



ELEMENTS OF FICTION AS A COMMUNICATIVE RESOURCE IN ACTIVISM Analysis of (Audio)Visual Content on Social Media¹

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ABSTRACT

The article proposes a study of the elements of fiction as a communicative resource in the context of contemporary activism. To this end, the analysis encompasses the examination of visual and audiovisual content published by Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion on X and Instagram over a six-month period. The research has identified a series of categories that articulate these fictional elements, namely the meme, the comic, the performance, the short video, and the animated video. Finally, the article presents conclusions regarding the use of fiction, which is frequently associated with references to mainstream culture.

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1. Introduction: The Use of Fiction in Activism

The potential of online communication as a means of activist communication has been demonstrated on numerous occasions. Despite certain limitations (Tatarchevskiy, 2011), the internet and social media have played an important role in the advancement of activism, as explained by Ildefonso Cordero-Sánchez and Jordi Alberich-Pascual (2015). The authors posit that the content of this online communication is not directed "preferentially to the militants of the causes, but to the general public, seeking to involve different layers of society"¹ (p. 817).

This expansion of the scope of activist communication is crucial for the realisation of their social demands. From this perspective, Stephen Duncombe (2020) have expressed concern about opposition proposals that are situated on the margins and therefore reach a very limited audience. While this generates its own cultural elements, which are typically antagonistic to the expressions of mass or mainstream culture, it also limits their scope. Consequently, Duncombe posits the following:

In order to bring about democratic social change, however, you need a majority on your side, and to reach this majority, you need to be able to understand their passions and speak their languages. Pop culture—as *popular* culture—can help activists and artists do this. (Duncombe, 2020, p. 188)

The concept of participatory politics (Jenkins et al., 2016) pertains to the utilisation of popular culture in novel manifestations of activism. It has been delineated as a sort of evolution of participatory culture: "participatory culture meets political and civic participation, where political change is promoted through social and cultural mechanisms rather than through established political institutions" (Jenkins et al., 2016, p. 2). This revitalised form of activism manifests within fan communities, draws upon their social media networks and constantly makes reference to mainstream culture, with such references displaying across a diverse range of media. In alignment with Duncombe's perspective, this referentiality to popular culture "performs bonding function within the group and also bridging functions toward a broader public" (Jenkins & Shresthova, 2016, p. 258).

In a personal interview with Henry Jenkins (18 October 2022), the author presents a series of recent cases that demonstrate the presence of popular culture in activism. These include references to the series *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017) in protests for reproductive rights, the salute in *The Hunger Games* (2012), the mass chanting of *Do you hear the people sing?* from the musical *Les Misérables* (1980, the latest film adaptation released in 2012) in the streets of Hong Kong, and the use of costumes from the film *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009). After asking Henry Jenkins whether this phenomenon indicated a substitution of factual references for fictional elements in activism, the author elucidates that political action has historically resorted to the use of fiction. In Jenkins' view, a variety of narrative forms have coexisted in the shaping of political discourse. He offers the example of a sculptural representation of George Washington in which the first president of the United States is depicted seated on a throne and wearing a toga: "What this early sculpture in the history of America said is 'this founding figure represents the restoration of Greek and Roman democracy'. They are tapping mythology and they are tapping history in that regard" (H. Jenkins, personal interview, 18 October 2022).

Henry Jenkins proceeds to examine a more contemporary example: the Occupy Wall Street activist demonstration that commenced in 2011. He provides an accurate account of the coexistence and exchange between elements of fiction and non-fiction:

There is a nostalgia for the political uprisings of 1968 that guides those activists, but many of them were wearing Guy Fawkes masks. Now, where does that Guy Fawkes mask come from? Well, it's a historic figure in the UK that led to a kind of folklore around politics. So is that fiction? Is it non-fiction? (...) For many Americans, it comes from *V for Vendetta*, Alan Moore's graphic novel, the Wachowski siblings' film. (H. Jenkins, personal interview, 18 October 2022)

In the interview, Jenkins clarifies that what is novel is what he calls "fan-based forms of activism", that is, an activism that starts from cultural references and shared identities around popular – often mainstream – works, a social infrastructure founded on networks, institutions and practices, and an outstanding technical competence in the use of digital media – such as the ability to create trends in

¹ Journal's original translation

social media – as the author explains. Certainly, the value of this popular use in activism is not always recognised. At times, it is perceived as frivolous, according to Jenkins, "as not taking the cause seriously enough, as not speaking the right language, or not using the right tactics" (H. Jenkins, personal interview, 18 October 2022).

