



Activity Report 2021

24 February 2022

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The statutes of SQRIDGE were deposited at the Belgian registry on 26 August 2019, and published on 28 August 2019 in the Belgian legal journal, thus legally establishing the NGO as an “internationale vereniging zonder winstoogmerk” (iuzw, or an international non-profit organization), regulated by the Belgian law of 23 March 2019 establishing a code of companies and associations.

SQRIDGE has the following aims:

- a) promoting, enabling and performing artistic research and scientific research, and research that is located at its intersections;**
- b) actively engaging in international scientific research, in the broadest possible range of academic fields and disciplines;**
- c) actively engaging in and supporting the production, the display and the distribution of creative practices, at the international level, in the different artistic domains;**
- d) stimulating international collaborations, dialogues, debates and reflections in relation to arts, science and their intersecting domains.**

SQRIDGE currently has two directors, Nico Carpentier and Vaia Doudaki.

This document reports on the activities of SQRIDGE, for the second full year of its existence, from 1 January until 31 December 2021.



Sqridgings

Two main projects were (further) developed in this period, which are: (1) Wolf Talks, and (2) the Iconoclastic Controversies 2 (“Mirror of Conflict”) project.

In addition, 2021 saw the completion of two other projects: (3) the Special Issue on Arts-Based Research in Communication and Media Studies, and (4) the Iconoclastic Controversies 1 book.



Sqridging 1: Wolf Talks

Wolf Talks is an arts-based research project, created by Nico Carpentier (as part of the Silencing/Unsilencing Nature project), that questions the power dynamics of the discursive-material relationships between human and non-human animals. For each photograph, you can listen to a Wolf Talks sound fragment (connected with the photograph through a QR code), where a wolf speaks to the visitor. Exceptionally, as a curtesy to the visitor, they will speak a human language. Or at least, the visitors will understand them, even if they might challenge them a bit.

Of course, non-human animals can use language. They have vast repertoires of verbal and non-verbal communication at their disposal. They can talk, even if human animals can hardly understand them. But non-human animals cannot produce discourse, at least not when we see discourse as systematically articulated knowledge frameworks. This inability to produce discourses generates structural power imbalances, which places non-human animals in a fundamentally disadvantageous position. This imbalance is only worsened by the access that human animals have to advanced technologies.

Human animals have the ability to categorise and classify non-human animals through their discourses. They can label them as harmful, undesirable or simply irrelevant, thus, in some cases, legitimating species-cides. Predators, in particular, have been subjected to excessive violence, as they competed with human animals over territory and livestock. The European wolf, for instance, was almost completely eradicated from its habitat. One of the safe heavens that were created for them were the European zoos, but this produced a high cost for them, as these animals were then subjected to fierce restrictions, and became trapped in discursive-material enclosures.

This sometimes structurally oppressive and violent relationship between human and non-human living beings is not easy to remedy. Wolf Talks analyses and questions these inequalities, acknowledging the unequal power relations non-human animals find themselves in, symbolised by the cat-face filter, which ironically anthropomorphises them and emphasises their tragic situation. But, Wolf Talks also supports the wolves, inspired by post-colonial theory, to talk back and to continue to resist human domination. Even if this tactic is necessarily imperfect – all material is still created by human



animals – these emphatic visual and auditory representations strengthen the wolves' agency through role reversals and highlights their ability to resist, not only through material behaviour but also through the stewardship of these visual and auditory representations.

A first version of this exhibition was part of the 2021 Fotograf Festival¹ in Prague (Czech Republic), with the 12 photographs displayed in 12 different locations and online.² In October 2021, the exhibition was on display at the Hollar Gallery, also in Prague. In February 2022, the exhibition moved to Pakistan, with two exhibitions, one at the University of Okara and one at the University of the Punjab, in Lahore.

