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MEASURING ONLINE MOBILISATION POTENTIAL FROM A MICRO-NARRATIVES SURVEY: LEADING CONCERNS FOR POST-YUGOSLAV RESIDENTS IN AUSTRIA, GERMANY, AND CROATIA

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Abstract: The paper explores the leading issues and concerns experienced by people of Post-Yugoslav origin living in Austria, Germany, and Croatia and which of those issues have the strongest potential for political mobilisation when discussed online. The data were collected in a Micronarratives Survey carried out in 2019. The questionnaire included an open-ended entry question asking which situation made respondents uneasy in the country where they live or anywhere else in the world. It then explored (1) how reading about that issue online makes them feel, (2) how ready they are to undertake unconventional political action to solve the issue, and (3) what direction of change they are inclined to pursue to solve the issue. Relationships between these three dimensions are validated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), resulting in an Online Mobilisation Score (OMS) which is estimated for all respondents and extrapolated for each theme of leading concerns. The main finding of the research is that, in 2019, Post-Yugoslav residents in the three countries were most frequently concerned about government decisions, but Diversity and Equality was the theme with the most potential for political mobilisation among those respondents (there being too much or too little of diversity and equality).

Keywords: diaspora, confirmatory factor analysis, online mobilisation

JEL classification: J61, C13, C38, C83, C51

INTRODUCTION

International longitudinal surveys explore attitudes, opinions, and sentiment of representative population samples using highly structured questionnaires. For diaspora and migration researchers, such surveys have limited applicability - response options are narrowed down to other scientific interests, samples often include small numbers of people of immigrant background and, immigrants who do not speak the host country

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language are usually skipped in data collection. This paper presents research on immigrant populations using a more open and inclusive methodology.

The central interest of this paper is the applicability of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) for quantification of online mobilizing potential of salient concerns for people of Post-Yugoslav origin[1] living in Germany, Austria, and Croatia. The data came from a Micronarratives Survey (MS) collected face-to-face and via live online meeting applications with 547 individuals of mostly Post-Yugoslav (PY) origin in Croatia, Austria, and Germany in July/October 2019, as part of the Resonant Voices Initiative in the EU (RVIEU). Although narratives are omnipresent in the online sphere, researchers are often missing access to other dimensions of information tied to those narratives that can readily be tested and analysed indirectly using SEM. Our approach was therefore to conduct a survey with an open-ended issue-focused entry question, and a number of other questions further exploring the respondents' understanding of their issue of concern, some of which we used for measuring online mobilising potential.

People from the Post-Yugoslav (PY) space continue to connect culturally, economically, and politically, bonded by the same or similar languages, in what is sometimes referred to as the Yugosphere (Judah, 2009) and Web Yugosphere (Mazzucchelli, 2012). The EU countries with the largest populations of PY citizens (including citizens of Slovenia and Croatia) in 2019 were Germany (1,172,200) and Austria (367,686), while only a small number (4,644) in Croatia had citizenships of other PY countries (EUROSTAT, 2022). Still, unofficial sources indicate that at least half a million people in Croatia were born in other countries of the former Yugoslavia (Jurasić, 2019). The study therefore included Croatia as the most recent EU member state with a large PY diaspora and a PY country at the same time. Of note is that 13 percent of Croatian citizens lived in another EU country in 2018 (Schneider, 2022), the share being higher than for other EU countries.

The PY diasporas' post-conflict, migration-, and integration-related grievances often resurface, while populist and radical parties in host countries easily tap into those issues, which can influence social cohesion negatively in cities such as Vienna and Frankfurt where PY populations are among the largest immigrant groups. Their political role in countries of origin is also ambiguous. It is therefore important to know which of their grievances from the past or present are brewing at different times, that is, which concerns are leading. For this paper, leading concerns are defined as those which have been making respondents uneasy in the country where they live or anywhere else in the world (including their countries of origin).