One illustrative example of this activism is the group Fandom Forward, previously known as The Harry Potter Alliance. This group has been the subject of frequent analysis by the Civic Imagination Project, led by Henry Jenkins. However, the narrative universe of Harry Potter serves only as a symbolic unifier for the Fandom Forward group, as Jenkins elucidates: "Behind the scenes, the conversations are always about non-fiction and about the facts. It's the blurring of myth and reality that makes fan activism an effective tool for social change" (H. Jenkins, personal interview, 18 October 2022).

While the activist organisations that emerge from within fan communities are not the subject of this article, they reinforce the role that mainstream culture can play in contemporary activism. Certainly, in some instances, activism has exhibited an oppositional relationship with mainstream or mass culture. In this sense, according to Marilyn Delaure and Moritz Fink (2017), the notion of culture jamming refers to actions that consist of appropriating and subverting the meanings of mainstream media, especially those linked to the logics of consumption – although they state that in recent years its target has expanded to include other social and political issues. Consequently, these activities encompass "media pranks, advertising parodies, textual poaching, billboard appropriation, street performance, and the reclamation of urban spaces for noncommercial use" (Delaure & Fink, 2017, p. 6).

Culture jamming maintains its presence today, benefiting from the internet's ability to expand and record actions that, due to their nature, are often ephemeral. Concurrently, however, in recent years, activist groups such as those previously mentioned have emerged, demonstrating a relationship of exchange rather than opposition with mainstream media narratives. In contrast to the concept of culture jamming, Henry Jenkins (2016) posits that we are faced with a model of cultural acupuncture, wherein "rather than jam the signal, activist groups surf media flows. Rather than seeing themselves as saboteurs who seek to destroy the power of popular culture, they regard popular narratives as shared resources that facilitate the conversations" (p. 17-18).

Beyond mainstream culture, activism employs fictional elements to construct its messages, which may draw upon sources such as folk tales, mythology, or other forms of narrative. This interconnection between fictional narratives and activist discourses entails a convergence of characters, worlds, and narratives, as well as the claims that are aimed at promoting social change. Consequently, there is a constant interchange between fiction – popular culture – and non-fiction – information and real data which underpins activism.

2. Objectives and Methodology

This article proposes an analysis of fictional elements in content aimed at social change and their hybridisation with the factual discourses that characterise activism. The research focuses on the visual and audiovisual communication of activist organisations through the study of their social media. To this end, the method employed will be the content analysis of the Instagram and Twitter accounts (recently renamed X) of Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion (XR). The analysis will encompass all posts published between 1 January and 1 July 2024. This timeframe was selected to ensure the results are pertinent to current developments and to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the object of study.

Neuendorf (2002) points out that content analysis is similar to survey research. However, while in this method individuals are the unit of study, in content analysis it is the messages that are the unit of study. For this reason, it can be considered the "method par excellence of communication research"² (Igartua, 2006, p. 181). Its objective is to analyse any media product, understand how it is produced, and predict its mechanisms of influence (Igartua, 2006). Wimmer and Dominick (1996) specify content analysis as "a method of studying and analysing communication systematically, objectively and quantitatively, with the aim of measuring certain variables"² (p. 170).

The choice of Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion as case studies is justified by their considerable influence and high level of activity in denouncing actions that harm the environment. Furthermore, their

² Journal's original translation.

capacity for action and their visibility on a global scale are of interest. Greenpeace has a presence in 55 countries, while Extinction Rebellion currently has a total of 88 groups distributed across all continents, as indicated on the respective websites of each organisation. For a research with such a singular objective, the scope of Greenpeace and XR facilitates a broader and more general approach to our object of study, which may lead in future research to more specific approaches, both in a geographical sense – which would be of particular interest in locations where activism may be a riskier activity – and in a temporal sense, thus being able to assess whether significant changes occur in relation to our results.

