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**Hybrid media? A comparison of traditional and social media  
migration-related content along scope, function and curation**



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## Hybrid media?

# A comparison of traditional and social media migration-related content along scope, function and curation

## 1 Introduction

The seminal work of Chadwick (2013) established hybridity as a new characteristic of the media system in the age of digital communication. Chadwick identified a blurring of the distinction between traditional and social media and a mix between the two types of media principles that power each of the two domains. In this study, we aim to explore *the extent of this convergence by comparing traditional and social media covering the topic of migration and refugees during 2015- 2019*. To do so we select three characteristics of each media domain that sets them apart from one another: *scope, function and curation type*. We then compare along these three lines the attributes of migration-related content on both media domains across nine European languages using a mixed-methods approach. We use two avenues to systematize our content analysis. First, we rely on global cleavage theory (Sicakkan, 2022) to identify five different categories of content, depending on their scope and their references (global, regional, state, national, or economic). We complement the deductive content analysis with an inductive frame detection for each of the nine language clusters. Our study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the process of media hybridization as well as an empirical one to the study of European migration coverage.

### 1.1 Hybrid media

Hybridity is born at the intersection of the old and the new. Chadwick distinguishes between diluted and particulate subtypes (Chadwick, 2013: 18). Looking at the construction of political news, he sees the latter type as being the more prevalent, with elements of both traditional and social media recombined to produce a new political news cycle. This recombination is not without friction: the two ways of informing about politics compete with one another for the power to access readers' or users' attention and gain their trust (Colombo and Mascheroni, 2022). The fact that both media types have survived and adapted to change shows that features of the old and the new are still around, though exactly in which proportion and to what power balance it is hard to say.

Traditional and social media have recombined into a hybrid environment with several characteristics. Modern newspapers, TV and radio channels have a strong, developed and visible digital component. One can read the newspaper on a tablet, watch the TV news via that channel's webpage or listen to one's favorite radio show as an on-demand podcast. The print news or the TV studio live sent bulletin are still around, but they can be consumed through the intermediary of social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. Because of their financial power and their reputation, traditional media occupy a large share of the digital news space, many times at the expense of independent newsmakers or citizen journalists. Journalists continue to write and report on the pages of print media or from television screens but have also successful careers (and high followings) as Twitter commentators.

That said, social media spaces have enough room also for non-traditional news actors. Some are citizen journalists, some belong to alternative news channels, and even some

more are influencers, but many still are regular users who use social media as a platform for self-expression, including on political matters. While traditional media has used social media as a supplementary avenue to reach audiences, the relationship goes also in the other direction. Social media has (the potential to) set the agenda for professional reporting, being the source of “breaking news”, documenting otherwise inaccessible places and events and giving a platform to previously voiceless peoples and groups. Research has tried to identify who cues whom, with ambiguous conclusions

## 1.2 The three dimensions of comparison

Traditional and social or network media have been previously compared in terms of their “logics”, which is a term covering “specific norms, rules and processes” (Klinger and Svensson, 2015: 1244). Both Klinger and Svensson and Van Dijck and Poell (2013) provide two alternative ways to distinguish between traditional and social/network media logics. In this paper, we are less concerned with these norms, rules and processes and more with some characteristics or features, arguably derived from the rules and norms, which can be explored empirically. Thus, we propose that the distinction between traditional and social media can be articulated along three dimensions presented in Tab. 1.1: scope, function and curation type. *Scope* pertains to the intended audience of the media. Traditional media have been typically confined to national borders, even though language commonalities (German-speakers from Austria and Lichtenstein may read newspapers based in the German Federal Republic) and professional publics (bankers and industrialists form an international public for the likes of Financial Times and The Economist) may have expanded the publics for some media houses. In contrast, social media is a borderless space, where regional or global publics can be reached by content produced anywhere in the world (Bossetta, Dutceac Segesten and Trenz, 2017). Digital distribution channels have facilitated the hybridization process, with traditional media such as newspapers and television increasingly having a digital wing, sometimes even in other languages than the vernacular of the country. However, “social media first” content is created often with a non-national audience in mind. This is reflected in the expansion of English as the lingua franca of internet communication, as well as in the development of digital personae or “measurable types” (Cheney-Lippold, 2017), grouping social media users along interests and characteristics beyond the mere national belonging.

Traditional and social media may also fulfill different *functions* in a hybrid media ecosystem. Traditional media has been the territory of professional journalism, with its standards of accuracy, truthfulness, impartiality and independence from any particular interests. Thus, one of its defining functions is to provide reliable information to its audience. Another function is to investigate the powerholders and keep them accountable, acting as the “watchdog” of society. Providing information and being able to investigate potential wrongdoings provided traditional media with its “fourth estate” status and prestige. Social media, on the other hand, being based on user-generated content, does not aspire to the same professional standards. It is the terrain of individual expression, including on political topics (Lane et al., 2019). Where traditional media stands for information, social media is the domain of opinion and commentary.