The first question in the 2019 Micronarratives Survey asked respondents to recount a recent situation which made them feel "uneasy" ("činilo nelagodu"). Their micronarratives were coded using thematic and frame analysis, shedding light on the leading concerns. Other questions from the survey were then explored as candidates for an Online Mobilisation Score (OMS) using SEM. The following three dimensions are finally included in the OMS: (1) Feelings which the respondents associate with the online content about the issue of concern; (2) Respondents' readiness to undertake

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1 Origin from one of the countries that emerged after the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – SFRY. The countries include Slovenia and Croatia in the European Union, as well as the EU Candidate Countries Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Kosovo (under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244).

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unconventional political action to solve the issue; and (3) Direction of change they are inclined to pursue to solve the issue. The research team estimated the OMS for all respondents in the sample and aggregated the OMS for each group of leading concerns (themes and frames). Although this paper focuses on the methodological contribution of our study to understanding complexity through SEM, the results of the remaining analytical processes are novel and open grounds for a variety of potential analyses but are not the central focus of this paper.

After the literature review in the second section, the data and the theoretical background for the methods used in this analysis are discussed in the third section. The results of the empirical undertaking are documented in the fourth section. Finally, the fifth section offers a discussion and conclusions from this research, focusing on the methodological contributions. This research opens space for replication of the approach with different survey designs and qualitative analyses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Virtual social networks as new forms of sociability have changed the PY populations' perceptions about community, relationships, and social life – by creating spaces and time for intensification (Sijakovic & Vukotic, 2020), but also by alienating populations from the non-virtual reality. On the other side, diasporas' sense of belonging, perfused by the experience of uprooting and migration, is on the surface healed through online opportunities to continuously reimagine the homeland, maintain closer ties to their kin, and engage in transnational action in real time (Louw & Volcic, 2010; Nedelcu, 2019), although overreliance on online diasporic communities of emotion may damage their potential ties to host societies.

Disruptive emotion may be one key aspect of a grievance narrative. Louw and Volcic (2010) drew parallels between grievances which Serbian and white South African diasporas expressed online on websites and in chat rooms longing for familiar identities that no longer existed after the collapse of systems they favoured. Anger, resentment, and blaming of *others* dominated their online narratives, reflecting victimage and dissatisfaction with the current situation *back home* (Louw & Volcic, 2010). To incite emotional response from audiences, online content creators often include emotionally charged images, particularly those with mobilizing potential – enthusiasm, anger, and fear (Casas & Williams, 2019). The posts on diaspora websites and chatrooms, or more recently in Facebook pages and on Twitter, are not representative of all members of those communities – people self-select, and many diasporas online communities attract expression of grievances, nostalgia, and dissent. Instead of analysing the online content, our research identifies grievances independent from the medium using a survey administered on a purposive sample, and then explores how reading about those grievances online makes respondents feel.

The traditional research assumption in the literature that conflict-generated refugees abroad demonstrate more nationalistic leanings than populations that stayed behind after conflict are disputed in research. Among Bosnian refugees in Sweden for example, those who were provided with coping resources early on later demonstrated similar attitudes about conflict and reconciliation as populations in BiH, not more nationalistic (Hall, 2016). Expectedly, host country reception system does play a role in the political attitudes of diasporas. However, Koinova (2016) argues that host

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country reception system, anti-immigrant rhetoric in host countries, foreign relations, and transnational influences may motivate political mobilisation of conflict-generated diasporas only momentarily, while the necessary condition for sustained political mobilization is continued perceived importance of a contested issue that connects the diaspora, the host state, and the state of origin. This was the key difference between the Bosniak diaspora in the Netherlands which was mobilizing around the role of Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica in the last decade, compared to Serb and Croat diasporas there that did not have a specific traumatic issue connected to the host country. The crisis of the EU refugee and migration regime has retraumatised some of the diaspora members, and created novel links between past traumatic experiences, host, and home countries. Milan (2018) for example documented experiences and emotions of individuals of PY origin in the solidarity groups working with asylum seekers – those individuals recognized something of what their parents had been through in Austria in the plights of the Syrian, Afghan, and other asylum seekers trying to enter Austria and Germany. Syrian conflict as a contentious issue attracted some of the PY diaspora to radical causes. Resentment and alienation of Kosovo diaspora in Germany combined with the presence of radical Islamic preachers there attracted some of them to the Caliphate (Perteshi, 2020). Further, Serbian, Croatian, and other PY citizens are participating in the conflict in Ukraine(Metodieva, 2019; Colborne, 2019).