In order to obtain a larger sample of messages, two social media networks, X and Instagram, have been selected for analysis. The analysis of the accounts of XR (@ExtinctionR on X, @extinctionrebellion on Instagram) and Greenpeace (@Greenpeace on both platforms) yielded a total sample of 1,223 posts. Extinction Rebellion has 303 posts, 98 of which are on X and 205 on Instagram. Greenpeace has a total of 920 posts, 428 of which are on X and 492 on Instagram. In the case of X, the review was limited to the 'Media' tab, in line with the object of study, visual and audiovisual communication, although this means that retweets from other accounts have not been taken into account, that is, content that was not uploaded by Greenpeace or XR. Regarding Instagram, the analysis has encompassed all posts on the respective accounts' timelines, as they all align with the object of study. In this instance, some of the posts on the timeline were uploaded jointly by these organisations and other accounts. Additionally, the Fridays for Future movement was initially included in the analysis, but it was subsequently excluded due to the insufficient number of publications within the specified timeframe.

The method entailed a detailed examination of each publication, with a view to identifying any elements of fiction. In order to proceed, it is necessary to provide some preliminary clarifications regarding the concept of fiction. As Locher and Jucker (2021) observe, "the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction are notoriously fuzzy" (p. 3), although they identify certain elements that are particularly characteristic of fiction, with the interaction between characters being a notable example. Conversely, they also identify certain less formal creative practices as belonging to the realm of fiction. These are termed "spontaneous fiction", referring to the exercise of the imagination or to everyday conversations, facilitating inventiveness and contemplation about hypothetical scenarios. The authors also encompass other such practices within this notion.

Moreover, the same authors posit that a fundamental element of fiction is the presence of a fictional contract, namely a mutual understanding between the sender and the receiver that acknowledges the fictional nature of the content, at least to some extent (Locher and Jucker, 2021). In this research, we will adopt a broad concept of fiction, which encompasses messages that, while they may express real events, incorporate a creative component and non-factual elements as a communicative resource. In this sense, although the information communicated about the climate crisis by the organisations studied is true, we will pay attention to those fictional elements that form part of the content of the publication. These include the presence of actors, the appearance of characters and the use of non-factual audiovisual elements. In addition, we will evaluate the presence of a fictional contract, that is, whether these elements are clearly identified as fictional, allowing the audience to perceive them as such. It is also important to note that the use of fictional elements in activism does not mean that the messages offered by organisations are less truthful. Rather, it is a strategic choice employed as a communicative resource.

Once the set of publications containing these fictional elements has been identified, the subsequent analysis will facilitate the establishment of a series of categories, thereby enabling the description of the utilisation of fiction in activist communication. Although content analysis is typically employed to obtain descriptions of a representative sample of messages, the application of this method seeks to go a step further. This is done in order to "infer the intentions or purposes of the message producers" and to raise "hypotheses about the influence of the messages on their audiences"³ (Igartua, 2006, p. 193). In this sense, the research will provide a descriptive account of the deployment of fictional elements in contemporary activist discourse. Additionally, it will offer insights into the meanings and influences sought by this communicative strategy in comparison to alternative forms of activism, such as those based on denunciation or the transmission of scientific information.

³ Journal's original translation.

3. Analysis and Results

Following the identification and collection of all publications containing fictional elements during the first six months of 2024, the research yields the following results. On the social media platform X, Extinction Rebellion has 20 publications out of a total of 98 during this period, while Greenpeace has 65 out of 428. On the other hand, in relation to Instagram, a social media platform which, as we know, is more graphic, we find 57 and 83 publications by Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace, out of a total of 205 and 492 respectively. This represents a percentage of 20.41% (XR) and 15.18% (Greenpeace) on X and 27.8% (XR) and 16.86% (Greenpeace) on Instagram, from which we can tentatively conclude that Extinction Rebellion uses more graphic resources with fictional elements than Greenpeace, although Greenpeace is more active in terms of publishing content on social media networks.

