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## CHAPTER 2

# CHRONOTOPES OF THE POLITICAL

## PUBLIC DISCOURSE, NEWS MEDIA, AND MASS ACTION IN POSTCONFLICT MACEDONIA

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An underexamined category has crept its way into fields of cultural study: public discourse. Across analyses of contemporary cultural phenomena, one inevitably encounters a reference to a public discourse on some topic. For example, studies might refer to public discourses on race, religion, celebrity, the suburbs, the Third World, lifestyle, taxation, George Washington's sexuality, and so on. In some cases, scholarly uses of the concept of public discourse draw on broader understandings of discourse itself, whether from Foucauldian, Bakhtinian, or sociolinguistic traditions (cf. Blommaert 2005). Oftentimes, however, the term is presented as self-evident and goes unanalyzed. In these cases, the concept is used to capture some regular way of speaking or thinking about some subject matter, found among some distribution of people. But the epistemological status, institutional moorings, and social efficacy of such discourses are left opaque. In this unelaborated state, the default characterization of public discourse is that of an ideological miasma that haunts the ether, vaguely reflecting and affecting popular thought and action.

This chapter responds to the muddled station of public discourse in cultural analysis. Rather than treating public discourse as a categorical primary, I consider the social processes and semiotic forms that produce and reproduce the transcontextual narratives that scholars typically understand as public discourses. I develop these arguments by examining one specific case, a 2004

protest movement that arose in the Republic of Macedonia and that was directed against the Council of Europe in reaction to a perceived slight against the country. Via this analysis, I offer a conceptualization of public discourse that speaks to the manifest, if contingent, sedimentation of socially available narratives on society and their impact on political action.

This approach to public discourses and their social efficacy draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. According to Bakhtin, the term "chronotope" refers to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (1981: 84), although he suggests that the concept extends to social and cultural representation in general. Such time-space (i.e., chrono-topic) relationships do not merely constitute narrative settings. Rather, the conventional qualities of socially recognized time-space frames presuppose specific character types and logics of action. To take an example from Bakhtin, the adventure time setting of an ancient Greek romance and the social realist setting of a bildungsroman are not only different contexts in which a story unfolds, but furthermore these settings imply (and also exclude) particular sorts of characters, actions, and events. The concept of the chronotope thus provides us with a tool to reckon with the qualitative thickness of social narratives.

Harnessing this insight, I examine how key genres of public and mass-mediated discourse in postconflict Macedonia presupposed stock chronotopes of the political, which in turn grounded narratives of everyday politics. Insofar as these chronotopes implied certain typical forms of action and agents, they supported second-order cultural stereotypes about the political field and its key characters, ones that affected how social actors understood and experienced the agencies that animated political life. I thus explore how particular chronotopes that came to frame some of Macedonia's key political events in 2004 contributed to how actors responded to these happenings—or whether they responded at all. Attention to such chronotopes of the political, I submit, can not only enrich scholarly understandings of public discourse, but also constitutes one way of analyzing the textures of political action (Hariman, this volume) that animate contemporary lifeworlds.

## CHRONOTOPES AND EVERYDAY LIFE

What is the significance of all these chronotopes? What is most obvious is their meaning for *narrative*. They are the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied.

—Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel"

The concept of the chronotope was originally formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin in his 1937 essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” to describe the way that particular literary genres represent time and space and how such time-space representations shape the possibilities of narrative development. Through his analysis of specific literary genres, Bakhtin argues that the chronotopic matrix or frames of a narrative influence the very quality and character of action in the narrative itself. As Bakhtin scholars Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson expound, the concept of the chronotope captures “a way of understanding experience; it is a specific *form-shaping ideology* for understanding the nature of events and actions” (Morson and Emerson 1990: 367; emphasis added).

The category of the chronotope thus constitutes a useful tool with which to analyze the relationship between conventional representations of time-space and social understandings of agency and eventhood. Although Bakhtin focused on literary narratives, a growing number of scholars from the field of linguistic anthropology (e.g., Basso 1996; Silverstein 2000; Agha 2007; Lemon 2009; Dick 2010; Stasch 2011) have applied the concept in studies of social interaction. On the one hand, these scholars have demonstrated that particular narrative and discourse genres from a variety of ethnographic contexts display conventional representations of time-space, that is, chronotopic frames, that impinge on how actions and characters are presented in specific narratives.

On the other hand, these scholars have theorized how social interaction itself can be understood as a dynamic process mediated by participants’ acts of narration. According to this view, social interactions consist of participants collaborating (to degrees) on the production of some social narrative to which participants variously align in their contemporaneous interaction. Analysts therefore examine the emergent and dynamic alignments between the narrated events and the event of narration as a means to uncover the social effects and achievements of particular interactions (see Jakobson [1957] 1971; Silverstein 1999). Significantly, both the narrated event and the event of narration can be approached through the chronotopic representations on which they depend. At times, the chronotopic conventions of the narrated events can be signaled to mark off the events narrated as taking place according to a distinct logic when compared to the event of narration (e.g., “once upon a time” in fairy tales). At other times, the chronotopic frames of the narrated events may be aligned with the event of narration to produce, for example, narrative realism (see Silverstein 2000). How participants align or contrast the chronotopic frames of narrated events to those of events of narration thus constitute a central dimension of everyday interactions and their social outcomes.

