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# **‘Your Pain is Better than Mine’: Politicization of Music in Poland**

*A Textual Analysis of Music Use during the 2020  
Presidential Elections*

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Master’s Thesis in Media Studies

Department of Media and Communication  
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Spring 2022



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## **Abstract**

Describing the ever-changing political climate in Poland as *eventful*, could be easily perceived as an understatement – especially in the past 40 years. From the introduction of the Martial Law in 1981 to nowadays' democratic backsliding, it is hard to point out and isolate a single year that has not brought a major political turn.

In this thesis, I conceptualize the state of politics in Poland, and at the same time study what role music plays in this. By focusing on phenomena such as the process of music politicization and the deepening “Us versus Them” polarization; I investigate how music becomes ideological in the political discourse, and how it contributes to the building of new social identities. To unfold these events, I have performed a close, textual analysis of campaign speeches presented during the 2020 presidential elections. Furthermore, I have analyzed music-centered TV shows such as the New Year's Eve concerts and the Opole and Sopot Festivals. In the end and seeing as there is a research gap within media and political studies on polarization and music's influence on said process. The main findings in this study are used to explain how music not only authenticates and emotionalizes political speeches, but also how it contributes to the process of political polarization.





## **Acknowledgments**

Writing this master's thesis has been an exciting, enlightening, and, at times, challenging process. A wild adventure that I will treasure forever. However, carrying out this project would not have been possible without the help of a few special people, that I would like to thank here.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Steffen Krüger. Thank you for your everlasting belief, patience, and support. For sharing your invaluable wisdom, and for your thorough, constructive, and positive feedback. For all the meetings and fun discussions. You challenged me to push further and to learn more. I could not have asked for a better matched supervisor and mentor.

Thank you to all the passionate professors who taught me at the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo.

Thank you to my ever-encouraging family and friends. To Mom and Dad – for all your stories, wisdom, and ideas. For never getting tired (or maybe you were, but you hid it so well) of my constant talking about this project. For always being there for me and supporting me. I really can't wait to see you soon!

To Kasia and Stian. For motivating me and for always being by my side. For all the dinners, jokes, and movies. For the help and support. You guys are true rock stars! Oh, and the next dinner is on me! To Teddy for being the best research 'dogssistant'.

To Jack for being the greatest friend, and for proofreading. And lastly, to my Oslo (Emma, Julie, Jonas, Natalia, Bartek, Magda), Poznań (Maja, Karolina, Ola, Monia), Berlin (Milla and Alex), and Highered crews. You guys are seriously everything I could ask for in a friend and more.

Wow! What a ride!



Table of Contents:

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Research questions	3
1.2	Structure of the thesis	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Historical background</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Transformation	5
2.1.1	Systematic transformation	6
2.1.2	Economic transformation	7
2.1.3	Social transformation	8
2.2	Democratic backsliding	11
2.3	Hybrid regimes	12
2.4	The 2020 presidential elections – organization and accompanying controversies	14
2.4.1	First and second round of the elections	16
2.5	Music and Cultural Identity	18
2.5.1	Music of the 1980s and the anti-communistic rock hymns	19
2.5.2	Music of the 1990s and the birth of disco-polo	21
2.5.3	2000s upwards: hip-hop revolution	23
<b>3</b>	<b>Theory</b>	<b>26</b>
3.1	Political polarization	26
3.1.1	Affective polarization	27
3.1.2	“Us versus Them” polarization	27
3.1.3	Polarization in Poland	29
3.1.4	Polarized partisan media in Poland	30
3.2	Populism	31
3.2.1	Populistic communication in Poland	33
3.3	Habitus	34
3.3.1	Hysteresis effect and homo sovieticus	36
3.4	Music and politics – music and society	37
<b>4</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>39</b>
4.1	What is textual analysis and reasonings behind its use	39
4.2	Hermeneutics	42
4.2.1	The hermeneutic circle	43
4.2.2	Hermeneutics of suspicion	43
4.3	Semiotics	44
4.3.1	Mythology	45
4.3.2	Social semiotics	46
4.4	Discourse analysis	46
4.5	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	48
4.5.1	Power, ideology, and identity	49
4.5.2	Methodological approach	51
4.6	Ethics	54
4.7	Reflexivity	55

<b>5</b>	<b><i>Music and polarization</i></b>	<b>56</b>
5.1.1	Music and polarized media	56
5.1.2	New Year's Eve concerts	57
5.1.3	The Opole Festival	58
5.1.4	The Sopot Festival	64
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Music and the political discourse</i></b>	<b>71</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>The speeches</b>	<b>72</b>
6.1.1	Speeches performed in the same, mid-size city – Opole	73
6.1.1.1	Rafał Trzaskowski	73
6.1.1.2	Andrzej Duda	78
6.1.2	Same event – campaign finales	81
6.1.2.1	Rafał Trzaskowski	82
6.1.2.2	Andrzej Duda	86
6.1.3	The “Us” and the “Them”	90
6.1.4	Populism	93
6.1.5	Music in Rafał Trzaskowski’s campaign	94
6.1.6	Music in Andrzej Duda’s campaign	96
<b>7</b>	<b><i>Conclusion</i></b>	<b>98</b>
<b>8</b>	<b><i>Bibliography</i></b>	<b>102</b>

## 1 Introduction

“Four weeks on the list, that was Nik Kershaw and his hit “Monkey Business”. And now, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> place – Maanam and their song “Jestem Kobietą” (Eng. “I am Woman”). This was Radio 3’s 114<sup>th</sup> edition of our weekly chart list. Thank you for listening, Marek Niedźwiecki<sup>1</sup>” (Muzyczny Antykwariat 2015).

It was June 23, 1984. Polish band Maanam just reached the top of the Radio 3’s chart list. And while millions of Poles gathered by their radios, were waiting for Maanam’s “I am Woman”, all they could hear was a drum roll intro from the band’s different song “To Tylko Tango” (Eng. “It’s only Tango”). Next week, three of Maanam’s songs were listed on the chart list. However, yet again, every time Niedźwiecki mentioned the band, all the audience could hear was “It’s only Tango’s” intro (Piotrowski 2011, 296). And while Niedźwiecki could not openly say what happened to Maanam, the public got the hint – Maanam was censored. The band refused to perform at the International Congress of Socialist Youth in Warsaw due to their anti-communistic stance. In revenge, Polish communistic authorities banned Maanam from the media (Torzecki & Słoński 2020, 99). For the next couple of months, no radios, TV shows or music magazines could mention the band. Nevertheless, knowing how enormously popular at that time Maanam was, Niedźwiecki decided to smartly bypass the rules, and as described – edited one of their songs and played it in protest. Since then, that drum roll intro, which later became known as ‘*werbelki*’ (Eng. snare drums), became instantly a symbol of a fight against the censorship and the government, and brought Maanam even more fame and popularity than ever before. As many argued afterwards, if not the ban from the government, Maanam’s songs might have had a lesser impact on the society. Because, as explained by John Street “[the] state’s behavior may be premised on a set of assumptions about what the music represents, and indeed by censoring it, the state – as a self- fulfilling prophecy – may have invested it with a status it would otherwise have lacked (...)” (2003, 119). Nevertheless, to the communistic regime it was more important to publicly punish Maanam and show other artists what might happen if one did not follow the rules.

Fast forward 36 years to May 15, 2020. Niedźwiecki once again hosted the chart list and more specifically – it’s 1998<sup>th</sup> edition. On that day, punk rock artist Kazik and his newly released hit song “Twój ból jest lepszy niż mój” (Eng. “Your Pain is Better Than Mine”) reached the top of the list. And just as every time, Niedźwiecki finished the broadcast with

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<sup>1</sup> This is not an exact quote. It was impossible to find the original recording, however, this event is mentioned in the cited video clip.

ABC's song "Look of Love" and by inviting the audience to his other radio show happening next day – Markomania. As he announced, "[now], ABC's "Look of Love" for all of you that have been waiting for these [music] 'greetings'. And in 13ish hours we will meet once again in 'Markomania'" (Lambert 2020). But we did not. For as 13 hours later, Marek Niedźwiecki, after having worked for over 36 years for the Radio 3, quit his job. His decision to leave said station was based on two reasons – he opposed to the Radio 3's decision to censor Kazik's song, and in protest to the ruling party – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość' (Eng. Law and Justice; hereinafter PiS) accusations of having had manipulated the outcome of the chart list (Sańczuk 2020).

"Your Pain is Better Than Mine" described a situation that occurred in April 2020, when Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of PiS, visited the grave of his mother and twin-brother, while all cemeteries were closed to public due to COVID-19 restrictions. His visit to graveyard was widely described in the news and outraged a big part of the Polish society. Thus, when the song reached the top of the list in audience voting, the ruling party was not pleased with this decision. For as, it not only called Kaczyński out, but brought even more attention to PiS' wrongdoings. Hence, to avoid further controversies, PiS' loyal decision-makers in Radio 3, announced that the list has been manipulated by the host Marek Niedźwiecki, and Kazik did not win after all. As they claimed, Kazik's song got just enough votes to be placed 4<sup>th</sup> (Świdorski 2020). Couple of days later, however, not only were the result removed from the Radio 3's website, but the radio announced that they 'cancelled' that day's chart. In consequence, just as communistic authorities thought that they could keep problematic artists at bay by censoring them, so did PiS by silencing Kazik. However, as the history has shown, this type of control rarely works out. So, just as Maanam became more popular due to the censorship, so did Kazik. For as, only hours after Radio 3 announced its decision to cancel May 15<sup>th</sup>'s chart list, the Opposition and anti-PiS media begun protesting PiS' led censorship, and their control over public media and culture (for example see Degórska 2020). As a result, two competing discourses begun to circulate in the public sphere – PiS' and the Opposition's. First, that Niedźwiecki deliberately manipulated the list – presumably in a political manifest. And second, that PiS censored Kazik, so as the public would not question the government's decisions.

Furthermore, apart from described controversy, the ruling party seem to have found also other, more subtle ways, to 'regulate' music and steer one's music taste and preference. For as, since their win in both parliamentary and presidential elections in 2015, PiS have taken a full control over the public media and its content. Since then, as this project will demonstrate, music-centered TV shows have changed their sound drastically and shifted towards more local,

‘traditional’ genres of disco-polo and folk music. PiS’ music-bias have also been strongly visible during their presidential candidate’s, Andrzej Duda, election campaign in 2020. Where during most of his campaign speeches, he was accompanied only by local folk bands. At the same time, Rafał Trzaskowski – Duda’s oppositional opponent, enriched his campaign events mainly with 1980’s anti-communistic rock songs. Furthermore, pro-Trzaskowski media not only began to remove disco-polo and folk artists from their programs, but also, in line with his agenda, started to prompt more 1980’s and anti-PiS artists.

In 1989 Poland became an independent and democratic country, where in 1990 censorship got fully eliminated. However, as the aforesaid situations show, the relationship between media, politics, and music is nowadays highly troubling. For as, while at the beginning of its democratic history, Poland was often complimented for its successful transition from one system to another. Today, however, many argue that with PiS’ win in the 2015 elections, the country began to democratically backslide (see Tworzecki 2019; Przybylski 2018). Furthermore, researchers note a worrying trend of deepening political and societal polarization (see Tworzecki 2019; Wozniak 2020; Kinowska-Mazaraki 2021; Kotwas & Kubik 2019). A process that was initiated by the politicians, and later has been further dredged by the biased media (see Żuk 2020; Newerle-Wolsk & Wolski 2020; Klimkiewicz 2021). Nevertheless, none of the mentioned publication have also examined popular culture’s, including music’s, role in said process.

Thus, the goal of this project is to first conceptualize the state of politics in Poland, and at the same time, to discover what role music plays in this. Because, as mentioned, the political parties, and supporting them media, seem to have lately had some specific music preferences. Yet, at the same time, said phenomenon have not yet become widely described in the academic research.

### **1.1 Research questions**

As outlined, this thesis is concerned with the connection between music and politics, with a specific focus on a deepening political polarization.

To understand this phenomenon, I have performed a close textual analysis of 4 campaign speeches given during the 2020 presidential elections by Andrzej Duda and Rafał Trzaskowski. Furthermore, I have also analyzed music-centered TV programs, that is New Year’s Eve concerts, and the Opole and Sopot festivals. By doing so, I am able to shed light on how politicians attempt to construct social identities, and how they used music in said process.

Thus, my two main research questions are:

RQ1: What are the usages, functions, and effects of music in the context of Polish politics at the current historical juncture?

RQ2: Is there a connection between music and political polarization in Poland and, if so, how can it be understood?

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

This project is composed of seven chapters.

First introductory chapter explains the basic background of the topics and presents raised research questions; then follows the chapter on historical background, including a detailed description of the most recent Polish history.

In the third chapter, I address theoretical frameworks, as well as terms and theories, that help in understanding the type of polarization in Poland, populism, and the connection between habitus and music.

In the fourth chapter, I account and assess adopted research methods, and provide an explanation to why I have chosen textual analysis.

The analysis is divided into two parts. Hence, in the fifth chapter, I investigate the connection between music and political polarization. There, I perform a close textual analysis of music-centered TV shows – the New Year’s Eve concerts and the Opole and Sopot music festivals. In the sixth chapter, I describe the gathered speeches. There, I interpret the speeches, focusing mainly on their textual properties. Furthermore, I answer to the first research question, and examine music’s role in the political discourse.

In the last, seventh chapter, I will provide a summary of prominent findings and offer suggestions for future research.



## 2 Historical background

The main goal of this chapter is to describe and analyze events and processes, that have shaped current political, cultural, and societal situation in Poland. For as many have argued, since PiS' return to power in 2015; the country has been going through worrying processes of democratic backsliding and deepening political and societal polarization (see Tworzecki 2019; Wozniak 2020; Kinowska-Mazaraki 2021; Kotwas & Kubik 2019). At the same time, however, these recent socio-political 'developments' are highly puzzling to researchers. It is due to the fact that, as most of the aforesaid studies contended, Poland has often been presented as a post-transitional 'wunderkind'. An ex-Soviet country, which after its successful transition from one system to another (see Kinowska-Mazaraki 2021; Tworzecki 2019; Frye 2010), was about to be finally reaching its goal of becoming a politically-stable and well-prospering state within the EU. Nevertheless, as events described in the introduction to this project have shown, Poland's road to a maturing democracy might be longer and more complex than initially assumed.

Thus, before 'deep diving' into Poland's current socio-political and cultural issues, I found it crucial to briefly describe the history behind the process of Polish democratic transition. For as, despite its enormous influence on both the country and its society, said phenomenon seem to often slip the attention of international media. Yet, it is arguably one of the key elements that shaped and continues to shape the country and its political progression, or perhaps nowadays - its stagnation. In consequence, this short historical presentation will help in studying and answering to the research questions and in explaining the materials gathered.

### 2.1 Transformation

Polish Transformation began almost immediately after the fall of communism and the formation of the Contract Sejm<sup>2</sup> in 1989, and was in its fullest effect starting from 1991 and with the first entirely democratic elections that were organized same year (see Wisła & Nowosad 2020). As Aleksandra Leyk explains, "[the] term transformation (*transformacja*) used in the Polish language refers to a set of comprehensive changes in the political, economic, and social systems which led to a shift from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, from an authoritarian regime to a liberal democracy" (Leyk 2016, 644). This, at times almost

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<sup>2</sup> Contract Sejm (or Contract Parliament) is a term used to describe first semi-democratic parliament of 1989, where 35% of the seats were given to the freely contested candidates, resolving in Solidarity being finally at a real parliamentary power.

impossible, procedure meant not only building of a completely new country, with a changed name, different economic system, denominated currency, or a re-written Constitution, but also had an enormous impact on the people and their lives. For this reason, the process of transformation is often split into three subcategories of a systematic, economic, and social transformation (see Ratajczak 2017). Hence, in the next subchapters, I will briefly describe each of said 'stages'.

### **2.1.1 Systematic transformation**

Systematic transformation is tightly linked to the political changes in Poland and refers to the progression from authoritarianism to democracy (Ratajczak 2017, 12). This transition led to the democratization of the political system in Poland and to the implementation of the principle of political pluralism (Lorencka & Obrębska 2018, 193). Political freedoms brought about by this changeover included freely held election, freedom of association and of speech, or freedom of the creation and the functioning of political parties - all the aforementioned were guaranteed in the newly written Polish Constitutions (see Lorencka & Obrębska 2018; Sadurski 2019).

Writing and adaptation of a new Constitution was crucial to the transformative process. After all, "Poland entered an era of deep democratic transformation on the eve of the last decade of the twentieth century, equipped with a constitution written during the darkest years of Stalinist repression in the early 1950s (...)" (Sadurski 2019, 35). Therefore, the development of new constitutional rights was highly prioritized by the Parliament, and as soon as in December 1989 a Constitutional Committee of the Sejm was established, followed by its counterpart in Senate (*ibid.*, 40). However, both entities did not cooperate as smoothly as firstly anticipated, and although in 1992 a so-called Small Constitution was presented, it took additional 5 years to complete said procedure and present the finalized document. As Sadurski notes, "[the] story of the Polish Constitution of 1997 confirms an old truth that the process of constitution-making may be as important as the outcome. The process, while it may be seen (and was seen) to have been unwieldy, messy, and unnecessarily drawn out, *ex post* appears to be almost a model of wise compromise-seeking" (*ibid.*, 43). Accordingly, the Polish Constitution of 1997 could be perceived as one of the final points of the systematic transformation. It presented the model of semi-presidentialism, where a ruling power is shared between a directly elected president, a democratic-pluralistic parliament, and a Senate, described often as a 'body of reflection' (*ibid.*, 46). Furthermore, the Constitution also describes the functioning of the judiciary system and its four-tier court structure and as well as the two tribunals. Together, the aforesaid elements are essential to the Polish system of checks

and balances - the one that, since PiS' win in both presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015, has constantly been weakened by said party's laws and reforms.