Following this overview, we provide a classification of the content of publications with fictional elements according to a number of identified categories. This categorisation is presented in the content analysis sheet (Table 1).

Table 1. Content analysis sheet

Social media		X or Instagram
Medium		Image or videos
Format	Meme, comic, performance, short video, animated video	

Source: own elaboration, 2024.

This analysis has allowed us to identify the different formats through which fiction is articulated in the activist publications of these organisations. Below, we provide a description of each of these, as well as examples of the specific uses found in the X and Instagram accounts.

According to Patrick Davison (2012), “an Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (p. 122). Although the meme is a format that is not necessarily linked to fiction, it often incorporates fictional elements, such as characters, references to mainstream culture or hypothetical situations, with the aim of creating content that, as the author suggests, is generally humorous or parodic in nature. Davison also emphasises the speed with which this content is transmitted. For this reason, memes have a certain suitability in terms of their activist nature, i.e. to disseminate a social message on a massive scale, which is why they have often been used for this purpose. This is pointed out by Ryan M. Milner (2013), who defines them as “multimodal artifacts remixed by countless participants, employing popular culture for public commentary” (p. 2357). Furthermore, memes have been identified as a form of discourse that subverts media hegemony, operating as a method of appropriation and resistance (Huntington, 2013). In this sense, José Manuel Ruiz Martínez (2018) notes that they “contribute to public political debate”⁴ (p. 996).

This format of publication on social media, which is one of the categories into which we divided the set of cases obtained, has a very significant presence in the activity of both XR and Greenpeace, which is not surprising given their ubiquity on the Internet. On X, we found 10 memes in the case of Extinction Rebellion, while Greenpeace published 31. On the other hand, their presence is also significant on Instagram, where we found 10 cases for XR and 38 for Greenpeace.

Two observations need to be made about this content. Firstly, some of the memes found are not the traditional meme consisting of an image with text but are videos or are inserted as an image in a video for illustrative purposes. In this sense, Gabriel Pérez Salazar (2017) notes that this format can be articulated in different ways – although, according to the author, the image with embedded text is one of the most common – including animated GIFs or even longer videos.

On the other hand, the meme is difficult to separate from popular or mass culture, according to Ruiz Martínez (2018), who highlights its intertextual quality:

Not only is it related to the fact that memes are reproduced through quotation and reference (from a meme to itself and sometimes to other memes), but the content of the meme often relates the

⁴ Journal’s original translation.

idea or argument it is intended to convey to a phenomenon of popular culture that needs to be known in order to be understood. (Ruiz Martínez, 2018, p. 1004)⁵

This combination would allow for a more general understanding of the message, as popular culture "offers images and symbols that express and evoke emotion, that we use not least in shaping our individual and collective identities" (Dahlgren, 2009, as cited in Milner, 2013, p. 2381). Indeed, Milner highlights the important role that the convergence of memes and pop culture played in the Occupy Wall Street movement.

In the case of the XR and Greenpeace publications, we found a very significant number of memes that establish an intertextual relationship with stories, characters or motifs from mainstream culture, with references to a Britney Spears song, the film *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) or the *Star Wars* saga on the part of XR, while the Greenpeace accounts also use stills from *The Office* (2005-2014), an image of the character Bugs Bunny, references to the series *The Last of Us* (2023), as well as images from other series such as *Friends* (1994-2004) and *Futurama* (started in 1999), to illustrate their respective texts, giving rise to the memetic content. As we will see below, the citation of mainstream culture is not limited to this category of memes. A selection of the cases found is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Category: meme

Organisation	Links
Extinction Rebellion	Video-meme: https://x.com/ExtinctionR/status/1750027431144984631
	References to <i>mainstream</i> culture:
	1. https://www.instagram.com/p/C2u9f88vr4/
	2. https://x.com/ExtinctionR/status/1754787240562336116 3. https://www.instagram.com/p/C5nAXvEui33/?img_index=1 4. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6_03aCqXE/?img_index=3
Greenpeace	Animated GIF: https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1790633530143510550
	References to <i>mainstream</i> culture:
	1. https://www.instagram.com/p/C3IHxqNpUU8/?img_index=1
	2. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6OeknWMHTN/?img_index=1 3. https://www.instagram.com/p/C3M_wfvNWp6/?img_index=1 4. https://www.instagram.com/p/C78I6vARpdW/?img_index=2

Source: Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace social media posts, 2024.

