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Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Bolin, G., Ståhlberg, P. (2022)
Disruption and transformation in media events theory: The case of the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine
Nordic Journal of Media Studies, 4(1): 99-117
https://doi.org/10.2478/njms-2022-0006

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Nordic Journal of
MEDIA STUDIES

Disruption and transformation in media events theory

The case of the Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine

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Abstract

Media events, Dayan and Katz argue, compose a narrative genre that follows specific structural principles and narrative tropes and that works toward societal integration. However, a specific subset of media events is labelled transformative, and these work towards societal change. In this article, we point to an unresolved tension between transformative events and what has subsequently been introduced as disruptive events. Our discussion builds on research on the developments in post-Soviet Ukraine, and we analyse, firstly, the transformative and disruptive relations related to the so-called Euromaidan Revolution, and secondly, how these events can be placed in a wider narrative of three Ukrainian revolutions. Our analysis concludes that narrative analysis can help explain the ways in which these events are understood by broader international audiences.

Keywords: media events, transformative events, disruptive events, Ukraine, narrative, ceremony

Introduction

The theory of media events, as developed by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz throughout the 1980s and ultimately summarised in their book *Media Events* (Dayan & Katz, 1992), has had a continuous influence on media research over the past three decades. Numerous analyses have been made of mainly largescale televised events, from the Olympic Games (Rothenbuhler, 1988), to news reporting (Zelizer, 1993), to the Eurovision Song Contest (Ericson, 2002; Bolin, 2010). The book has gradually taken a place among the classics of media research, not least indicated by its 25th anniversary celebration, published in the special section of *Media, Culture & Society* (Sonnevend, 2018a). The theory was quickly picked up by a variety of scholars as a text-oriented alternative to the mushrooming paradigm of qualitative audience research in the wake of David Morley's (1986)

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Family Television. Instead of looking at the everydayness and routine media use that Morley focused on, Dayan and Katz turned to its opposite: the spectacular, which broke with the routines of everyday life and cut through its steady flow of naturalised and unnoticed media habits. However, although it emphasises the break with the everyday flow of events, the message of these events was, as Dayan and Katz argued, one of reconciliation and integration. Grounded in anthropological ritual analysis, semiotics and Durkheimian sociology, the media event theory radically emphasised the quality of television as the medium for "the live broadcasting of history", as *Media Event*'s subtitle read.

Media events, Dayan and Katz argue, compose a specific narrative genre that follows specific structural principles and narrative tropes of contests, conquests, and coronations. They are organised outside of the media, preplanned and announced beforehand, presented with reverence and ceremony, and they enact "the bases of authority" within society through mediated ceremony, proposing integration (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 45). This integrative aspect was also what attracted debate, and, for example, Nick Couldry (2005) argued that Dayan and Katz were too affirmative in their celebratory approach to media events, too functionalist and too uncritical of the established order of society.

As a response to this criticism, Dayan and Katz eventually reformulated and adjusted their arguments, also pointing to a development within the media landscape. New digital media, they argued, destroy the integrative function that broadcast television had, and "[fill] the air with endless interruption and talkback", "disperse the audience", and "do away with centrality" (Katz & Dayan, 2018: 151). In the new millennium, ceremonial media events in the genres of contests, conquests, and coronations seemed to be receding in importance. Instead, Katz and Liebes (2007) saw a rise of live broadcasted "disruptive events", which lacked several of the characteristics of ceremonial media events. These events were not preplanned, reverent, integrative, or conciliatory. Most importantly, disruptive events were not co-produced by broadcasters and the establishment, but rather by broadcasters and anti-establishment actors. Katz and Liebes look closer at three types of disruptive events: terror, disaster, and war (Dayan, 2008); they also briefly mention a fourth type of disruptive event that they call protest, and which they suggest includes revolution.

However, in the original book, Dayan and Katz had already elaborated on a specific subset of events that they called transformative, and which deviated from the main types of hegemonic, reaffirming events. Transformative media events were "harbingers of change" rather than upholders of established values. Still, this type of media event was, according to Dayan and Katz, ceremonial and not regarded as disruptive in the same way as Katz and Liebes later would discuss terror, disaster, and war, some of which were not even events but "disaster marathons" (Liebes, 1998). Confusingly, as an example of transformative media events, the original book also mentioned protests and revolutions.

Thus, the question arises of whether protests and revolutions belong among the category of media events, and whether the concepts of transformative and disruptive events are compatible. We want to explore to what extent these concepts are helpful for understanding the narrative aspects of the so-called Euromaidan Revolution in Ukraine, which took place in the winter of 2013–2014. The revolution started in the form of protests in late November 2013, when then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych surprisingly backed out from signing an Association Agreement with the European Union, choosing instead to approximate Russia and their Eurasian Economic Union. The protests were violently suppressed by the police, and the conflict between protesters and police special forces escalated, leaving a death toll of over one hundred civilians, but eventually also leading to Yanukovych being ousted and escaping to Russia in late February 2014. The attention that the protests, violence, and political change received among international news media was significant and placed Ukraine in the spotlight for media audiences across the world (Horbyk, 2017; Bolin et al., 2016). So, how can this event be understood within the framework of media events theory?