It is also worth mentioning that the Polish Constitution of 1997 describes the relationship between the state and the church, where it "(...) [establishes] a framework for a friendly church-state separation - though, significantly, the word 'separation' is never mentioned" (ibid., 47). Furthermore, the collaboration between the Catholic Church and the state is regulated by an international treaty with the Holy See, while the relations with other religions are regulated by the state and the reps of these churches (ibid.). Lastly, the Constitution also includes many of the church's requests such as a definition of marriage as 'a union between a woman and a man' (Art. 18 in ibid.), or regulations related to abortion. In consequence, the Constitution has not only an impact on the systematic functioning of the country, but also on its citizens private and intimate lives.

### **2.1.2 Economic transformation**

Poland's economic transformation, which was managed and steered by former Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Leszek Balcerowicz, had as its main purpose the rapid transition from a centrally driven state ownership-based economy to a capitalist market economy. Balcerowicz "(...) introduced sweeping economic reforms (...) that liberalized foreign and domestic trade, cut subsidies to industry and agriculture, and removed many obstacles to the creation of small businesses" (Johnson & Kowalska 1994 in Frye 2011, 219). His 'shock therapy' approach (often describes as the Balcerowicz Plan or the Sachs-Balcerowicz Plan - from Jeffrey Sachs, an American economist known for his economic advising in post-socialist states), "(...) was an embodiment of neo-liberal market policies in a pure, extreme form" (Puchalska 2005, 819). Simply put, the chief objective of the Balcerowicz Plan was a consistent and long-lasting "capital" privatization as well as the internationalization of the market. His policy was also motivated politically. As Puchalska explains, "(...) the pre-dominantly economic orientation of reforms was partly based on the belief that economic factors are more crucial for sustaining democracy than social and political ones" (ibid., 818). Timothy Frye, in line with Puchalska, underlines the political motives, and mentions in addition the possibility of a reversal of economic reform (2011, 221). He argues, that "[by] privatizing large industrial enterprises at a moderate pace while improving corporate governance institutions, successive Polish governments minimized the extent of inconsistent reform and asset stripping relative to other countries in the region" (Frye 2011, 221). Although successful in its economic-centered aims, privatization has also negatively affected the politics and especially the society.

During 45 years of communism, the middle class in Poland was non-existent due to ideological reasons (Weltrowska 2002, 47). Consequentially, with the change of the economic system a new social structure developed, where a middle class became its key component. “A characteristic feature of this class is that it comprises three main categories (...): ‘private initiative’ under state socialism, the post-Communist Solidarity, and post-Solidarity nomenklatura, and the intelligentsia” (ibid.). Middle class, although an important group in the market economy-driven societies, has also become a destabilizing factor in the strong ruling elite-working class relationship (see Wozniak 2020). Ideologically, working class in socialist Poland had been portrayed as the constitutive group of the society – one that was close to being idealized. With the economic transformation, however, said class lost its privilege and importance and became a ‘victim’ of the new economic system. “One of the most damaging aspects of this rift was the notion, propounded by the political elites, that the workers’ participation is dangerous to democracy, which provided a platform for what in effect amounted to an exclusion of the trade unions from the political process (Ost 2002; Schopflin 1994 in Puchalska 2005, 816) This, for the working class unexpected turn of events after the fall of communism, started a domino effect the consequences of which can be seen even today. This process had also an influence on socio-economic and spatial polarization and on the growing animosity between the members of different income classes.

Although, as Marek Ratajczak argues, systematic and economic transformation can to some extent be perceived as a ‘done deal’ since Poland entered the European Union (EU) in 2004 (2017, 10). After all, a country would not be accepted in the EU if it were not seen as being both democratic and with a well-functioning market economy (ibid.). It simultaneously does not, however, mean that Poland has reached all the goals which it originally set up, especially as concerns institutional changes (ibid.). The growth of populist parties and their questionable democracy-damaging reforms, as well as the downfall of the judiciary system might indicate that Poland either reached its full potential around the time it became a member of the EU and since then started to sidetrack towards becoming a hybrid regime, or that it in fact has actually never finished the process.

### **2.1.3 Social transformation**

Social transformation might be the hardest process to explain and contextualize out of the three, due to its more ‘intangible’ character. Ratajczak notes, that the main objective of social transformation was the changeover from ‘forced collectivism’ to ‘socialized individualism’ (Ratajczak 2017, 12). He describes the post-communistic Polish society as ‘a collection of

individuals' (ibid.). While during communism, many of the elementary freedoms - like the freedom of speech or of association were nonexistent, after 1989 people were finally able to live less governmentally dictated lives. That meant being able to vote, to travel, to open one's own business, or for instance, to create uncensored art. Of course, one is not freed from the civic duties, such as participating in the democracy, yet - one is not any longer 'stripped' from basic democratic rights.

Morawski argues, however, that while the key intention of the social transformation was the ability for people to finally become equal individuals. Nevertheless, the strong neoliberal economic focus of the process, had a far more reaching impact on the society. Thus, instead of 'equal citizens'; Polish society became rather divided into 'investors' and 'consumers' (2014, 444). A split, which not only led to individuals struggling for recognition, but also ignited another societal issue, described by Morawski as "[the] interest of the 'I' [being] more important than the collective 'we'" (ibid.). Here, his theory bears some resemblance to Ratajczak's 'socialized individualism', yet he continues to draw further conclusions and connects the 'I' versus 'we' struggle with the social polarization and people 'categorizing' themselves based on worldviews (ibid.).

Based on both Morawski's and Ratajczak's theories, one could therefore argue that the intended (or not) goals of social transformations, were to free people from restraints set up by the conservative collectivism, towards economically uttered articulated liberal individualism. However, the latter mode so blindly copied from the idealized Western societies, did not fully fit with the historical and traditional Polish mentality of *Polish Messianism*, originated long before the socialism, and the forced communistic mentality of a *homo sovieticus*.

Renata Pasternak-Mazurek describes Polish Messianism as "[a] trend tracing its origins to the mid-nineteenth century, and that persists to this day, is based on a Romantic vision of Poland as "the Christ of the nations," an innocent victim crucified by foreign powers, a sacrifice for the world's sins with a potential for universal salvation and rebirth" (2020 in Galuszka 2020, 26). Polish Messianism originated during the Partitions of Poland, when between 1772 and 1795 three nations of Prussia, Russia and Austria divided between themselves the territory of Poland. In consequence, for the next 123 years Poland ceased to exist. However, during that time, many members of the Polish cultural elite emigrated to countries such as France or England, and from there propagated the vision of Polish Messianism. Since then, just as Pasternak-Mazurek contends, Polish Messianism did not ever cease its influence on Polish society, and more importantly, Polish culture. So, as she argues it not only had a positive impact, when it "(...) underscored political dependence on the USSR and provided a means for

negotiating space for sovereignty” (ibid., 27). But it also negatively fueled current populist discourses. For as she describes, “Polish identity appeals to a similar narrative of a stateless nation persecuted by empires, convincing itself of its moral superiority and of the idea that other nations owe the country a moral debt after decades or even ages of persecution” (Zarycki & Warczok 2020, 912). Thus, nowadays this polemic of endless suffering and the foreign hostility towards Poland, have also been used in an anti-German and Eurosceptic propaganda.

When it comes to *homo sovieticus*, this concept is connected to the polemic of the losers and winners of the transformation process and acts as a fluid description of a pre- and post-transformative Polish identity. At first, the term *homo sovieticus* described the mentality of a person living under the socialist regime. A ‘typical’ *homo sovieticus* was “(...) an individual corrupted by the Communist system, which guaranteed basic social security and a sense of dignity in exchange for passivity and obedience” (Leyk 2016, 647). It is essentially a person without ambition, passive and lazy, who has no regard for democracy, nor a need to excel (see Leyk 2016). *Homo sovieticus* knew that the state would provide him/her with a job and a stable salary and therefore did not have an internal need to make an effort or fight for more (ibid.). Although, many assumed that transformation would end the era of *homo sovieticus*, some researchers claim that this identity not only stayed in some parts of the society, but also modified its role to better suit to the new system (see Leyk 2016; Sztompka 1996).

Modern *homo sovieticus* is therefore seen as the loser of transformation, one that is clueless in the new system. “‘Losers’ (...) due to their established patterns of action and their internalized values and norms – adopt strategies of action disadvantageous for themselves. They perceive themselves as victims treated in an unjust way. They put forward unrealistic claims towards the state, they live mentally in a ‘better past’, and they are unable to comprehend the reality of a market economy and liberal democracy” (Leyk 2016, 649). Winners, on the other hand, are the ones that very easily adopted the new norms of both democracy and the free market and managed to make the best out of the transformation. “(...) [‘Winners’] were often described through individual and psychological predispositions – the ability to take matters into one’s hands, wit, being innovative, future-oriented, not being afraid of taking risks, and so on” (ibid., 650). This division between losers and winners was also based on one’s status before the transformation. While losers are often being found within the members of the lower and working class, winners are often seen as the members of *intelligentsia* - the intellectuals and *nomenklatura*, that is people from higher classes, academics, or those with political power (see Leyk 2016).

And although the aforesaid divisions are overgeneralizing and merely show the ‘ideal types’, they do however go a long way in offering a workable understanding of the political discourses nowadays, especially when aiming to study the content of populist communication. An identity-crisis-like discourse, that could be described as the extreme combination of the romanticized, patriotic faith in the greatness of the Polish nation, mixed with the post-War and communistic regime struggles and lastly, the dream-like believe in the ‘now so near and open’ West. In the end, one could argue that the whole goal of the social transformation was to erase one identity, and present a new, economically superior, one. If that have worked is a matter of a long and exhausting discussion - one that might lead to various results. Nevertheless, the mentioning of these changes is crucial to understanding the current social dynamics and the following political discourse.

## **2.2 Democratic backsliding**

Already in 2007, Ivan Krastev has labeled Poland as ‘the capital of Central European illiberalism’ (56). Krastev saw Poland’s tendency towards autocratization during PiS’ first reign in the years 2006-2007. As he described it “[the] new self-proclaimed “revolutionaries” in Central Europe fear not the authoritarianism of the state but the excesses of postmodern culture and the collapse of traditional values” (ibid., 61). PiS’ second reign, which started in 2015 and still lasts (2021) is ideologically close to the previous one. PiS’ reforms and tendency towards polarization and dividing of the nation is leading the country towards democratic decay, while hidden behind the Euro-sceptic anti-West propaganda.

Democratic backsliding, or autocratization/democratic decay, is described as an “executive-led assault against the democratic system” and, in countries such as Hungary or Poland, “the development of a hybrid regime” (Daly 2019, 17). Simply put, Daly defines democratic backsliding as democratically elected authoritarian-leaning governments pursue “(...) to hollow out democratic structures and to entrench themselves in power for the long term” (ibid., 18). Kim Lane Scheppele, similarly as Daly, notices that “[new] autocrats are not just benefiting from the crisis of confidence in public institutions; they are attacking the basic principles of liberal and democratic constitutionalism because they want to consolidate power and entrench themselves in office for the long haul” (2018, 547).

There are many factors that explain why democratic backsliding was possible in Poland – a country so eagerly described as a transformational ‘wunderkind’. For instance, while Timothy Frye maintains that Poland should be seen as one of the success stories of transformation, due to the somewhat well-functioning market economy, growing democracy

and low level of political polarization. One could also argue that strongly concentrating on the economy, Frye had not focused enough on the law institutions and high levels of corruption. As Larry Diamond explains “[there] is some statistical evidence to suggest that weak rule of law is a “leading indicator” of trouble for democracy. (...) [All] the democracies that broke down during this period (or any other) have been “illiberal”, which is to say that competitive, democratic elections have co-existed with high levels of corruption and weak rule of law institutions” (2021, 33). Indeed, Poland although performing successfully in terms of democracy until 2015, has never been corruption-free nor, as seen today after PiS’ reforms, had strong enough law institutions (see Tworzecki 2019; Przybylski 2018). It is not a coincidence, however, that Frye had put so much emphasis on the economy. As Przybylski explains, during the most vital years of the transformation “(...) political narratives and policy decisions have rested to a large extent on an economic rationale, with the promise of prosperity at its center” (2018, 54). Due to this very strong focus on the economics, governments ‘forgot’ to include the society in the process, nor take into consideration their views on and satisfaction with the reforms. “There is practically no evidence that democratic support for the reforms has been sought, directly via public debate, through party politics or through the trade unions” (Puchalska 2005, 819). From the very beginning, social agreements, or democratic debates on the reforms, were basically non-existent in Poland (ibid.). As a result, this ever-growing gap between the people in power and the rest of society has made it possible for the populists, social polarization, and finally political backsliding to emerge. “(...) [Such] neglect of the democratic process at the crucial moment of deep systemic change resulted in a lasting derailment of the democratic process and pluralistic debate, and was instrumental in facilitating the rise of populist, violent means of conducting political dialogue” (ibid.). Apart from following a common autocratization pattern, that is first attacking the media, to so polarize the society, spread fake news, and dismantle the law institutions (V-dem Institute 2021), PiS also took advantage of a long-lasting neglect of popular support by their predecessors.

### **2.3 Hybrid regimes**

Timothy Frye argues that “[as] expected, Poland’s low level of political polarization and consistently premarket governments led to rapid liberalization, consistent reform, and strong economic performance relative to other countries in the region” (2010, 214). Although, he does acknowledge that there have been some mishaps along the way, such as frauds, scandals, rich getting richer or the quality of governance, yet, as he concludes “[it] is only to argue that the political environment, in particular the relatively low level of political polarization and robust



democracy, has been more conducive to economic and institutional reform than elsewhere in the region” (ibid.). All in all, Frye’s argument is that Poland was not only, although the first one in line, the most effective in its transformation from socialism to capitalism, but also that its success is due to the growing democracy and declining political polarization (ibid., 3). “(...) [The] impact of democracy on economic and institutional reform is conditional on the level of political polarization. (...) [Democracy] is positively related to more rapid and consistent reform when political polarization is low, but each increase in polarization dampens the beneficial impact of democracy (...)” (ibid.). While, in Frye’s book Poland was brought up as a ‘positive’ case to his hypothesis, 11 years later, though still fitting in the ‘equation’, one could argue that its place should not only be reconsidered, but it could already be placed among the *hybrid* regimes countries struggling with democratic downfalls and raging polarizations (i.e., political, economic, social, media or cultural).

The so-called hybrid regime in Poland is a result of all the processes aforementioned in this chapter. Beginning with the transformation and ending with the democratic backsliding, Poland’s systematic journey has not ended where it was first assumed - liberal democracy. As Andrea Cassani illustrates in her paper on the divergences in the analysis of hybrid regime, it is actually not that easy to establish which country fits into hybrid regime framework, or even to determine a common explanation of said phenomenon (2014). Nevertheless, Cassani has proven that there are some facts that often reoccur in most of definition. Therefore, she explains that “(...) a form of regime that is hybrid in that it combines both democratic and autocratic institutions, whose coexistence and interaction profoundly shape the politics” (ibid., 550). Furthermore, she notes that “[these] regimes feature some of the institutions that are necessary (but not sufficient) to make a full democracy, and some of the institutions that are typically associated with authoritarian patterns of governance” (ibid.). Although scholars find it problematic to point out which countries fully fall into hybridity brackets, PiS’ reforms targeting Poland’s law institutions, questionable organization of presidential elections in 2020 or disregard for EU’s fines and remarks, drive the country closer and closer towards authoritarianism. In the most recent V-Dem Institute’s Democracy Report (2021), Poland is described as a “major autocratizer”, where in the past 10 years regime type changed from liberal democracy to electoral democracy (19). Additionally, V-Dem’s Report mentions PiS’ media laws from 2015/6, which impacted on the freedom of expression - a trait that is common in the process of autocratization (23).

Apart from controlling the media, or abolishing the Constitutional Tribunal, due to PiS’ doings “(...) the offices of the president and prime minister were reduced to mere decorations,

while actual decision-making power came to be exercised extra-constitutionally by the PiS party chairman, Jarosław Kaczyński (...)" (Tworzecki 2019, 99). Kaczyński in 2021 got appointed as a Prime Minister, however, before that apart from being PiS' chairman, he was just an ordinary member of the Sejm (ibid.). The decision to omit the applicable rules of governance in Poland and hand over the authority to Jarosław Kaczyński, shows how little regard the ruling party has for the democracy. To make things worse, PiS has also appointed party's loyalists for the state jobs, to both secure and keep said institutions from turning against the government (see Tworzecki 2019). While researchers find it difficult to reach a consensus regarding the hybridity, PiS does as well as numerous reports (see V-Dem Institute 2021; The Economist Intelligence Unit 2021; University of Würzburg 2020), show that Poland is a step away from becoming (if not already) a hybrid regime.