The second format identified is the comic or cartoon. Martin Lund (2018) mentions the concept of "activist comics", explaining how this medium has been used in a political sense in all kinds of printed publications since its origins. Comics have always shown a significant potential for protest. According to Anna Nordenstam and Margareta Wallin Victorin (2023), "the comics medium has certain features that make it particularly suitable for activism, where it is vital to catch the reader's attention, create understanding of a cause and arouse an emotive response" (p. 738). Like the meme, it also relies on a humorous element that seeks an affinity with the audience.

Its presence is much lower than in the case of the meme. For Extinction Rebellion, we found 4 comics or cartoons on X and another 4 on Instagram, with no repetition of content in either case. In Greenpeace, we found 10 cases on X and 5 on Instagram, although there are some repetitions within the same social media network and duplication of content on both social media platforms. The contrast between the presence of the meme and the comic strip suggests a displacement of the latter by the former.

In some cases, there is an exchange between the two creative fields. For example, one of the memes uploaded by XR corresponds to an image from the comic strip *Gunshow* (2008-2015) by the author KC Green, which shows an anthropomorphic dog sitting in a burning room and saying, "this is fine". This image began to be used as a meme – it is named after the phrase – to allude to emergency situations in which one does not know how or cannot react. In addition to the meme, XR also uploaded a version of the comic containing an update. The author changes the posture of the character, who now shouts in obvious panic that the situation is not right. XR uses the work as a metaphor for the climate crisis. On

⁵ Journal's original translation.

the other hand, Greenpeace publishes a comic from the series *Cyanide and Happiness* (2005-present), which depicts a job interview. This particular comic has become a meme – and we have considered it as such in this case – because the original interview has often been modified to give it different meanings. In this case, Greenpeace is doing this, so that the comic is denouncing the actions of oil companies to hide the climate damage they are causing.

In general, these comics or cartoons represent themes such as the inaction in the face of the climate crisis, the denial of its consequences, the melting of the poles, the deforestation, the deceptive discourse of the owners of large companies and their irresponsibility, among others. Some of these comics are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Category: comics

Organisation	Links
Extinction Rebellion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.instagram.com/p/C2aUy3s0Zrj/ 2. https://x.com/ExtinctionR/status/1798918406202335605 3. https://x.com/ExtinctionR/status/1780771498992808389
Greenpeace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.instagram.com/p/C1t9yALsQeV/ 2. https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1795038316787544211

Source: Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace social media posts, 2024.

Thirdly, the analysis sheet shows the category of performance. According to Paula Serafini (2018), activism can be expressed through a variety of media with creative intent, but currently "there is a widespread trend for engaging with the performing arts, whether theatrical performances, spoken word, walking as art, or music" (p. 15). The author explains performance as follows:

An embodied expressive practice that can be open to participation, it can take place anywhere and relies more on the body than on external materials and instruments, it can be unexpected, and due to the verbal and body languages that compose it, it is a practice that allows narratives, pedagogical pieces, as well as highly symbolic work. (Serafini, 2018, p. 15)

In consideration of its fictional or factual character, performance is characterised by a diffuse nature. Although it draws upon elements of theatre, Mario de la Torre-Espinosa (2019) posits that "the immediacy of the scenic, the fact that there is no mediation, the here and now inherent in these practices... make the performative a very special case"⁶ (p. 80). In alignment with the perspective put forth by José Luis García Barrientos, the author underscores that despite the fact that theatre is fiction, "performance is a reality infused with the fictional"⁶ (p. 80).