In this article, we first account for the media events theory and the conceptual confusion between what is referred to as the transformative media event and the disruptive event. Second, we describe the role of the media in the narration of these two types of events. Third, we discuss the role of narrative and mediated structuring of events. Fourth, and finally, we discuss how the Euromaidan Revolution is integrated into a broader history of the three Ukrainian revolutions since the collapse of the Soviet Union: the Revolution on Granite, the Orange Revolution, and the Revolution of Dignity, as the Euromaidan Revolution has also been referred to domestically. The article ends with a discussion of the role of narrative, as both a descriptive and prescriptive category.

Our analysis builds on empirical material from six years of fieldwork in Ukraine between 2013 and 2019, mainly from Kyiv but also from other parts of Ukraine. The material includes ethnographic observations, documents, media material (press and television), second-hand source material (academic and journalistic accounts), and interviews with people in public office, public relations and branding professionals, journalism, news agencies, information officers, activists, academics, and so on.[1]

Transformative and disruptive events

Let us start with transformative media events. Dayan and Katz (1992: 167) argue that they follow a "sequential structure" or "recognizable scenario of progress through a succession of identifiable phases". Transformative media events take their point of departure in a latent unresolved conflict or problem that is addressed, through gestures, and an idealised future state of affairs is announced, ultimately leading to a resolution of the problem and a new state of affairs being established. Thus, narrative closure is achieved. Among the examples that Dayan

and Katz give of transformative media events are "conquests", such as Anwar Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 or Pope John Paul II's pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, and – more relevant for the analysis in this article – the "mass demand for political change in Eastern Europe in the fall of 1989" (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 147), and more specifically, the political rallies at Wenceslaus Square in Prague, Czechoslovakia that November. It is not difficult to see the parallels between the 1989 protests in Prague and the protests at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti [Independence Square] in Kyiv in November 2013.

The narrative structure of transformative media events "echoes the phase theories that anthropologists have applied to change processes such as rites of passage" (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 167). By "anthropologists", Dayan and Katz refer to scholars such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958/1977), Victor and Edith Turner (1978), and Anthony Wallace (1966), and their studies of religious ritual sequencing. Such sequencing appears, for example, in the rites of passage where subjects transition from one "state" – that is, any "stable or recurring condition that is culturally recognised", as Victor Turner defines it with reference to van Gennep (1909) – through a "liminal phase", in order to then be "reaggregated" into a new state (Turner, 1969: 94f). It should be noted that neither the anthropologists that Dayan and Katz lean on in their theory, nor they themselves, make any distinction between social reality and representation. After all, ritual ceremonial enactment is a *symbolic* practice. We can think of the ritual as a "scripted" practice that follows a certain sequential structure, in the same way that narrative and storytelling follow certain established conventions and narrative patterns.

In Dayan and Katz's analysis, the transformative event goes through five phases. The first phase is latency, where a "longstanding problem" precedes the event and acts as the condition to which the event is a response. It is a time of crisis, the authors claim, within which people have learned to live with silent aspirations. This is followed by the second phase of signalling, the announcement of a ceremonial event that will openly address the possibility of change. A dormant paradigm "comes into view and is embraced, sometimes reluctantly, by the elite" (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 169). In the third modelling phase, the ceremonial event itself starts, introduced with a "gesture that is presented as an instrumental step toward solving the problem" (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 168). This ceremony continues in the fourth framing phase, as an enactment of gestures and messages by ceremonial leaders, which eventually leads to the final evaluation phase, where the event slowly fades out (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 168). True to their anthropological points of departure, Dayan and Katz do not distinguish between social reality and symbolic representation, but seemingly argue that social reality and representation have a dialectic relationship to one another. This is, however, not explicitly addressed in *Media Events*.

Looking at the Euromaidan Revolution, we can certainly distinguish the first two phases of a transformative media event. The latency phase in the Ukrainian case was in the form of the stagnated society, marked by a strong oligarchic struc-

ture – including ownership of the media – and high levels of corruption. Similar to other post-Soviet countries, Ukraine saw a total restructuring of its society after the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the very quick transformation from plan economy to capitalism produced a group of very wealthy oligarchs who had seized the moment and capitalised on the transformation. In the wake of this restructuring followed political instability with high levels of corruption and a very blurred boundary between political and economic power. Voter fraud led to massive protests after the elections in November 2004, in which the sitting president Yanukovych was found to have manipulated results in his favour. The protests were successful, and a new and fair election resulted in a victory for the opposition candidate Viktor Yuschenko, and his prime minister, Yulia Tymoshenko. However, Yuschenko became increasingly unpopular during his presidency, and in 2010 he lost the election to his predecessor Yanukovych, who thus regained the power to lead the country. His main opponent, Yulia Tymoshenko, received almost as many votes. The year after, Tymoshenko was arrested and jailed. This jailing of an opposition politician overshadowed much of the news discourse of Ukraine for 2011–2013 and contributed to an image of the country as corrupt and unable to move forward (see Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2016).