#### **2.4 The 2020 presidential elections – organization and accompanying controversies**

In most usual circumstances, presidential elections in Poland are organized in accordance with articles 127 to 129 in the Polish Constitution (1997). Thus, pursuant to said provisions, election date is ordered by the Marshal of the Sejm, and "(...) must be held no earlier than 100 days and no later than 75 days before the expiration of the term of the serving president" (ibid., Art. 128). In 2020, following the announcement made by the Marshal Elżbieta Witek on February 5, elections were initially set to happen on May 10. However, there were many objections to Witek's decision coming mainly from the Opposition, the Commissioner for Human Rights Adam Bodnar, anti-governmental media and organizations, health professionals due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (see ODIHR 2020; Flis & Kaminski 2022). Nevertheless, the government purposely declined to declare a State of Natural Disaster – an only legally possible extraordinary measure that would allow to postpone the elections<sup>3</sup>. They argued that under specially adjusted health measures (social distancing and mask mandate), there were no reasons to believe that the organization of elections under the normal schedule would not be possible (see Flis & Kaminski 2022). In the meantime, however, the Opposition and the journalists suspected that government's 'stubbornness' was rather motivated by favorable polling predictions (ibid., 4). As Flis and Kaminski clarify, the Polish government's quick and radical response to growing numbers of COVID-19 cases had at that time rewarded them with highly positive poll ratings (3). Furthermore, any delay to electoral timing could undermine

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<sup>3</sup> In circumstances other than death of the President (or alternatively, resignation from office by the President), the Constitution does not offer any legal and practical frameworks for election postponement (see the Constitution of the Republic of Poland).

Duda's position. From lockdown weariness, to growing economic concerns, PiS' politicians had no interest in risking their strong position to possible pandemic-related 'mishaps' (ibid.).

On March 28, however, the PiS government decided to introduce a new pandemic-related electoral measure, that is a possibility to vote by mail for citizens who were 60 years or older (ibid., 5). A decision that yet again was criticized by the Opposition. As they argued, not only was the government reacting hastily and unconstitutionally<sup>4</sup>, but instead of caring for the common well-being, they prioritized mainly their own voters (PiS's most faithful electorate consists mainly of 50+ year-old voters (see Tyrała 2018). Furthermore, the opposition also accused PiS of an attempt to hijack the elections, and as a consequence, illegally secure their win (Flis & Kaminski 2022, 5). However, as Flis and Kaminski explain, apart from allowing seniors to participate in elections without risking their health, PiS also opted for postal voting due to lack of popular support for traditionally-organized elections (ibid.). "While the government had received high ratings for its coronavirus response, in a March 28 poll, 77.4% of respondents favored postponing the election while only 13.8% were against the idea (Ibris 2020, March 28 in Flis & Kaminski 2022)" (ibid., 5). Hence, it is hard not to notice a pattern in the PiS government doings – by letting seniors vote by post, and then attracting mostly pro-Andrzej Duda (and corona-sceptic) voters to attend physical elections; PiS has been purposely (to put it politely) 'engineering' the presidential elections to their own advantage. In result, when due to the constitutional minority the opposition was unable to stop PiS's electoral 'hijacking' reform on the governmental level, they began to act locally.

Elections in Poland are in 90% organized by local governments, of which the majority of are administrated by independent and opposition candidates (Flis & Kaminski 2022, 5). Accordingly, "[expecting] dramatic developments, and also convinced that they had strong public support, local governments protested and resisted passively—specifically, by slowing down or stopping their election preparations. There was also a substantial drop in the number of volunteers" (ibid.). Local governments' passivity has thus prompted the government to find a different solution, so as to keep their 'plan' on track. A solution, which after 30 days of constant back-and-forth between the PiS-ruled Sejm and opposition-led Senate, caused not only major financial loses and crucially changed the electoral law, but also brought no results in the given situation (see Sula, Madej & Błaszczyszki 2021; Flis & Kamiński 2022).

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<sup>4</sup> As ruled by the Constitutional Tribunal, any changes to the electoral law must be introduced at least a year before the elections (Flis & Kaminski 2022, 5).

On paper, PiS' idea was relatively ingenious – at least when considering that the government acted in its own interest. By bypassing local governments (which have been organizing elections for past 30 years), the national government attempted to organize mail-only elections in cooperation with the Polish Post – an entity that was not only unexperienced, but also poorly prepared (Flis & Kaminski 2022, 5). Furthermore, instead of appointing local electoral committees to oversee the elections and count votes, the government proposed to have a newly appointed central administration supervise the process (ibid.). However, such a changed electoral system could in the first instance lead to significant slowdowns to the counting process, and secondly partially or completely prohibit poll workers from overseeing possible attempts of electoral fraud. It is hence not surprising that this time not only the opposition had criticized the government, but also the Supreme Court, as well as international institutions, such as the European Commission or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (see ibid.; ODHIR 2020; reuters.com 2020). Nevertheless, PiS' attempt to organize mail-only elections failed due to a lack of time caused by the Senate's prolonged inaction, and difficulties in reaching an agreement with local governments (Flis & Kaminski 2022, 7). Thus, without any other possible option, the government had to agree to the electoral postponement and organization of traditional in-person voting. In consequence, and “[despite] remaining legal uncertainties (Rakowska-Trela 2020 in Flis & Kaminski, 2022), on May 28, after weeks of hot-temperature political drama, all the main candidates supported holding the election on June 28, 2020” (ibid.). Furthermore, the second round of elections was scheduled on July 12, in case none of the candidates managed to gather an absolute majority of valid votes.

#### **2.4.1 First and second round of the elections**

In the first round of elections, a total of 11 candidates gathered 100.000 voters' signatures, and thus got approved by the National Election Commission (NEC). Furthermore, considering short period of time between the initial voting date of May 10, and final one of June 28, all candidates that had previously been approved were excused from signature re-collection. As a result, 10 out of 11 committees used the above-mentioned 'relief', while KO, due to their initial candidate's Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska resignation, once again had to take the streets of Polish cities and towns and raise signatures for their newly selected nominee - Warsaw's Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski. In an extremely short period of time that was granted to Trzaskowski and his team (one week), KO's contender successfully managed to collect almost 2 million signatures in support of his candidacy.

As mentioned previously, before the elections were postponed, there was a high possibility that Andrzej Duda would win in the first round. Between April and May, multiple pre-election polls indicated that incumbent President would get between 50% to 64% of all votes (see [rmf24.pl 2020](#); [gazetaprawna.pl 2020](#); [rp.pl](#)). Duda's strong position was mainly due to two of Duda's strongest opponents, Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska and Szymon Hołownia, stopped campaign efforts due to their early election objections (see *ibid.*; Sula, Madej & Błaszczewski 2021). However, while Hołownia was a political newcomer, known previously from being a journalist and a TV celebrity. Kidawa-Błońska's poor performance, on the other hand, as a representative of a second-largest party (PO – eng. The Civic Platform, part of KO), and a long-time political figure, was a shocking surprise to many (see Sula et al. 2021). For at since 2006 and a failed coalition between PO and PiS, PO has been PiS' strongest rival, with a second to first electorate (size-wise) (Niebylski 2020, 170).

(...) [In] 2005, the Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska – PO) lost the electoral rivalry with Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PiS). The post-election period did not bring a coalition between the parties (the so-called PO-PiS), despite both parties agreeing in many aspects (e.g. both were for de-communization, fighting against corruption) and represented a conservative approach to worldview issues. PO's loss started a series of ideological changes, which made the party the opposite of PiS and allowed it to win the early election two years later (*ibid.*).

In result, for the past 17 years, PO and PiS have almost completely dominated the Polish political scene – even to the extent where since the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005, no other party managed to come close in-between the PO-PiS rivalry. Hence, when shortly before the unorganized May 10 elections, Kidawa-Błońska's polling hit an all-time low of only 4% (see [rmf24.pl 2020](#); [gazetaprawna.pl 2020](#); [rp.pl 2020](#); [Goczał 2020](#); [tvpinfo.pl 2020](#)), many pro-PiS media (including the national broadcasting TVP) saw this as the end of PO (see [Osowski 2020](#); [Trzmiel 2020](#); [Bukowski 2020](#); [gazetapolska.pl 2020](#); [Supernak 2020](#)). Thus, when after a month-long 'battle' between the government and Senate the first election date passed without a vote; PO and coalescing with them parties (Nowoczesna - eng. Modern, Inicjatywa Polska - eng. Polish Initiative, and Partia Zieloni - eng. The Greens) seized their opportunity to change their strategy and image drastically and appointed a new candidate – Rafał Trzaskowski (Sula et al. 2021, 33)

Instead of continuing his predecessor's 'soft' and compromise-seeking approach; Trzaskowski started his campaign strong and belligerently with hard-hitting slogans, such as “complete elimination of TVP Info (i.e., national broadcaster's 24/7 news channel)” or “no more 'law hijacking' by PiS” (Platforma Obywatelska 2020). His approach quickly paid off,

and about three weeks later since Kidawa-Błońska's extreme low polling, KO was again right behind PiS with a score of ca 27% (see [polsatnews.pl](http://polsatnews.pl) 2020; Kośka 2020; [fakty.tvn24.pl](http://fakty.tvn24.pl) 2020; Bieńczyk 2020). At the same time, Andrzej Duda's results fell from said 50-64% to ca 40% (ibid.). In the end, official results were not too far from early-poll predictions. In the first round of elections, both candidates managed to improve their results by ca 3%, gaining respectively 43.50% (Andrzej Duda) and 30.46% (Rafał Trzaskowski) ([pkw.pl](http://pkw.pl) 2020).

In the second round of elections, Andrzej Duda, with a total score of 51.03%, beat Trzaskowski (48.97%) by 400.000 votes ([pkw.pl](http://pkw.pl) 2020). Furthermore, as NEC's official analyses have shown, over 60% of Duda's voters were located in rural areas (mostly in Poland B). Trzaskowski, on the other hand, was mostly popular among people voting from abroad (74.12%), and inhabitants of big cities (67%) (ibid.). When it comes to their voters' educational background, the majority of Duda's voters had a secondary (38.9%) and vocational (27.4%) education (Kopeć & Pawłowska 2020a). Trzaskowski's voters, on the other hand, had mainly higher (i.e., bachelor's degree or higher) (49%), and secondary (39%) educations (ibid.). Lastly, the majority of Andrzej Duda's voters were 50 years or older (55%), while Trzaskowski's electorate consisted mainly of people that were 50 years old and younger (64%) (Kopeć & Pawłowska 2020b).

## **2.5 Music and Cultural Identity**

Before 1989 and the fall of communism, many protests were organized in Poland. In 1956 workers of Cegielski Factories in Poznań demanded better work conditions, in 1968 students and intellectuals protested communist regime, in 1980 workers from Gdańsk Shipyard organized strikes together with Solidarity defending Anna Walentynowicz. Nevertheless, the only event that actually managed to successfully rewrite the history and end the era of communism were the 1988 Solidarity-organized strikes. What was striking about the protests of 1988 was the fact, that for the first time since 1945, the whole country united, both sociologically and geographically, and was ready to fight for freedom and democracy.

'Solidarity' transformed from the workers' union into a political movement and raised a new wave of protests. Although they were not as intense as in 1980–81 (Marciniak, 1989), the protests of 1988–89 led to a crucial switch in the history of Poland: legalisation of Solidarity, the Round Table negotiations and the first semi-free elections that resulted in a victory of the opposition. Such a successful institutionalisation of 'Solidarity' would have been impossible without a strong national support (Sabatovych 2018, 141)

Yet, this would not have been possible without many other coexisting factors, such as the failure of the Martial Law, Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policy reforms, or the support

from the catholic church. As Witold Morawski explains “(...) that lack of acceptance (legitimation) for communism in society was not alone sufficient for its downfall, just as in the past (1795-1918), society's lack of acceptance for the partitioning powers was in itself insufficient for the attainment of independence” (2014, 441). He argues, however, that what truly set in motion and contributed greatly to the fall of communism, was culture and active participation of cultural elites (ibid., 437).

Two of the cultural artforms that especially stood up in the 1980s and helped in motivating the people and igniting their fighting spirits, were film and music. From popular comedies of Stanisław Bareja, or the cinema of moral anxiety to punk festival in Jarocin and *werbelki* in Radio 3 music chart; filmmakers and musician did everything in their power to omit the censorship and tell the truth about the struggles one faced in the communistic Poland. Interestingly enough, however, film, and especially music, gained their extremely influential role in the formation of social cultural identity through the doings of communistic authorities. As Renata Pasternak-Mazur explains, “(...) [the] establishment in Poland, as in all socialist countries, considered music a powerful tool in its social management schemes and in shaping the “new socialist person” (...)” (Pasternak-Mazur 19, 2020 in Galuszka 2020). Accordingly, cultural issues were treated with great importance and were subjugated to socialist ideology (ibid., 20).

### **2.5.1 Music of the 1980s and the anti-communistic rock hymns**

Whereas the establishment sought to create and shape the new socialist person via music, music has never fully committed to its role. “Contrary to certain assumptions about popular music and the socialist state that are common in the West, music in the state-sponsored system developed not necessarily in ways authorities intended” (ibid., 29). Although before 1980s, many governmentally supported fairly popular music groups have emerged, their success has always been balanced by anti-establishment musicians. Therefore, “(...) [the] system tried to absorb and adapt cultural activities that were not envisioned in its cultural policy, trying to appropriate them” (ibid.). For instance, in 1960s when rock’n’roll was at its peak in the Western world, the authorities decided to introduce ‘big bit’ - “our reply to the rock ‘n’ roll craze of the West” (ibid.). Big bit was used as a sort of a ‘safety outlet’. Youth instead of listening to Western bands such as The Rolling Stones or The Beatles in illegal radio stations, such as Radio Luxembourg or Radio Free Europe, could enjoy Polish equivalent with bands such as Skaldowie or Trubadurzy. There were several reasons for the state to allow musicians to perform genres such as rock, punk, big bit or jazz. Firstly, the economic gains - seeing how

popular said music styles were, the establishment could profit enormously from producing records in said genres (see Pasternak-Mazur 2020 in Galuszka 2020). Furthermore, keeping people away from the West and ‘Western ideology’. It also was supposed to steer people towards Polish media, instead of illegal radio stations, like the one mentioned previously. Lastly, it can also be seen as a mood-managing tool, that is - deflating anti-systematic emotions by granting access to more freedoms (see Idzikowska-Czubaj 2020 in Galuszka 2020). ‘Safety outlet’ strategy was used again in 1980s with the creation of Jarocin Festival.

Though there were big bit and jazz musicians that successfully managed to outsmart the censors and get their music accepted by the authorities, while their lyrics hidden anti-establishment meanings (for instance Czesław Niemen or Jan Pietrzak); the genres of rock and punk were the ones that brought the most problems for the authorities, especially in the 1980s. “Rock music in the 1980s is an example of a genre, which developed and functioned not in the way envisioned in the cultural politics of socialist Poland, yet using state-sponsored houses of culture, student clubs, and even occasionally the radio and recording studios (see Patton 2012 in Pasternak-Mazurek 2020, 29)” (Pasternak-Mazurek 2020 in Galuszka 2020, 29). Instead of creating ‘the new socialist’, rock and punk helped in spreading anti-systematic views and were rather contributing to the creation of pro-democratic social identity, rather than backing up the establishment. “Due to censorship in communist state any controversial information in the music had to be hidden, otherwise authorities wouldn’t allow the song to be recorded and put on the album. Cryptic lyrics didn’t stop the audience from catching the meaning and metaphors and uncover them during concerts” (Garczewski & Garczewska 2014, 48-49). Most of the lyrics described one’s everyday struggles, such as the fear of the ZOMO (communistic paramilitary-police), curfew and other restrictions introduced during the Martial Law, censorship, interrogations, or even on the use of propaganda in the media. Additionally, many songs told stories about events that had an equal influence on everyone’s lives, such as the death of Stalin or Brezhnev, tragic death of Zbigniew Godlewski (an 18-year-old shipyard worker, killed by the militia during protests in 1970), Martial Law or the construction of the Berlin Wall. In consequence, while those situations and events had an enormous impact on the young people and their time growing up in the socialist Poland, creating a common experience or even identity; songs that mentioned these shared stories were easily associated by many (ibid., 49). That also explains their popularity - many could find themselves in the lyrics, as well as their impact on one’s image and political views. “Lyrics of rock songs spoke the language of young people and talked about matters that were close to their heart using their manner of thinking and expression. Many lyrics, especially in punk rock, constituted a form of



social punditry and reflected the state of interpersonal, national, and global relationships” (Idzikowska-Czubaj 2020 in Galuszka 2020, 46).