A final distinction can be made along the lines of *curation* of information. This is arguably the most significant structural difference between the two media domains. As already hinted above, traditional media is the domain of journalists with professional credentials such as relevant education and/or membership in an accredited journalistic organization. These media experts act as gatekeepers, sorting information based on its newsworthiness - a balancing act between deontological considerations and economic calculations

(Bednarek and Caple, 2017). In contrast, social media content is selected not by professionals but by regular users who function as “secondary gatekeepers” (Singer, 2014). The individual users are secondary to the algorithm, who is the primary gatekeeper. Individual users affect information selection and circulation by implicit acts (e.g., spending more time on a post) or by explicit actions (interacting with the post by clicking on it, sharing it, or commenting on it). These implicit and explicit interactions form the input for recommender algorithms on social media that are built for an economy of attention and popularity (Gillespie, 2018). Thus, traditional media uses expert curation based on newsworthiness, whereas social media has algorithmic curation based on popularity.

Tab. 1.1. Media types and their characteristics.

	Traditional	Social
Scope	National	Transnational
Function	Information provision	Opinion and commentary
Curation	Professional, based on newsworthiness	Algorithmic, based on popularity

In this study, we are interested in empirically assessing how distinct traditional and social media are over a five-year period on a topic that has been at the top of many news cycles, namely migration. *We expect that the two media domains, despite hybridization, remain distinct* and that they have distinguishable differences in their respective scope, function and curation.

We chose to evaluate the extent of hybridization on migration-related content. This has been at the top of news agendas across the European Union, in particular in connection with what has come to be known as the Syrian “refugee crisis”. Moreover, migration has been at the core of political agendas of European parties, especially for those with a nationalist orientation (see Iannelli, Biaggi and Meleddu, 2021 for the case of Italy).

### 1.3 Media discourses on migration

Although media reporting of migration related issues has been studied extensively within different strands of communication research and different national contexts, cross-national comparisons of traditional and social media are still scarce. Existing research on media topics related to migration is mostly anchored in national demarcations. Comparative analyses which examine the discourse on (im)migration in different European countries (except from Helbling, 2014) in traditional and social media seem to be lacking (Eberl et al., 2018). Indeed, research on digital discourses of migration is rare. A recent review of 119 articles revealed that newspapers were the primary source in most studies on migration discourses, whereas TV and social media were seldom included (Seo and Kavakli, 2022). The investigations of the interrelationships of media within hybridized media systems on polarization and/or opinion alignment of attitudes toward immigrants found that traditional media assert a greater impact on extreme and consistent positions than social media news (Iannelli et al., 2021). Conrad (2021) performs a frame analysis on a data set that combines traditional and social media from three countries but focuses only on the Global Compacts and uses a small-N approach. Moreover, he is only interested in the frames employed by populist and right-wing actors.

The problems related to media coverage of (im)migration themes have preoccupied the research community and have seen an increase in studies since 2005 (see Eberl et al., 2018). Studies examined the salience of immigration topics and how they are reported in traditional media, such as print (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden and Boumans, 2011) and television (Ruhmann, Sommer and Uhlemann, 2006).

*Agenda setting* - the presence and/or intensity of media content devoted to a particular topic (McCombs and Shaw 1972) and *framing* - the emphasis that media devote to a particular perspective or perspectives on the topic (Entman, 1993) are the most commonly used approaches in these studies. The body of research studies that make use of these two perspectives is widespread in the field of political communication. These types of studies contextualize how public debates about (im)migration influences public opinion and the potential impact of these issues on voting decisions and public policies regulating (im)migration (for a literature review, see Eberl et al., 2018).

There appear to be a series of common frames or ways of interpreting migration, and in particular the “refugee crisis”, across media types. Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017) find that in six Austrian mainstream newspapers the most frequent frames in which the “refugee crisis” was portrayed were the *settlement/ redistribution* of incoming asylum seekers, *criminality* risk posed by them, *economy* (or the economic burden posed by the newly arrived), and *humanitarianism* (desire to assist, especially from the part of civil society). Also present were frames of what the authors called *background/ victimization* (the difficulties encountered by the refugees on their way to Europe), *securitization* (national security and border control), and *labor market integration*. Other common frames identified are the emphasis of the otherness of (im)migrants, for example, in economic or cultural terms, security threats and exploitation of social programs (Lawlor and Tolley, 2017), frames of (im)migrants which criminalize and victimize, victimization of migrants and/or construction of a threat (Famulari a Major, 2022), the role of media reporting in creating an urgency of crisis (Cottle, 2000) or anti-immigrant hate speech, in particular on social media (Nortio et al., 2021).