The second, signalling phase was then formed around the "aspirations" and hopes that were reawakened with the upcoming Association Agreement with the European Union, which would bring the country closer to the rest of Europe and, since it also included a trade agreement, would bring higher living standards to the Ukrainian people. This ceremonial event was "signalled" beforehand, and a date was set for the signing of the agreement: 28 November 2013. It was during this phase of latency that we first visited Kyiv as scholars conducting fieldwork for a project that was focused on communication management. When meeting professionals in the public relations industry, we recurrently encountered great expectations of radical change as Ukraine was moving closer to Europe: foreign investment would intensify; the tourist flow doubled in five years; and a number of international sports events were arranged (Ståhlberg & Bolin, 2016: 277f). These aspirations and the hopes that accompanied them were also made clear in statements from public officials of the Yanukovych government whom we interviewed in the autumn of 2013:

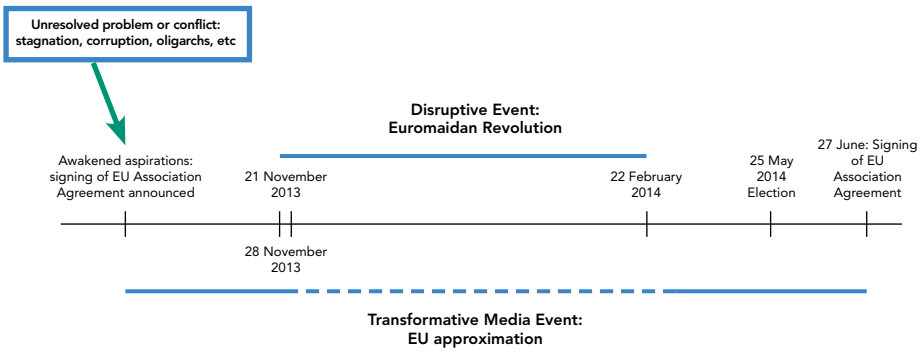
> The majority of the population supports it. […] European integration is associated with progress, associated with developing the right way. It's a great impetus for self-esteem, self-respect… yes, we are becoming closer to the most respected countries in the world. (State Secretary, MFA, 10 October 2013)

Thus far, the events in Ukraine seemed to follow the sequential narrative structure laid out by Dayan and Katz. However, this pattern was broken when the government announced their decision to withdraw from signing the European Union Association Agreement. One could say that the transformative media event at that

point became interrupted and put to a halt, since it didn't follow the preplanned direction. The abruptness can be illustrated by the fact that even those working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were seemingly taken by surprise by the turn of the events. The "gesture" that was supposed to have happened did not occur. All aspirations for coming closer to Europe were crushed. Instead, the disruption of the transformative event introduced a second narrative sequence. The Euromaidan Revolution started, and it could be understood as a disruptive event. This is also the point at which the media attention increased, and although the Association Agreement did get some attention, the protests and escalation of police brutality received much more social media activity and widespread mass media reporting.

We thus need to make a distinction between what could be analysed as a transformative media event, and the disruptive event that interferes with it. The transformative event had a narrative progression starting with the announcement of signing the Association Agreement, but was disrupted by the Euromaidan protests (ultimately resulting in the ousting of the corrupt president). Importantly, the transformative media event was then continued after the ousting of President Yanukovych, and finally reached narrative closure with the actual signing of the Association Agreement by the new president, Petro Poroshenko – symbolically executed with the same pen that would have been used by the former president. Thus, the disruptive event was the Euromaidan Revolution, which started on the eve of 21 November 2013 and continued until the president was finally ousted and fled to Russia on 22 February 2014. Figure 1 illustrates how the disrupted event interferes with the transformative media event.

Figure 1 The disruptive event and the transformative media event



Comment: The figure shows a timeline of the transformative media event centred on the signing of the EU Association Agreement and the disruptive event that it included.