While the category of the chronotope can be useful for the analysis of specific interaction, it is important to highlight the generic and conventional character of most socially recognizable and productive chronotopes. Indeed,

depending on the breadth of their discursive circulation and the nature of their uptake, certain chronotopic models act as commonsense representations of the world, while others (or the same ones in a different context) arrive as controversial representations subject to critique and parody. In either case, however, as Asif Agha stated,

whether or not a chronotopic model is widely known, is felt to be legitimate, is uniformly accepted by those acquainted with it, or whether it fractionates into positionally entrenched variants, the processes as a whole proceeds *as a social process* through modes and moments of participatory access to the model itself ... and through forms of alignment to *that* model (or variant) to which participants orient in some modality of response ... through their own semiotic activities. (2007: 322; emphasis in original)

Hence, while always contingent and subject to contestation and revision, chronotopes provide ideological matrices through which (or against which) social actors implicitly or explicitly make sense of their social world and respond within it.

In Macedonia, I contend, there were two major chronotopic models that regularly organized narrated worlds during the period of my research in 2003 and 2004. First, there was a chronotope of “transition.” This chronotope represented a Macedonian here and now defined by the country’s secession from Yugoslavia, the fall of state socialism, and the social instabilities that accompanied these political changes. Historically speaking, the years that followed Macedonia’s 1991 independence were marked by hardship and turmoil. War flared in other ex-Yugoslav states, most tragically in Bosnia, and the Macedonian economy plummeted. Exacerbating the situation, Macedonia’s neighbor to the south, the more powerful Greece, refused to recognize Macedonia by its constitutional name, claiming a historical monopoly on the toponym “Macedonia.” Following a nineteen-month Greek embargo in 1994 and 1995, Macedonia was forced to accept the infamous designation “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” or FYROM, as a temporary name in the United Nations pending future negotiations. The naming dispute continues to this day. Then, in 2001, Macedonia experienced its own armed conflict, in which ethnic Albanian insurgents and ethnic Macedonian-dominated security forces clashed. Fortunately, a peace agreement, negotiated with the oversight of EU and US diplomats, ended the violence and mapped out a series of political reforms to stabilize and democratize the country. In the years following the armistice, European and American officials continued to play an active but unofficial political role in the country. This historical period, typically glossed as Macedonia’s “transition,” was experienced by many as a difficult time.

Reflecting such experiences of instability and hardship, the chronotope of Macedonia's transition represented a present in which time moved in a nonprogressive manner. Populated by social types such as corrupt politicians, meddling foreigners, and weary everypersons, the chronotope of transition was, ironically, one in which "nothing ever changes," where characters' actions reproduced a dreary status quo. (It thus differed from the nostalgic narrative on Yugoslavia, which presupposed that time-space's modernity, stability, and opportunity.) Accordingly, the actions represented through the chronotope of transition abided by a logic of deceit and intrigue.

Second, and in contrast to "transition," a chronotopic model of efficient and prosperous "Europe" also achieved widespread traction in Macedonia (cf. Gal 1991, 2005). Within the "European" chronotope, political actors were characterized as responsible and responsive: it was a time-place of consummate modernity and reason. The chronotopes of "transitional Macedonia" and "modern Europe" proliferated across the mediascape of fin de siècle Macedonia.<sup>1</sup> They routinely grounded report and commentary on current events by imbuing news stories with narrative conventions that contrasted the two imagined time-spaces.

The following vignette illustrates how these chronotopes would be called upon in the narration and construal of everyday experience. One Saturday evening in Skopje during June 2004, a friend invited me over to his family's home to join a number of others in watching a movie. *American Pie 2* was the film on the bill. Such an event—a group of friends gathered to chat and watch a move on a weekend night—would not likely warrant untoward suspicion. However, my own inclusion in this plan, and hence the appearance of an American anthropologist in a Macedonian living room, transformed the narrative that at least one participant constructed for that warm night. The participant in question was my friend Petar's fifteen-year-old sister, Maja.

Arriving at Petar's family's apartment, I met Maja for the first time that night, and I politely greeted her according to the informal Macedonian custom, shaking her hand while saying hello and offering my first name: a simple, "Zdravo, Endi." Alarmed by the peculiarity of my name and my accented Macedonian, instead of reciprocating my greeting, the teenager turned to her brother, asking, "Otkaj e?" (Where's he from?). I answered first and responded, "Amerikanec sum" (I'm an American). Listening to me but still refusing to acknowledge me, Maja spoke again to her brother: "Sram da ti e, Brate!" (Shame on you, brother!). Bewildered by this unfolding interaction, I again intervened before Petar had a chance: "Što?" (What?) I asked. With this question, Maja finally addressed me, with an intense certainty: "Pa, sigurno ste špijun!" (Well, surely you're a spy!).

With these words, Maja broke the building suspense and Petar and I broke into laughter. Petar chastised his sister for what he considered her rude conduct toward his guest while assuring her that I was in fact not a spy, but a researcher, an anthropologist interested in the news media in Macedonia, and a friend. In my own defense, I reasoned to her that most spies would probably not spend a precious weekend evening watching B-grade comedy movies in company that included teenagers. I have no idea whether we managed to alter Maja's prejudice, and she quickly left us to spend the remainder of the evening with her own friends in her room on the other side of the apartment. However, in Maja's initial reaction, one can discern the significance that chronotopes have on how people make sense of the happenings that constitute everyday life. What could have been an unexceptional (even banal) narrative—a group of friends in their midtwenties hanging out on a Saturday, watching a silly movie—instead became one filled with scandal and intrigue. Was this guest a spy? Was her brother an accomplice?