It is also important to consider the distinction between a performance and its subsequent recording. Claudia Georgi (2014) identifies several key elements that define the nature of performance as a live expression: "co-presence of performers and spectators, the ephemerality of the live event, the unpredictability or risk of imperfection, the possibility of interaction and, finally, a specific quality of the representation of reality" (p. 5). However, as our focus is on audiovisual content on social media, when we discuss performance, we are referring to its recorded expression and reproduction via the Internet, which undoubtedly alters this practice. In this regard, there is a debate between live performance and mediatised performance. Some authors reject the latter, arguing that a performance cannot be recorded without becoming something else (Phelan, 1993). However, others defend its validity (Auslander, 2023). In any case, a significant number of the key components identified by Georgi are either absent or modified when the performance is reproduced through video or image via social media.

When viewing posts on X and Instagram, it is common to find numerous images and videos showing the activist actions that these organisations have carried out or promoted. In the selection, we have included posts in which this element of performance is sufficiently visible, although in some cases it occupies only a few moments of a video.

⁶ Journal's original translation.

In the case of Extinction Rebellion, a total of six publications were identified on the social media platform X, and 39 on Instagram. Such content depicts the performance of various activist groups, such as the Dirty Scrubbers or the Red Rebel Brigade. In the case of the former, the group's characterisation is comprised of attire and accessories associated with cleaning work, including comfortable and informal garments such as tights, rubber gloves, and cleaning products. Additionally, they incorporate the use of fake banknotes, with the objective of creating a satire that denounces the practice of greenwashing. On the other hand, the Red Rebel Brigade is an activist group dedicated to performance that originated during an Extinction Rebellion's protest and has since gained a presence in several countries.

Greenpeace has 15 posts on X and 18 on Instagram with this feature, showing a lower frequency of performance on their social media networks. Most of these publications – in the case of both organisations – feature images or videos of protests in which some performative action appears. Consequently, we would like to draw attention to a video from Greenpeace's social media networks that gives a more visible role to performance. The video was created by Pattie Gonia, an artist, environmentalist and drag queen, who appears in a dress made of plastic to denounce the use of this material. Several examples of this category are included in Table 4.

Table 4. Category: performance

Organisation	Links
Extinction Rebellion	1. Dirty Scrubbers: https://www.instagram.com/p/C5RHCfQunJU/?img_index=1 2. Red Rebel Brigade: https://www.instagram.com/p/C2arzySPM11/ https://www.instagram.com/p/C500gcxqRJT/?img_index=1
Greenpeace	1. Pattie Gonia: https://www.instagram.com/p/C5ybRjoLleq/2 2. Action against the Dove brand: https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1774421470829269297 3. Protest at the start of Berlin Fashion Week: https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1755879301151686913

Source: Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace social media posts, 2024.

The fourth category comprises short fiction videos, that is, fictional works with accompanying scripts and performances. In the case of Extinction Rebellion, no such videos are available on X, whereas four are present on Instagram. One such video is entitled *Logging Actually*. It is a parody of the film *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003), in which deforestation is denounced by replicating a famous scene from the film where one character communicates with another through a series of white cards that gradually reveal their declaration of love. However, in this instance, the placards serve to denounce deforestation. The character inadvertently incorporates a protest placard bearing the inscription 'Stora Enso kills', which denounces the company Stora Enso, a prominent entity in the pulp and paper manufacturing sector. As the video draws to a close, the character prepares to depart, declaring their intention to endeavour to halt the felling of trees in an adjacent forest, a cause which ultimately attracts the support of the other characters.

Additionally, there is another video in which a character who lacks comprehensive understanding of the climate crisis and its gravity requests that a scientist elucidate it in a straightforward manner, employing a jocular tone that caricatures the positions of those who deny the crisis's existence. A third video employs a montage that juxtaposes a scene from the television series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) with an intervention by actors Riann Wilson and Creed Bratton, renowned for their roles in *The Office* (2005-2014). They elucidate the imperative for immediate action to address the climate crisis, once more employing a comical tone. A final video is an extract from the short film *Climate Anxiety* (Joycelyn Longdon, 2023), with a link to access the full view on another website, as it is over nine minutes long.