Although scholars find it difficult to establish the influence political rock and punk songs of the 1980s had on the fall of communism (see Piotrowski 2011; Idzikowska-Czubaj 2020 in Galuszka 2020; Garczewski & Garczewska 2014; Pasternak-Mazurek 2020 in Galuszka 2020), all of them agree that the songs composed in that period showed the desperation and the eagerness of the nation. “Polish rock music of the 1970s and 1980s was not only expressing youthful rebellion or rejection of social norms and bourgeois lifestyle, as it was typical for rock’n’roll in democratic countries, but it was often politically involved, and certain songs became kind of a cry for freedom of speech” (Garczewski & Garczewska 2014, 54). These songs motivated thus people to rebel against the government and helped in constructing a shared identity. Even nowadays, generations born after the communism are aware of the legacy of rock and punk songs of the 1980s. When performed in festivals or concerts, thousands of people know and sing those songs - showing not only how after all these years their popularity have not faded, but also how their status changed from ‘just songs’ into politically-charged ‘hymns’. Therefore, when used in modern political conflicts, it is hard not to see the connections and hidden meanings in one’s music use, however, this notion will be studied later in this thesis.

### **2.5.2 Music of the 1990s and the birth of disco-polo**

After 1980s, which were often described as The Golden Decade of the Polish rock (Galuszka 2020 in Galuszka 2020), came another turbulent decade - the transformational 1990s. Although, at the beginning of the 1990s there were produced and released political rock songs, as Krzysztof and Anna Garczewscy explain “[there] are two types of Polish music concerning politics that can be found after 1989. One is the music created during the PRL (i.e., PRL – Polish People’s Republic) era but stopped from being recorded or released by the censorship (...). And the other is the music created in post-communist Poland concerning communist period as well as present Poland in relation to the political past (...)” (2014, 53); 1990s are more associated with a new musical style - disco-polo.

Disco polo, as the name suggests, is a Polish-made disco music, created out of simple melodies and accompanied with often unsophisticated lyrics (Socha 2020, 178 in Galuszka 2020). “Disco polo involves a catchy instrumental accompaniment to vocal pieces of pop music with readily discernable lyrics” (ibid., 179). One distinctive element of disco polo is the often high-pitched vocal of the male lead singer (ibid., 180). Therefore, disco polo is often compared

with the music of the Bee Gees, Modern Talking or Al Bano & Romina Power. The use for disco polo is hence obvious - it is a light and rhythmic music dedicated to dancing and parties, also a popular choice during weddings or major light-hearted public events, such as New Year's Eve concerts. Apart from its party-laden character, popularity of disco polo could also be attributed to its origins and musical influences.

As Ziemowit Socha explains, “[the] origins of disco polo can be accounted for in different ways because of the multitude of contributing factors that gave rise to it, but the most primary element is folk music” (ibid.). Disco polo is therefore often perceived as a modern folk music - one that uses known melodies and Polish lyrics. Its homely, national spirit speaks to many, creating a sort of an identity. However, story behind disco polo's creation is also one of the elements that influenced on people's perception of said music.

Thanks to the transformation, open internationalized market economy and the lifting of the border, Polish people could finally travel to the West or shop and import Western goods - also electronics, including instruments. As a result, many could in a hobbyist manner get involved in music production and try their luck in the industry. Furthermore, “[in] December of 1988, prior to the collapse of real socialism, the government passed a law on economic activity known colloquially as Minister Wilczek's Act” (ibid., 182). Said law had a redemptive influence on small businesses, since it made it possible for every citizen to undertake any economic activity. “The act had a liberating effect on small business and a large impact on street trade. Cassette tapes, for instance, could now be sold by anyone, without permission” (ibid.). As a result, many hobbyist musicians began to release their home-made cassettes and sell them on the street. To many of them disco polo was the genre of choice, since not only it became enormously popular quickly, but also due to its simplicity; all one needed to produce a disco polo record, was a simple tape recorder and a cheap keyboard/synthesizer.

In consequence, the beginnings of disco polo were rather 'modest'. Yet that changed quickly with the Blue Stars Records and the popularization of disco polo through television. “Blue Star was the first important record company to emerge. It was founded in 1990 by Sławomir Skręta in Reguły (near Warsaw), and managed to release about 400 albums in its six years of operation” (ibid., 182). Blue Star popularized such groups as Bayer Full, Akcent, Boys or Milano. Today, said groups are not only seen as the pioneers of the genre, but also keep on gaining new fans and perform in the biggest concert halls all over Poland. When it comes to television though, Polsat was the first channel that dedicated two programs to disco polo music. Said programs “(...) were among the most recognized of Polsat's programming. For listeners of disco polo, the two programs carved out a time for relaxation starting on Saturday evening,

when people were preparing for going to the discotheque, and ending on Sunday morning, the following day, when the same people were resting their hangover” (ibid.). Today, Polsat is still known for promoting disco polo artists, via specialized programs on their main channels, their New Year’s Eve concert, or their three disco polo devoted music channels - Polo TV, Disco Polo Music and Vox Music TV.

When it comes to the sociological aspects of disco polo, this genre is often perceived as kitsch or tacky, and of a generally low artistic value (Choczyński 2020, 74). Furthermore, disco polo is often associated with the province, lower income working class, and people living in the so-called Poland B<sup>5</sup>. It is a genre often openly criticized by the music scholars, intellectuals, people from middle- and higher-classes and people living in the bigger cities, especially in the Poland A (see Choczyński 2020; Socha 2020 in Galuszka 2020; Rydlewski 2020). Right from the start, disco polo became a sort of a ‘symbol’ in elites versus the province/commoners cultural war and is often used as a label to stigmatize and ridicule people (Rydlewski 2020, 281). Furthermore, elites have ever since disco polo’s emergence done everything they could to ‘ban’ the genre from the media (ibid.). As Michał Rydlewski argue, intellectuals wanted to influence on the cultural taste of the province, and by banning the music from the popular media channels - force the ‘lower classes’ to listen to and admire more ‘valuable’ music styles. Though, this strategy has partly worked out at the end of 1990s, when disco polo first lost its popularity - it did not bring long-term results. In consequence, from early/mid 2010s up, disco polo has made a comeback, and arguably became even more successful, then in the 1990s (Rydlewski 2020, 283-284).

While in the 1990s politicians tried to politicize the genre, for instance in 1995 former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski used disco polo as his campaign music; the ‘movement’ gained an enormously politically laden role as late as in mid-2010s thanks to PiS and their populist political communication (see Rydlewski 2020). This political interference is also one of the elements that helped disco polo become popular again.

### **2.5.3 2000s upwards: hip-hop revolution**

While 1980s can be described as the end decade of the communism in the rhythm of rock and punk, 1990s as going into raptures over freedom accompanied by an upbeat disco polo, the challenging post-transformational 2000s were the times of stabilization and the advent of hip-hop culture.

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<sup>5</sup> Poland A and B refers to a spatial, socio-economic distinction between the western and the eastern part of the country. Furthermore, Poland A is often regarded as of being richer, and better developed.

While rock had its short period of fame, disco polo's success can be viewed in two waves; hip hop is a genre that came to Poland almost 20 years ago and since then has not lost on its popularity (see Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020). "Hip-hop became one of the most potent musical genres in Poland during the last three decades.

The videos of high-profile rappers generate millions of views on YouTube, and their albums feature prominently on monthly best-seller lists. Moreover, the influence of hip-hop is discernible throughout broader mainstream culture, where it continues to hold sway in pop music, cinema, fashion, etc." (Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020, 155). From an underground urban culture to mainstream Poland-wide movement, hip hop has brought a new perspective to the elite-province conflict and gave young people a voice they did not have since the punk era of 1980s.

From the beginning, people's opinion on hip hop was very divided – from seeing it as a music made by and for young, frustrated men, who grew up during the transformation, to positioning rappers as successors to the Polish literary legacy (Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020, 156). The first perspective was especially widespread in the early 2000s, when people associated hip-hop with young men living in housing projects or block of flats (that is also why first rappers were called *blokers*), poverty, criminality, drugs, alcohol, and as a genre that could negatively influence on young people (see Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020). However, there were also voices that defended hip-hop, claiming that it "(...) expressed the frustrations of young people whose only choice was between staying poor and feeling worthless or getting rich by illicit means, both options being utterly undesirable. Instead, they made music" (ibid., 157). This view shows some similarities with how people reacted to punk in the 1970s - equally demonizing the music and its following, fearing that it might have an indoctrinating effect on younger generations. However, with years both genres became better understood by the society and many have changed their opinion on said movements. It is also important to mention, that just like disco polo, hip-hop also got caught up in the elite-province conflict, but also in the generational divisions (Węclawek et al. 2014, 11). "Standing in opposition to the pro-European and pro-market intelligentsia, hip-hop gave voice to various fears and anxieties that accompanied regime transition and Poland's entry into the EU. It adapted values and symbols that were deeply rooted in Polish tradition but were questioned by the new, liberal elites as burdens rather than assets in the ongoing transformations" (Pasternak-Mazurek 2009, 15). Furthermore, similarly like disco polo, many have perceived hip-hop as a genre of low artistic value. Nevertheless, whereas disco polo is still seen as rather 'primitive', hip-hop however, is

becoming recognized and valued by the scholars - especially when studying the lyrics of such rappers as Łona, Sokół or Fisz (see Węclawek et al. 2014).

Just like the aforementioned genres of rock and disco polo, hip-hop has also political connotations - from parties using hip-hop songs and beats in their campaign spots to artists rapping about the political situation; “[no] other genre of contemporary popular music in Poland demonstrates such a strong patriotic tendency, often combined with severe criticism of the political and economic establishment (...)” (Pasternak-Mazurek 2009, 14).

Nowadays, hip-hop community is as polarized as the whole nation. On one side of the spectrum one can find rappers with nationalistic, right-wing, or pro-governmental affiliations, while on the other are the ones who are either liberal, anti-governmental, anti-establishmentarian or even ones that do not want to participate in any political discussions (often performing in genre of hip-hopolo - a hybrid between hip-hop and disco polo) (see Pasternak-Mazurek 2009; Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020).

[Any] attempts to establish hip-hop’s “national” character are necessarily fragmentary, failing to encompass the entirety of the genre and, as such, they invite opposition. From its very beginning, the Polish hip-hop community was divided by regional animosities, and the local allegiances of different rappers often precluded any possibility of unity at a national level (Szarecki 2020 in Galuszka 2020, 161)

In consequence, just like rock, punk, and disco polo; hip-hop is one of the genres that can be perceived as projecting the tensions within the society.

As previously stated, the ongoing socio-political situation in Poland is heavily influenced by the transformative processes of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Therefore, while this chapter attempted to describe the theoretical frameworks needed to better understand the state of Polish politics, society, culture, music, and media. It has also explored the last 30 years of Polish history, and thus provided a scholarly context for the following discourse analysis. This heavy focus on the transformation is also needed when forming connections between the elements mentioned above. For as, while music is rarely mentioned when studying recent social polarization or the state of Polish politics, it is however often perceived as an important cultural trope before the fall of communism (especially rock and punk music) and right after it (disco polo and hip hop).

### 3 Theory

The main goal of this chapter is to outline key concepts from political and social sciences to present and describe processes that are currently taking place in Poland. Furthermore, due to the deficiencies in research on music and polarization (specially in political sciences), this section will also act as a link between musicology, social and political sciences, to better understand this relation. Lastly, I will present presumed connections between music and populist discourse, as well as music and political polarization.

#### 3.1 Political polarization

As Kenneth Roberts notes, essentially “(...) polarization involves the binary division of society into antagonistic political camps, pushed further and further apart” (2021, 3). However, since the studies on political polarization began, this concept has been approached from many diverse perspectives. For instance, in political psychology, polarization is being studied in relation to voter’s emotions. In political economy, on the other hand, this phenomenon is researched in the context of income inequalities. In result, nowadays there are numerous specific and detailed definitions of polarization. And while most (or even all) of them could complement this study in an impactful manner; due to the chosen methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks, Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes definition of *affective polarization* as well as Jennifer McCoy, Tahmina Rahman and Murat Somer’s definition of polarization (which for the purposes of this study will be titles as “*Us versus Them*” polarization) will be applied. Moreover, as McCoy et al. maintain, frames on which understandings of polarization has been set on so far (such as economy, identity, or belief), do not fully mirror political and societal changes of the modern democracies (see 2018). Hence, they argue that with the rise of populism in highly polarized countries and following ‘the people’ versus ‘the elites’ rhetoric; understandings of polarization should be less restrictive (as in left versus right or cosmopolitan versus nationalist divisions) and more open to current ‘fluid’ moral dimensions (ibid., 20).

The different socioeconomic, cultural–ideological, historical, or contemporary cleavages on which polarization thrives in particular cases are of course important to study and explain. But they do not necessarily change the common patterns and dynamics we observe in widely different social–cultural and historical–institutional contexts (ibid.)

In result, they base their definition on Iyengar et al.’s concept of affective polarization, while extending it, so it would also include probable effects of populist polemic. Seeing how strongly the contemporary political discourse in Poland is affected by populism, use of “*Us versus Them*” polarization seems to be therefore the most relevant and suitable.

### **3.1.1 Affective polarization**

As various researchers argue, including Shanto Iyengar, Jennifer McCoy, or Kenneth Roberts, polarization should be studied beyond voter's policy preferences (see Roberts 2021; Iyengar et al. 2018; Iyengar & Krupenkin 2018; McCoy, Rahman & Somer 2018; Druckman & Levendusky 2019). "Policy-based division is but one way of defining partisan polarization. An alternative, and in our view, more diagnostic, indicator of mass polarization is the extent to which partisans view each other as a disliked out-group" (Iyengar, Lelkes & Sood 2012, 2). They argue that while politics influence social identity, people not only develop positive opinions towards their own in-group, but also grow gradually more negative feelings towards individuals coming from out-groups. "So, to the extent that party identification represents a meaningful group affiliation, the more appropriate test of polarization is affective, not ideological, identity" (ibid.). In consequence, one's emotional responses prompted by partisan identity often generate a "principled" aversion towards the opposition, while it is not necessarily strengthened by more extreme policy and ideological stances (ibid.). Simply put, people's feelings towards a party, its supporters, or its opponents, are more likely to cause and deepen polarization, rather than party's ideological viewpoints alone. Additionally, the gap between groups widens beyond ideological differences to include a sense of social identity (ibid.). "The more salient the identity, the stronger the loyalty toward in-group members and the prejudice and antipathy toward out-group members tend to be" (Gaertner et al. 1993 in McCoy et al. 2018). For instance, Iyengar et al. in their research found out that many Americans had difficulties with properly situating parties on issue scale, yet they would still have strong political identities (2012, 20). Furthermore, Iyengar et al. argue that election campaigns "(...) contribute to higher levels of affective polarization. Campaigns reinforce voters' sense of partisan identity and confirm stereotypical beliefs about supporters and opponents (...)" (ibid., 23).

Lastly, they mentioned the role of politically biased media. And argued, that they "(...) not only make subjects like the other side less, but that negative affect spills over into other areas, such as evaluations of political trust and bipartisanship. Partisan media have real consequences for subjects' attitudes toward the other party, as well as their willingness to engage with them in the political process" (ibid., 574-575).

### **3.1.2 "Us versus Them" polarization**

McCoy et al. describe polarization as "(...) a process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly align along a single dimension and people increasingly

perceive and describe politics and society in terms of “Us” versus “Them”” (2018, 16). While their definition is close to the one given by Roberts, it does however underline affective societal preferences, as well as introduce populist terminology to the studies on polarization. Therefore, one can argue that McCoy et al. broaden both Roberts and Iyengar et al.’s perspectives on polarization and adjust them to the current political trends. While they claim that “[political] polarization benefits democracy by mobilizing political participation, simplifying political choice for voters, and strengthening political parties” (ibid., 17). They also emphasize that nowadays stark polarization threatens people’s support for democracy, societal structures, and governability in developing democracies (to which they also count Poland) (ibid.).

In McCoy et al.’s opinion “(...) contemporary polarizations often start when a previously disunited or marginalized segment of society becomes politically united and mobilized to achieve social, economic, cultural–ideological, or institutional goals” (ibid., 18). To attain a split in society, politicians intentionally emphasize and initiate underlying cleavages within a nation and reinvent “a dominant cleavage around which other cleavages align” (ibid.). At the end, “[it] is the alignment of opinions under a single identity, rather than the radicalization of opinion, that “crystalizes interests into opposite factions” and threatens to undermine social cohesion and political stability” (Baldassari & Gelman 2008 in McCoy et al. 2018, 18).

In “us” versus “them” polarization, social identity is a crucial element. While politicians construct a ‘struggle-based’ “us” group, all of the differences that isolate “them” from the desired and supported part of the public, fall into one negatively-laden difference (ibid.). In the end, that difference defines the opposing group, and “[at] the extreme, each camp questions the moral legitimacy of the others, viewing the opposing camp and its policies as an existential threat to their way of life or the nation as a whole (Garcia-Guadilla 2016; Pew Research 2016; Schmitt 1996 in McCoy et al. 2018, 19). Due to this somewhat simplistic and threatening view of the “others”, polarization not only becomes one-dimensional, but also start to evoke strong emotional reactions within voters. That is also why McCoy et al. view Iyengar et al.’s concept of affective polarization complementary. Since, as they explain, “(...) [The] severe polarization we examine includes a significant affective dimension, when distance between groups moves beyond principled issue-based differences to a social identity (Iyengar, Sood & Lelkes 2012 in McCoy et al. 2018, 19). Furthermore, there is also another downside to the “us” versus “them” polarization arising from its affective tendencies, which is a *social polarization*. As Iyengar et al. argued, many voters choose their ‘side’ based on their emotional and social ties, rather than



due to party's principles alone. In result, this biased, often predisposed choice, often becomes also visible in other contexts of one's social life, "such as families, schools, churches, and communities, and that take on the same exclusion, rigidity and confrontation present in the political struggle" (Lozada 2014 in McCoy et al. 2018, 20-21). In consequence, both groups become gradually more isolated and antagonistic.