Political leanings of the PY diasporas are changing as the structure of emigration from the PY space changes. People emigrating in the last two decades are younger and higher-skilled (Prelec, 2019) than conflict-generated refugees from the 1990ies or the economic and political emigrants from the SFRY period. Prelec (2019) showed that Serbian diaspora that voted in the 2017 Serbian Presidential Election was more interested in practical governance issues in Serbia than in traditionally nationalistic issues and Serbia's international relations. The PY diasporas are therefore a multiverse of waves and generations, with political ideologies leaning from the far left to the far right, and with different degrees of motivation to act politically. Recent research suggests that immigrant families tend integrate into the host country political spectrum and values over two or three generations, with the first generations maintaining more conservative attitudes than the next, though the families' socio-economic lag may persist longer, and social ties may still remain inward-looking(Heath & Schneider, 2021).

Diasporas' influence on countries of origin is more complex than sometimes portrayed by the international community supporting their economic engagement in home countries. While diasporas heighten contentious issues in home countries' politics, culture, and education (Alibašic, Davidović, Kapetanović, Remiddi, & Zejnilović, 2019), they also exert positive developmental pressures through remittances, investment, and return migration(King & Oruc, 2018).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

SEM is widely applied across different scientific fields(Kline, 2011; Brown, 2006; Bollen, 1986), especially in social research (Roldán, 2021) and in psychology(Morrison, Morrison, & McCutcheon, 2017). Harlow, Korendijk, Hamaker, Hox, and Duerr (2013) showed that SEM was the second most widely used multivariate analysis in European journals in 2008, most likely because of specialized software availability, according to Skidmore and Thompson(2010). Also, management litera-

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ture in recent years shows an increase in using SEM as an analytical approach for theory testing (Larry, J. Vandenberg, & Jeffrey , 2009) and similar situation is for marketing(Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Hence, SEM as the methodological approach is suitable for evaluations of relationships and validation of the constructs in question and it is possible to find various examples in diverse literature (Núñez-Barriopedro, Ravina-Ripoll, & Ahumada-Tello, 2020). Variables, directions of relationships between variables, and basic boundaries for SEM construction in this study were identified through a review of the communicology and political science literature, as well as grey literature on mobilisation and radicalisation. The review of techniques and previous experience with SEM pointed to the application of the hybrid SEM which combines measurement and structural components, allowing for complex relationships between observed and latent variables. This method enhances the validity of the model by ensuring that constructs are accurately measured, and relationships are correctly specified. Hybrid SEM is particularly useful for testing theoretical models and hypotheses, as it allows for the confirmation of theoretical expectations about the relationships between constructs. Additionally, its flexibility makes it suitable for various types of data and research questions, enabling the modelling of direct and indirect effects, mediating variables, and feedback loops.

In the initial stages of our analysis, we conducted the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) which allowed us to identify the latent structures within our data without defined number and nature of factors. Our original dataset included 617 variables and EFA was essential to reduce the complexity to the most relevant factors. We then turned to Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test specific hypotheses about the relationships between the observed variables and latent structures. CFA allowed us to assess the degree to which the model fits the data.

Whereas SEM as a quantitative tool is regarded highly in the post-positivist toolbox (Abu-Alhaija, 2019), narratives are among the central data for constructivist researchers. This study entailed a combination of those seemingly opposed epistemologies. According to Polleta (2012), narratives are complex accounts of meaning and interpretation that may connect events in a chain of causes and consequences, typically in a linear fashion. Some of the most exciting narratives, however, remain only partial, fragmented(Polletta & Gardner, 2015).

DATA

Resonant Voices Initiative in the EU (RVIEU) was an EU-funded civil society initiative which campaigned against online misinformation and radicalisation among the PY diasporas in the EU countries in 2019 and 2020. As part of the RVIEU research team, the authors co-designed a Micro-Narratives Survey screening for radicalising themes and misinformation among PY diasporas. Considering the complexity of factors associated with radicalisation, the RVIEU team opted for a sensemaking software solution to collect data (SenseMaker by Cynefin). RVI EU used the data to craft the campaign materials and online tools.