Going beyond one national case study, Heidenreich et al. (2019) gather print and online articles from several news outlets in five European countries (2015-2016) and perform an automated frame analysis. Their findings reveal many similarities with the Austrian case, but also some differences, in particular in the rank ordering by frequency of each frame. Here, the most common lens through which migration was seen across the media outlets was the *economy*, followed by *welfare*, *accommodation* of refugees, and international *humanitarian aid*. *Refugee camps*, *borders* as well as *national* and *EU politics* were also present.

To our knowledge, no research has performed a similar type of analysis performed on social media data. Several studies included social media posts in their analyses. However, they all focus either on a specific type of actor within social media or on one specific platform. Among those studies that include a social media component, Ademmer and Stöhr (2019) look at comments left on the Facebook pages of local and regional newspapers in Germany. They identify 100 topics, which they group in three cleavages: GAL/TAN, left-right, and dealignment (cf. Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002). They find that the first cleavage, characterized by an emphasis on culture and identity, clearly dominates the comments studied. The more traditional left-right cleavage between progressive and conservative politics is much less frequent, whereas dealignment, or the lack of a political leaning, is the least prevalent. While providing relevant insights, this study focuses on the microlevel of migration politics and is thus rather limited in scope compared to our undertaking.

In another article related to migration on social media, Heidenreich et al. (2020) analyze visibility and sentiment towards migration in the Facebook accounts of political actors across six European countries, between mid-2015 and end of 2017. However, the article does not cover citizen discourse and includes only one social media platform.

Thus, our paper can provide new and important empirical knowledge about migration-related content as it 1) compares traditional and social media; 2) compares across nine languages; 3) covers a longer period that allows for the effects of the European refugee crisis to be observed.

#### 1.4 The global cleavage system

Central to our deductive part of the analysis is the process of discursive othering, based on the binary oppositions or cleavage of "us" versus "them" (Pettersson and Sakki, 2017; Musaro 2019). Our study further develops the theoretical perspective of discursive othering by including different dimensions of threat, protection, and responsibility.

In a general sense, social or cultural cleavages are fault lines dividing societies in distinct categories, which can become politicized (Kriesi et al., 1995). Political cleavages are important because they influence party formation and voter preferences. Initially developed by Stein Rokkan (1970) at the national level, cleavage theory has been adapted to the global level and to the context of refugee protection by Sicakkan (2012, 2016).

In short, Sicakkan contends that there are four different cleavages separating actors on the international refugee protection scene. Similar to national cleavages, the global cleavage system helps identify the various political groups (and their interests) that compete over setting the agenda for international refugee and migrant protection. Each group identified in this manner has its own view over the extent to which these vulnerable groups should enjoy protection, who should be the main provider of the protection and in which way the resulting policies should be implemented or administered. A summary of these positions can be found in Tab. 1.2.

The four types outlined above are transformed into discursive frames, and are rejoined also by a fifth category, the market-oriented type. The market-oriented frame sees migrants through an economic frame: either as costs to the welfare state, to the society, or to the state budget, or as benefits to the labor market, to innovation and productivity.

Tab. 1.2. *International protection in the global cleavage system. From Sicakkan (2022).*

	GROUPS IN THE GLOBAL POLITICAL CLEAVAGE SYSTEM			
	Nativists	Nation-statists	Regionalists	Globalists
<b>What is most worth protecting?</b>	<u>Ethnic Belonging</u> Dispersed nations' rights in terms of ethnic/diasporic identification, language, and territorial belonging	<u>National Belonging</u> Citizens' rights and duties in terms of civic culture; states' interests; and the international order	<u>Regional Belonging</u> Members' rights and interests in terms of dignity, lives, liberties, and estates in a civil society	<u>Humanity</u> Individuals' rights and interests in terms of dignity, lives, liberties, and estates in a civil society
<b>Is it a duty or charity to protect refugees?</b>	<u>No duty to protect others than co-ethnics</u> Constitutional asylum	<u>Protection is given as charity, not a duty</u> Convention, temporary, and constitutional asylum as legal grounds	<u>Protection is given as an entitlement, not a duty</u> Convention asylum and subsidiary protection as legal grounds	<u>Protection is duty and entitlement</u> Convention asylum as legal grounds
<b>Minimum Criteria for protection</b>	<u>Endangering</u> Endangering by persecution, oppression, assimilation, or non-protection by a state or non-state actors supported by a state	<u>Persecution</u> Persecution by a state; or persecution by the majority or non-state actors combined with effective state collaboration	<u>Persecution</u> Persecution by a state; or persecution by the majority or non-state actors combined with effective state collaboration	<u>Non-protection</u> Non-protection, discrimination, or persecution by a state; persecution by non-state actors combined with states' negligence
<b>Who is responsible for protection?</b>	<u>Co-ethnic states</u> Individual states with historical relations with their diasporas and the states where these diasporic groups reside are responsible.	<u>Inter-governmental</u> Individual states primarily, and the international community secondarily have the responsibility to protect.	<u>Supranational</u> The regional authorities primarily, and member states, are responsible for protection.	<u>International</u> The international community / the international society has the responsibility to protect.
<b>Policies cited in discourses</b>	<u>Ethnicization of the refugee problem</u> Territory and autonomy claims for diasporic groups; population exchanges;	<u>Nationalization of the refugee problem</u> Focus on root causes; preventive diplomacy, economic relief, forced / voluntary	<u>Regionalization of the refugee problem</u> Focus on root causes; extensions of sovereignty to stateless communities; regional	<u>Universalization of the refugee problem</u> Focus on human rights; individual protection; cooperation across borders;