Grounding Maja's representation of and participation in the unfolding interaction was a chronotopic model of transition and its figure of the meddlesome foreigner with obscure intentions. The general salience of this chronotope as a narrative ground for talking politics in postconflict Macedonia enabled Maja to impart a meaning to the plans Petar and I shared that night, even if it was one that at first puzzled and then amused the two of us. Our sense of utter normalcy of "hanging out" (which implies its own chronotopy) on a Saturday evening was ruptured by Maja's sense of alarm over the foreign spy that she surely had in her midst. Her reframing of our plans (and our identities) as she aligned our encounter within the transition chronotope displaced our implicit self-understandings and ultimately produced our laughter.

Bakhtin (1981: 250) expressed this aptly: "[T]he chronotope makes the narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins." As with the case of my interaction with Maja and her brother, social actors can be shown to presuppose and operate within socially available chronotopic models when figuring their own narrative understandings of even everyday encounters. Socially available chronotopes thus constitute a central semiotic material, grounding models of the world that, contingent on the nature of actors' alignment to them, inform subjects' experience of the everyday and their own place within social worlds.

## **MEDIA CHRONOTOPES OF THE POLITICAL**

Socially available and familiar chronotopes do not only affect small-scale social interactions; as we shall see, they also impact mass-mediated construals of

the social world (see Agha 2007). While this point could extend to any number of mass media forms, it is exemplified by the narrative regularities found in cultures of news media and journalism. It is perhaps a truism within media studies that news reports do not merely describe a situation, but construct “events” through narrativization (cf. Hall 1980). Inherently, then, news media narratives depend on an array of chronotopes in producing such events via description. Insofar as particular chronotopes become dominant within and across news media, they yield commonplace public discourses on the nature of social and political reality.

In this section, I illustrate this point by examining the characteristics of political scandals within the Macedonian news media. Although in principle a many varied thing can be described as a scandal, as I demonstrate for the Macedonian case, the narrative making of a scandal emerged through and reproduced particular stock chronotopes of Macedonia’s postconflict political culture. The result was that a narrow set of themes came to be common to most media scandals. It is this character of chronotopes, their role in bringing media scandals “to life” in narrative and to connect stories in a shared experiential framework, that I explore here.

In postconflict Macedonia, it was in fact common practice for journalists to break stories as scandals (*skandali*) that, contingent on their subsequent development, could earn the epithets *slučaj* or *afera* (i.e., the X incident or the X affair) that marked stories off as tokens of the scandal type. To give but a small indication of the range included within the category of the scandal, during the course of my research examples included the National Bank’s failure to note the liquidation of an Irish bank in which it had holdings, an alleged plot by the interior minister that resulted in the murder of seven South Asian migrants, poll rigging on a popular news discussion television show, baby selling, and a government minister’s shady real estate deal.

However, while many news reports would initially frame a story as an example of a scandal, only very few would take on a social life in which they emerged as perduring and socially robust topics of scandal. What, then, made a news story felicitous as a scandal in the postconflict Macedonian context? What made a scandal compelling to audiences? What enabled scandals to take off? In examining these questions, I reflect on the social processes by which public discourses take shape, circulate, and come to have tangible social effects.

As is the case with news in Macedonia more generally, stories about scandals developed through an intertextual process tied to the temporalities of news publishing. That is, news stories necessarily developed as socially significant events in a piecemeal fashion that spanned (a series of) published reports, public reactions, and public commentary that mutually alluded to and anticipated one another. Unlike basic examples of news reports, however,

scandals advanced a moral narrative for the happenings framed as the news event. Grounding the scandal genre was thus a particular chronotopic frame, a here and now marked by moral crisis and demanding remedy. Articles on news scandals implicitly or explicitly called upon audiences to align themselves to the subject position of outrage within this chronotope: something happened, and “we,” an implied public audience, should be angered by it. Furthermore, in the Macedonian context, the alleged violation of public morality at the center of a scandal narrative typically also relied on chronotopic contrast that made sense of this violation in terms of Macedonian and European difference. Scandals regularly drew on contrasts between “transitional Macedonia” and “modern Europe” to articulate and authorize statements expressing how “our” leaders disappoint “us,” “the public” presumed to understand and value “European” ways.

An example of this can be found in a 2004 news story over milk quality in Macedonia. In this story, the publicization of a government report about the illegal and unhealthy presence of powdered milk in Macedonian milk supplies developed into a scandal over the government’s allegedly insufficient commitment to food safety. A quick review of three news articles from different moments in the story’s social life will reflect the social process through which the story’s changing moral frames emerged.

