward the Pride parades and the LGBTQIA+ community in general can be linked to it (Kubica 2009; Kalb 2009: 216–217). Moreover, when one of the most important players in the Polish right-wing political scene – the Law and Justice party (PiS)[7] picked up on those frustrations, they became one of the major factors ensuring PiS's win in the 2015 parliamentary elections and 2020 presidential elections (Kinowska-Mazaraki 2021). The dialectic of fear enforced by PiS to convince the electorate initially focused on the issue of Muslim refugees, then, near 2019, shifted towards other "fears" such as LGBTQIA+ or gender, as Kinowska-Mazaraki explains in-depth in *The Polish Paradox* (2021: 8–11). Meanwhile, the biggest opponent of PiS – PO – refuses to acknowledge issues raised by the ruling party, often relying on voting against them as praxis or simply ridiculing whatever PiS or their voters care and worry about. The rest of the opposition: SLD, PSL and the other right-wing, mostly far-liberal-conservative party the Confederation (Pl. *Konfederacja*)[8] fail to influ-

6 While attributing each party to a specific area of the political spectrum, I mainly refer to the designations of Juraj Buzalka (2008) and Antoni Dudek (2016). It is important to note that all of these affiliations have changed, particularly in recent years, so the labels used only tally with the specific context of the 1990s and early 2000s, with the exception of PO, which has remained centre-conservative-liberal. The SLD, for example, changed its profile around the 2015 elections and became more social democratic than before, forming a coalition with the social democratic party United (Pl. *Razem*) and the social liberal Robert Biedroń's Spring (Pl. *Wiosna Roberta Biedronia*).

7 By calling PiS only a right-wing party against the common practice of labelling them as far-right I am following Jacek Bartyzel (2010), according to whom members of the parliament cannot be described as "far" (either right or left) because they represent the country in parliament, and thus are part of the mainstream. "Far," in this understanding, would refer to the agents staying on the margin of the political discourse like the Polish Neopagan group "The Order of Zadruga 'Northern Wolf'" as described by Mariusz Filip (2015). The presence of groups regarded so often as far-right in the mainstream shows how far the polarisation and radicalisation of society have come.

8 I label Confederation "right-winged mostly far-liberal-conservative" because the party is actually a coalition between a few minor parties represented by people such as Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Krzysztof Bosak and Grzegorz Braun. Each of those men represents different approaches, from monarchism to conservative liberalism and neofascism; however, their electoral programme is mostly focused on liberal rights and freedom understood in conservative terms (see their page Konfederacja.pl for more details).

ence the discourse and often fall into the same predilections as PO. Even the Confederation, which shares a somewhat similar worldview with PiS, mostly focuses on criticising the ruling party without offering an actual alternative at hand. Therefore, the political scene of contemporary Poland is vastly polarized and radicalized. In a sense, there is no middle ground to be achieved; conflicts between parties arise on a regular basis and any sort of cooperation is rare.

Mainstream Newspapers in Poland

The political discourse is represented, reproduced and created in both new and traditional mass media, which, in the Polish case, are predominantly occupied by liberal and elitist outlets (Buchowski 2006). In comparison, right-wing-oriented media remain on the margin with the instance of the newspaper "Rzeczpospolita" and TVP, the national TV station which is dependent on the government. According to PBC (b.d.) research on the Polish press market, right-wing newspapers like "Do Rzeczy" or "W Sieci" fail to reach wide publicity in contrast to liberal "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Newsweek" and "Angora" which are some of the most popular magazines in Poland and also the ones I will focus on later in the article[9]. It is worth noting that none of the mentioned liberal newspapers identified themselves as left-wing or even centre-left-wing[10], which may be related to the Poles' hostile attitude towards issues generally associated with communism (CBOS 2000, 2017). Instead, they use labels like "centre" or "liberal": therefore, while referring to them, I will use the term centre-liberal as it seems to best describe their declared affiliation, simultaneously stressing how important it is to distinguish them from Polish left-wing newspapers and media in general.

As I noted in the introduction, the following analysis will focus on articles relating to three issues: abortion, gender and LGBTQIA+, published in "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Newsweek" and "Angora" around the time of three major events: Black Protest (2016), Women's Strike (2020–2021) and the "Stop LGBT" and "gender ideology" initiative (2021). Those articles come both from the paper version of the magazines and their Internet pages and were selected from among others due to their significance, relevance to the subject and accessibility.