What then is a disruptive event? Katz and Liebes's (2007) article on disruptive events is short. They merely point out that terror, disaster, and war are three types of live broadcasted events that have been increasingly common during later

decades. Disruptive events are traumatic and, as it seems, unwelcome by almost everyone (save terrorists and war supporters) and, importantly, do not follow any script. Disruptive events are mediated (because they are broadcasted) but they are *not* ceremonial "high holidays of mass communication" (Dayan & Katz, 1992: 1) and cannot be analysed within this genre. They are in fact described as the radical contrast to media events, and Katz and Liebes (2007) insist on the distinction between media events (including the transformative ones) and disruptive events. In fact, a concept such as "disruptive media event" would be a contradiction in terms.

Empirically, however, protests and revolts seem to be a grey area. These types of events are mentioned as transformative media events in Dayan and Katz's book from 1992, but as a possible fourth type of disruptive event (besides terror, disaster, and war) in Katz and Liebes's 2007 article. Thus, protests and revolts seem to challenge the strictly binary distinction between ceremonial and traumatic events that are broadcasted live. It is telling that Katz and Liebes are hesitant to elaborate on this fourth type of disruptive event. In their later reflections, Dayan and Katz also avoid clarification on this point, and in the end, the relation between disruptions and transformations has remained unresolved (Katz & Dayan, 2018).

Initially, Katz and Liebes (2007) argued that disruptive events do not follow any script, something that Katz modified in later writings (Katz & Dayan, 2018: 151), although not specifying which type of script and what types of sequential structure it would be following. Consequently, they do not suggest any common structure (in the form of sequences or phases) to terror, disaster, and war, even though they are "established genres of mainstream television" (Katz & Liebes, 2007: 163). However, the disruptive event of the Euromaidan Revolution is possible to analyse in terms of different phases, which is, for example, what Dariya Orlova (2016) does in her account of the events.

First, the Euromaidan Revolution did not come out of nowhere. Even though the large gathering and protests at the central square in Kyiv were not preplanned and surprised most people in Ukraine as well as elsewhere, it had a background. It was the response to the abandonment of the aspiration to solve Ukraine's long-standing problem. At this point, the transformative media event was interrupted, and the disruptive event took over.

Second, a signalling phase could be identified in the form of Facebook postings on 21 November. One of these was from the well-known journalist Mustafa Nayem calling people to protest by gathering at the Independence Square in Kyiv. Although Liebes and Katz might be reluctant to regard all protests as media events, these calls were undeniably signalling an event that would take on the problem – that is, challenging the government's decision not to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. Furthermore, a call for people to gather at the Independence Square was also a gesture loaded with symbolic significance: It was here that people demonstrated during the Orange Revolution in 2004.

People did answer the call and gathered at the square in numbers increasing day by day. From this point, the terminology from Dayan and Katz's theory is not sufficient. The Euromaidan Revolution was much more complex than those kinds of media events they had in mind. For one, the gestures of a transformative event, in its third phase, are in their examples mainly acted out by an individual person (e.g., Sadat, Pope John Paul II), but in the case of the Euromaidan Revolution, one could argue that it was the collective gestures of the protesters that started this phase: a long row of speeches from the provisional stage raised at the square, and the singing of the national anthem, often led by famous Ukrainians such as Ruslana, the very popular singer who had won Eurovision Song Contest in 2004 in the midst of the previous Orange Revolution. Other celebrities such as Vitalij Klitschko, famous boxing champion and member of the Ukrainian parliament (Verkhovna Rada), were also active on stage, as were several profiled journalists, such as Mustafa Nayem, influencers, and others (Horbyk, 2019; see also Horbyk, 2017: 23f; Voronova, 2020, Nayem 2014). With this enactment of gestures and messages by ceremonial leaders, the event continued and did not end until Yanukovych gave in and fled the country. With that act, he concluded the disruptive event, which had by now fully merged with the structure of the transformative media event.

In hindsight, it is thus possible to identify a structure in this disruptive event and see how it developed over time to include increasingly more ceremonial elements. Initially, the demonstrations and speeches on the Independence Square were peaceful. The first rallies engaged an increasing number of people, and the crowds supporting European integration of Ukraine grew steadily. Already on 24 November there was, according to BBC reports, up to 100,000 people demonstrating (Orlova, 2016: 208). The event continued in this peaceful way for a week until a new phase occurred when the police violently clamped down on protesters on 30 November. Footage of the police brutality circulated in social media, which seemed to have triggered even more people to join the protests. Media coverage showed demonstrations that may have numbered half a million protesters. At this point, the agenda and rhetoric of the protesters also changed: People no longer only demonstrated for a European Union Agreement, but also against a corrupt regime. On the Independence Square, a whole infrastructure of facilities for protesters – tents with kitchens, medical care, sleeping places, information units – was constructed (Orlova, 2016: 209).