The first report on the story—published in news daily *Dnevnik*—was presented as a synopsis of a scholarly study from the state’s veterinary institute on milk quality in Macedonia. The government study stated that excessive amounts of powdered milk had been discovered in the ultra-high-temperature pasteurized milk produced by Macedonian dairies. Since the powdered milk supplement would have gone through the pasteurization process twice, the report explained, the nutritional content of the milk would be substandard. Common to the genre of unmarked news report, the title of this first article read as a dry statement of fact: “Powdered Milk Used Illegally” (*Dnevnik* 2004a). Indeed, from a linguistic perspective, the Macedonian-language verbal forms used in the article and the headline underscore its matter-of-factness. The preferred verbal tense locates the article’s narrative in an isolatable, recent past, indicating that this happened and sources confirm it.

Several days later, once the study had been submitted to the appropriate government ministries for review, another *Dnevnik* report foregrounded the illegality and danger of powdered milk supplements to “the public” and also quoted demands that the implicated dairies be held accountable. In the title of this report, one detects the emergent moral frame of a scandal and the interpellation of a concerned public: “We Drink Dangerous, White Water Instead of Milk” (*Dnevnik* 2004b). While this report still locates events in an isolatable, recent past, through the inclusion of the calls for justice, the narra-

tive also projects an imperative for a future time in which the issue has been resolved.

The story's "scandalousness" became even more pronounced in later news articles. Illustratively, one week after the second report, in an op-ed commentary entitled "Powdered Responsibility," *Dnevnik* columnist Todor Pendarov vociferously criticized both Economy Minister Stevče Jakimovski and Agriculture Minister Slavko Petrov for their handling of the milk issue and called for their resignations (Pendarov 2004). To do so, Pendarov contrasted a recent past of misdeed with an uncertain present demanding resolution. Thus, Pendarov's piece begins, "The milk quality affair has already continued two weeks, and *until now* no one has taken responsibility for it. Approximately twenty dairies use unapproved amounts of powdered milk in the milk they produce, but *it is still not* clear whether they will be punished nor by whom" (Pendarov 2004; emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> From this temporal frame, Pendarov then gave his moralized take on what was now referred to as the Powdered Milk Affair by linking the alleged misdeed to a chronic pattern. He wrote, "The contested milk remains in stores, and *Macedonia is once again confirmed as a state which cannot secure its citizens' most basic rights and give them protection to consume healthy food*" (Pendarov 2004; emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> By this time, the scandal had come to roost, and the implicated parties publically traded blame with the hope of minimizing their portion of the scandal's fallout.

The success of this scandal in achieving popular traction—as indicated by the public figures it animated and by its cycle of report and commentary—becomes understandable when we examine how it relied on oppositions between a chronotope of transition and one of Europe. In ways both implicit and explicit, the piecemeal development of this scandal came to turn on a commonsensical contrast between the popularly perceived inadequacies of a Macedonian here and now and an idealized Europe. Thus, in Todor Pendarov's commentary on the Powdered Milk Affair, he punctuated the failure of Macedonian officials by stating, "Didn't [Agricultural Minister Petrov] hear that we applied to the EU, where there are over 6,000 standards, laws, and regulations which control agriculture and the food industry" (Pendarov 2004).<sup>4</sup> In doing so, he highlighted the contrast between Macedonia and the EU in a manner that echoed their differing chronotopic representations. Evidence of substandard milk production was eventually framed within a narrative about Macedonia's intolerable backwardness compared to Europe. The anger that came to be directed at the state officials held responsible for the milk was not only anchored in concerns about public health, but also in perceptions of the typicality of such backward behavior on the part of the government officials. The scandalousness of the narrative thereby emerged as the "public" voice was embedded within a chronotope of European modernity that contrasted Mace-

donian hopes and expectations for the future with a state hopelessly mired in an unchanging, backward past.

While chronotopes of transitional Macedonia and modern Europe were broadly distributed across genres of social interaction in postconflict Macedonia, the media form of news scandals was a privileged and potent site in which this chronotopic distinction regularly emerged. In this regard, the regular manifestation of such chronotopic contrasts in reportage and commentary on scandals constituted a social process in which persons (in the form of journalists, news makers, and, crucially, audiences) routinely participated in mass-mediated interactions that took these chronotopes for granted. In doing so, a scandal functioned by breathing characterological qualities into the agents depicted in its narrative, from a “public” subject of outrage to the various other agencies with which it came into contact, for example, the state and foreigners. Consequently, a typology of social personae became widely available to Macedonian audiences and actors.

#### CHRONOTOPES AND AGENCY

In the preceding analysis, I examined how chronotopic representation of time-spaces and the characters who populate them contributed to the social development of political scandals in Macedonia. It is worth highlighting that in these cases chronotopy functions on two levels. First, the news narratives produced within and across reports rely on particular chronotopic conventions and contrasts. In complement, the consumption of and reaction to these narratives (e.g., by individuals following the story or by news makers caught in the story’s spotlight) presupposed their own chronotopic conventions that to degrees aligned with those in the narrated event. Thus, in the social emergence of any one scandal, mass-mediated narratives spurred on social action both on the level of the news makers implicated in a story and among the general audience of the news narrative.

Attention to chronotopy thus provides a novel perspective on an age-old problem of the social sciences: the structure versus agency debate. In a review essay on the subject, Laura Ahearn argued that, although the concept of agency remains ill defined in the social sciences, any definition should minimally conceive of agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (2001: 112; see also Ortner 2006). Within this framework of mediation, an actor’s agency (regardless of whether the actor in question consists of an individual or a collectivity) can be shaped by various degrees of sociocultural determination: from large-scale social structures to the participation frameworks of real-time social interaction.