	unilateral actions such as condemnation and intervention, and bilateral agreements.	repatriation, military aid, and intervention.	devolutions; temporary collective protection; regional safe zones; repatriation	preventive diplomacy; economic aid and relief; voluntary repatriation.
<b>Where to protect?</b>	In the country of escape, or of asylum	In the country of escape or of resettlement	In or near the country of escape or of origin	In the country of asylum
<b>How to organize?</b>	<u>Uni-lateral or bilateral state actions</u>	<u>Voluntary unilateral, bilateral or multilateral state cooperation</u>	<u>Mandatory state cooperation</u>	<u>Global multilateral binding cooperation</u>
<b>Governance modes and actors</b>	<u>State-centric centralist governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States</li> <li>- Other states in bi-lateral agreement</li> <li>- Nativist non-state organizations</li> <li>- Ethnic minority organizations in refugee sending countries</li> </ul>	<u>State-centric corporatist governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- States</li> <li>- Other states in bi- and multi-lateral agreement</li> <li>- National non-state organizations funded by the state</li> <li>- Local authorities</li> </ul>	<u>Region-centric pluralist governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional organizations</li> <li>- States</li> <li>- International organizations</li> <li>- Transnational non-state organizations</li> <li>- National non-state organizations</li> <li>- Local authorities</li> </ul>	<u>Global corporate-pluralist governance</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International organizations</li> <li>- Regional organizations</li> <li>- States</li> <li>- Transnational non-state organizations</li> <li>- National non-state organizations</li> <li>- Local authorities</li> </ul>

Categorizing the digital public discourse on migration along the five cleavages may reveal the challenges to international protection and may be particularly useful in a comparative setup such as ours. Because this categorization covers national, regional and global levels, it allows us to capture the possible differences across the nine languages studied. Moreover, the cleavages allow us to compare the *scope* of traditional vs social media.

## 2 Data

The data for our analysis was obtained using the same query to select individual items in social and traditional media between 2015 and 2019. The search string was translated into nine languages: Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, and Polish. The string included two criteria. First, to capture the European dimension of migration, media items had to include a direct reference to the EU or one of its related institutions (i.e., Commission, Parliament, Council, Court of Justice, Frontex, Europol, or LISA). Such references also included a direct reply (in the case of social media) to or mentioning of the EU actor or reference to one of their websites or official social media accounts. Second, the media item needed to include linguistic variations of the words (im)migrant, refugee, or asylum within a 20-word distance to the mentioning of the EU institution. Before analysis, duplicates were deleted.

To gather social media posts, we used the services of Brandwatch Consumer Research which only had complete access to Twitter, Reddit, and Youtube and, therefore, these three social media are used in this paper. Since 80% of the data from social media was from Twitter, the results of our social media analysis are presented in the Appendix separately for Twitter and the other platforms. If not nuanced explicitly, the results were consistent across platforms.

For traditional media, we used Event Registry (ER), a global media monitoring platform. At the time of data collection (November 2020), the platform collected news articles from over 150,000 news sources published worldwide in over 40 different languages. The platform acquires articles via RSS technology and, therefore, only contains news sources that use said technology, and only articles included in their RSS feed are added to the database (Leban et al., 2014). We analyzed outlets coming from (at the time) EU member states and extracted the articles containing the terms of our query. In the Appendix we include the 20 most common sources per country showing that the data primarily includes media items from newspapers and news aggregators.