Lastly, McCoy et al. argue, that polarization is often used as a 'tool' by populists to categorize the nation into in- and out-groups. As they explain, populism "(...) paints conflict among groups in black and white, good and evil terms. A populist candidate may use any of the aforementioned cleavages to identify the establishment elite in constructing his or her People versus Elite appeal" (McCoy et al. 2018, 20). In this regard, "us" and "them" become "the people" and "elites".

### **3.1.3 Polarization in Poland**

As Hubert Tworzecki argues, the absence of significant underlying cleavages between citizens, suggest that the current polarization did not occur from the 'bottom-up' (2019, 97). Instead, "(...) that polarization was driven from the top down by a segment of the political class that donned the cloak of radical populist anti-establishmentarianism to gain popular support, win an election, and rewrite the constitutional rules of the game to its own benefit" (ibid.). He draws a connection between the top-down polarization and the democratic backsliding and indicates that the latter process fueled by PiS' questionable reforms have triggered divisions within the society (Tworzecki 2019). While on one hand, PiS has been restraining rights that have been taken for granted since the transformation, on the other, the party has introduced a tax-free child subsidy, 13th pension or reduced the retirement age (ibid., 100). As Tworzecki reasons, although PiS has been repeatedly and aggressively complaining about communism or leftist parties, "(...) time and again the government made a nod in the direction of those nostalgic for the days of a command economy, criticizing the sell-off of state-owned enterprises and collective farms during the privatizations of the 1990s (...)" (ibid., 100). Furthermore, the ruling party opted towards centrally-driven economy, or generous social welfare, whereas the state would be responsible for providing housing, employment or child-care (ibid.).

By doing so, PiS is provoking a conflict in the society. As already mentioned in subchapters about economic and social transformations, one can identify groups that could be perceived as victims of the transition from communism to liberal democracy. Said groups are the socio-economic classes with lower incomes, working class, or in Ratajczak's nomenclature 'consumers'. On the other side of the spectrum, one can find those, who have essentially

profited from the new installed market economy. These include the higher income classes, intelligentsia, those in power, ‘investors’. Tworzecki comments on this conflict, by claiming that “[critical] voices, both among opposition elites and segments of the public (particularly the urban middle classes) concerned about the economic consequences of these policies, were dismissed as mere protestations of those who had to give up their “place at the trough” in favor of people victimized and left behind during the post-1989 transition to a market-based economy” (ibid.).

In the end, just as described by McCoy et al., PiS painted an oversimplified, “black and white” picture of the Polish society. As in, one either is a part of “us” – the oppressed losers of the transformation; or a part of “them” – money-drive, individualistic winners of the transformation. Thus, apart from dividing the country based on political views, PiS has also brought an affective, social dimension to said conflict. Which in the end, impacts ways in which people see themselves, and the others, and is fundamental in building social identities.

#### **3.1.4 Polarized partisan media in Poland**

Right after winning the elections, PiS introduced a significant number of changes to the functioning of national media in order to make them even more dependent on the government. Thus, one of the first things that the ruling party did, was to let go of several hundred PiS-sceptic journalists from both TV and Radio channels. Furthermore, they considerably raised the national broadcasting funding, so that it would be less dependent on the subscription every citizen with a TV in the household is supposed to pay. By doing so, they gained more power over the content - if the citizens don’t pay, they have less of a power of the programming. Lastly, they appointed party loyalists as the heads of the national broadcaster. PiS’ farce on the national media, however, is not perceived by the scholars as a surprise.

For the populist right, there are no political competitors, but enemies that must not only be defeated but also eliminated from public life. In this sense, right-wing populists do not want a common and diverse public space to be an arena of disputes—just like in the propaganda of classical fascism there is only room for one version of truth managed by an authoritarian state and referring to fear and the mobilisation of threat” (O’Shaughnessy 2018 in Żuk 2020, 290)

Therefore, national media in PiS’ eyes is supposed to be pro-governmental only and surrounded by the people that back the government - as in, giving no room for alternative views. In consequence, many identify PiS-ruled national media as propaganda channels, and perceive them as another example of Poland’s march towards authoritarianism (see Żuk 2020; Surowiec et al. 2020).

PiS' hijack of the national media could also be perceived as one of the strategies of 'gardening' of the said publics. Anna Litvinenko and Florian Toepfl describe this phenomenon as a micro-management of the level of independence of the three publics described above (2019). The measures taken by the politicians in the act of the "gardening" can be divided into two main goals: "(...) (1) reducing the weight of leadership-critical publics (measured in terms of the aggregate size of the audiences regularly involved) and (2) increasing the weight of uncritical publics, primarily by seeking to involve mass audiences in newly constituted uncritical publics in Internet-based environments" (2019, 232). Although, the researchers focused mainly on the authoritarian public in Russia and their use of the social media, PiS' approach towards the national media could also be seen as falling within the aforementioned goals. By letting off the critical participants, they reduced the communication space of the leadership-critical publics, and accordingly, by transforming the national media into a somewhat 'propaganda tool' they gave more attention to the uncritical public.

Stripped from a nation-wide governmentally managed channels, both leadership-critical publics and policy-critical publics had to move to different media environments, to have at least some kind of space for their discursive practices. Although even before PiS' win, the media have been to some degree polarized; PiS' gardening only widened the gap between pro- and anti-governmental channels.

### **3.2 Populism**

Despite its popular, or even at times nonchalant use, *populism* is not an easy concept to grasp nor define. While this term is often being applied in both social and scientific debates as a self-explanatory or a unanimous perception, Carsten Reinemann et al. argue that this lack of specificity or clarity obstructs communication between public and science (2017, 12). Thus, the goal of this subsection is to give a literature-backed explanation of populism to prevent any comprehensive discrepancies in the forthcoming chapters of this thesis. This is crucial, since as Reinemann et al. contend, populism has been described in many different ways throughout the years (2017). From a "thin" ideology or communication style to a discourse practice; Reinemann et al. coincide with researchers who acknowledge populism as a "set of ideas" (ibid., 13). This means that "(...) populism is a general, abstract concept about politics and society that is open to a diverse set of more concrete political ideas and programs, depending on both national and historical contexts" (ibid.). In result, the definition applied in this study, is the one that is most appropriate to the current socio-political situation in Poland, and in particular to PiS' political agenda and communication style.

Hence, populism is defined here as a relationship between three elements, which combined allow to make distinctions between four individual types of populism (Jagers & Walgrave 2007 in Reinemann et al. in Aalberg et al. 2017, 15). Said elements are *references to the people*, *exclusion of out-groups*, and *attacks on elites* (Reinemann et al. 2017, 15). Reinemann et al. describe the first type of populism as *empty populism*, which consists of only one element, that is the references to the people; the second type is *exclusionary populism* which combines references to the people with the explicit exclusion of out-groups; the third type is *anti-elitist populism* which makes references to the people and attacks elites; and lastly, the fourth type is *complete populism* since it includes all three elements (ibid.), coming references to the people as in-group with attacks on elites and the exclusion of an out-group. While these four types already bring some clarity to understanding of populism, Reinemann et al. find it crucial to go into detail, and thoroughly describe the three elements each type (to some extent) consists of.

As the four types already indicate, the so-called *reference to the people* is a crucial part of populism, and lies at its very core (ibid., 16). ‘The people’, or as Reinemann et al. call it ‘an aggregate-level in-group’, is a forever-present, extremely vague label of a desired majority. Though not always straight-forwardly used, this label can be hidden under more nationalist (e.g., “Polish men and women”), religious, or regional appeals, giving the message stronger connotations (ibid.). “(...) [This] very vagueness is an important reason for the success of populist messages. They hold that, because “the people” is open for interpretation, it can serve as an “empty signifier” (Laclau 2005; Mény & Surel 2002 in Reinemann et al. 2017, 16), which allows diverse audiences to unite under a common label despite differing demands or values” (ibid.). While ‘the people’ is both stylistically and semiotically an integral part of populist communication, it serves also as an identity-builder. Populism and populist communication “(...) create a new social identity among citizens (...) in order to unite them and generate a sense of belonging to an imagined community charged with positive emotions” (ibid., 19).

While ‘the people’ is a positively-laden community, out-groups and elites are the negatively-laden ‘threatening’ groups, that serve as ‘amplifiers’ when constructing a social identity. As Reinemann et al. explain, “(...) social identity can be generated only by social comparison” (ibid., 20). They conclude, by stating that “[anti-elitism] and exclusion of out groups can therefore be regarded as functional equivalents that make explicit the standard to which “the people” are contrasted and that contribute to strengthening identification with the in-group” (ibid., 21).

In consequence, populism is a deliberate building of ‘the people’, with additional components of anti-elitism and anti-out-group stances (ibid., 23-24). Furthermore, populism constructs social identities, while it can further “(...) be regarded as illiberal because its representatives support the pure rule of the majority (...) and favor the idea of a homogeneous society” (ibid., 24). Therefore, this concept bears negatively laden connotations, of fostering in-group nepotism and oppressing out-groups or opposition, often disguised as ‘elites’.

### **3.2.1 Populistic communication in Poland**

Since the fall of communism and the beginning of transformation, one can identify four waves of populism that have occurred in Poland. First one happening in 1990’s presidential elections, during which Lech Wałęsa appealed to “all Poles” or the “Polish nation”; the second one was connected to the elections in 1995 and the success of populist right- and left-wing parties; the third one followed 2001’s parliamentary elections and the emergence of highly populist parties, such as the Self-Defence and The League of Polish Families; the most recent, fourth one was initiated by the 2015 parliamentary elections (Stępińska et al. 2017 in Aalberg et al. 2017, 311). Interestingly enough, the two latter waves have one party in common - PiS. While the 2001 wave is mostly known for the two parties, The League of Polish Families and The Self-Defence, its culminating point ‘hit’ the moment said parties created a coalition with PiS and formed a majority government in 2005 (ibid., 313). In the 2015’s upsurge however, most of the research focus has been directed towards PiS and their discourse alone, leaving smaller coalition parties out of the discussion (although it is worth mentioning that said parties are often even more extreme in their political principles than PiS).

Studies on populism in Poland began at the same time as the beginning of the first wave. Since then, the majority agreed on two elements that were almost always present in all populist political communication - that is the conflict between “the people” and “the elites”, and a critical view on many aspects of the modern world (or more precisely the reality of post-transformation) (ibid., 311-312). PiS’ discourse in both waves, but especially before and after the 2015 elections, was not much different. As Piotr Żuk explains, apart from the global economic system crisis in 2008, an event that once again gave populist right-wing party a winning argument, was the restoration of capitalism at the beginning of the transformation (2020, 288). “Fatigue and growing frustration resulting from the neoliberal transformation and the 2015 immigration crisis helped right-wing populists from the Law and Justice (PiS) party come to power in Poland in 2015” (ibid.).

In 2012, Paweł Przyłęcki argued that PiS' discourse was an example of *exclusionary populism* (in *ibid.*, 315). The ruling party often spreads messages that are Eurosceptic, anti-communistic, anti-German, or anti-intellectual. As he stated:

(...) populists in Poland stress land as an element of national heritage and refer to social equity and to elements that imply certain virtues—such as God, history, and tradition. They generally adopt critical attitudes to all actions undertaken after 1989 (Poland's Third Republic), to the current social, political, and economic situation, to liberalism, to new social policies, and to state interventionism (*ibid.*, 311-312).

In this project, however, I posit that in the 2020 presidential campaign, Andrzej Duda's populist communication was rather closer to the complete populism. For as apart from speaking to the people and excluding the out-groups (such as the LGBTQIA+ community, refugees, atheists etc.), he has also been mentioning and attacking 'the elites' in his speeches (see Stępińska et al. 2017 in Aalberg et al. 2017; Żuk 2020).

### **3.3 Habitus**

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* focuses mainly on people's ways of functioning and understanding in the social reality. Furthermore, it also helps in understanding power relations in the society, as well as the conditioning factors behind social inequalities.

In his theory, Bourdieu presents three elements that constitute the social reality – *habitus*, *field*, and *capital*.

When it comes to habitus, as Bourdieu explains, it "(...) is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes" (1984, 170). Habitus can thus be understood as a 'system of distinctive signs' in a social space (1984). It constitutes people's present experiences, which are based on their past experiences. Meaning, one's way of functioning is developed through the most 'primary' social elements – such as one's origins, childhood, or family, and secondary factors – such as one's work or education (Bourdieu 2000). Hence, while one on one side is constrained by the primary habitus, at the same time, one develops also a secondary one, based on one's current position in the social structure. So, as Bourdieu argues "(...) habitus is continuously changing according to new experiences (...) in a form of constant revision which is never radical because it is set on the basis of the current dispositions established in the previous situation" (Bourdieu 2000 in Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020, 601). Habitus helps thus in understanding the post-transformational split in the Polish society, and more specifically – the division between the

losers and winners of the transformation. While the winners of the transformation, due to their primary habitus as the intelligentsia in the communistic Poland, were equipped in set of skills and dispositions that let them thrive in the new reality. Losers, on the other hand, as Leyk argued – “(...) due to their established patterns of action and their internalized values and norms – [adopted] strategies of action disadvantageous for themselves” (Leyk 2016, 649). Or as Bourdieu would argue, not adopted by themselves per se, but were constrained by their primary habitus.

Field, on the other hand, “(...) is a differentiated and structured space of objective relations between positions held by agents or institutions” (Gomez 2010 in Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020, 602). Thus, in the example mentioned above, the post-transformational reality could be described as field. It is a social space, with its own set of rules, *capitals*, and knowledges. Hence, the better one is ‘equipped’ (in capitals, suitable primary habitus etc.), the better one functions within the field.

Lastly, capital “(...) is met in the forms of cultural, economic, social, and symbolic” (Bourdieu 1986 in Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020, 602). When it comes to cultural capital, it can be met in in three forms – embodied (manners, inner culture, etc.), objectified (art – also music, various possessions, pictures, etc.), and institutionalized (education, work, etc.) (Kalogeropoulos et al. 2020, 601). Economic capital, on the other hand, can be simply defined as any kinds of belonging that could be transformed into money (ibid.). Social capital relates to one social network – kind of family one comes from, one’s friends and work colleagues, and social and economic class. The more ‘influential’ one’s social capital is, the higher position one might have in the society. Lastly, symbolic capital strongly relates to economic capital, and describes such values such as fame, prestige, reputation etc.

In the end, “[the] habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices” (Bourdieu 1984, 171). Said practices, could be hence described as a result of all above-mentioned elements – habitus, capital, and field. As Bourdieu (1984, 101) schematically explained this,

$$[(\text{Habitus})(\text{Capital})] + \text{Field} = \text{Practice}$$

Hence, to understand one’s position in a social space, one must recognize and point out one’s classifiable practices, as well as juxtapose said practices with other agents’ practices. At the end, one forms judgements based mainly on differences - a process that also leads to structuring of one’s social identity.

Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of differences, differential positions, i.e., by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not and especially from everything it is opposed to; social identity is defined and asserted through difference (Bourdieu 1984, 171-172)

Said differences and their impact on one's social identity are especially crucial when looking into "Us" versus "Them" polarization, as well as music-laden divisions. For as it will be explained in the analysis, both the politicians and the media arguably destined people in the right groups – either "us" or "them" based also on one's music taste. This has also influenced on voters views of themselves and the others. Thus, if one voted on a different candidate, enjoyed different type of music, or watched different TV channel, then this person must have been a part of the "them". For as, their social identity did not match the group identity constructed by the discourses. In the end, I found Bourdieu's theory of classifiable judgments and classificatory practices highly important in the analysis and when describing the process of polarization in the Polish society.

### **3.3.1 Hysteresis effect and homo sovieticus**

Time and space are crucial elements in Bourdieu's theory. After all, an individual's current and future practices are predestined by said their previous experiences, which are always formed by the social, as well. Yet, while circumstances can change and impact one's habitus, the pace in which these changes take affect may vary. In consequence, when there's a time lag in the transition between an old and new habitus, one can find oneself in a situation which Bourdieu calls as the "hysteresis effect". As Ron Kerr and Sarah Robinson explain: "The hysteresis effect [...] means that in the changed circumstances we maintain our already-acquired habitus/dispositions even when they are no longer adapted (what Bourdieu, following Marx, terms 'the Don Quichotte effect')" (2009, 833).

Many researchers conjoin this theory with the previously mentioned concept of homo sovieticus (see Kerr & Robinson 2009; Sekuła 2009). After all, individuals described as a part of homo sovieticus are perceived of as not having changed much since the fall of communism and the beginning of a 'new order'. Therefore, the social context (field) in which they struggle over various resources (capital) is still heavily influenced by their primary communism-made habitus. The hysteresis effect of homo sovieticus can therefore explain why both communism and transformation still play such an important role in Polish people's social identity, and their taste; it also influences their taste in music, as well as music's historical and social connotations.