I argue that socially manifested chronotopic models also provide one crucial level of mediation in on-the-ground reckonings of agentive capacity precisely due to their representational and characterological qualities. As Asif Agha argues, chronotopic representations “include figurements of social persons of many different kinds—historical actors, abstract agents of colonial history, fictional characters, sketches of political subjectivity—that become available to persons in semiotic encounters with mass-mediated representations and play a critical role in encounters with others oriented to the same representations” (2007: 326). In short, the logics of action and characterologies that define particular chronotopes constitute semiotic resources that can shape the nature and quality of social action.

Thinking about chronotopes in this way can highlight the semiotic and social processes by which collective dispositions toward action emerge and dissipate. For instance, in writing about hope, Vincent Crapanzano makes the point that, “[e]xcept where it is used as an equivalent to desire, hope depends on some other agency—a god, fate, chance, an other—for its fulfillment. Its evaluation rests on the characterization—the moral characterization—of that agency. You can do all you can to realize your hopes, but ultimately they depend on the fates—on someone else” (2003: 6). Reading this insight in terms of the concept of the chronotope, hope—whether an individual or collective disposition—arguably depends on a chronotopic representation of social agencies, while it also projects a field of possible action populated by these diverse agencies. It is within this projection, the chronotope, as it were, that the ego’s own course of (in)action can take place.

So too can attention to chronotopy inform the analysis that both Hariman (this volume) and Citron (this volume) offer on the eclipse of the trope of revolution by that of catastrophe within recent political movements. As they each argue, the formulations of revolution that dominated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were organized according to a temporal logic of progressive stages. That is, revolution implied a chronotope defined by particular possibilities of action that oriented how individuals and groups acted under the mantle of revolution. The logics of action presupposed by the chronotope of catastrophe are markedly different. Whereas revolution conjures figures of popular uprising and, in its Marxist iteration, a progression of state forms, catastrophe instead projects unexpected and exogenous forces as agents of change that demand response. As Hariman and Citron both emphasize, the differences in how catastrophe figures agency compared to revolution reflects a profound shift in contemporary political culture.

The circulation of chronotopic models thereby bear on actors’ reflexive sense of their own capacity to act. In some cases, the notion that “things never change” or that “change will eventually come”—when achieved in a discursive

interaction—can ground a projection of a field of agency in which individual social actors feel little compulsion, or capacity, to act, in which their stance can be characterized as resigned (cf. Riskedahl 2007). In other contexts, political chronotopes, including those that figure revolution and catastrophe, can presuppose a collective agent at the center of social change to which individuals can align. Similarly, chronotopic models of activism exist that portray everyday social actors whose interventions do count (e.g., see Keck and Sikkink 1998). Broadly circulating chronotopes thus occupy a central role in anchoring expressions of social personhood and intersubjectivity and in setting the scene for the myriad social practices that form the material of everyday life. Such chronotopes overlap, complement, and conflict, but nonetheless they emerge and mediate action in the world when taken up within and across discursive interactions.

From this perspective, the conventionality of chronotopic models within Macedonian discourses of the scandal is very significant. Via scandals, chronotopes circulated that allowed people to make sense of everyday Macedonian political dynamics, but also to “tie the narrative threads together” when reflecting on their own position within the chronotope, whether it be one of backward Macedonia or progressive Europe. I often encountered people doing just this during my fieldwork: criticizing, complaining, explaining, defending, and rationalizing, all predicated on chronotopic representations of the Macedonian present. In doing so, they would constantly, if implicitly, evaluate their own agentic capacity in relation to those other agencies projected within the chronotope. Ergo, in postconflict Macedonia, as Agha observes, “[c]hronotopic representations enlarge the ‘historical present’ of their audiences by creating chronotopic displacements and cross-chronotope alignments between persons here-and-now and persons altogether elsewhere, transposing selves across discrete zones of cultural spacetime through communicative practices that have immediate consequences for how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel, and act” (2007: 324).

### SAY MACEDONIA!

My contention, then, is that analytic attention to the emergence and achievement of chronotopic framings of the political can illustrate not only how actors understand political experience, but also how they understand their own agency within a given social context. To demonstrate this, I offer an example that focuses on one news scandal that crossed the publicity threshold in Macedonia and resulted in many ordinary citizens rallying to public action. The scandal itself centered on the discovery of a Council of Europe document

that stipulated terms of address for Macedonia and its residents that went further than the norms that had resulted from the country's name dispute with Greece. By exploring the emergence of particular chronotopes and chronotopic contrasts in the scandal's narrative development, I show how a mass mobilization in protest of the document became felicitous.

On 15 March 2004, journalist Zoran Andonovski broke a story in the now defunct Macedonia-language news daily *Vreme* about a Council of Europe (COE) document that outlined terms of address for Macedonia and its residents for use in communications within the office of the Secretary General (Andonovski 2004d). The Council of Europe, founded in 1949, is an interstate body that fosters European coordination and cooperation on matters related to human rights and the rule of law. According to Andonovski's article, the document, dated 2 March, prescribed that the dominant language and culture of Macedonia should be referred to as "(Slav) Macedonian"; that citizens of the country should not be called "Macedonians" but rather "citizens of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"; and finally, that members of the Macedonian diaspora should be referred to as "individuals who identify themselves as (Slav) Macedonians." These guidelines were in addition to, but went well beyond, the use of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," or FYROM, to refer to the country itself as set out by the United Nations. In the fashion of the news scandal genre, Andonovski's article blended a chronotope of factual report with one implying crisis and the need for remedial action.