Greenpeace presents 5 videos on X and 14 on Instagram. These videos include a series of satires criticising TotalEnergies' sponsorship of the 2024 Africa Cup of Nations, a video parodying a person in charge of a large plastics company, a 2D video game-like animation criticising vehicle pollution, or a representation of banks and financial institutions by filming several people in suits destroying a forest while raining down banknotes. Some examples of this category can be seen in table 5.

Table 5. Category: short videos

Organisation	Links
Extinction Rebellion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Logging Actually</i>: https://www.instagram.com/p/C1kbSzrum3P/ 2. "Are you tired of climate scientist telling us mean bad facts about our world in confusing ways?": https://www.instagram.com/p/C2c8DN4JG7z 3. <i>A Tale of Fire and Ice</i>: https://www.instagram.com/p/C2kiB0009EC 4. <i>Climate Anxiety Film</i>: https://www.instagram.com/p/C2NKZdeu74Y
Greenpeace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Criticism of the company TotalEnergies: https://www.instagram.com/p/C19LzqttxGj/ 2. <i>POV: You're a big corporation producing billions of plastics</i>: https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1760924425728438377 3. <i>Big Cars, Bigger Crisis</i>: https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1768124937376841965 4. "Unhinged bankers caught destroying our planet while governments do NOTHING!": https://x.com/Greenpeace/status/1793195100119392471

Source: Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace social media posts, 2024.

The final category comprises a series of brief animations, with varying lengths, which depict potential utopian scenarios or the ramifications of the climate crisis. This format is exclusive to Greenpeace, with eight instances on Instagram and four on X. Two brief animations, entitled *Visual Utopias*, depict the transformation of polluted cities into verdant, oxygen-rich metropolises. Another video depicts koalas grappling with deforestation. A series of GIF animations illustrate the destructive impact of the climate crisis and the complicity of banking and financial institutions. Additionally, a longer video emphasizes the necessity of sustainable urban design. The videos in question are presented in Table 6 for reference.

Table 6. Category: animated videos

Organisation	Links
Greenpeace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Visual Utopias</i>: https://www.instagram.com/p/C8gM90tRIox/ 2. "Every second a native animal is killed from deforestation in Australia": https://www.instagram.com/p/C7BGHXRSPg1/ 3. "Our financial system is bankrolling extinction": https://www.instagram.com/p/C1mbiS6NDWF/ 4. Animation on sustainable cities: https://www.instagram.com/p/C1wg5X2Nlro/

Source: Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace social media posts, 2024.

In addition to the analysis of the content in each of the categories identified, we have also considered their corresponding paratexts, given their role in relation to the audiences' perception of fiction. The main paratexts identified include the accompanying texts and hashtags to images and videos in the publications, as well as other texts characteristic of each format. As an example, short videos typically feature a title, credits and subtitles, with a concluding text that provides information. In contrast, videos of performances may include supplementary text that provides additional information about the protests, as well as other informative elements, such as the incorporation of press headlines or statistical graphs. The majority of the paratexts are of a non-fictional nature, although some examples of a fictional

paratext can be observed, as illustrated by the video meme in Table 2. In this instance, the accompanying text serves to reinforce the comedic tone of the publication, alluding to an alleged XR exclusive in relation to a conversation between Selena Gomez and Taylor Swift. The non-fictional paratexts serve an informative function, whereas the latter are primarily designed to capture the attention of audiences and, in doing so, persuade them. This is a function that can be attributed to the publications analysed as a whole, given their use of fictional elements. In this sense, the deployment of non-fictional paratexts enables a hybrid mode of communication, whereby the audience is prompted and influenced by the fictional elements of the publication, while being furnished with more accurate information through the paratext.