A network of RVIEU field researchers surveyed 547 individuals of mostly PY origin in Croatia (245, including 149 non-immigrant), Austria (114, including 8 non-immigrant), and Germany (188, including 24 non-immigrant) in July/October 2019. The researchers mostly used the face-to-face offline and online mode of data

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collection in Vienna, Zagreb, Rijeka, Berlin, and several other cities in Germany. Our sample structure is in Table 1. In the Croatia sample, women formed 58 percent of respondents, in Austria 61 percent, and in Germany 46 percent.

The sample in Croatia included 46 individuals who were born in other countries of the former Yugoslavia – field researchers were instructed to collect information from a purposive sample based on the population census, not on the assumed structure of PY diasporas in Croatia, as numeric information on those populations was limited. By ethnicity, the majority of the sample in Croatia were Croats, in Austria Serbs, while Croats and Serbs were also the largest groups in Germany. It should be noted that samples outside Croatia included a small number of persons (8 out of 114 in Austria, 24 out of 188 in Germany) who had no direct lineage to Post-Yugoslav space but had family, friendship, or workplace ties to persons of Post-Yugoslav background. We kept these categories of respondents within the sample.

Table 1. Sample structure by country and gender

Country	Female, N= 297	Male, N=239	Non-binary, N=1	Other, N=3	Refused to answer, N=7	Total
Austria	70 (61%)	44 (39%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	114
Croatia	141 (58%)	99 (40%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	4 (2%)	245
Germany	86 (46%)	96 (51%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)	188

Source: Author's analysis

Variables

Survey design followed the SenseMaker software guidelines. A good overview of the technique is available in a technical note by Merwe, et al. (2019) and in Lynam and Fletcher's (2015) study exploring adaptation to climate change. In addition to an opening micronarrative, a questionnaire includes a set of questions in which respondents assign meaning and importance to their micronarratives.

From the original questions in the questionnaire, 23 variables were initially considered for construction of the OMS (Table 2; relevant survey questions listed in Appendix A), or more specifically for measurement of latent variables of *Emotion* triggered by online content about the situation, *Activism* for political solutions to the situation, and *Beliefs* about the causes and solutions to the situation, and preferences for a strong leader, ruling elite, or ordinary people's rule in the host country. Age was a control variable. In Table 2, shaded variables are those included in the final model.

Table 2. Variables considered for SEM (see Appendix A for survey questions)

Dimensions	Variables	
Emotion	Angry about online content related to the salient issue	*Feel_Angry*
	Frustrated about online content related to the salient issue	*Feel_Frustr*
	Fear about online content related to the salient issue	*Feel_Fright*
	Worried about negative consequence of the salient concern	*D_WorriedX*
	Combined angry and afraid about online content	*Fear_Outrage*
	Any emotion reported (binary)	*Emotion_bin*
Beliefs	Driven to change perceived economic marginalization	*Econ_X*
	Driven to change perceived political marginalization	*Pol_X*
	Driven to change perceived socio-cultural marginalization	*SocCul_X*
Activism	Very likely to petition	*SuppPttn_X*
	Very likely to promote online	*SuppPromoteOnln_X*
	Very likely to volunteer	*SuppVolunt_X*
	Very likely to donate	*SuppDonat_X*
	Very likely to vote	*SuppVote_X*
	Very likely to promote offline	*SuppPromOffln_X*
	Very likely to participate in rallies	*SuppRallies_X*
	Very likely to undertake any other political action	*SuppOther_X*
Emotion (additional)	Frequent exposure to online content about the salient issue	*OnlnContent_recode*
	Any exposure reported (binary)	*OnlnContent_bin*
Beliefs (additional)	Preferred strong leader	*Ruling_Ldr*
	Preferred ruling elite	*Ruling_Elite*
	Preferred ordinary people's rule	*Ruling_Ppl*
Age	Age- excluded from SEM	*Age*

Source: Author's analysis

Within the *Emotions* dimension, *D_WorriedX* is based on the SenseMaker guidance to scale the importance of the concern and the research team opted for the degree to which the respondent is worried about negative consequence of the issue. Other variables in the *Emotions* dimension come from the MNS item adapted from a study of emotions about political advertisements(Weber, 2013), since the RVIEU team used the MNS to evaluate the effectiveness of its online content. Additionally, within the dimension, the team explored the association between negatively valanced emotion and degree of exposure to, i.e., the frequency of seeing the online content about their issue of concern. The survey item (see Appendix A) was adapted from the Privacy Panel Survey by the Pew Research Centre(2014).