Tab. 2.1 provides an overview of the resulting 18 analytical groups (i.e., unique combinations of languages and media types) analyzed in this paper. Per language, the data typically contained less unique documents coming from traditional than social media. However, since social media posts were much shorter than documents from traditional media, the number of words in each language and media type tend to be on the same order of magnitude. To enable a computational analysis of the more than 1 billion words, all documents were pre-processed through the same pipeline using the R package *quanteda*. In the pipeline we 1) lowercased the text, 2) lemmatized all words to their semantic roots, and 3) deleted common language-specific stop-words, syntax symbols, emojis, hashtags and URLs.

Tab. 2.1. Media items across languages and media types.

Language	Media type	N documents	Pre-processed ...	
			... words per document	... words
English	Social	10,729,555	19.7	211,372,234
English	Traditional	307,082	429.0	131,738,178
Spanish	Social	1,387,692	16.2	22,480,610
Spanish	Traditional	124,612	307.5	38,318,190
German	Social	1,149,094	19.2	22,062,605
German	Traditional	1,226,336	282.4	346,317,286
French	Social	830,667	21.0	17,444,007
French	Traditional	208,180	334.9	69,719,482
Italian	Social	624,438	20.5	12,800,979
Italian	Traditional	82,642	308.4	25,486,793
Dutch	Social	576,474	17.7	10,203,590
Dutch	Traditional	44,498	236.2	10,510,428
Swedish	Social	216,357	18.3	3,959,333
Swedish	Traditional	35,359	237.0	8,380,083
Danish	Social	182,898	16.2	2,962,948
Danish	Traditional	20,353	290.0	5,902,370
Polish	Social	114,385	20.7	2,367,770
Polish	Traditional	27,704	372.6	10,322,510

For traditional media the following languages contained news items from more than one national media system: German: Austria and Germany; English: UK and Ireland, French: France and Belgium, Dutch: the Netherlands and Belgium. Since social media are trans-national, we considered this aggregation across languages in traditional media as crucial to the comparability of the two media domains. Furthermore, the query only sampled items that explicitly mentioned EU actors, which ensured that media items are thematically consistent and exclude discussions on (e.g., in the case of the English or Spanish language) migration on other continents.

### 3 Methods

We used a mixed-methods approach to analyze the data. Summarized, we 1) used computational methods to generate lists per language and media type of the most commonly used words in the context of migration or refugees, 2) qualitatively coded the words and their semantic context in terms of themes and cleavage categories and 3) compare the distribution of themes and cleavage across languages and media types. Step 1 and 2 are described in more detail below.

#### 3.1 Generating word lists

As the first step in our analysis, we generated a list of words per analytical group that contained ‘descriptors’, that is, words that were representative of the analytical group’s discourse on migration. In order to appear in the list of descriptors, words had to fulfill two criteria. Only if both criteria were fulfilled, words were considered descriptors. First, words needed to be conceptually related to migration. The conceptual relatedness of words was estimated with the help of word2vec models (Goldberg and Levy, 2014) mapping all words used within documents of the analytical group to a common vector space. In such models, the so called ‘cosine’ distance is used as a metric of conceptual distance between word pairs. The first criterion for a descriptor was thus that it needed to be among the 500 closest words in terms of mean cosine distance to the migration-related keywords ‘migration’, ‘refugee’ and ‘immigrant’ (translated to the respective language). The second criterion for descriptors was that they needed to appear in proximity to the same migration-related keywords. To generate a list of words fitting this second criterion, we performed a keyword-in-context analysis (Chelvachandran and Jahankhani, 2019) again considering all words in all documents of the analytical group that were within a word-distance of 3 to the migration related keywords.<sup>1</sup> Again, we compiled a top-500 list of words most frequently identified by the keyword-in-context analysis.

The final list of descriptors was the intersection between both top-500 lists.

The resulting lists of descriptors that fulfilled both criteria contained 250-400 words in each of the analytical groups, which was at the upper limit of what could be handled in the following steps of the analysis. Note, our approach to generating descriptors is language agnostic and has no language specific parameters. Only the migration-related keywords needed to be translated into the analytical group’s language. These words are relatively similar in all languages under investigation and, also, part of the original query through which the original data was acquired. We thereby also limited chances of language specific biases in our analysis.

#### 3.2 Qualitative coding of word lists

The resulting lists of descriptors were then analyzed by two trained and independent coders. To help the coders interpret the context in which a descriptor was used, we also determined the three most common bigrams (i.e., word pairs) in which the descriptor occurred (e.g., for “border” “border control”). We settled with this number of bigrams per descriptor because this in total led to ~1,000 bigrams per analytical group, which was the upper boundary of what could be handled.