Furthermore, the identification of disparate formats indicates the existence of varying degrees of fiction, or at the very least, a multitude of fictional elements in their enactment across each of these formats. Fiction can be defined as the narration and description of imaginary events and characters (Locher and Jucker, 2021). This implies the presence of specific components that, in conjunction with the fictional contract, articulate that fiction. Comics, short videos and animation, for instance, typically present this series of components. However, the case of performance is more complex. As Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) observes, the performative turn in theatre from the 1960s onwards entailed a redefinition of the relationship between performers and audience, which was no longer intended to present a fictional world in which communication took place between characters on a stage. Similarly, with regard to Max Herrmann's contribution to performance, the author notes a shift in focus from the characters and the fictional world to a real body and a real space. However, in his analysis of a performance case, Torre-Espinosa (2019) posits that, although the performance presents factual elements, there are also perceived actions that, due to their symbolic meaning, present a "degree of fictionality"⁷ (p. 79). In this sense, if the comic, the short video and the animation present fictional components such as those previously mentioned, the performance demonstrates fictional actions. It is also necessary to make a distinction between the meme and the other forms of communication under discussion, given that it can be considered to incorporate some of the aforementioned components in some cases, but not in others. This format is more closely aligned with the concept of fictional utterances, defined as utterances that adhere to "a set of conventions that suspends them from the normal conditions of utterances, such as committing the speaker to the truth of an assertion" (Locher & Jucker, 2021, p. 18).

In the course of our analysis, we have also identified a number of publications that do not always feature fictional elements but rather establish a discourse that is characteristic of culture jamming. Both Extinction Rebellion and Greenpeace offer a critique of the commercial strategies of certain brands, employing parody or satire. This is evidenced by images of protests against the Dove brand, including one depicted in Table 4. In this instance, a group of activists are clothed in the white attire characteristic of the brand's advertising, accompanied by a Dove bottle of a similar height to a person. The sign displayed reads "Real Harm". Another illustrative example is the image uploaded by Greenpeace, which reads: "Dear Ikea, just because it's legal doesn't mean it's sustainable," superimposed on an image of deforestation. This illustrates that culture jamming remains a present tactic among activists, albeit one that is often employed in conjunction with mainstream cultural references as a means of engaging with broader audiences.

4. Conclusions

The research offers an overview of the presence of fictional elements as a communicative resource in activism through an analysis of the visual and audiovisual content on social media networks of the organisations Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion. The total percentage of publications incorporating this fictional element is considerable, thereby substantiating the utilisation of this communicative resource to facilitate greater accessibility for the general public. In this regard, online activism demonstrates a fusion of factual discursive elements, which form the foundation of activism, and motifs derived from fiction. Content analysis has enabled the establishment of a series of categories that articulate the use of fiction, namely: the meme, the comic, the performance – typically obtained through the filming or photographic capture of protest actions in urban settings – the short video, and animation.

In these approaches to fiction, there is an evident propensity to reference popular culture, or more specifically mainstream culture, above all through the meme format. Consequently, a considerable

⁷ Journal's original translation.

proportion of the total number of publications included in the analysis make reference to a character or work belonging to this sphere of cultural production. This is consistent with the approaches outlined at the outset of the article in relation to participatory politics, although in this instance the starting point is not fan communities. Nevertheless, references to mainstream culture serve as a form of shared cultural capital, facilitating identification with activist content among a multitude of connected individuals.

On the other hand, organisations frequently employ comedy as a mode of communication, utilising the aforementioned formats. The deployment of humour across most categories indicates an activist strategy that aims to engage audiences, while circumventing excessive discouragement, although the current circumstances of an unprecedented emergency regarding the climate crisis can also make this position understandable. This strategy employs fiction to integrate elements of humour, irony, and satire, enhancing communications that merely present scientific data but may foster a sense of disengagement and pessimism. In the context of the climate crisis, Maxwell Boykoff and Beth Osnes (2018) posit that, despite the potential for humour to seem inappropriate in light of the gravity of the situation, comedy has the capacity to convey information regarding the climate crisis in a way that can alleviate the anxiety and discomfort it produces. This, they argue, “can make these issues more approachable and manageable” (p. 2).

Finally, the incorporation of communicative actions associated with culture jamming indicates a coexistence between the quotation and reference to mainstream culture, which may have been subject to criticism in the past, and the denouncement of specific companies and their products through statements that seek to refute their messages and highlight the environmental damage caused by these entities.

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