Beliefs variables are based on two sets of items. The first set explores why respondents are concerned about the issue, i.e., whether they believe it influences or may influence the power, resources, and identity of the group they care about. These belong to two groups of usual explanations for adverse intergroup relations – realistic and symbolic threats(Simonovits, 2016). The three items are interpreted as a respondents' potential field of action. The second set of *Beliefs* items did not stay in the final model.

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The set was based on the exploration of three possible approaches to resolving the issue – through a strong leader, elite rule, or people's rule, which can broadly reflect political preferences for authoritarian, elitist, and/or populist political options. The item for authoritarianism was adapted from the World Values Survey Wave 7 (Haerpfer, et al., 2022) while the elitism and populism items were developed following the same pattern. It should be noted that these three preferences for political leadership are not mutually exclusive but are sufficiently distinct – this is a preferred feature of SenseMaker items.

Activism variables are based on political participation items in the European Social Survey Round 8 (Gibson & Cunill, 2016), but the question itself was formulated as likelihood of engaging in political action, as initially formulated in the Activism Orientation Scale (Corning & Myers, 2002). The team also explored the item of likely engagement in any other political activity a leader or a group may ask them to do, which can indirectly mean engaging in unlawful activities. Confirmatory Factor Analysis run with SEM

In Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) run with SEM, the variables are either observed or latent. The relationship between one or more latent variables and their (observed) indicators are described with a set of equations (Beaujean, 2014). There are several observable variables that indicate one factor. Also, there are multiple factor models where there are two or more latent variables (Steinmetz, 2015), where latent variables can serve as indicators for other latent variables.

The CFA structure is defined by the parameters that can be free, fixed, and constrained. The structure can be complex (Brown, 2006). The final structure is identified through an iterative procedure where each model is evaluated and modified in the next iteration (Holmes & French, 2015). Each model was evaluated using a global fit, or more precisely the Chi-square test statistics and fit indices. In addition to those, the analysis proceeded with checking whether the parameter values were valid, making sure that there were no negative residual variances, that factor loadings and covariance were of the expected direction, and that there were no large standard errors.

This paper is based on the *lavaan* package, a free open-source, but commercial-quality package for latent variable modelling in R programming surrounding (Rosseel, 2012). The *lavaan* package uses the maximum likelihood estimation. It should be mentioned that SEM approach can be significantly upgraded through Bayesian inference (Sik-Yum, 2007), although this upgrade remains out of the scope in this analysis.

RESULTS

All variables presented in Table 2 (except age) are included in one of the iterative steps of SEM. Theoretical basis and model parameters are aligned with modification indices to provide direction for model improvement.

We run 15 models, before closing the entire process with the final, 16th model. Key parameters for each model are in Table 3. A table containing item loadings that provides a comprehensive overview of the standard output, was generated by the *sem* command in the *lavaan* package, including parameter estimates for latent variables, regressions, covariances, and variances, along with their standard errors, z-values, and p-values.

First five models are one-factor models with only one recognized latent variable. Models 6 and 7 are multiple-factor models but without imposed hierarchical

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structure, with three factors included: *Emotions*, *Activism*, and *Beliefs*. Key models are 4, 6, 7, and 11, which we briefly elaborate to outline evolution of the model through this iterative process.
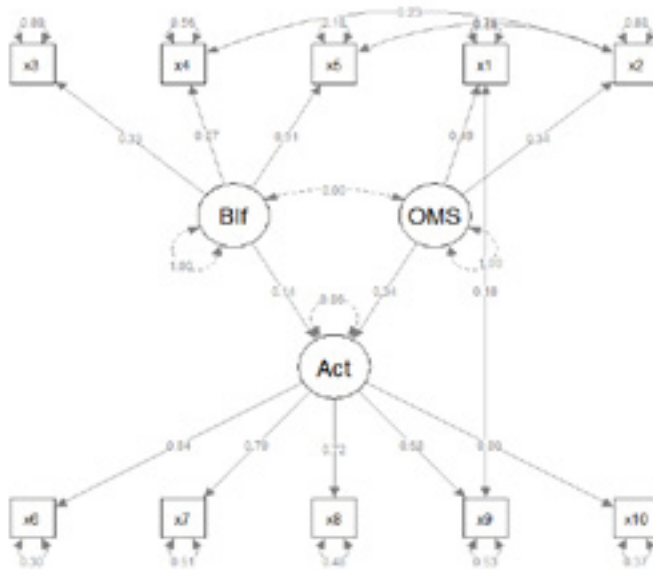
Table 3. Evaluation of CFA models of different structure2