The events took a new direction on 16 January when the Yanukovych regime passed a law that restricted the freedom to demonstrate. This increased the tension between protesters and police, and several people were killed in clashes and many more were injured. Even though the president agreed to withdraw some of the anti-demonstration laws, the protests escalated. The police tried to clear the square of protesters, and this culminated on 20 February when snipers shot 60 people on the bloodiest day of the protests. This incident, however, also led to the collapse of the government. The protesters refused a proposed peace deal with President

Yanukovych, who then escaped to Russia (Orlova, 2016: 211). The disruptive event was concluded, and the ceremonial enactment of the transformative event could then continue.

On the same day that Yanukovych fled, a new presidential election was announced, and on 25 May the new president was elected. Petro Poroshenko could thus sign the Association Agreement with the European Union in June, symbolically enough, with the special pen that would have been used by the ousted president on the first occasion. With this final gesture, the transformative media event was brought to narrative closure.

In her article on the Euromaidan protests, Ukrainian media scholar Dariya Orlova (2016: 222) describes how the revolution started as a disruptive event but eventually turned into "a hugely powerful shared experience" and points at a number of ceremonial and symbolically loaded elements of the protests. During the months of demonstrations, a new sense of collective identity took form. Thus, the disruptive event gradually transformed, and was becoming more ceremonial – for example, the ritualised Sunday "viches", defined as an instrument of "direct democracy […] practiced in medieval Slavic countries" (Orlova, 2016: 222) with the singing of the national anthem – and more of an integrative event, which furthermore laid a ground for the new political establishment of the country. The binary distinction between ceremonial and traumatic events vanished. Gradually, the disruption became transformed and aligned with the ceremonial progression, and thus integrated into the transformative media event.

The role of the media in transformative and disruptive events

Thus far, we have explained the Euromaidan Revolution in terms of a narrative sequence with the help of Dayan and Katz's (1992) model for analysis of such events. We have also tried to distinguish between the ceremonial transformative media event and the disrupted event. The latter put a halt to the ceremonial character of the event and added an "intermezzo" in the narrative – a sort of parenthesis in the transformative media event. There remains, however, yet another problem to discuss: Media events are most often described as if they are not mediated. As we have already indicated, Dayan and Katz actually do not make a clear distinction between the events themselves and their mediation or narrative representation. As already said, this is due to their point of departure in anthropological ritual theory. In the rest of this section, we focus on the media component of the event.

When the protests on the Independence Square started, Mustafa Nayem, who was claimed to have initiated the Euromaidan protests with his Facebook post, was engaged in a new news streaming service called Hromadske TV. The service had not yet begun its operations, but quickly started on 22 November as the protests began to grow, relaying unedited and uncommented footage from Independence Square almost around the clock. Hromadske was not alone in this

task. Several other streaming services were put up, and Espreso TV, Spilno TV, and UkrStream also sent footage, often from high-rise buildings, always uncommented and unedited. As there were few international news correspondents in Kyiv at the time (Dyczok, 2016: 7), international news services such as CNN, BBC World, and Al Jazeera all had to rely on images from these local streaming services, as well as more print-oriented services such as EuromaidanPR, which functioned as a newly founded news agency providing international news outlets with stories and information.

The unedited footage from the square and neighbouring areas in central Kyiv do not, of course, make up a narrative. Most of the time, very little happens in front of cameras, and the only camera movements are in the form of zooming and panning; the cameras are merely documenting people moving slowly back and forth, building provisional barricades, and so on. Narrative is only constructed when these images are picked up by the mass media, where they become edited, and commentary is added.

However, the Euromaidan Revolution was not only broadcast via television. It was also relayed via Twitter, Facebook, and VKontakte, all of which filled different functions in the construction of the event. Some of the social media outlets worked as organising tools (Metzger & Tucker, 2017; Onuch, 2015), but soon Facebook groups were set up for civil society initiatives such as the EuromaidanPR and other news distributors, and also for NGOs such as the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre, which is a platform for press briefings, communication, and the dissemination of information that was set up by private individuals in order to inform foreign news media about the unfolding of events.

When one speaks about "the media" that were part of the narrative construction of the Euromaidan Revolution, it is important to distinguish between media as technologies, as organisations, and as textual assemblages. If we look at which technologies were actively employed during the Euromaidan Revolution, we can see that they consisted of a mixture of streaming services, online media (social media), broadcast television, radio, and print journalism. Closest to the event were those "alternative media" that Dayan and Katz (1992: 157) also noted in relation to the events in Prague in 1989: "graffiti, posters, pamphlets, illegal books and newspapers, church rallies and pilgrimages, agitation at factories, and word-of-mouth on the streets – to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people". These media also made up the basic information technologies which disseminated information later to be picked up by the mass media, foremost television.

The alternative media of 2013 were, of course, updated and in the form of digital online media, but their function was basically the same. The same goes for the ways in which the alternative media were organised. Newly founded small media organisations such as Hromadske TV, Spilno TV, Espreso TV, EuromaidanPR, Informnapalm, UCMC, and StopFake were all formed around the events, and contributed to their mediation (and thus also to the way in which the situation evolved).