9 The most popular newspapers in Poland are actually tabloids: "FAKT" and "Superexpress". While they remain mostly liberal in their affiliation, they often embrace populism tactics, as described by Rafał Pankowski (2010: 169). Due to their "cheap sensation" renown I refrained from quoting them, but some references to their publishing can be found in *Dobra Zmiana* by Katarzyna Kłosińska and Michał Rusinek (2019). One of the most popular liberal newspapers in Poland is also "Polityka" which I will not be covering in this paper.

10 It does not mean that there is no leftist press in Poland, "Krytyka Polityczna", "OKO.press" or Catholic-leftist "Kontakt" being prime examples – however, they do not usually reach beyond their small public, remaining unnoticed by the majority of the population.

Abortion Law: Black Protest and Women's Strike

As stated by the Centre of Reproductive Rights (2022), second to Malta, Poland has the strictest abortion law in European Union[11]. The current status is said to be caused by two major documents: the 1993 concordat agreed on by the Polish government and the Catholic Church[12], and the 2020 (issued in January 2021) ruling of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, preceded by the parliamentary draft bill from the 2016 (Amnesty International 2022). Because of them, the only cases in which abortion is permitted are if pregnancy is caused by a prohibited act (incest or rape) or if the pregnancy poses a threat to the life or health of a pregnant woman. While signing the concordat caused wide political discussion on its legitimacy (Zakroczymski 2019), it did not cause any social movements in contrast to the ruling from the 2020 and the 2016 draft bill, which caused major protests. As Wojciech Dohnal noted:

> On Monday, October 3, 2016, over 100,000 people took to the streets of 143 Polish cities to express their opposition to a draft bill being considered by the Polish parliament (Sejm) which called for an unconditional ban on abortion and punishment for women who violated the ban. These demonstrations, known as the "National Women's Strike", or "Black Monday", were the culmination of a protest, ongoing since September 23rd, organised by feminist activists on the Internet, mainly on Facebook, under the hashtag "#Czarny protest" (Black Protest). [...] Many women did not go to work or their university classes that day, and those who could not afford to do so, dressed in black. Men did the same, thus expressing their support for the idea of the strike (Dohnal 2021: 45–46).

A similar situation followed the 2020 ruling, only on a much larger scale – this timearound 430 000 people took to the streets in hundreds of cities across the country and even beyond its border under the name of Women's Strike (Pl. *Strajk Kobiet*). The biggest protest in the capital city of Warsaw was said to gather over 100 000 participants, as much as the whole Black Protest did, and it all happened in the middle of COVID-19 outbreak (Tilles 2020). The protests were followed by the media, both right-wing and centre-liberal, richly contributing to the discourse of this time. What I find particularly interesting is the language they used; as Agnieszka Graff (2021: 108–122) points out, rightist discourse overtook the language used to talk about abortion – "foetuses" were replaced by "children" and the discussion revolves around the protection of life rather than right to choose. Left-wing agents in Poland try to reclaim language regarding abortion, but their efforts stay mostly within their bub-

11 In Malta's case, abortion is completely prohibited, making it one of the strictest abortion laws in the world.

12 There is no entry in the concordat directly forbidding abortion, but the representatives of the Catholic Church in Poland refer to it nonetheless (Zakroczymski 2019).

ble, barely if at all affecting the mainstream discussion. This particular use of language is apparent in the articles published around this time, for example in the "Newsweek" interview by Małgorzata Śmiechowicz (2020) with Bogdan de Barbaro who said: "Forcing women to carry the pregnancy if it is known the child is without a brain or will die from different causes right after birth is contrary to the constitution"[13]. This shows how prone centre-liberal media are to reproduce rightist rhetoric, even when they try to speak against right-wing agenda. It also aptly illustrates the ambivalent character of the dialectic of fear – while centre-liberal agents try to negate right-wing discourse, they inadvertently reproduce right-wing wording and phrasing, involuntarily adding to their agenda.

Moreover, the protest also played a more direct role in establishing and reproducing the dialectic of fear. The entire conversation around abortion law protests, especially the one focused on the Women's Strike was expressed in language referring to war. Headlines like "Signal of total anger" (Pl. *Sygnał totalnego gniewu*; Wiśniowska 2020) or "Government of walking dead" (Pl. *Rząd żywych trupów*; Wroński 2020) were published in "Wyborcza", while the "Angora" cover from issue no. 06/2021 presented a walled outline of Poland filled with protesters under the slogan "Women's Ghetto" (Pl. *Getto kobiet*). Similar phrases can be found inside the articles – Natalia Waloch (2020) for "Wyborcza" writes about "furious women" who were the driving force of the protest, while Ewa Wesołowska (2020) in "Angora" talks about "Warsaw Conquered" (Pl. *Warszawa zdobyta*). Although the context of protest calls for highly emotional language to motivate its participants, references to war and violence are a specific (and common) choice that feeds feelings of anger, distrust, and finally fear.