	Model	χ2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
1	Model one	412.08	119	0.682	0.12	0.095
2	Model two	68.37	35	0.932	0.075	0.056
3	Model three	12.226	9	0.993	0.046	0.028
4	Model four	5.453	5	0.999	0.023	0.017
5	Model five	2.086	4	1	0	0.011
6	Model six	184.401	116	0.911	0.059	0.061
7	Model seven	171.111	101	0.909	0.064	0.061
8	Model eight	158.81	101	0.936	0.058	0.063
9	Model nine	The optimizer (NLMINB)[1] claimed the model converges, but not all elements of the gradient are (near) zero. The optimizer did not find a local solution.				
10	Model ten	101.079	52	0.931	0.075	0.059
11	Model eleven	118.571	73	0.938	0.061	0.059
12	Model twelve	89.812	41	0.928	0.084	0.058
13	Model thirteen	78.429	39	0.942	0.077	0.051
14	Model fourteen	95.725	51	0.935	0.072	0.061
15	Model fifteen	78.429	39	0.942	0.077	0.051
	Final model	39.543	30	0.987	0.038	0.044

Source: Author's analysis

The key differences between the models lie in their complexity and the theoretical constructs they aim to capture. **Model Four** focuses on a single latent variable representing resource-demanding political activism, highlighting the relationship between various high-effort activities. **Models Six** and **Seven** introduce multiple factors (Emotion, Beliefs, and Activism), with **Model Six** being less parsimonious due to the inclusion of more variables, yet not improving fit indices compared to **Model Seven**. **Model Eleven** refines the measurement of the Emotion factor using binary variables related to online content, showing significant improvement in fit. The **Final Model** incorporates key observable variables like the likelihood of participating in petitions, reducing the number of variables from 23 to 10, and ensuring a robust and parsimonious representation of the theoretical constructs.

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2 χ2 is the Chi-square statistic, df are the degrees of freedom, CFI is the Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA is the root mean square error of approximation, and SRMR is the standardized root mean square residual. These are all parameters used for model evaluation.

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Figure 1. Path diagram for the final model of the OMS

Source: Author's analysis

We reached a significant improvement only after we included the likelihood of participating in petitions (*SuppPtnn_X*) as an observable variable for the *Emotion* factor. The *Final Model* is based on ten measured variables - Figure 1 shows relationships between variables and factors, while Table 5 lists variables and key indices. We downsized the set of variables from the original 23 to 10 variables.

To assess the extent of the common method bias, we could have included a theoretically unrelated market variable that is known to not relate to the constructs of interest, but finding such a variable can be challenging (Podsakoff, et al., 2003). Instead, we used procedural remedies during data collection, such as ensuring anonymity and counterbalancing the question order (Podsakoff, et al., 2003; Podsakoff, et al., 2012) to further mitigate the potential method bias in our study.