As mentioned above, much of the textual content relayed by these organisations, through these communication technologies, were randomly selected, and in the case of the streaming media, massive amounts of images documenting non-events. However, these around-the-clock streaming broadcasts were used as the basis for the construction of the narrative of the Euromaidan Revolution. The few moments of intense action were edited and used for circulation on social media and eventually on the major television broadcasters, relayed by news agencies to newspapers around the world, and narrativised. Typical for how the narrative became constructed in print and broadcast media abroad was an uncertainty regarding how the events should be labelled, especially in the beginning. An article in *The Guardian* of 24 November had the headline "Ukrainian protesters flood Kyiv after president pulls out of EU deal" (Grytsenko, 2013). However, only a few days later, foreign correspondent Elin Jönsson, reporting for Swedish Television, anchored the meaning of the images by exclaiming that "it looks like a revolution" (SVT, 2013). The concept of revolution then became the norm, and familiar props connoting revolution were used: footage of burning tyres, barricades, armoured police, flames, smoke, and violence.

Media narratives and mediated structuring

For those who were not present at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti during the time of the protests, clashes with police, and the subsequent ousting of President Yanukovych, the events were only accessible in mediated form. This is, of course, the case with all types of information we receive and that we do not have first-hand experience of. However, not all information we receive is in the form of narratives. For the analysis of media events as a narrative genre, however, it is important to analyse the components that make up a narrative: a temporally ordered chain of events with causal relationships to one another, a set of dramatis personae, and a set of narrative functions. A narrative should be distinguished from other types of speech acts, statements, discourses, and ideologies. In the online world, especially, we receive a lot of factual information that is only distantly related to other bits of information, and most such types of information do not have causal relationships, nor do they develop over time. We can, and often do, produce a narrative for ourselves out of these pieces of information, but unless others also draw the same inferences from the bits of information, this will remain a subjective meaning.

To Dayan and Katz, a media event is social: It is orchestrated as an offer to be accepted by the audience, and there must be intersubjectively produced meaning – the audience has to accept the offer. Arguably, it is in the intersubjectively perceived meaning that the media event is realised and reaches narrative closure. The event and its mediation can no longer be separated, and in hindsight, the order and sequence of happenings are organised in narrative form. Included in this narrative form are the many academic accounts of the event (e.g., Dyczok, 2016; Horbyk, 2017; Junes, 2016; Marples & Mills, 2015), and also films such as the

Netflix documentary *Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom* (Afineevsky, 2015). The dialectic that is the mediation and the social reality on the ground produces both the transformative and the disruptive event.

The concept of narrative deals with how events, persons, contexts, and things are ordered in a meaningful way. Narrative theory has its origins in theorists such as Vladimir Propp (1928/1968), Tzvetan Todorov (1969), and later Umberto Eco (1981) and Gerard Genette (1997), as well as others who have successively developed a conceptual toolbox for the analysis of stories; for example, sjuzet, fabula, dramatis personae, and paratexts. When we use these concepts for analyses of events, we usually do that in narrative form: We describe, as we have indeed done above, how events sequentially follow one another in an order that makes it meaningful for the reader of the narrative. We produce a coherent fabula by combining narrative elements into a sequence. To produce narratives is also part of how we present our analysis: We explain happenings for the reader of the analysis according to narrative principles of coherence and causality. However, we should also be aware of the difference between *producing a narrative* out of components picked from social reality, and *analysing something as a narrative* – which we usually do with texts. We then produce a new narrative out of our analysis. This should be borne in mind for the coming analysis: We do analyse a historical event, and we do so by producing the narrative that is our analysis. This is an important difference, and some uses of the concept of narrative seems to have forgotten this distinction, such as many analyses within the field of international relations, where one can speak of, for example, the Cold War as a narrative (Roselle et al., 2013; see also Miskimmon et al., 2013). But the Cold War is not a narrative. It can of course be narrativised in historical analysis or in fictional format (e.g., John le Carré's 1963 book, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*), but as a historical relation between a number of countries in the first and second world, it is not a narrative.

So, social realities are not narratives, but social realities can be narrativised. These narratives are constructed by way of how different media document them. But narratives are not only descriptive, they can also be prescriptive, and impact the ways in which events play out. Rituals are forms of scripting of social reality, which then takes on a specific narrative form and follows a (pre)scripted, preplanned sequence. In anthropology this is common, and we can see this in the accounts given in classical ritual studies (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1977; Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1909), as well as in modern accounts where the scripting dimension of practice is more accentuated (e.g., Swidler, 2000).