### **3.4 Music and politics – music and society**

Studying and categorizing one's musical taste is an obnoxiously difficult task, since, as Simon Frith argues, people "invest so much of [themselves] in music" (1997 in Prior 2013, 181). On the one hand, musical preferences can be perceived as personal manifestations of one's own identity and are therefore impossible to measure. Yet, on the other hand, following Bourdieu's logic, music is also an integral part of cultural capital, and hence complies to a greater socio-relational logic of class division. After all, he maintained that "(...) nothing more clearly affirms one's 'class', nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music" (Bourdieu 1984 in Prior 2013, 183). In Bourdieu's opinion, appreciation for art and higher culture derives not from one's aesthetic judgments but is rather rooted in one's class affiliation (Prior 2013, 183). As a part of cultural capital, it is directly linked to habitus and one's social position (field). The higher one stands in the social hierarchy, the more comfortable they feel when interacting with higher culture.

However, there are some shortcomings stemming from Bourdieu's studies. Firstly, he perceived classical music as a higher culture, and, what we call today, popular music as a lower culture. And while studies conducted by Tony Bennett et al. in 2009 confirmed classical music's greater popularity among individuals with higher education, it also showed "(...) that the symbolic power of classical music may be declining among middle-class groups" (Bennett et al. 2009 in Prior 2013, 186). Secondly, Bourdieu was restrictive in his musical taste classification. As mentioned, he sorted people in basically only two groups. Yet, Bennett et al.'s study showed that "(...) certain music consumers are more eclectic or "omnivorous" in their tastes than was assumed by Bourdieu, undermining the central connection that he makes between taste and cultural capital" (ibid., 187). This 'broadness' of musical taste is also seen as a sign of modern times and technology brought by them. "Digital formats and devices such as iPods have not just made music more mobile (Bull 2007 in Prior 2013, 188), but have potentially liquefied genre categories (Sandywell and Beer 2005 in ibid.) and given users historically unprecedented access to an ever-proliferating body of musical works (Reynolds 2011 in ibid.)" (Prior 2013, 188). However, it is worth mentioning that although it is easier to find and access music nowadays, it does not necessarily mean that the majority of people do interact daily with various music genres, nor that their and their social group's preferences have changed drastically. Finally, some of more modern sociomusicological studies argue that Bourdieu's approach to music ignores "(...) the multifarious ways that music "gets into action" (DeNora 2000 in Prior 2013, 189), including how it activates our memories and emotional

states” (Prior 2013, 189). As Nick Prior reasons, perception of music as one of many indicators in socio-relational structure reduces its complexity and dynamicity (see 2013).

Considering the above, finding and applying the right theories and frameworks when assessing music’s role in politics, and its possible effects on polarization and ultimately society, is not an easy task. However, as Prior concludes

it is still Bourdieu who, more than any other single sociologist, has provided us with the most elegant and fertile conceptual scheme to make sense of how music mediates, intersects with and expresses power relations – power relations and stratified social trajectories that are, moreover, often glossed in accounts considered post-Bourdieuian (2013, 191)

Though his theory is not bulletproof, it does serve as a solid starting point in research on music and politics. Furthermore, while political science pays very little attention to music; musicological studies are often recognizably more music-centered, and thus not sufficiently (at least for this thesis’ purposes) detailed in their analyses of political settings. Bourdieu’s habitus builds a much-needed bridge between both approaches. For instance, studies on polarization or populism pay a lot of attention to social identity, namely to how it is constructed, alternated, and utilized. Music, on the other hand,

has special significance in how we construct and negotiate our social identities. If not always straightforwardly a classifier of social class *per se*, music nevertheless marks out important differences in how we stake a claim for ourselves as belonging to particular social groups and taste cultures, even in high-tech, information-rich, globalized societies (ibid.)

While functioning as a display of one’s perception of oneself, musical taste can also influence one’s perception of the others. Thus, in populist discourse, music can become socially and affectively polarizing, when used as an element in references to ‘the people’. Furthermore, it might as well act as yet another ‘cleavage’ in a social polarization triggered by “us” versus “them” polarization. “Thus genres (i.e., musical genres) reward with the familiar, and shock with the strange; they help to constitute a sense of an ‘us’, against a ‘them’ who are ‘othered’, often in ossifying ways” (Ballantine 2020, 252). Introduction of music to political discourse can also further widen gaps in polarized societies due to music’s affective qualities. “(...) [If] music can affect the shape of social life, then control over music in social settings presents an opportunity to structure the parameters of action by whoever has the reins of political, economic, and/or cultural power” (DeNora 2000 in Freeland 2018, 285-285). In this regard, populists in power (which are by definition in favor of polarization) can intentionally use music as an ideological device in an escalating conflict.

## 4 Methods

As introduced in the first chapter, this project attempts to analyze key aspects of usages, functions, and effects of music in the context of current Polish politics, as well as its probable connections to deepening political polarization. I have chosen to address this issue through textual analysis of political speeches performed during the 2020 presidential elections. In addition, I have gathered research materials consisting of song lyrics, news articles, information related to the TV-mediated New Year's Eve concerts and music festivals, as well as Facebook and YouTube comments. To complement and 'situate' said data, I have also collected official voting results and correlated to them demographics.

### 4.1 What is textual analysis and reasonings behind its use

Essentially, textual analysis is "(...) a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse" (Lockyer 2008, 865 in Given 2008). Though textual analysis is mostly interested in workings of language and signs; this approach is not only limited to literary works, but to all sorts of media such as television, social media, films, or music. Hence, said 'texts' should rather be seen as 'somethings' one makes a meaning from, than just written communication (McKee 2003, 4). As Elfriede Fürsich explains, "[text] is understood as a complex set of discursive strategies that is situated in a special cultural context" (2009, 240). Since one is unable to analyze every material produced at a certain time, textual analysts, by closely reading a carefully selected data try to depict functioning and construction of social reality. Therefore, texts chosen and analyzed are meant to be used as 'evidence for the overall argument' (ibid.). As Pälli, Tienari and Vaara explain,

(...) potential texts, as meaning, provide access to the microlevel processes through which meanings are created and social phenomena are constructed. (...) Thus, textual analysis involves strategic choices concerning theoretical frameworks, the selection of texts, and the exact methods to be used. The key issue with the theoretical framework is to be able to link substantive or formal social theories with linguistic approaches that allow one to focus on the key issues (924, 2010 in Mills, Durepos & Wiebe 2010).

Seen in this perspective, textual analysis though often described as a method, can be also perceived as a term that depicts a broad selection of various methodologies (Lockyer 2008, 865 in Given 2008). Combined, said approaches help in establishing the meaning potential of studied texts. Thus, depending on research questions, one's preferences and gathered materials, one chooses those methods that best inform the research (ibid.). Furthermore, choice of methods and approaches is also often linked to an analyst's research field. For instance, in popular music analysis, semiotics and hermeneutics are often adopted by scholars to better

understand how sounds and lyrics articulate meaning (see Solomon 2012; Hawkins 2002). In media studies, on the other hand, content analysis has lately become a widely employed method, due to its both qualitative and quantitative features, as well as its ability to analyze large clusters of data (see Julien 2008, 120 in Given 2008; Stan 2010, 226 in Mills, Durepos & Wiebe 2010). Besides content analysis, however, nowadays media and cultural studies are also heavily influenced by audience studies, as well as quantitative, sociological, and ethnographic research methods (for example see Phillipov 2013). While providing meaningful insights to mainly public's experiences and receptions of media content; said methodologies are also valued for their more 'rigorous' frameworks and empirical dimensions. Nevertheless, many scholars defend studies based on textual analytical approaches, proving that these methods, "(...) offer creative ways to articulate experiences that would otherwise be inaccessible to empirical research methods (...)" (Phillipov 2013, 209). Furthermore, as Michelle Phillipov argues, research backed by empirical studies can be equally subjective as those informed by textual approaches (2013).

(...) while textual analyses have been (rightly) critiqued for assigning meanings to media products without adequately considering participants' contexts or experiences of consumption, empirical research methods offer no guarantee that the researcher will also not impose his/her own meanings and interpretations on the media or cultural form under examination (ibid., 213).

Similarly, Alan McKee argues that audience research not only produces more texts, which as well must later be analyzed by a researcher, but also that it, similarly to textual analysis, produces 'representations of reality' instead of 'reality' itself (2003, 84). All in all, every approach has its strengths and weaknesses; therefore, one should choose those that best inform one's research questions.

Considering this thesis' interdisciplinary interests, as well as its proposed research questions, I have chosen to analyze gathered materials with a use of hermeneutics, semiotics, discourse analysis and close textual analysis. I opted against audience studies in form of qualitative and/or quantitative interviews, as well as focus groups, due to the richness collected data. Furthermore, since all of electoral speeches, were acquired from YouTube and Facebook; when needed, I analyzed entries from comment sections, instead of having personally questioned the audience. Seeing as both elections happened a couple of years ago, I found it more contextually 'realistic' and objective to interpret people's opinions from the same time period than having them 'replicate' their feelings nowadays. As Jennifer Morey Hawkins explains, "[interpretation] involves understanding the text under investigation within the multiple facets of the historical, cultural, and social understandings of the world at the time the

text was created. The text, or texts, under investigation both indicates and influences communication occurring within the historical context” (2017, 1755 in Allen 2017). Thus, by studying people’s opinion coming from the same historical context, one is more likely to understand cultural and political phenomena that were occurring in that time (ibid., 1754). Besides, some of the speeches analyzed were originally live streamed on YouTube with an accompanying “live chat replay”. Said chat replays gave me an opportunity to study audience’s attitudes and sense-making practices when gathered texts were performed for the first time. It thus creates a type of an anthropological field work dimension, something that cannot be recreated in interviews or focus group settings after an initial event. Furthermore, in an interview I would have to inform audience members about this project’s purpose, and hence risk imposing an idea onto them and receiving needed, yet ‘biased’, results. As Alan McKee describes it, “(...) an audience member might never actually have thought about, or actively made sense of, a text before they're asked about it. (...) [To] ask detailed questions about how the readers interpreted these texts actually takes us further away from everyday practices of sense-making because that isn't what these texts are for” (McKee 2003, 84). Therefore, by analyzing chat and comment sections, I could learn more about audience’s opinions, without having them adjust their responses to survey.

In the end, the aim of this study is to contribute to existing research and bring a broader understanding to current political communication in Poland. Furthermore, in this project, I do not attempt to give likely interpretations or claim that said speeches can be understood in many various ways, or are ‘buried’ under ‘endless layers’ of social reality; but rather lean towards structuralism and realism, and deconstruct texts to uncover the truth of a situation (ibid.) Seeing as analyzed speeches were performed in specific electoral settings, their underlying goal is hence evident – gaining the public’s support and securing enough votes to win the elections. What is, however, less evident and not straight-forwardly articulated by politicians, are ways, ‘images’, and language they use to persuade voters. Said ‘tricks’ combined with vagueness of populist communication, makes it not only hard to spot and understand for people coming from other countries and cultures, but also to many Polish voters - especially if they are not engaged nor interested in politics. Thus, a deeper understanding of Polish culture and its dominant discourses is called for when trying to locate, contextualize, and lastly uncover real meanings behind gathered speeches and their persuasive tendencies. “The manner in which one systematizes, during a close reading, is by exploring meanings of a text that others may have overlooked. When critics consider such hidden meanings, they may connect their own knowledge and perspective to the text” (Ruiz De Castilla 2017, 137 in Allen 2017). Similarly,

McKee explains that “(...) the best way to get a sense of the dominant discourses circulating in a culture is to immerse yourself in that culture as much as possible - live there for a while” (2007, 106). Thus, as a Polish citizen, that have been situated outside of the country for a substantial part of my life, I argue that I not only was able to ‘connect my own knowledge and perspective to the text’, but I also did it from a safe, analytic distance. In result, by backing my interpretations with previous theories and research, as well as incorporating methods such as hermeneutics of suspicious; I was able to use my personal experiences and own knowledge, but not to a degree that I would not be able to reflect upon my own culture.

#### **4.2 Hermeneutics**

Hermeneutics, as a method, is interested in people’s interpretive processes, and their understanding of texts (Boerboom 2017, 648 in Allen 2017). As Anthony Thiselton writes, “[hermeneutics] explains how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or in a context of life different from our own” (2009, 1). Though originally associated with biblical studies, and more precisely with the tradition of reading and interpreting of sacred texts; eventually, hermeneutics became a common practice within other academic fields, such as philosophy, sociology, or communication studies. Hence, in relation to politics, as well as sociologically and critically motivated questions, hermeneutics helps one to understand “(...) how vested interests, sometimes of class, race, gender, or prior belief, may influence how we read” (ibid.). In consequence, a hermeneutic inquiry leads to a description of “(...) not only what is *transmitted* by the text, or the source of the subject matter, but also what is *conveyed to*, and *understood* and *appropriated by*, the reader or the ‘target’ audience” (ibid., 3). Such research then, often described as “the art of *understanding*” (Schleiermacher & Gadamer in Thiselton 2009, 3), insists on looking beyond “the actual processes” of interpretation, and taking a more critical stand toward “(...) *what exactly we are doing when we read, understand, or apply texts*” (Thiselton 2009, 4). For, it is not the same for everyone how one understands, misunderstands, or interprets texts. As Melissa Freeman explains,

[it] is because understanding can be manipulated, mistaken, and misguided that hermeneutic theories of understanding take into account the social, cultural, and political contexts, past and present, in which understanding and misunderstanding take shape. It is also because humans continue to make sense of the world around them and act on those interpretations regardless of their familiarity, interests, or knowledge that understanding the process of understanding is a core issue in social research (2008, 386 in Given 2008).

Thus, considering the breadth and intricacies of mentioned contexts, hermeneutics throughout the years has gained a multitude of approaches and theories. In general they are concerned with “(...) the processes through which understanding and interpretation occur, the truthfulness of interpretative statements, and the conditions for new understanding” (ibid.). They do, however, approach these issues with various aims, foci, or, at times, feelings. Therefore, when analyzing texts, its readers, and authors, one chooses these hermeneutic methodologies and ‘rules’, which best arrive at a fuller understanding in a given perspective.

#### **4.2.1 The hermeneutic circle**

The hermeneutic circle is particularly useful when analyzing historical cues present in modern Polish politics, since one is constantly “(...) moving from earlier pre-understanding to fuller understanding (...)”, and thus “(...) examining the parts or pieces of the puzzle (i.e., the texts) that we handled initially and relating them to an understanding of the whole picture” (Thiselton 2009, 14). Instead of interpreting texts linearly, that is, for instance, by looking first at the whole of a picture, and then gradually ‘zooming’ in on details; the hermeneutic circle suggests a constant spiral-like movement between said ‘whole picture’ and its parts. As Thiselton argues, “[we] cannot arrive at a picture of the whole without scrutinizing the parts or pieces, but we cannot tell what the individual pieces mean until we have some sense of the wider picture as a whole” (ibid., 14). Thus, by approaching texts in this dialogue-like fashion, the hermeneutic circle, through a process of constant revision and re-reading, provokes alternative interpretations anchored in both past and present.

In relation to research questions presented in this project, hermeneutic circle can, for example, help one in understanding how songs, with already established historical connotations, gained their new political meanings, and how these meanings were later interpreted by the audience. Hence, by analyzing each song on its own, and then moving back between these elements and speeches or situations in which they were presented, one is able to locate them in broader cultural and historical contexts.

#### **4.2.2 Hermeneutics of suspicion**

Hermeneutics of suspicion, as Paul Ricoeur described it, “(...) is not an explication of the object, but a tearing off of masks, an interpretation that reduces disguises” (1970, 30). It is a method, or rather, a school of thought, which is “(...) animated by suspicion, by a skepticism towards the given” (Josselson 2004, 3). As Ricoeur argues, one can approach texts with faith, or with suspicion. Hence, while the first method is “(...) understood as the manifestation and

restoration of a meaning addressed (...) in the manner of a message, a proclamation (...)", the second, 'suspicious' method "(...) is understood as a demystification, as a reduction of illusion" (Ricoeur 1970, 27). Furthermore, Ricoeur argued that the suspicious reading is not only directed at the text, but also at oneself (ibid., 34). Meaning, that this method also uncovers one's, as Ricoeur calls it, "illusions of consciousness" (ibid.). Thus, instead of following one's common-sense assumptions, one is meant to both question oneself and the texts one is interpreting. Hence, when used in such ideological and polarizing political settings, as the ones described in this project, it is the suspicious, rather than faithful reading, that helps one in uncovering the truth behind the texts. Especially, considering that the gathered speeches were constructed in ways that would persuade the voters, as well as help in building new social identities.

In consequence, while the hermeneutic circle (directly and indirectly) forces one to constantly rethink one's interpretation, to revise it and inform it by looking closely at details, and 'widely' at a whole; hermeneutics of suspicion provides one with an angle when going through all these steps. Thus, when combined, these approaches make up a "(...) theoretical toolbox that is sensitive to history and to the nuances of the many traditions that make up the complexity of our societies and the several different traditions within it" (Marcelo 2019, 67).

Lastly, it is also important to mention that hermeneutics of suspicion has received a lot of critique in the past decades, for as it is argued, not every material requires a suspicious reading (for example see Felski 2012). Nevertheless, as aforesaid, close reading of the gathered campaign speeches – texts that have as a goal to persuade the voters, should be made in a suspicious manner, not only so one would not fall in their ideological traps oneself. But also, so one could let go of one's common-sense assumption, political biases, and personal views and investigate the reality outside of the political power/knowledge relations. Only this way, one is able to better comprehend the ideological mechanisms functioning behind the discourse.