Those slogans were met by right-wing stances which resolved around family and protection of life, portraying protestors as a threat to those values. As Kłosińska and Rusinek (2019: 370–371) point out, Polish right-wing agents see abortion as a part of the "civilization of death" – a term proposed by pope John Paul II referring to indifferent human attitude towards life manifested by in vitro, abortion, contraception or euthanasia. From a right-wing perspective, centre-liberal references to war and a general attitude toward abortion were seen as a threat to their morality, ethics and lifestyle. Reactions to this threat varied. Some newspapers decided to ridicule its opponents, like "W Sieci" on its cover from November 2020, which showed the photoshopped leader of Women's Strike – Marta Lempart, attacking a policeman in a satirical manner. Another magazine – "Do Rzeczy" – in an article from June 2021 warned its readers that leaders of the Women's Strike supposedly feed narcotics and alcohol to the children, stressing the need to protect Polish families (Do Rzeczy

13 Polish „Zmuszanie kobiety do donoszenia ciąży, gdy wiadomo, że dziecko będzie bez mózgu albo z innych powodów umrze zaraz po urodzeniu, jest sprzeczne z art. 30 konstytucji".

2021)[14]. I would argue that while right-wing agents see a threat in the centre-liberal stance on abortion, they are not necessarily afraid of it, but, rather, they portray themselves as protectors of Polish values: family, Catholicism and tradition. Centre-liberals, in this context, may be described as desperate, since to achieve their means they need to, even if metaphorically, call to arms. The fear depends on discourse and perspective – following only one narrative (either right-wing or centre-liberal) invalidates other standings and creates an incomplete and often beguiled portrayal of society.

"Stop LGBT" and "Gender Ideology"

As I previously mentioned, the Poles' views on LGBTQIA+ (and gender, which is usually associated with it), while growing more tolerant, are still negative or indifferent. According to 2019 research by CBOS, 24% of respondents saw homosexuality as abnormal and intolerable, 54% as abnormal but tolerable and only 14% as normal (8% declared that it is "hard to say"). At the same time, 66% of respondents are against gay marriage, 84% against gay adoptions and 67% against the right for gay people to publicly show their lifestyle. Laws ensuring gender equality or the right to marriage for same-sex couples are regularly proposed by the left-wing party the United (Pl. *Razem*) and are as often disregarded and critiqued by right-wing ruling party PiS, associated with the Catholic Church in Poland, and fundamentalist organizations like the Ordo Iuris or the Life and Family Foundation (Pl. *Fundacja Życie i Rodzina*) founded by Kaja Godek, famous Polish anti-choice activist (Graff, Korolczuk 2022). Recently, the opposition PO party leader Donald Tusk claimed that after his party wins elections in 2023, they will vote for same-sex marriage (Bromber 2022), but for now it remains in the sphere of political promises. Other political parties in parliament do not express any support toward LGBTQIA+ and the Confederation party is openly hostile – one of its leaders, Janusz Korwin-Mikke (2021) stated on his Twitter account that he believes LGBT ideology to be "more dangerous than climate crisis" adding that "gays are paid by the West to demoralise society".

The right-wing media along with PiS, Catholic Church and mentioned fundamentalist organisations criticize the so-called "gender ideology" and "LGBT agenda" as described by Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk:

> In the eyes of the Polish Catholic clergy and ultraconservative activists, gender studies are equivalent to totalitarian ideologies such as Stalinism and Nazism, atheists become mass murderers and sex education can be equated with "organized gang rape on the child's soul". [...] The sense of the region's uniqueness and Poland's special importance as a Catholic

14 Picturing opposition as a threat to family and family values is a strong tendency in right-wing discourse; Kłosińska and Rusinek (2019: 235–242) argue that "family" is a key-word for Poland's governing party PiS, describing the most important value of Polish society and its existence.

> country permeates the local version of anti-gender rhetoric, endowing it with a peculiar tone of urgency and drama (Graff, Korolczuk 2022: 91).

Liberal publishers are not passive and speak up more often than liberal politicians, especially in recent years, since the topics of LGBTQIA+ rights seem to be raised frequently. One of the issues that produced the most reaction was the "Stop LGBT" project proposed by the Life and Family Foundation. In short, the project seeks to ban Pride marches and forbid any popularisation of the so-called "LGBT agenda" in order to protect Polish families, especially children; furthermore, the project would serve as a gateway to ban transitioning in the future, while ensuring the continued legality of conversion therapy in Poland. Similarly to abortion, LGBTQIA+ is seen by the right-wing as part of the "civilization of death".