Wolf talks / Vlčí hovory

An
arts-based
research
project
on the
(un)silencing
of nature

By
Nico Carpentier



3/9/21 - 3/10/21
Prague

<http://wolvestalk.commedia.wiki/#/>

Collaboration/support: Mistra EC WP5,
Sqridge, ICSJ & Fotograf Festival

¹ <https://fotografestival.cz/2021/en/event/vlci-hovory/>

² <https://wolvestalk.commedia.wiki/>

Photos of the Prague locations



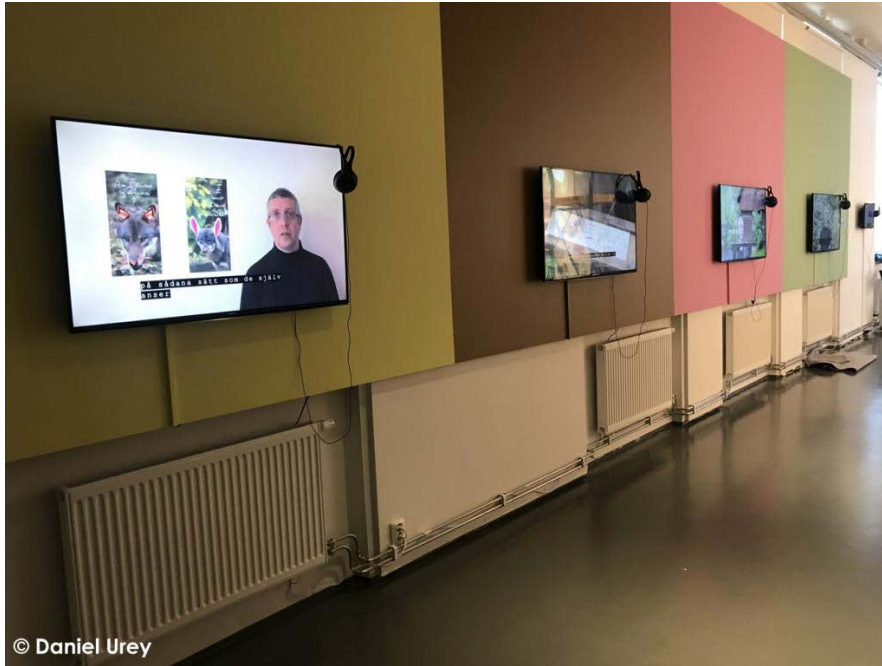


Photos of the Hollar Gallery exhibition





In addition, the videos related to the educational package of Silencing / Unsilencing Nature, which used the wolves' photographs as example, were on display as part of the Lyssna! exhibition at Nordanå centre, Skellefteå, Sweden (13 March - 30 May 2021)



Publications about Wolf Talks (and Silencing/Unsilencing Nature)

- CARPENTIER, NICO (2021) Silencing / Unsilencing Nature: A Participatory Visual Essay on the Right to Flourish, *Comunicazioni Sociali*, 1: 61-70.
- CARPENTIER, NICO (2022) Silencing/Unsilencing Nature: A 'Lupocentric' Remediation of Animal-Nature Relationships, *Central European Journal of Communication*, in press.

Conference presentations

- CARPENTIER, NICO (2021) Who is entitled to speak? Unsilencing strategies in animal-human relations, ECREA 2021 conference, Online (6 - 9 September 2021).

Guest lectures

- Arts-based research in communication and media studies: A series of examples and experiences, IUML PhD programme, Milan, 15 September 2021.
- Arts-based research in communication and media studies: A series of examples and experiences, Department of Fine Arts, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus, 24 November 2021.



Sqridging 2: The Mirror of Conflict: Iconoclastic Controversies 2

2021 was used for new ethnographic and historical research on memorialization in Cyprus, with a series of research visits to North Cyprus. The results will be displayed in an exhibition at the H4C in Cyprus, in April 2022.