### **4.3 Semiotics**

Semiotics, or semiology, as a science of signs, is interested in looking at "(...) how things stand in relation to other things, and how those mediated relationships help us understand things better" (Shank 2008, 806 in Given 2008). To put it simply, semiotics helps one in taking a text apart, and so finding how it functions in connection to a broader system of meaning (Rose 2016, 106). Thus, by assuming that signs "are a vehicle of communication", semiological research engages one in a "conversation with the world" (Shank 2008, 809 in Given 2008).



Semiotics, though heavy on complicated analytical and theoretical concepts, provides one with terminologies, and tools to understand and describe “(...) the social effects of meaning” (Rose 2016, 107). Therefore, when concerned with social dimensions of text production and interpretation, semiotics’ focus changes “(...) from the ‘sign’ to the way people use semiotic ‘resources’ both to produce communicative artefacts and events and to interpret them (...) in the context of specific social situations and practices” (van Leeuwen 2005 in Rose 2016, 109). In this project I have chosen to incorporate Roland Barthes’ *mythology*, and *social semiotics*. While the first approach is mostly concerned with language, power, and ideology, social semiotics, on the other hand, studies sound and visual images and how they create meaning socially.

#### **4.3.1 Mythology**

To better grasp Barthes’ concept and structure of a *myth*, one must first describe fundamental ‘elements’ of semiotic analysis. These are: sign, signified, and signifier. As Gillian Rose explains, the most fundamental element, the sign, is “the basic unit of language” (2016, 113). Said unit consists of two parts, the signified and signifier. While the former refers to a concept or object, the latter is a “(...) sound or an image that is attached to a signified” (ibid.). Roland Barthes, however, argued that a sign can function on two ‘additional’ levels – a denotive level, in which signs are easy to interpret, and a connotive level, where “(...) signs carry a range of higher-level meanings” (ibid., 121). When put together then, any given sign can have (at least) two layers: an easy-to-grasp, straight-forward layer of meaning, and a second, less straightforward, cultural-conventional, and ideological meaning. It is this second meaning that Barthes called a *myth*. As Rose explains, “[myth] makes us forget that things were and are made; instead, it naturalizes the way things are. Myth is thus a form of ideology” (ibid., 131). In the end, since connotive signs’ meaning is naturalized, and hence gives one an impression of being as set and intuitive as the one denotive signs have; “(...) the interpretation of mythologies requires a broad understanding of a culture’s dynamics” (ibid., 132). An understanding which, as a native of Poland and a student of media, I believe I have.

In this project, I analyzed rock music of the 1980s and disco polo songs on their mythical level, examining how their ideological meanings got neutralized by politicians, and further, how said genres contribute to deepening “Us versus Them” polarization.

### **4.3.2 Social semiotics**

As Gillian Rose explains, social semiotics is concerned with “(...) the ways in which the meanings of signs are made socially” (ibid., 136), or how particular communicative acts and specific situations impact the ways in which people make meaning and interpret texts (ibid., 137). Thus, social semiotics, instead of analyzing texts as static artefacts, focus on how these texts function in social reality, and further, how social reality impacts the processes of understanding and interpretation. Furthermore, this kind of research pays attention to multimodality, meaning “(...) nothing is ever just visual, and that all visual images are accompanied by other kinds of semiotic resources that are integral to their meaning” (ibid., 138). Hence, in this project, not only speeches themselves are analyzed, but also contributing music, surroundings, comments (mainly on YouTube), lyrics, articles, interviews, etc. All said ‘artefacts’ create discourses and produce interpretations inseparably and are therefore meant to be studied in relation to each other. Moreover, “(...) social semiologists emphasise that both the production of specific semiotic resources and modes, and the way that they are interpreted by people, are shaped by social processes” (ibid., 139). This is especially crucial in political ‘scenarios’, since political communication is not only structured in relation to both ongoing and past (historical) social practices, but it also influences how these develop over time. Simultaneously, audience’s understanding of these texts is equally bonded to said practices. This notion relates also to the last crucial element of social semiotic analysis, that is “(...) the circumstances in which semiotic resources are used are also shaped by established practices (...)” (ibid.). Meaning, that social contexts, which have a great effect on understanding, can at times invite readers to freer and ‘fluid’ interpretations, but can also somewhat ‘forcefully’ lead them to predestined readings (ibid., 139-140). Thus, social semiotics also examines discourses and interpretations on institutional levels.

Social semiotics have mainly informed my analysis of linguistic elements highlighted in political speeches, and how they contributed to social positioning (more on this in subchapter on critical discourse analysis).

### **4.4 Discourse analysis**

In its most general sense, discourse analysis is an umbrella term describing methods related to the study of language and its role in social life and space (Potter 2008, 217 in Given 2008). Thus as Juliane Cheek explains, the theoretical frame that guides one’s understanding of discourse will likewise influence and shape the understanding of discourse analysis that is in use (2008, 355 in Given 2008). Thus, in a study related to the language-shaped construction of

power within societal life, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an approach most likely to be adopted by scholars. However, to understand CDA's theoretical and methodological frameworks and origins, it is crucial to first revisit Michel Foucault's views on discourse and power-knowledge relationship.

Foucault understood discourse as a "(...) particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it" (Rose 2016, 187). In Foucault's opinion, discourse is shaped by a relationship between power and knowledge. Thus, when something is being communicated, 'something else' is being silenced. Such a link between what is seen, and what is repressed, Foucault described as the 'order of discourse' (see 1970). In result, it is power that dictates what is being included in discourse, and hence, shapes one's understanding of the world. For this reason, he did not perceive knowledge as objective, universal, or value-free. Nevertheless, this intersection of power and knowledge does not make the latter 'inferior', but rather, that both have a direct somewhat-circular effect on one another, and on discourse. As Foucault explained it, "(...) power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1977 in Rose 2016, 190). However, while it is natural to think of power as a sort of top-to-bottom force, in Foucault's opinion "(...) power is everywhere, since discourse too is everywhere" (Rose 2016, 189). As Cheek describes it,

(...) power is a productive concept; it is not simply repressive. Nor is power a hierarchical concept, but rather it is an effect of sociohistoric processes in that knowledge underpinning a discourse can be used by proponents of that discourse both to claim authority and presence in certain settings and to exclude other possible discursive framings or ways of viewing those settings (Cheek 2008, 356 in Given 2008).

In result, while a certain discourse might at a given time have more of a meaning-shaping power over others, its dominance is not granted forever, nor is it the only available option out there.

Considering the abovementioned elements, Foucault's approach then studies "(...) the way texts themselves have been constructed, ordered, and shaped in terms of their social and historical situatedness" (ibid.). Simultaneously, though, when analyzing texts, one also pays close attention to other, competing discourses, which at certain times have been repressed by the dominant discourse. As Foucault writes, the "image of an object represented in a text is formed according to the frame or focus that shapes what is to be seen. This formation challenges the notion that texts are neutral and value-free receptacles, or simply conveyors, of information" (ibid.). Similarly, discourse analysis negates the notion of a transparent and value-

free language. Every text, and its language, is assigned a certain meaning, one that is influenced by a situation in which it was used (ibid.). In consequence, discourse analysis studies texts “(...) to uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within them that have shaped the very form of the text in the first place” (ibid., 356-7).

While Foucault’s theories laid the foundations for modern approaches within discourse analysis, he did not, however, provide a clear method on how to analyze discourse and its social dimensions. Thus, as Cheek explains,

(...) rather than specifying one way of doing discourse analysis, it is Foucault’s theoretical work that provides us with a number of understandings that underpin both the framing and the conducting of research using this approach (...). Drawing on a metaphor Foucault used, the understandings derived from his work provide a toolbox or set of tools that can be used to shape the discursive analysis undertaken (ibid., 356)

This is also how Norman Fairclough developed his own method within discourse analysis – the so-called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). By drawing on some of Foucault’s ideas (mainly the notion of discourse and order of discourse), Fairclough established an approach with specific socio-political and socio-cultural foci, looking mainly into unequal power relations.

#### **4.5 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

As Norman Fairclough explains, CDA’s primary focus is on “(...) the effect of power relations and inequalities in producing social wrongs, and in particular on discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities: on dialectical relations between discourse and power, and their effects on other relations within the social process and their elements” (2010, 8). Thus, as its name suggests, CDA is not only interested in purely linguistic descriptions, but also in a critical analysis that examines “(...) the subtle ways in which unequal power relations are maintained and reproduced through language use” (Weninger 2008, 145 in Given 2008). By adopting a critical stance, CDA enables also one to assess “(...) what exists, what might exist and what should exist on the basis of a coherent set of values. At least to some extent this is a matter of highlighting gaps between what particular societies claim to be (‘fair’, ‘democratic’, ‘caring’ etc.) and what they are” (Fairclough 2010, 7). In consequence, this sociological and political focus of CDA differentiates it from a ‘just’ language-focused discourse analysis. As Fairclough explains, CDA “(...) is not analysis of discourse ‘in itself’ as one might take it to be, but analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as analysis of the ‘internal relations’ of discourse” (2010, 4). As Fairclough argues, language is not merely a crucial element of domination, but, ultimately, all “social life is built

in and around language” (1995, 185-6). At the same time, Fairclough claims that many perceive language as transparent, and straight-forward (ibid., 208-9). Thus, CDA’s main goal is to challenge said assumption by scrutinizing texts, and showing what is unspoken, repressed, and/or wrong, how it came to be, and how does it impact social reality. Lastly, it is important to note that CDA is a methodology coming from the realist school of thought – it assumes that some forms of interpretation are possible, and others not (Fairclough 2010, 4-5). Or, as described in the introduction to this chapter, it uncovers the truth, rather than many possible interpretations. As Fairclough explains,

(...) the world is discursively construed (or represented) in many and various ways, but which construals come to have socially constructive effects depends upon a range of conditions which include for instance power relations but also properties of whatever parts or aspects of the world are being construed. We cannot transform the world in any old way we happen to construe it; the world is such that some transformations are possible and others are not (ibid.).

For this reason, CDA is a particularly useful methodology when analyzing political communication, for, as many scholars have argued, topics and messages introduced by politicians have often resulted in visible societal, cultural, and institutional changes (for example see Krzyżanowski 2018; 2020; Kopińska 2021; Cap 2018; Drozdowski & Matusz 2021). For instance, as Piotr Cap explains, PiS’ anti-immigration discourse has influenced public opinion on this matter, and ‘persuaded’ many to take a similar stand as the ruling party (see Cap 2018). “While this kind of policy finds little understanding with most European partners, it enjoys relatively high popularity on the home front, among Polish people. This is due to a skillful rhetorical campaign, which not only legitimizes that policy, but also, and consequently, plays a key role in legitimizing the new government as a whole” (ibid., 286). Thus, while populist political communication is often seen as vague and objectionable, and potentially prone to many possible interpretations - especially when ‘surface’ read; PiS’ discursive strategies have been described as straightforward and “far from subtle” (see Cap 2018). However, that is not always the case with other parties, and especially the opposition, which is often using more ‘delicate’ elusive language, yet one that as well contributes to building of social identities. In result, CDA as a method helps in analyzing a rich spectrum of Polish political language and especially in uncovering both visible and more hidden cues.

#### **4.5.1 Power, ideology, and identity**

As already mentioned, power and ideology play a crucial role in CDA. However, while Foucault understood power as an omnipresent authority-claiming concept – a way in which discourse dominance is achieved; Fairclough added to this assumption a second meaning, one

that perceives power as also “asymmetries between participants in discourse events” (1995, 2-3). These two sides of power, Fairclough described as *power behind discourse*, and *power in discourse*. As he explains, power in discourse “(...) is a matter of some people exercising ‘power over’ others in discourse. (...) It includes powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of less powerful participants and can sometimes amount to a form of coercion” (Fairclough 1989 in Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, 113). Simply put, power in discourse is preoccupied with power relationships, and how they are demonstrated through language. Thus, an analysis of power in discourse would, for instance, focus on how participants address themselves and others in a speech or conversation. Power behind discourse, on the other hand, Fairclough describes as “[the] idea (...) that the whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power” (2010, 46). It is a type of oppressing power that is often unrecognized by people yet introduced as something they wanted in the first place (Fairclough & Fairclough 2012, 113). Hence, power behind discourse is closely tied with domination, discourse dominance, and most importantly – ideology.

When it comes to ideology, Fairclough argues that it is “(...) most effective when its workings are least visible” (2013, 71). By adapting Foucauldian theory of order of discourse, Fairclough explains that ideology “(...) involves the representation of ‘the world’ from the perspective of a particular interest, so that the relationship between proposition and fact is not transparent, but mediated by representational activity” (2010, 46). Thus, when one becomes aware that interests of more powerful are inscribed in knowledge (common sense) and discourse, and further, that their interests reinforce inequalities – then such discourse ceases to be ideological or dominating (2013, 71). In the end, as Gillian Rose explains, it is science that helps in uncovering texts’ ideological structures. As she explains, “[ideology] is knowledge that is constructed in such a way as to legitimate unequal social power relations; science, instead, is knowledge that reveals those inequalities” (2016, 107). In result, as Fairclough explains, ideological “(...) invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to ‘textualize’ the world in a particular way, and on the other hand lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way” (2013, 71). For this reason, Fairclough argues that texts are rarely visibly ideological, on contrary, their ideological potential comes to light with one’s interpretation of them; an interpretation that is essentially a reproduction (ibid.).

Fairclough's view on ideology and power correlates with linguistic strategies of populism and political polarization. With its social identity-building mechanisms, populist communication forms divisions within society, by for instance, creating in-group 'the people/us', and out-groups such as 'the elites/them'. Furthermore, this separation is often broadened by articulation of possible threats coming from 'them'-dominance, or potential improvements if 'us' were in power. With a use of these types of rhetorical figures (us, them, the people etc.), populists produce so-called *subject positions*. As Fairclough explains, "[in] one sense of *subject*, one is referring to someone who is under the jurisdiction of a political authority, and hence passive and shaped: but the subject of a sentence, for instance, is usually the active one, the 'doer', the one causally implicated in action" (2013, 32). This means that subjects are passive, as in constrained/created by discourses, but also active – meaning creating discourses and thus positioning other subjects.

Moreover, Fairclough argues that people are unaware of their subject positions, and its impact on one's ways of understanding and interpreting, or as Fairclough describes it – talking and seeing. This invisibility of subject positions is what aligns it with ideology;

(...) in the process of acquiring the ways of talking which are normatively associated with a subject position, one necessarily acquires also its ways of seeing, or ideological norms. And just as one is typically unaware of one's ways of talking unless for some reason they are subjected to conscious scrutiny, so also is one typically unaware of what ways of seeing, what ideological representations, underlie one's talk (Fairclough 2010, 42).

In the end, it is discourse that produces subjects, and their way of functioning in social reality. It dictates what people should and should not do, or how they should perceive others. Furthermore, subject positioning relates to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and specifically with his conditioning factors of classifiable judgments and classificatory practices.

When analyzing Polish political speeches then, I have paid attention to formulations such as the elites, the people, us and ours, "sovereign" (pol. *suweryn*), "first- and second-class citizens" (pol. *lepszey i gorszy sort*), "my countrymen" (pol. *moich rodaków*), citizens (pol. *obywatele*), and losers/winners of transformation, and how these 'labels' effected people's views on others, themselves, and social reality.

#### **4.5.2 Methodological approach**

As Fairclough explains, CDA is *relational, dialectical, and transdisciplinary* (2010, 3). Relational, because its core focus is not on individuals, but on social relations. Fairclough perceives social relations, as relations between people who communicate with each other, relations in communicative events, power relations, and relations between elements that

constitute discourse itself (such as language and style) (ibid.). Furthermore, Fairclough describes these relations as dialectical, since these are, “relations between objects which are different from one another but not (...) ‘discrete’, not fully separate in the sense that one excludes the other” (ibid., 4). In other words, one cannot analyze a certain object or element on its own, without studying its relation to other objects. Lastly, since CDA is both relational and dialectical, that is interested in dialectical relations between objects within ‘larger’ social relations; then one needs to constantly relate to other disciplines (such as linguistics, sociology, or politics), to better grasp mechanisms occurring in said social relations (ibid., 4). Hence, as Fairclough argues, CDA is also transdisciplinary – meaning, “(...) the ‘dialogues’ between disciplines, theories and frameworks which take place in doing analysis and research are a source of theoretical and methodological developments within the particular disciplines, theories and frameworks in dialogue – including CDA itself” (ibid.). Considering said transdisciplinary character of CDA, then, its methodology is as well informed by various approaches, which are helping in structuring one’s research. Thus, instead of only focusing on theory of discourse, one is also incorporating other methods, and theories (ibid.). In case of this project, said transdisciplinary interests were described in previous chapters.

Furthermore, Fairclough highlights the importance of *intertextual context* in CDA. As he explains, “[discourses] and the texts which occur within them have histories, they belong to historical series, and the interpretation of intertextual context is a matter of deciding which series a text belongs to, and therefore what can be taken as common ground for participants, or *presupposed*” (2013, 127). Thus, CDA assumes that texts cannot be analyzed on their own, without referencing to other texts and contexts. Furthermore, it is also intertextuality that helps in determining who is more powerful in discourse, and how people come to their interpretations (ibid.). In my study I have thus incorporated other data besides 2020 presidential campaign political speeches, which helped in setting primary data in historical, cultural, social, and political contexts, and in ‘spotting’ ideological cues in speeches. All said data is listed below in this subchapter.