The reaction from the centre-liberal media was instant: "Angora" in a headline from no. 45/2021 called the day of reading the project in parliament "A Black Day in Polish History" (Pl. *Czarny dzień w historii Polski*) while Agnieszka Żądło (2021) in the article for "Newsweek" called it "A Hate Project". One of the journalists for "Wyborcza" called out rightist politicians for supporting the project, saying that they "put loyalty to the party before decency"[15] (Bielecka-Hołda 2021). Similarly to the case of abortion, gender and LGBTQIA+ issues call for strong emotional language. The reference to "black day" shows the severity of the situation, "hate project" brings to mind hate speech and calling out someone's decency is a direct comment on the general collapse of morals, so often brought up by right-wing agents. It is typical for headlines to be dramatic, but those mentioned show the strong, negative feelings associated with LGBTQIA+. The dialectic of fear here is more subtle and less straightforward, but it is still there, showing that fear can be transmitted in an indirect, but still effective manner. It does not mean that it is equivalent to the fears spread by the right-wing: by naming LGBTQIA+ as a threat they directly labelled queer community members as targets of violence and discrimination, as a result of which 69,4% of Polish LGBTA teenagers have suicidal thoughts (KPH 2016).

Conclusions

The examples chosen for this article aimed to showcase the rarely analysed part of the discourse, adding to the efforts to wholly understand the issue of polarisation and the role of the dialectic of fear. Further work is needed to properly grasp the subject, but to approach it reasonably we, as researchers, should shift our perspective. In the examples presented, both the right-wing and the mainstream centre-liberal media stand up for their declared belief, rights and morals. Simplifying, they see their beliefs as the only truth, making

15 Polish: "Posłowie prawicy lojalność wobec partii postawili ponad przyzwoitością".

no attempt to explain their stance[16]. Moreover, the fear experienced by both sides is not equal – the right-wing is not as afraid of the centre-liberals as the centre-liberals are afraid of the right-wing. This disproportion is visible in the right-wing tendency to portray themselves as protectors while centre-liberals more often seek to protect themselves (for example, through metaphorical calls to arms). In a way, the right-wing media either cause fear or protect others from it, while the centre-liberals are notoriously in a defensive position. Both of their attitudes prevent them from seeing or acknowledging an alternative worldview, consequently making compromises and discussions unachievable. The issue here is not which side is right and which is wrong, but that neither side is willing to listen and actively seek to understand. The centre-liberal and the right-wing media contribute to growing social unrest through their constant mutual attacks, resulting in a more polarized and deeply divided society. It is by no means solely the mass media's fault, as the same practices are repeated by politicians and reflected in everyday interactions between individuals.

Dialectic of fear in this perspective is unavoidable – we live in fear-driven discourse that affects all spheres of social life, including academia. "The world that science made is very much alive, the world that made science is now shaky" (Trouillot 2021: 56) – meaning that academia is prone to reflect the moods of the society around it, as well as simultaneously affect it. In the context of this article, I would suggest that Polish mainstream academia works for polarisation – mostly biased by the country's liberal mass media, it focuses mainly on criticizing right-wing agents, usually ignoring the rest of the political spectrum. It does not mean that from now on we, as researchers, should only analyse liberal and left-wing discourse, but that we should properly deconstruct the discourse as a whole. This means altering our approach similar to the shifts proposed by anthropologists like Sherry Ortner (2016), Joel Robbins (2013) and, in Poland, Natalia Bloch (2021). Their works postulate or show approaches that are mainly focused on the agency of their research partners. In this perspective, the previously mentioned disruption between right-wing and centre-liberal agents in Poland is no longer solely a conflict between ideologies but, rather, a matter of individuals with different backgrounds and different interests, whose agency intersects with others. Current mainstream academic interpretations seem to focus on the point of the intersections and their consequences, but only rarely ask about circumstances that led to them in the first place[17].

16 Reasons for this attitude vary – while media are almost always capital-oriented (usually economic but also social and cultural), in some instances actual measures to protect their declared identity may come into play.

17 Those uncommon examples can be found in previously mentioned works by Kalb (2009), Buzalka (2008), Pasieka (2017, 2019) and Filip (2015, 2019) or, in the U.S. context, in the work of Hochschild (2018). A similar approach can be also seen in works regarding post-Soviet transformation, e.g. Buchowski (2006, 2017), Dunn (2015) and Ost (2005).

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