The exhibition investigates how the memorials on the island of Cyprus represent the Cyprus Problem in very particular ways, often supporting antagonistic nationalist discourses and constructing the other as Enemy. It is an arts-based research project, grounded in academic research, that uses an artistic repertoire to communicate and co-produce knowledge.

The 93 photographs, capturing acts of memorialization both in the south and north of Cyprus, show the presence of national(ist) markers and the connections with Greek and Turkish histories. They glorify heroes and leaders. They remember victims, pain and suffering. And they celebrate freedom, victory and sacrifice. Still, these antagonistic nationalist discourses do not go uncontested. In some cases, these discourses are undermined by the practices of everyday life, that deny the memorials the attention and respect that they seek. In other cases, material processes such as decay, or the spaces where they are placed, work against these memorials (and the discourses they try to communicate and support). Moreover, a number of informal and formal memorials try to actively resist and disrupt the antagonistic nationalist discourses, even though they remain rare.

When displaying these photographs next to each other, we can also see the structural similarities between these memorials. Even when they refer to different people, events and analyses, the memorials in the north and south of Cyprus are remarkably similar in how they focus on history and identity, on victims, heroes and leaders, and on freedom, victory and sacrifice. Also the memorials that resist dominant (antagonistic nationalist) discourses exist both in the north and south of Cyprus, and they use similar tactics. Here, the exhibition demonstrates how the constructions of the enemy and the self are each other's mirror image. These constructions might be claiming radical difference but they are simultaneously characterized by structural similarities, often functioning as each other's inverse and constitutive outside.

The 33 metal stands on which the photographs are displayed, convey an analysis of how dominant and resistant discourses are engrained in memorials, and the different ways that they communicate ideology. By clustering the photographs on stands, the visitor is also invited to reflect about the similarities (and differences) between north and south. As the stands form a metal forest through which the visitors can stroll, the exhibition embodies the idea that we are immersed into these ideologies, and that we are part of these struggles over how to give meaning to the Cyprus Problem and its histories.



Conference presentations about IC2

- CARPENTIER, NICO, Antagonistic nationalism and its memorializations, FI(o)w Conference, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic, 1-2 July 2021, invited keynote panel.

“Antagonistic nationalism and its memorializations” guest lectures

- Current Issues of Mass Media, Faculty of Journalism, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, 30 September 2021.

- Department of Communication and Internet Studies, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus, 24 November 2021.

- Media and Conflict, MARS, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, 9 December 2021.

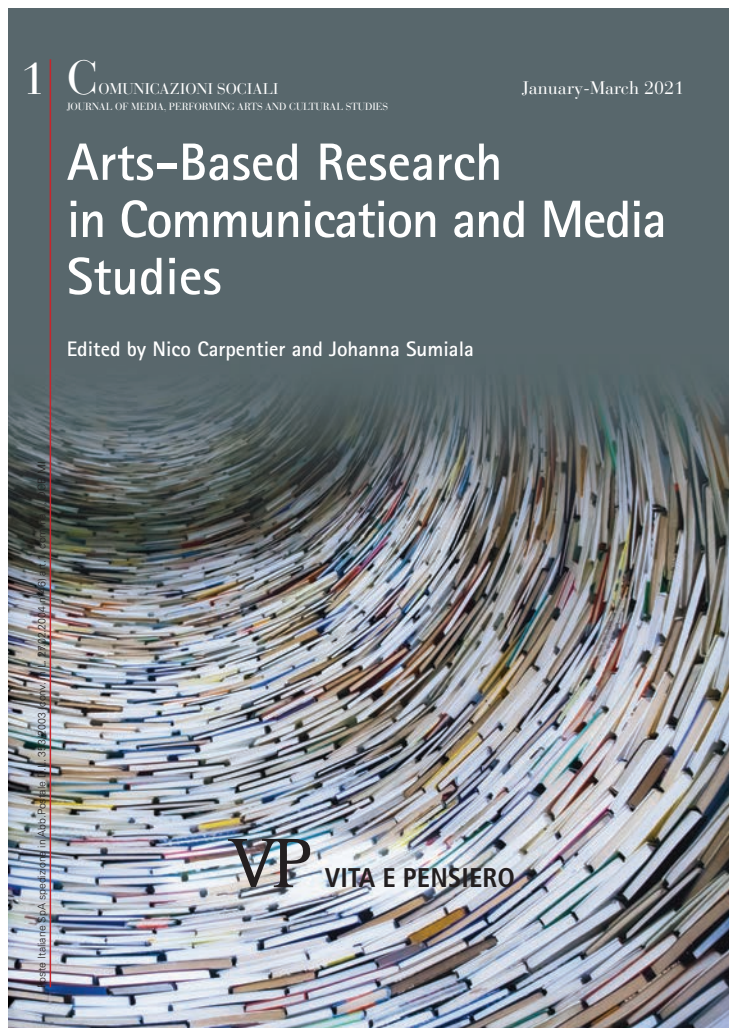
- PhD programme social sciences faculty, Helsinki University, Finland, 10 December 2021.