Given the widespread resentment most ethnic Macedonians have toward the naming dispute that foisted the designation FYROM upon the country in the first place—it was perceived as a direct Greek attack on the Macedonian nation and national identity—this story was likely to draw popular attention. But, since the Macedonian press regularly churned out reports about perceived regressive or progressive steps taken by foreign governments and international organizations regarding the naming dispute, the story's uptake as a scandal was by no means guaranteed. Indeed, in its first rendition, the story, although mentioned on *Vreme's* front page, was not highlighted as the lead story nor accompanied by a photograph. The story might have ended here.

The next day, 16 March, however, saw the story's acceleration. *Vreme* again highlighted the story, featuring a follow-up report on its front page. This time, however, the story had expanded. With a picture of Minister of Foreign Affairs Ilinka Mitreva, the headline read, "The Ministry Comforts Us; The Ambassador Protests" (Andonovski 2004c). In the report, a statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which emphasized the unofficial status (and thus relative insignificance) of the document, is contrasted with the strong criticism that the Macedonian ambassador to the COE, Zvonimir Jakuloski, leveled toward COE Secretary General Walter Schwimmer. As *Vreme's* cover-

age of the story continued, the developing narrative about injustice toward Macedonia at the COE was complemented with one that also cast doubt on the appropriateness of the government's reaction. Macedonia's other news dailies also picked up the story on 16 March and published reports that mirrored the narrative threads introduced by the *Vreme* coverage.

In addition, 16 March also saw two articles of published commentary on the emerging COE scandal: an editorial in *Vreme* by none other than Zoran Andonovski (2004a), and an op-ed piece in the newspaper *Dnevnik* by Ljubomir Frčkovski (2004), a former politician and one of Macedonia's leading public intellectuals. Each author highlighted the hypocrisy of the COE—an organization ostensibly with a mission to increase harmony and unity between its member states—for unilaterally taking sides on the Greek-Macedonian naming dispute and, in effect, subordinating all its constituent members to the will of one, Greece. Both of the articles, however, concluded with a call for a public response to the document: Andonovski called on citizens to “remind foreigners what [Macedonia's] name is,” and Frčkovski asked readers to prove that Macedonia “will not acquiesce.”

Already on this second day of news coverage, then, one can discern how the emergent news narrative on the COE scandal relied on distinct chronotopes that represented and contrasted “Macedonia” and “Europe.” However, unlike the valences more typical of this contrast, in this instance, “Macedonia” was portrayed as a truthful and upright center (despite its government's ineptness) against a hypocritical “Europe.” Furthermore, in line with the chronotopy of the scandal genre, this contrast supported the “outraged persona” (voiced both by Andonovski and Frčkovski) who demanded urgent action in response to the incident.

The next day, on 17 March, coverage of the COE scandal continued, but the play of chronotopes became more complicated. Reports in the newspapers *Vreme*, *Dnevnik*, and *Utrinski Vesnik* all focused on the MFA's new demand that the COE document be immediately withdrawn (e.g., Andonovski 2004b). This reproduced a chronotope of urgent action in which Macedonian justice countered European hypocrisy, and signaled government attempts to place itself at the heroic center of the emerging narrative. At the same time, however, the newspapers continued to question the MFA's conduct prior to the discovery of the document, suggesting a diplomatic failure on the part of the ministry.

In addition, the coverage of 17 March also elaborated on the unresponsiveness of the COE. The *Utrinski Vesnik* report, entitled “Strasbourg Is Silent about the Scandal around the Name,” highlighted that Walter Schwimmer had not made himself available for questioning by Macedonian journalists. The *Utrinski Vesnik* article also intimated that, unofficially, it was known that

Schwimmer was more outraged at the leak than at the offense caused to the Macedonian public, and that the document had been the outcome of Schwimmer's efforts to recruit Greek votes to support his candidacy for a second term as COE Secretary General. Through this narrative trajectory, "Europe" further emerged as a place of intrigue, of backroom politics, and of nontransparent and unresponsive officials. In effect, it was assimilated to a chronotopic model of transitional Macedonia.

The narrative of the scandal thus developed across both reportage and commentary in two complementary directions: one direction highlighted the hypocrisy of "Europe," the perpetrator in a characterology derived from the chronotopic model of scandal, while the other direction questioned the lack of action on the part of the MFA. This strain of report constituted, as it were, a subscandal. Within this subscandal, the narrative represented the Macedonian state as an impotent entity that failed to confront the secret, hidden agencies of "Europe."

Over the next few days, further reports and commentary continued the narrative trend of the story and the growing diplomatic ripples caused by the Macedonian protest to the document. Notably, however, other social actors were getting involved. In particular, a consortium of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) banded together to spearhead a mass postcard protest of the COE. As part of a "Say Macedonia!" campaign, the NGOs designed and printed a large amount of postcards that proclaimed slogans such as "Don't You FYROM ME" or "Call Me By My Name" (figure 2.1). The postcards' backs offered senders blank space to express their displeasure to the COE.