The list of descriptors and their associated bigrams was then used for a qualitative coding of the discourse within each analytical group. Two types of codes were generated: An

inductive code type, grouping descriptors into discourse themes (Saldana, 2009) and a deductive code type, matching descriptors to the categories from the, earlier discussed, global cleavage theory (Sicakkan, 2022). Potential theme codes were based on a pilot analysis of the two media sources and are shown in Tab. 3.1. Coders were free to report additional codes if they found a theme that was not covered by the available codes. However, none of the coders did so.

Tab. 3.1. Code description for the topic analysis.

Code	Description
Criminality	Crimes and violence in a broad sense linked with migrants
Economy	Discussions relating to money, the economy, markets, etc.
EU politics	EU institutions, politicians, legislation, directives, etc.
Global politics	Global institutions, politicians, legislation, directives, etc.
Humanitarian	Humanitarian compassionate attitudes
Limits	Limits to migration, typically critical towards migration
National politics	Domestic institutions, politicians, legislation, directives, etc.
Refugee characteristics	Differences in terms of values, attitudes, religion, culture
Refugee crisis	Specific events or stories in the context of migration
Asylum procedure	Discussing legal details of the asylum system
Latin American migration	Focusing on Latin American countries and refugees/migration
African migration	Focusing on African countries and refugees/migration
Media reference	References to other social, alternative, or traditional media

Charting the content of traditional and social media in this inductive manner helps us identify differences and commonalities for our *function* category. While most of the categories cover factual content, two of them are indicative of the way content was presented: Limits and Humanitarian. We take these two topics to signal the presence of opinion and commentary rather than a focus on facts. The topics are an additional help for our identification of *scope*. EU and Global politics signal a transnational scope, whereas National politics clearly binds the content to a domestic arena.

We get to our final comparison category, *curation*, by looking at cleavages and topics overall pattern of distribution in traditional vs social media. We aim to detect the effects of curation (a process) on content (its outcome). According to this line of reasoning, if the

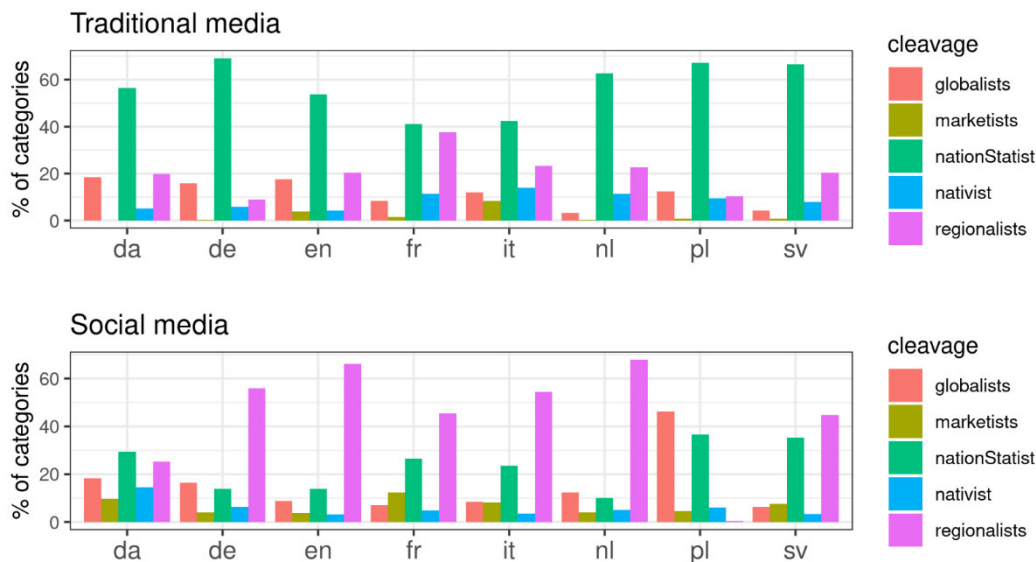
same pattern occurs in the cleavage and topic distribution, and if it does not change over time, it means that the two curation principles go hand in hand. However, if different patterns are displayed in the two media systems, then we take it to point to two different curation types, one based on newsworthiness, the other on popularity.

In the following section, we compare distributions of codes between media types and language groups, identifying particularities and commonalities with respect to cleavages and topics covered within the discourse on migration on social media. As common in qualitative coding (Saldana, 2009), all coding was compared at the end of the coding procedure to ensure inter-coder reliability. In the appendix we show that codes were consistent within each analytical group. We tested intercoder reliability for both themes and cleavage categories separately and found a consistent Krippendorff’s alpha of at least 0.7 in each analytical group.