Sqridging 3: The Special Issue on Arts-Based Research in Communication and Media Studies

This special issue was published in 2021. It is driven by the belief that still more could be done at the level of theorizing arts-based research practices, and at the level of deploying them in different contexts. The aim of this special issue is to further stimulate the discussion on this topic, bringing together a diversity of voices, formats and approaches.

In order to translate this objective into practice, a very strict (and restrictive) definition of arts-based research was avoided. Instead, all contributions that allowed for an artistic-academic dialogue on arts, academia and research were welcomed. This became translated into an intentionally-kept-vague structure, with more general reflective texts first, and then a series of more case-study-based approaches and more targeted and specific discussions, divided into a cluster on participation and interaction on the one

hand, and mediation on the other. For the very same purpose, also a variety of formats was welcomed, including multimodal formats, more artistic contributions and policy-oriented statements, even though all contributors were asked for relatively short contributions, to maximize the diversity of voices. This strategy produced a variety of contributions that aim to inspire researchers in the field of Communication and





Media Studies, and beyond, to reflect about the potentialities (and limitations) of arts-based research, and to consider adapting some of these approaches and methods in their own academic practice.

The flyer is on the next page.

Arts-Based Research in Communication and Media Studies

COMUNICAZIONI SOCIALI - 2021 - 1

Edited by Nico Carpentier and Johanna Sumiala

About the special issue:

Slowly but surely, arts-based research is making its entry into Communication and Media Studies, moving away from a rather exclusive focus on written texts and oral presentations. This special issue is driven by the belief that still more could be done at the level of theorizing arts-based research practices, and at the level of deploying them in different contexts. The aim of this special issue is to further stimulate the discussion on this topic, bringing together a diversity of voices, formats and approaches.

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Open access at: <https://bit.ly/3a0eR8m>