The subtitle to Dayan and Katz's (1992) book emphasises "the live broadcasting of history", and "liveness" is thus central for the event. Liveness is an important feature in their theory; it is what unites, integrates, and brings audiences the feeling of being part of the event. In media theory, liveness has most often been attributed to television, in fact being labelled as a founding characteristic of the medium (Heat & Skirrow, 1977). Liveness is a televisual code that

works to produce a sense of presence among the viewers, and there are several ways in which this quality is produced. Often, it is in a combination of directly broadcast sequences, mixed with pre-recorded clips, direct address to the viewer by a commentator, and so on. Common to all such broadcasts is that they are presented *as if* they were live transmissions of events occurring at the same time the viewer receives them. Their narrative progression is linear, causal, and has a clear direction, and editing techniques are carried out to result in a seamless text that unfolds in front of the eyes of the viewers (see the wider discussion of liveness in Bolin, 2009).

As both Dayan and Katz themselves, and other media events theorists have pointed out, the media landscape of today is much more fragmented compared to when Dayan and Katz initially formulated their theory. This has made the authors very pessimistic about the future of media events in an online world of multiple screens and fragmented audiences (Dayan, 2008; Katz & Dayan, 2018). With Julia Sonnevend (2018b), Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (2018), César Jiménez-Martínez (2016), and others, we would disagree, and point to the fact that although narratives are today dispersed over several platforms of content distribution (television, social media, on- and offline news, etc.), some stories assemble audiences far and wide and produce media events of ceremonial character, combining different elements across media technologies and platforms into a larger meaningful fabula. Not least did the livestreaming around the clock contribute to the construction of liveness – the sense among audiences and social media followers of being at the centre of the unfolding events and taking part in their flow.

As Dayan and Katz argue, transformative media events transform time and space. Undeniably, Ukraine has entered a new time: the time of revolution. Ukraine has also turned into an entirely new space – the Independence Square transformed into a European square, defining Ukraine as a country symbolically belonging to Europe through literally being put on the European map. The temporal and spatial order of the world is simply not the same after a transformative media event, something which is evident if we look at the outcomes of the events on what was once Maidan Nezalezhnosti, but now Euromaidan.

Ukraine: A story of three revolutions

The Euromaidan Revolution indeed put the country on the mental map of not only European audiences, but also wider international circles. However, there is also a broader narrative, where Euromaidan is a subplot. In the accounts of Ukraine's post-Soviet history, Euromaidan is the third revolution that the country has experienced since the collapse of the Soviet Union, following the Revolution on Granite and the Orange Revolution. Together, these three events make up the backbone of Ukrainian contemporary history. As any historian would say, history is a narrative account of past events, explained from the vantage point of posterity, and organised into a coherent and meaningful whole. The importance

of historiography was indeed emphasised among a group of historians during the Euromaidan Revolution, who came to organise themselves as "Likbez. Historical Front" in the Spring of 2014. In the words of Yuliya Yurchuk (2021: 691), "these historians regarded their profession as a tool in warfare and positioned themselves as civic activists who strived to influence the situation". These historians were, however, not alone in the pursuit of constructing the Ukrainian post-Soviet history, and successively, a master narrative consisting of three revolutions appeared.

The first of these, the Revolution on Granite, was a student protest that occurred 2–17 October 1990, the year before Ukraine became an independent nation-state after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. The name of the revolution comes from the student protesters' raising of tents on the granite steps to the Lenin monument in Maidan Nezalezhnosti. The protests were peaceful, and the government accepted the protesters' demands. Shortly thereafter, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Ukraine received independence as a sovereign nation-state (Yekechyk, 2015: 1f). The Orange Revolution started in November 2004 with large protests against a rigged election and corruption in government. It was labelled after the campaign colour orange that was used by the political opposition to the then sitting Yanukovych government. The protests eventually led to a re-voting procedure where Yanukovych lost to the leader of the opposition, Viktor Yushchenko.

Finally, there is a name for the events which started when President Yanukovych (now back in power) refrained from signing the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013 and was subsequently ousted and forced to flee to Russia. In Ukraine it is known as a Revolution of Dignity, while in the rest of the world it is more commonly known as the Euromaidan Revolution. "Revolution of Dignity" was launched quite early in December 2013 as an alternative to "Euromaidan Revolution" (Rudenko & Sarakhman, 2020). The reason was, according to its alleged author Yuri Syrotiuk, that the revolution was not only about aligning with Europe, but more a national rising (Syrotiuk, as cited in Rudenko & Sarakhman, 2020). The three revolutions are placed on a timeline in Figure 2.

Figure 2 The three Ukrainian Revolutions

Comment: The three revolutions form the longer narrative of the Ukrainian nation since the break-up of the Soviet Union.