Table 5. Variables in the final OMS model

		n	Mean	sd	Median	Skewness	Kurtosis	se
x1	Anger related to online content about the issue	547	0.46	0.50	0.00	0.16	-1.98	0.02
x2	Frustration related to online content about the issue	547	0.45	0.50	0.00	0.19	-1.97	0.02
x3	Driven to change perceived economic marginalization	362	41.67	31.54	33.99	0.33	-1.28	1.66
x4	Driven to change perceived political marginalization	367	71.04	24.98	78.08	-1.06	0.44	1.30
x5	Driven to change perceived socio-cultural marginalization	427	59.23	32.19	67.51	-0.43	-1.20	1.56

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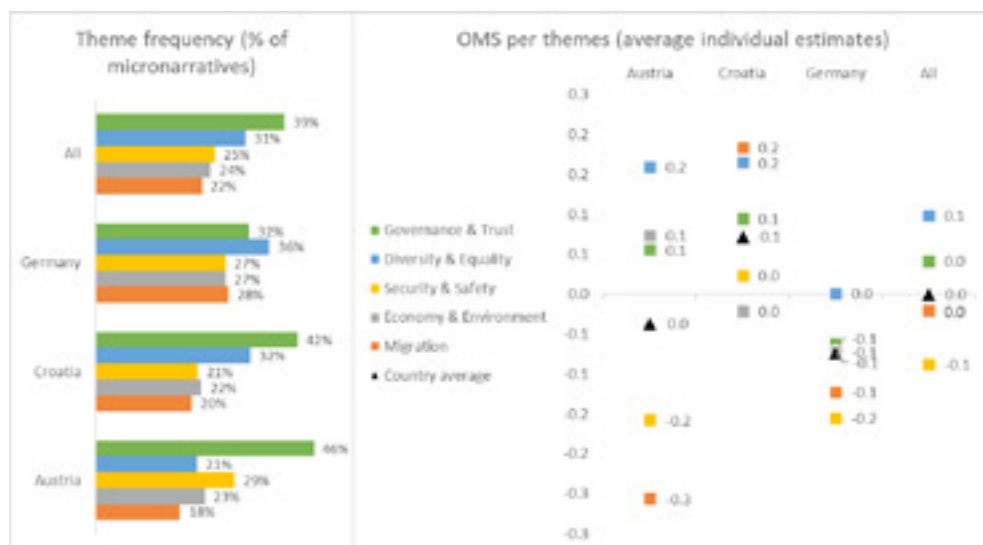| x6	Very likely to volunteer	508	50.14	32.86	52.94	-0.07	-1.40	1.46
x7	Very likely to donate	506	41.45	33.22	34.94	0.33	-1.32	1.48
x8	Very likely to promote offline	500	46.23	32.34	49.15	0.09	-1.35	1.45
x9	Very likely to participate in lawful public demonstration or a rally	516	56.83	32.65	62.67	-0.37	-1.23	1.44
x10	Very likely to undertake any other political action a political group would ask them to	446	36.88	31.22	33.95	0.48	-0.99	1.48

Source: Author's analysis

CFA of the few first-order latent variables, bi-factor and second-order latent variables models led us to the Structural Equation Model, where latent variable of *Beliefs* has a direct effect on the latent variable of *Activism* and an indirect effect on *Online Mobilisation*. In the final model, *Online Mobilisation* is a latent variable defined by variation in *Activism* and two specific emotions, anger and frustration directly reported in the MNS about the situation that makes respondents uneasy. All loadings are above 0.3 or more, highly statistically significant. The model is robust and has high global, absolute, and relative fit indices (Table 3).

The missing values issue was treated with the random forest method. The overall robustness was confirmed on a reduced dataset excluding cases with missing values. However, factor scores for online mobilization potential were needed for the further analysis of micronarratives about salient concerns. The random forest technique was therefore applied as a machine learning approach.

The *Final Model* is used to estimate the OMS for each respondent. Based on individual estimates, we aggregate the OMS at the level of themes of situations which respondents described in the opening questions. Theme frequency and OMS averages per country and theme are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Theme frequency and OMS estimates

Source: Author's analysis

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OMS is aggregated also at the level of topics and frames, but those results are not presented in this SEM-oriented analysis. Diversity and Equality ranks high in all three countries – it includes narratives reflecting the tension between diverse segments of the society based on sex, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic belonging, and similar. Asked what makes her uneasy, one respondent noted:

"A protest was recently organised in a part of Croatia with a significant Roma population. The poster/protest call explicitly mentioned (only) Roma. This protest was discussed on public television in an informative TV programme (with high viewing rates). Of the many shameful statements by the politicians (…) I was mostly shocked by the fact that nobody on the programme (or from more visible political circles) condemned/thought it scandalous that such a protest was organized, and on top of that, the minority was explicitly named!" *Croatia, female*