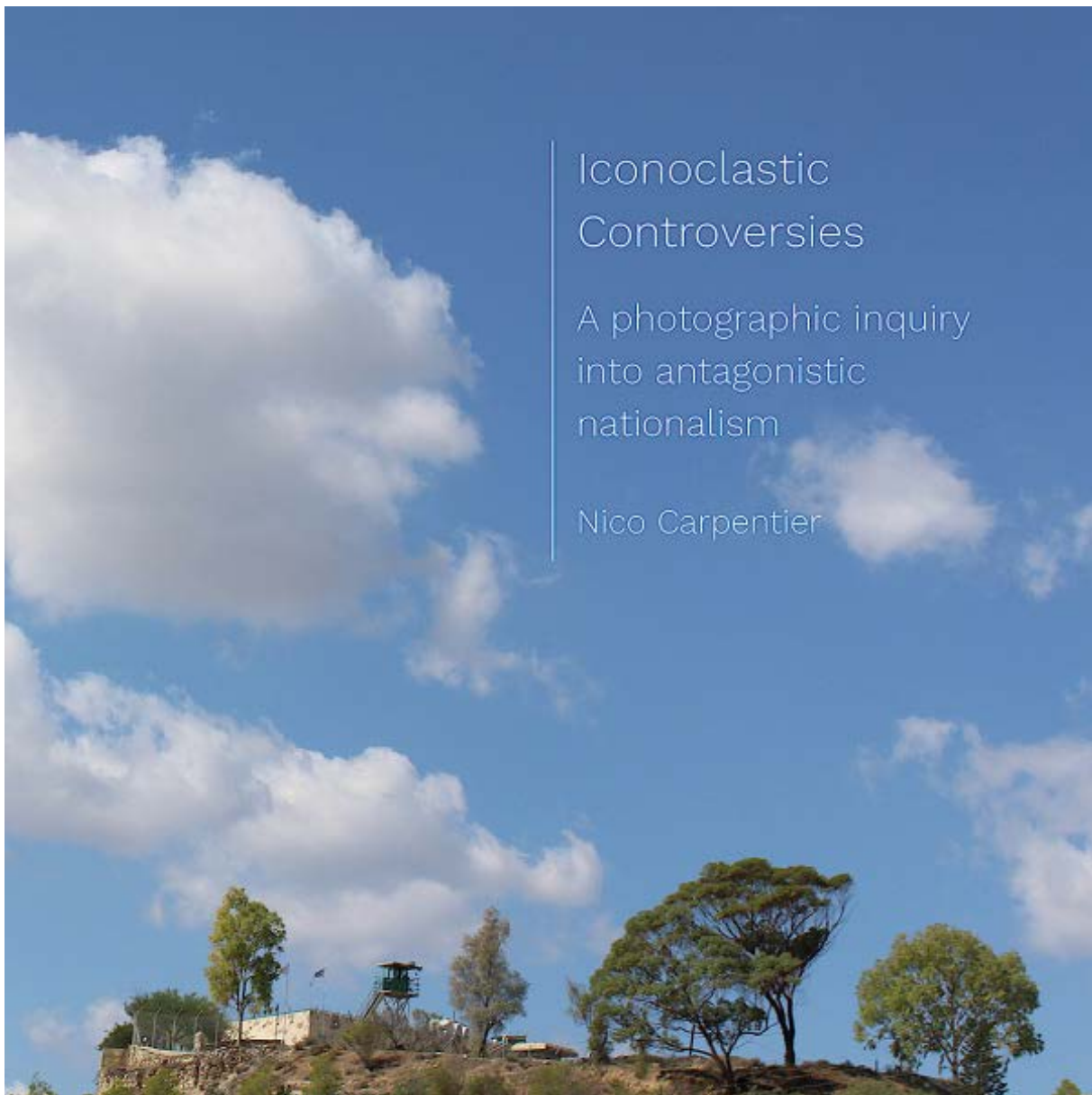
Our videos on the special issue:

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8346607/>



Sqridging 4: The Iconoclastic Controversies book 1

Iconoclastic Controversies: A photographic inquiry into antagonistic nationalism was released in May 2021. The book combines photography and written text to analyse the role of memorials and commemoration sites in the construction of antagonistic nationalism. Taking Cypriot memorializations as a case study, the book shows how these memorials often support, but sometimes also undermine, the discursive-material assemblage of nationalism.





Future plans

The search for financial resources, to allow for one or more arts-based research residences in Prague, has been successful. Financed by the Swedish foundation Mistra, and connected to a research project on environmental communication at Charles University's ICSJ, this is aimed to start mid-2022.

Also the existing exhibitions (Wolf Talks and IC2) will be rolled out to other locations. Early 2022, the Wolf Talks exhibitions were already on display in Okara and Lahore (Pakistan). One other option being investigated is another collaboration with the University of Brasilia.