The mass mobilization achieved by the postcard campaign was unparalleled when compared to other postconflict scandals that projected public outrage but rarely succeeded in mounting full-scale popular action. As I contend, the scandal's ability to effect mass action was hinged on the chronotopic contrasts that came to be employed in the domi-

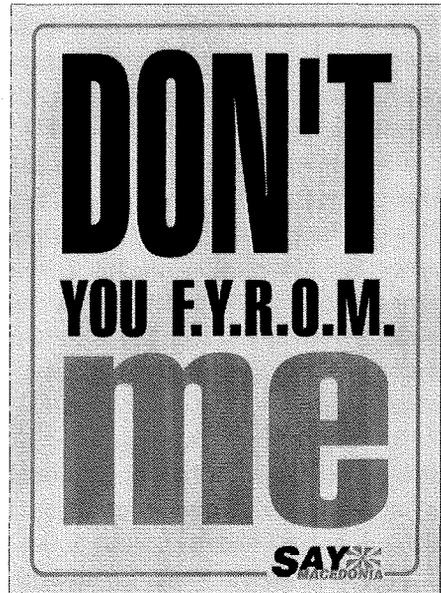


Figure 2.1. One of the postcard designs used to protest the Council of Europe's stringent guidelines on how to refer to Macedonia within the organization's documents.

nant narrative that emerged around the news story. In particular, the effort to inundate the office of the Secretary General with postcards of protest operated in a chronotopic model opened up by central themes of reportage and commentary, that is, Schwimmer's (non)reaction to the issue, the MFA's inadequacy in handling the situation, and the expression of popular protest to the situation. Such themes contrasted a nonresponsive and unforthcoming outside power (i.e., the primary scandal) and an ineffectual state (i.e., the sub-scandal) with "the people," who had to stand up and act as their own advocates within the framework of the scandal narrative's chronotope of urgent action. Further animating this chronotopic model was a contrast between "Europe" and "Macedonia," but one in which their typical valuations and associations were reversed. Unlike previous moments of outrage over the name dispute, the postcard campaign, enlivened by chronotopic contrasts, projected a space for popular agency that could bring about concrete results. Mass action became felicitous.

The advance of the postcard campaign also resulted in further representations of Macedonian popular agency against hypocritical "Europe" and despite perceived state inactivity. Significantly, these reports all quoted the NGO coalition's statement saying that because the MFA had been so passive, this citizens' action must continue until the document is withdrawn and "responsibility is taken." Such rhetoric appeared in news reports over the subsequent days as the news narrative and participants' statements continued to align with the emergent chronotopic model of the scandal.

Beyond the framing of the postcard campaign and its news coverage, the emerging sense of popular action also had a palpable effect on daily life in Skopje. The postcard booth in Skopje's central square was well visited, and other "Say Macedonia!" paraphernalia (e.g., T-shirts, baseball caps) cropped up across the city. Many friends and neighbors also seemed revitalized by their sense of participation in the collective stand against "Europe's" hypocrisy, and many of them specifically urged me to participate in the postcard protest, which I did.

As the postcard campaign continued and expanded to other Macedonian cities, there was, however, only limited news coverage, until Tuesday, 6 April, when the "Say Macedonia!" campaign came to a close. Both *Vreme* and *Utrinski* each had stories on that day about the reception of the postcards in Strasbourg (Stojanovska 2004a; Jovanovska 2004). Finally, to punctuate the end of the campaign, the organizers of "Say Macedonia!" held a press conference on Thursday, 8 April, that was covered in all three papers. The media coverage highlighted the organizers' central claim that the initiative "united" government and citizens and even the government and the opposition ("The Battle for the Name Links Citizens and Politicians"; "Say Macedonia Unites Gov-

ernment and Opposition”) (Stojanovska 2004b; *Utrinski Vesnik* 2004). In the end, the scandal concluded on a happy middle ground. COE Secretary General Walter Schwimmer admitted some responsibility for the incident and suffered embarrassment, which may have contributed to his failure to win reelection as COE Secretary General. The MFA declared a victory due to its role in holding the COE responsible for the document. The NGO coalition celebrated their remarkable organizational feat and the “citizens’ action” that it precipitated.

In the case of “Say Macedonia!,” the story’s initial traction was in no small part due to its being cast within the scandal genre, with its characteristic chronotopic contrasts, resulting in a representation of pernicious “foreign intervention” in Macedonian politics. European actors within the chronotope of transitional Macedonia often took on undesirable characteristics, as two-faced agencies with unclear motivations and agendas. Insofar as the COE Secretary General was seemingly caught red-handed in his perceived defamation of Macedonia, he was easily construed as a glaring example of that character type. Reports and commentary foregrounded this viewpoint by echoing statements about the COE’s—and, by extension, “Europe’s”—hypocrisy. This narrative thrust, therefore, came into direct conflict with the other dominant chronotope of Europe, in which Europe constituted the realm of normalcy par excellence. By contrasting these chronotopes, the COE scandal showed not only a “European” bureaucracy plagued by petty politicking, but also one that held sinister motives toward Macedonia that threatened the integrity of the Macedonian national identity. The combination was powerful, or better said, empowering: the mischievous foreigners in Macedonia had typically been imagined as behind-the-scenes and therefore unable to be addressed. However, now materialized in “Europe” and embedded in scandal logic, European justice and efficiency could be used against “them.”