## 4 Results

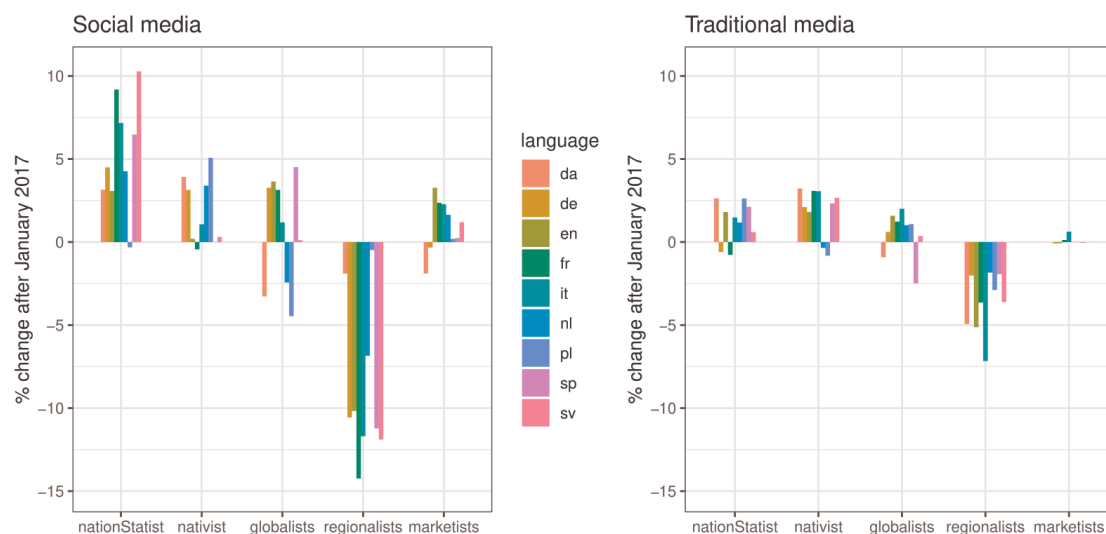
In Fig. 4.1 we compare the extent to which each of the five cleavages identified in the theoretical framework appears in the two types of media. We see that the distribution of cleavage frames is relatively similar across languages but clearly different between social and traditional media. While in traditional media, descriptors assigned to the nation-statist cleavage category are dominating, in social media, the majority of descriptors are linked to the regionalist cleavage.

Fig. 4.1. Comparison of cleavages found in traditional and social media.



To see how the cleavage categories used within each media type and language changed over time, Fig. 4.2 presents the change in the used cleavages before and after January 2017. This point of division was selected because it divides all articles into two equally large groups and corresponds with the point in time at which the number of asylum applications within the EU stabilized at a significantly lower level than that in previous months. We see a common trend across languages and media types: cleavage categories in use generally shift away from regionalists to, primarily, nation statist and nativists. The difference between media domains lies primarily in the magnitude of the shift, being 2-3 times larger in social compared to traditional media.<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 4.2. Cleavages change before and after January 2017.



The second dimension we want to compare is an inductively derived theme catalogue. During the coding process, we identified 12 different content themes that are present in both media types and Figure 3 provides an overview of the themes' distributions. One of the most striking insights is the overall contrast between the two media sources: the journalistic/elite discourse and the social media/popular discourse on the topic of migration and refugees, in the period studies, are very different. Across languages, traditional media tends to focus on the coverage of the refugee crisis and, less clearly, on the EU politics of migration and refugees. On the other hand, the social media content, while also featuring those two themes, prioritizes other topics, such as Global politics as well as often emotional appeals to help the migrants and refugees, which we labeled 'Humanitarian'.

Besides the general distinction between the two types, Fig. 4.2 brings evidence of a fragmentation along language lines. The themes most dominant in Polish traditional media (the asylum procedure and the limits to the reception of migrants) do not match those of any other language in the sample, but even less striking contrasts are visible. To select a few, Swedish traditional media discusses national politics very little in the context of migration, Dutch, French and Italian traditional media cover a lot of EU politics, but Spain and Germany do so to a much lesser extent.

The same language differences are visible also for the social media discourse. There, Poland is less of an outlier, and shares the general focus on EU politics. However, there are contrasts, such as between the global theme of social media content in English, Spanish and French and the theme of EU politics more prevalent elsewhere. National politics are much discussed in Danish but not elsewhere, African migration appears as a theme in French and Latin American migration in Spanish, but not in other languages. Finally, in some languages, the limits to migration are discussed frequently (in German, English, Dutch and Polish), but in others this theme is rather marginal (Danish, French, Spanish, Swedish).

Here a caveat is in order, namely that all our findings are by necessity a result of content (and not user) analysis. The traditional media data does not always include an author for each article gathered. Moreover, Reddit and YouTube allow anonymous users, so we could not infer any details about who posted on these two social media platforms. Therefore, we had to rely exclusively on content-level variables for our analysis of the extent of hybridization between traditional and social media.