Still, the most representative of that theme in Austria and Germany are the integration narratives about difficulty preserving identity, status, rights as diaspora or immigrants. One respondent for example noted that what makes him uneasy is:

"The astonishment and even intolerance (…) in Germans when they see I am a practising Moslem. Only because I go to the mosque regularly, it is as if they look upon me as a terrorist, and not a simple diligent worker." *Germany, male*

Governance and Trust issues also rank high in the mobilising potential, followed by the Economy and Environment theme, Migration, and lastly Security and Safety issues. There are important variations between countries in frequency of concerns and mobilizing potential.

Themes, topics, and frames in the collected micronarratives can be described with two measures. One is frequency which denotes the spread of concerns. The more representative the sample, the better the measure of spread. The second measure is the latent online mobilisation potential that we identify through SEM. Those issues that demonstrate higher online mobilising potential, even if not very frequent, may be more likely to incite political activism in the future. OMS may be used as an early diagnostic tool.

CONCLUSION

Immigrant populations are usually hard to reach in longitudinal surveys that focus on the general adult population of countries. This paper is a methodological contribution to identifying the immigrant populations' concerns that have the most mobilising potential, using data from a survey that specifically focused on immigrants. In 2019, a team of researchers affiliated with an EU-funded civil society initiative administered a Micro-Narratives Survey to a purposeful sample of Post-Yugoslav (PY) origin residents (547) in Austria, Germany, and Croatia, asking them to describe situations that made them uneasy. Austria and Germany are traditional destinations for PY emigration, while Croatia is both an EU and PY country with a significant population originating from other former Yugoslav republics.

To detect mobilising issues, we qualitatively categorised the collected micronarratives according to leading themes and topics that made respondents uneasy. Using other questions in the survey, we constructed an Online Mobilisation Score (OMS) to understand which issues are more politically charging for PY residents when discussed online. To construct the OMS, we ran 16 iterations of the Structural Equation Model-

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ling, settling for a final model with 11 variables related to activism, beliefs, and emotions. Beliefs contribute to the online mobilising potential through their influence on emotion and activism. When respondents interpreted their issue of concern as a form of socio-cultural and political marginalisation (as opposed to economic), they were more likely to report frustration in our sample. Our final model of the OMS includes frustration and anger experienced as a reaction to online content about the issue of concern. Anger also directly links to respondents' motivation to participate in political protests. We take *Activism*, consisting of resource-demanding political actions, including protests as the key dimension of the OMS, reinforced by emotion and beliefs.

In 2019 the most frequent theme of concern in the purposive sample was related to Governance & Trust in institutions, but the theme with the most online mobilising potential in Austria and Germany is Diversity & Equality. In Croatia, where most of the respondents were non-immigrants, the theme of highest online mobilising potential was Migration. However, our findings are not generalisable to the entire Post-Yugoslav populations in these countries. In selecting the 2019 purposive sample of Post-Yugoslav populations in Croatia, Austria, and Germany, field researchers were instructed to aim for gender, age, and ethnic diversity. Administrative data on Post-Yugoslav populations in Austria and Germany is incomplete and could not provide direction for sampling. The subsamples in these two countries included also 8 and 24 persons respectively who are not of Post-Yugoslav origin but have ties to persons of Post-Yugoslav descent.

The themes and topics coded from micronarratives would likely be significantly different in 2024 considering the profound global changes that happened in the meantime, including the COVID-19 pandemic and two major conflicts influencing perceptions in the Post-Yugoslav and the European space. Similarly, the repertoire and intensity of emotion, the likelihood of certain types of political activism over others, and the drive for certain types of change may be different today. The results should thus be interpreted with caution and potentially re-evaluated in light of the recent challenges.

However, this article primarily demonstrates usefulness of Structural Equation Modelling for constructing a quantitative measure of the mobilising potential of specific themes within groups. The approach is particularly useful in media and communication studies, as well as consumer research, and other fields.

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(Footnotes)

1   NLMINB is an optimizer using PORT routines. PORT optimization routines have a common structure and assume certain number of iterations and objective function and gradient function evaluations performed. We did not constrain optimization, although there is an option.