Significantly, within this emergent, major chronotope, the appropriate delegate of the Macedonian state, Foreign Minister Ilinka Mitreva, developed as a character of impotence, that is, as one without initiative. In news coverage and commentary, the MFA could only respond—and ineffectually at that—following press and popular pressure. Thus, as the narrative paired a malicious Europe with an impotent Macedonian state where at stake was the integrity of the Macedonian identity itself, the conditions were ripe for a mass mobilization. Journalists and commentators seized on this in dually criticizing the COE and the government, as well as in urging citizens to action.

However, whereas most postconflict scandals either projected an impotent and intractable Macedonian state or the hidden power of foreigners against which public cries would fall silent, the “Say Macedonia!” scandal proved different. By revealing the hidden machinations of a European power not inside Macedonia but in the “heart of Europe” and guaranteed by “European”

standards, the scandal produced a villain amenable to effective response. If the words of Macedonian politicians were empty and those of foreigners in Macedonia duplicitous, the COE by virtue of its history and moral authority not only could, but also needed to, answer Macedonian alarm in a form deemed substantive. Not coincidentally, in presenting the issue in terms of a contrast between a manipulative “Europe” bound by vested interests (e.g., of Greece, of Schwimmer and his campaign for reelection) and a just and honest “Macedonia,” conditions were created for the mass demonstration of a collective national voice that at least momentarily reversed the moral underpinnings of the dominant chronotopic framings of the role taken by internationals vis-à-vis Macedonia.

This particular confluence of chronotopes that emerged in the unfolding scandal was instrumental in founding a situation in which the “Say Macedonia!” campaign could take off. The chronotopic model organizing the news narrative cast the *foreign* Council of Europe as an antagonistic but vulnerable agent and the Macedonian government as an ineffectual one, and so an NGO-led “people’s action” appeared possible and necessary. The socially achieved chronotope of the COE scandal was crucial to the felicity of the NGO action: by capturing “Europe” as simultaneously secretive and transparent, a field of agency was projected upon which people could act.

## CONCLUSION

The “Say Macedonia!” scandal illustrates how salient chronotopes ground the social production of public narratives on the political. On one level, the availability and familiarity of particular chronotopic representations (e.g., of Europe and of transitional Macedonia) shaped the news story that emerged on the scandal across media outlets and a cycle of reports, follow-ups, and commentaries. On another level, insofar as public actors (e.g., the NGO coalition) aligned to the chronotopy of the scandal, mass public action became felicitous in the “Say Macedonia!” case. Attention to chronotopes in news narratives thus provides one lens through which to view the formal qualities of public discourses, the way such discourses frame social responsibility and agency, and their form-shaping relevance for political action.

The approach to public discourse outlined here privileges the analysis of both the textual qualities of public narrative as well as the institutional settings and social processes that function to (re)produce public narratives as a regular discourse. Indeed, the view on chronotopy described and applied here theorizes the relationship between the textual and the social-institutional. The salience of particular chronotopes impacts narrative conventions (e.g., genres

of news report and news scandal) that define the political institution of professional journalism but that also shape public readings of political agency. In a dialectical fashion, public discourses at once depend on their uptake within and across social institutions and social contexts, and they also shape the practices found in these locations.

Ultimately, then, I argue that this chronotope-focused approach to public discourse amounts to a powerful conceptualization of political culture. The chronotopes of the political that circulate broadly within a society—including those that circulate via social technologies such as the political scandal—are not only central to the imaginations of political agency, but also become instrumental to social actors' reflexive evaluations of their own capacity for action in concrete cases. Through chronotopic models we can trace the representations of state power that are characteristic of a particular time and place, and also the relationship of these representations to the ways in which people negotiate their encounters with the state. In the chronotope as a major, social manifestation, then, one finds a practical notion of historical consciousness and historicity, not as abstract objects that are the outcome of analysis, but as orienting devices that are achieved in lived moments. Attention to chronotopes, their interdiscursive emergence in particular contexts, and their mediation of actors' representation of and action in a social field facilitates both an understanding of overarching regularities of a political culture, but also of the heterodox forms of praxis that inevitably emerge within social life.

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## Notes

1. The narrative opposition between Europe and the Balkans has a long history within literary traditions of both Western Europe and the Balkans, as does a Balkan narrative about malicious foreign powers (see Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Neofotistos 2008).
2. "Vekje dve nedeli trae aferata za kvalitetot na mlekoto, a dosega nikoj ne ponese odgovornost za toa. Dvaesetina mlekarnici koristele nedozvoleni količestva mleko vo

prav vo mlekoto što go proizveduvaat, no se ušte e nejasno koj i dali kje gi kazni." All translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

3. "Vo prodavnicite ostana spornoto mleko, a Makedonija ušte ednaš se potvrdi kako država koja na svoje gragjani ne može da im obezbedi najosnovi prava i zaštita za da komsumiraat zdrava hrana."
4. "Dali ministerot slušnal deka apliciravme za členstvo vo EU, a tamu ima nad 6.000 standardi, zakoni, i propisi koi go ureduvaat zemjodelstvoto i prehranbenata industrija."

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# CULTURE, CATASTROPHE, AND RHETORIC

THE TEXTURE OF POLITICAL ACTION



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