The way in which the three Ukrainian revolutions are linked together can easily be read as a story – a narrative that includes a series of events, causally bound together over time until narrative closure is reached with the restoration of dignity. The story begins when the country is still part of an oppressive empire, and the

times are hard and grey as granite. The second event happened during a period of expectations, when emancipating revolts were seen around the world; that revolution had the bright (but somewhat ambiguous) colour of orange. The last event signifies a closure: an ousting of the Russia-friendly president and the election of a new president and the final signing of the European Union Association Agreement. Dignity for the country was achieved. The Ukrainian nation-state has gradually shaken off its Soviet legacy. The narrative pattern can be compared to how Sergei Eisenstein (1925) illustrated the popular uprising in the end of the famous Odessa steps scene of *Battleship Potemkin*. The scene ends in a montage of three statues of lions juxtaposed as to rise from a resting to a standing position, illustrating the rise against oppressors. Likewise, one could interpret the narrativisation of Ukraine's post-Soviet history in terms of three revolutions. The theory of montage that Eisenstein (1949/1977) developed out of his montage practice has since become a standard feature for narrative (visual) storytelling.

Ukraine's three revolutions could each be regarded as media events that follow the narrative sequence of transformative media events. This is probably true of all revolutions, as they are integrated into a recognisable narrative structure and presented to posterity. Taken together, the three Ukrainian revolutions form a super narrative and are integrated into a larger narrative of the formation of the nation-state of Ukraine. In Roland Barthes's (1957/1973) sense, they become part of an integrative myth, in this case of the Ukrainian nation.

However, inside the long narrative of the three revolutions are smaller units enclosing each other, like matryoshka dolls: A transformative media event (the EU Association Agreement), a disruptive event that eventually merges with the transformative media event (the Euromaidan Revolution), which gradually transforms and reaches an integrative ceremonial moment that makes it possible to reintegrate with the transformative event in order for that to reach narrative closure. In order to see this broader narrative construction, one must repeatedly disassemble the matryoshka doll in order to see how it eventually can be reassembled.

Conclusions: Narrative, ceremony, and a recipe for revolutions

To what extent are the events that have occurred in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in Ukraine *media* events? Why are they not simply events, that are both told according to the principles of narrative theory, but are also largely scripted on the background of them? Why is it "the live broadcasting of history" rather than just "history"? Can we even access history outside of narration? These are important questions that should be raised in relation to the media events theory, and we hope that the above exercise can be of inspiration for further such analyses. In the hyper-mediated world of today, there are very few events that are untouched by media – as technologies, organisations, and textual assemblages. Firstly, large-scale events cannot really happen without the representation power of the media. International phenomena such as the Olympic Games would be

unimaginable if they were not mediated to international audiences. They would simply not be large-scale events, but local events. The same is true of the Eurovision Song Contest. Without the mediation, this would simply be an event where artists from different places came together to sing for an audience that was present in the same room, at the same time. And without the media as an organisational technology, they would only gather local audiences. Nobody outside of the local community would even know of their existence. And without communication technologies to document the event in textual form, if only to make a list of the outcome of the contest, the event itself would fade into oblivion for those who were not present. Arguably then, all large-scale events *are* media events (and not only mediated events), be they sports contests, political elections, wars and conflicts, and so on.

As media technologies have developed over time, the dialectic relationship between media as narrators and as participants of social events has increased. Furthermore, realities are also to a larger extent becoming scripted according to narrative principles, approaching how rituals follow a narrative pattern. The relations between textual expression and form, and social action, is becoming more and more intertwined in the late modern media society of the twenty-first century.

In the above, we have tried to discuss the transformative and the disruptive media events related to the Euromaidan Revolution in light of the three Ukrainian revolutions as they gradually have come to be constructed in the historical accounts and in the retrospective mass media features. We have pointed to an unresolved distinction between the transformative media event as theorised in Dayan and Katz's early writings and the disruptive events they proposed in their later works. We have also discussed the unresolved tension between social reality and its representation that the media events theory orchestrates. In late modern hyper-mediated society, the distinction between events and media events does not make sense, and although Dayan and Katz were unclear on this point, their theory in fact fits better today than it did in the 1960s and 1970s. Our example is, on the other hand, perhaps not typical, and we would therefore welcome further discussion on the ways in which events are narrativised and incorporated into longer national histories, and how we come to know, understand, and interpret them.

Postscript

While editing the final version of this article, Ukraine was brutally invaded by Russia on 24 February 2022. The war that has, in effect, been ongoing since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, and the Russian involvement in Donetsk and Luhansk, has now intensified, and casualties are growing day by day. A happy ending seems very distant. The struggle over its representation is ongoing, and no doubt will extend into the final representation of the outcome.

Note

1. The project started with the aim of analysing the nation-branding practices of Ukraine, but due to the events around the Euromaidan revolution, the project soon changed to become focused on the management of information in its wake. It is accounted for in full in Bolin and Ståhlberg's forthcoming volume, *Managing meaning in Ukraine: Information policy, agency, media and reputation in turbulent times* (2023).

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