## 5 Discussion

The aim of our study is to test the extent of hybridization between traditional and social media using the example of migration coverage. We identified three dimensions along which the two media domains can be compared: scope, function and curation.

Our results show that traditional media, in our case primarily print (including syndicating services, such as news aggregators), retains a national *scope*, with the most dominant cleavage being that of the Nation-statist. Social media, in contrast, gives more room to Regionalists, emphasizing the transnational scope of its content. The same trend is reflected in the themes that we identified. Social media has as its most prevalent topic EU Politics, followed closely by Global Politics, whereas in traditional media these two themes are only secondary to reporting about national politics. These results provide further evidence that social media is the place where Europeanization of the migration discourse takes place (see also Dutceac Segesten and Farjam, 2022).

The distinct *functions* of the two media domains are also supported by our results. Here the themes are most useful as they show how traditional media focuses on more factual reporting of the main events related to migration in the period studied. Conversely, social media allows much more space for our two opinion and commentary themes, Limits (to migration) and Humanitarian (views).

The third dimension, *curation*, is most difficult to capture with the methods at our disposal here. Nevertheless, we combined all three measures of our analysis to provide some evidence of curation, in the form of the content type circulating in each domain. Looking at the overall distribution patterns of cleavages and themes, we see that, over time, the changes in cleavages go in the same direction, with regionalist cleavages disappearing and nation-statist and nativist taking more space. The difference here lies in the scale of the longitudinal change, with social media being more dynamic. However, we do not see any new topics or cleavages emerging on social media that were not also present in traditional media. We can infer thus that, of the three dimensions, curation is where the two media systems converge most. This could be seen as proof that traditional media has adapted to the economy of attention, a trend for which there is some incipient evidence (Walters, 2021; Tsurie et al., 2021). Further refinements of the analysis of the curation dimension will have to include other dimensions of content, such as language formality and cohesion as well as a sentiment analysis.

A final mention for a phenomenon that is also captured by our results, *polarization*. In traditional media, we see the clear division between Nation-statists and Regionalists. On social media, the two cleavages that take first and second positions are the Globalists and the Nation-statist ones. Since we defined these cleavages as taking clear stances on the provision of the refugees’ and migrants’ right to protection, their predominance in the data shows that the traditional and social media coverage tends to be divided along these two opposing stances. This could be another consequence of the convergence in curation strategies.

Across our three dimensions, national variation across the nine different language clusters was low, which gives us some confidence in the generalizability of our findings. That said, some national contexts did display some idiosyncratic properties. Poland is arguably a national sphere with unique content features: the social media data shows that the regional cleavage is much less prominent there in comparison with all other eight languages. Moreover, the most frequent topic covered by traditional media in Poland relates to Asylum procedures and not the events that fell under the theme Refugee crisis, which was the most common theme in the other eight languages. A possible explanation for this unique content pattern may have to do with the Poland’s stark opposition to the EU’s common



migration and asylum policy (in particular the Polish government's refusal to receive any Syrian refugees) and to a public opinion rather skeptical towards non-European refugees and migrants (c.f. Narkowicz, 2021).

Another language cluster that displays idiosyncrasies is the Danish one. The Danish-language social media data does not follow the contrasting pattern with traditional media like the other clusters. Instead, both traditional and social media in Denmark report and discuss matters of immigration and asylum through a nation-statist lens. The regionalist and globalist cleavages more prevalent on social media elsewhere take a backseat in Denmark, compared to the nation-statist cleavage. The country sticks out even in the time analysis: while elsewhere in our sample the globalist lens appears to increase in frequency after 2017 (even though much less than the nation-statist one), in Denmark, the globalist lens declines in use in the same period. This peculiarity of the Danish case parallels developments in the institutional arena, where Denmark enjoys an opt-out from the common EU Justice and Home Affairs policies that include migration and asylum.

Even though Poland and Denmark are the (slight) exceptions to the trend of consistent coverage of the media discourse for the overall population of cases studied, the characteristics of their discourse underline the connection between institutional and legal structures and the media discourse. The domestic political reality influences, as expected, the traditional media coverage of migration, but also the social media coverage of the issue.

In sum, we find that traditional and social media retain their distinct characteristics in terms of scope (national and transnational, respectively) and function (information vs self-expression/opinion/commentary). The third dimension, curation type, showed the highest degree of convergence, with more overlap in the pattern of migration coverage over time and large similarity in the topics covered in the two domains. All these results are generally consistent across language clusters included in our study, giving us some claim to generalizability.

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