Reflecting on all abovementioned properties of CDA, and language’s role as both discourse, *and* social practice, Fairclough argues that one “(...) is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions (...)” (2013, 21). Thus, as he explains, to each of these dimensions of discourse (texts, production and interpretation, and relationship between texts), there are corresponding stages of CDA (ibid.). These three dimensions of CDA he defines as *description*, *interpretation*, and *explanation*. In



the following paragraphs, I will shortly describe Fairclough's three-dimensional methodological framework.

In the *description*-stage, one is identifying and coding "(...) formal features of a text in terms of the categories of a descriptive framework" (ibid., 22). Description is thus interested in "formal properties of the text" (ibid.). Theoretically this stage is least 'subjective' since one is giving detailed descriptions of gathered and analyzed materials, and not uncovering their meanings. *Yet*, as Fairclough argues, description is as 'interpretive', as the two other dimensions, since "(...) one has to produce a 'text' by transcribing speech, but there are all sorts of ways in which one might transcribe any stretch of speech, and the way one *interprets* the text is bound to influence how one transcribes it" (ibid.).

The second stage in Fairclough's CDA is *interpretation*. As its name suggests, it is a part of analysis that seeks to understand and make sense of elements of the texts described in the previous step (description). By recognizing and defining common-sense assumptions, or as Fairclough calls it background knowledge (or MR – *members' resources*) and historical contexts; analysts examine texts' cues that 'lead' one's reading and understanding (ibid., 118). Furthermore, interpretation investigates connections between texts and social interactions, and how both elements influence one another. Lastly, interpretation "(...) [assigns] meanings to the constituent parts of a text (...)" (ibid., 22), and "(...) views discourses and texts from a historical perspective" (ibid., 129). For this reason, it is also this stage of analysis that often requires complementing data to set the intertextual contexts.

The final step, *explanation*, is concerned with "(...) [portraying] a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them" (ibid., 135). Thus, in explanation one is interpreting findings from previous stages in relation to power. Furthermore, the explanation stage explores common-sense assumptions, and how they become ideologies. As Fairclough explains, "(...) the assumptions about culture, social relationships, and social identities which are incorporated in MR, are seen as determined by particular power relations in the society or institution, and in terms of their contribution to struggles to sustain or change these power relations - they are seen ideologically" (ibid., 138). In the end, explanation uncovers hidden meanings behind ideological cues.

By loosely following Faircloughian framework, I have begun my analysis by describing and comparing the contents of the music-centered TV shows. There I investigated the TVP's and TVN's New Year's Eve concerts and The Opole and Sopot Festivals. There, I have also

included other interdiscursive materials, such as song lyrics, news articles, and social media comments. With use of said data, I was able to position primary material in intertextual contexts and examine to which historical series it belongs and how it creates common assumptions. Furthermore, I was able to examine how socio-cultural and historical frameworks impact both voters' and politicians' practices of text production and interpretation. In the end, this part of analysis helped me in acknowledging how power and inequality relations in Polish society originated. Lastly, it is important to mention, that that part of my analysis also included elements of quantitative and anthropological studies.

In the next step, I first transcribed the speeches performed by Polish politicians during 2020 presidential elections. There I was most interested in linguistic elements (such as grammar, vocabulary, or metaphors), and have also listed and examined 'labels' (as described in subchapter on subject positioning) that the candidates have been giving their voters and opponents. When it comes to the circumstances during which said speeches and interviews were performed, I have described accompanying music with an emphasis on its lyrics. Thus, when describing lyrics, I have been looking for political narratives and metaphors, and national, patriotic, folkloric, and religious themes (for instance sociolect-specific words and 'sounds').

In this last stage, I have first interpreted speeches and music used by the candidates. Furthermore, with the use of hermeneutics and semiotics, I have positioned them in broader historical and socio-cultural contexts related to communism and transformation. There I have drawn parallels between the homo sovieticus, the losers and winners of transformation, and the habitus, and how said labels work as subject positions, but also how they are used in power/knowledge relations. Furthermore, I have examined how subject positioning through workings of social comparison (as it can be also found in habitus) can impact music preferences among voters, their social identities, and belonging to 'destined' in- or out-groups. Next, I have analyzed other mentioned linguistic elements of political communication as ideological, and their contribution to social divisions and deepening polarization. Lastly, I have focused on music and lyrics, and analyzed how its mythical meaning developed and changed throughout the years.

#### **4.6 Ethics**

Considering that data used in this project consists mainly of mass media and popular-cultural artifacts, and that sources from which it has been acquired were unrestricted and easily accessible public domains; there were little to no ethical concerns nor challenges raised in the process. Regarding the comment sections on YouTube and Facebook, no forms of consent have

been collected. Nevertheless, all gathered data was anonymized in the process. I did not save any of the comments, whether with or without a username, on unprotected drives. Furthermore, I translated all of the comments from Polish to English myself, so as to introduce another level of anonymization. Lastly, I removed all information, such as name and geolocation, and instead wrote in brackets – [user1], [user2] etc. In the end, users' anonymity and privacy has been maintained.

#### **4.7 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity plays an important role in qualitative research, and especially if one is engaged in critical methodologies, such as hermeneutics, or discourse analysis. As Peter Miller explains, qualitative researchers “[rather] than presenting themselves as detached scientific investigators, (...) are more apt to identify as integral research instruments and/or even passionate advocates for a specific cause. Qualitative work in this regard celebrates the reflexive nature of research” (2008, 572 in Given 2008). Thus, instead of aiming towards objectivity, as seen in quantitative studies, qualitative analysts lean towards subjectivity (not to be mistaken with absolutism), and let their own interests impact their study and interpretations. Furthermore, it is important to mention, that “[subjective] qualitative research, marked by researchers' honesty, transparency, and contextualization throughout the research process, is valid in that it offers meaning, lends insight, and in some cases, leads to socially responsible action” (ibid., 573). Hence, by constantly reflecting and examining one's personal biases and their influence on one's study, qualitative scholars are able to produce trustworthy and credible interpretations.

As already mentioned, I let my personal background (as a native of Poland), political biases and interests motivate and inform my study. While I do believe that my knowledge and involvement have both been important research ‘instruments’ in my study and helped in creating a coherent and transparent picture of the current situation in Poland; at the same time, I have conducted this research while having been located for years outside of Poland. For this reason, I argue that I have also been able to take a safer and more distant analytic stance, and I have not been overly ‘limited’ by my views. Furthermore, by having related to theories and studies made by other scholars, I aimed to ‘bridge’ the gap between my own and others’ understandings of Polish politics and society.

## **5 Music and polarization**

As explained in the previous chapter, in this part of the analysis I examine and compare the contents of TV-mediated music events – the New Year’s Eve concerts, and the Opole and Sopot Festivals. By focusing first on said music events, I want to better understand how music has become politicized over the past years, and how it has been used in the creation of common assumptions and social identities. Furthermore, in this chapter, I investigate music’s connections to the deepening political and societal polarization. In consequence, I treated the study performed in this section, as a much-needed musical tapestry, before explaining music’s ideological potential in the analyzed speeches.

The overarching question for this chapter is:

RQ2: Is there a connection between music and political polarization in Poland and, if so, how can it be understood?

To answer this, I will conduct textual analysis of both the described events, as well as the songs and speeches performed during the events. Furthermore, I also examine comments made by YouTube and Facebook users. This way, I can better understand how the society interpret music, and how music, in line with Bourdieu’s theory, becomes a part of classifiable judgments.

### **5.1.1 Music and polarized media**

In this project, I argue that both candidates used music predominantly as an integral, social identity-establishing and -enforcing element in their discourses. In Rafał Trzaskowski’s speeches, music not only highlighted his antagonistic views towards the “Them” – that is PiS, and their most faithful electorate (predominantly losers of transformation). But also provoked his voters (winners of transformation) to an oppositional countermobilization. Andrzej Duda, on the other hand, used music to firstly stress his “Man of the People” image, and secondly, to speak to the “Us” (meaning ‘the people’s) beliefs, and social identities. To show them that they are not forgotten and that it is now their time to be in the lead, and not “Them”’s (“anti-Polish” pro-PO elites). In result, Trzaskowski and Duda by prompting their discourses with music flattened the existing societal cleavages (as McCoy et al. label them), and “[divided the society] into two camps, with political identities becoming social identities” (McCoy et al. 2018, 22). Additionally, these affective polarizing effects have also reached and been mirrored by other domains of social life – mainly the media and popular culture.

As explained in the second chapter, after their win in the 2015 parliamentary elections, PiS drastically reformed the functioning of public service media (PSM). Mainly, by making them financially government- rather than public-dependent, implementing their party loyalists as decision-makers, and letting PiS-sceptic journalists go. Hence, the ruling party gained practically total control over the content. In result, PSM's news coverage quickly developed into strictly pro-PiS/anti-PO propaganda. For instance, as The Council for the Polish Language's report on TVP's news coverage indicated,

(...) the government and related political subjects [were] most often associated in positively laden news [buzzwords] such as “reform,” “solid,” “patriotic,” “strong,” “heroic,” “democracy”; while actors critical to the government [were] described mostly through negative expressions such as “provocation,” “scandalous,” “destabilizing,” “blackmail,” “savage,” “profanation,” “lying,” etc. (The Council for the Polish Language 2019 in Klimkiewicz 2021, 62).

Hence, due to PiS' manipulation of PSM's communication; the pro-PO audience had to find a different media outlet, one that would better suit their anti-PiS belief system. In the end, it was the privately-owned TVN that took upon itself said role, as a counterweight to TVP's affectively-laden propaganda.

The TVP-TVN political divide has been not only visible during the 2020 presidential elections, where “(...) both main candidates decided not to get involved with those media which they considered offensive. [For instance], in the second round they refused a joint debate, appearing instead on two different channels —the president Duda on TVP and Rafał Trzaskowski on TVN24 with coverage also on Polsat” (OSCE 2020 in Klimkiewicz 2021, 58). But also, in more entertainment-laden aspects of the TV-mediated reality – such as music concerts, reality shows, or film and TV series production.

### **5.1.2 New Year's Eve concerts**

Each year, TV-organized New Year's Eve concerts gather millions of Poles in front of their TV sets. In 2022 one fourth of the Polish population (over 10 million viewers) spent their New Year's Eve following one of the shows (Kurdupski 2022). Furthermore, said events are most of the time organized by the three most popular TV stations – pro-PiS TVP, pro-PO TVN, and PiS-leaning Polsat (most of the time, since in 2021 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 restrictions, TVN decided not to organize their show). And while before PiS' control over the TVP's content, both TVP and TVN had similar programs, especially music-wise; afterward, said situation changed drastically. For as, since 2015, arguably both station's music selections began to mirror their political affiliations. Meaning, while TVN started to gradually include more

openly anti-PiS musicians, and simultaneously cut any folk or disco-polo artists from their event. TVP, on the other hand, almost fully shifted its focus towards disco-polo and modern folk music.

For instance, in 2015, TVP invited 28 various bands and musicians to perform during their concert (tvp.info.pl 2015). And while 10 out of said 28 artists, were commonly associated with rock music; the remaining 18 could be loosely described as of representing pop music. There were no disco-polo musicians present at the event (ibid.).

In 2019, on the other hand, 10 out of all 19 invited bands, were well-known disco-polo groups, including said genre's legend and one of TVP's favorite artists – Zenek Martyniuk (Waligóra 2019). Furthermore, 2 out of 10 remaining artists, were mostly known for their modern folk hits. The last 8 music groups consisted predominantly of international stars, including the German Europop duo – Modern Talking, and Italian Italo-disco/pop artist – Pupo. It is also worth mentioning, that the term Europop (or Eurodisco) is often used as an umbrella term covering all the European-made disco music, including disco-polo, Italo-disco, or French house (for example see Doehring 2016; Krettenauer 2016).

When it comes to TVN, in 2015, only 1 artist (Maciej Maleńczuk) out of all 19 invited, was well-known for his harsh critique of the ruling party (eska.pl 2015; for example see Wysocka-Schnepf 2021). The remaining 18 performers represented genres such as modern folk and pop.

In 2019, however, 5 out of all 17 invited performers were known for their dissatisfaction with PiS' ruling – including 1980's bands Perfect, Kombii, and Bajm (kultura.onet.pl 2019). Furthermore, that year TVN did not invite any folk or disco-polo musicians to their event. Presumably, because folk, as well as disco-polo, are rather negatively received among TVN's pro-PO public – mainly, due to TVP's and PiS' affection for said genres.

### **5.1.3 The Opole Festival**

Apart from the New Year's Eve concerts, both TVP and TVN organize also two more, strictly music-focused events each year – namely the Opole and Sopot music festivals.

The Opole National Festival of Polish Song (hereinafter the Festival) was first organized in 1963, by both the TVP and the Polish Radio. Since then, for over half a century, the Festival has been watched by millions of Poles – as live spectators, but mainly as TVP viewers (Korzeniewska 2021, 107). As Katarzyna Korzeniewska explains, “[during] the fifty-six instalments of this several-day-long artistic event, many hundreds of the country's most important artists have performed on the stage of the Amphitheatre in Opole and have sung

thousands of songs of various genres of pop” (ibid.). In result, in public opinion The Festival is often described as more than just an entertainment – as one of the oldest cultural institutions that “(...) has put an indelible stamp on the history of Polish popular music” (ibid.).

Before the transformation, many Polish musicians used the Festival and its televised nationwide reach to spread anti-communistic and anti-establishment messages. “In the 1960s and 1970s, the Festival was a space for the artistic work of ‘song poets’, i.e., nuanced, literary games with the censors” (ibid., 112). In the 1980s, it also became a part of the State’s ‘safety valve/outlet’ mechanism. The ‘safety outlet’ mechanism was a State’s controlled relaxation on more ‘rebellious’ music genres – mainly rock and punk. A presumably safe way to license the political resistance (ibid.). As a result, during the last decade of communism, the Festival “(...) was to some degree characterized by freedom of speech and freedom of expression” (ibid., 111).

After the fall of communism, and regardless of the political party that have had an impact on the public television – the Festival continued to be known for its rather low levels of politicization (see ibid, 118). Apart from a few hip-hop related ‘hiccups’ (censoring of profanities), the Festival’s directors have had total control over the content and choice of artists/music. Nevertheless, this changed after PiS’ TVP takeover.

As described by Korzeniewska, “[in] 2017, the dispute over the politicization of the media and the atmosphere of a political divide in the country meant that for the first time since the 1980s, a large group of over 40 artists decided to boycott the Festival” (ibid., 118). It was mainly due to three factors – the Editorial Board’s decision to pull a song from the Festival, the liberal artistic circle’s disapproval of the PiS’ government, and due to a conflict between Opole’s government and TVP (ibid.).

When it comes to the first factor, the song of the band Dr Misio was removed from the Festival due to the ‘unbroadcastable nature’ of the song’s official music video (ibid.). “The ‘unbroadcastable nature’ of the music video consisted of parodying the clergy of the Catholic Church” (ibid.). As of the remaining factors, “(a) representative of the local government, associated with the liberal milieu of the Mayor of Opole (...), protested the manner of preparation for the Festival, which according to unofficial sources, excluded the singer Kayah, who sides with the opposition” (ibid.). In consequence, the city of Opole threatened TVP that they would end their almost 60 yearlong contract, and either organize the Festival themselves or with another television – for instance, the pro-PO TVN (Cichoński 2017). In the end, however, “(...) the parties to the dispute (officially: Polish Television and the Mayor of Opole) came to an agreement and the Festival was organized with a delay of two months. [Nevertheless

that] edition of the show had the smallest TV audience in history (...)” (ibid.). Furthermore, throughout these two months of back-and-forth between TVP and the Mayor of Opole; TVP decided to organize a new festival, in case they would not reach an agreement with the local authorities. As TVP’s decision-makers argued, they did not need Opole, to organize The Opole Festival (Sztander & Janusz 2021). TVP’s new festival – The Festival of Dance Music, was organized and televised for the next three years in the city of Kielce (south of Poland), and consisted of only disco-polo music. Its short run ended in 2021, and as the Vice Mayor of Kielce Marcin Chłodnicki (SLD; Democratic Left Alliance) stated – “[the] City did not wish to prolong its contract with the TVP, due to the Kielce Festival’s bad reputation (i.e., its connotations to the PiS-led Opole Festival controversy)” (ibid.).

In 2018, The Opole Festival’s PiS-controlled Editorial Board once again tried to censor musicians’ artistic expression (Korzeniewska 2021, 118-9). “(...) [The] band, Girls on Fire, qualified for one of the Festival’s competitions with the song “Siła Kobiet” (i.e., Eng. *Women’s Power*). With lyrics that were affirmative of women and a music video containing an emancipatory message, the band won the Debuts competition (ibid.). Nevertheless, shortly after the Festival, TVP published an official statement –

[with] even more satisfaction, TVP accepts the explanations of the band, who – in a special announcement – cut themselves off from feminist ideas and the culture of death ascribed to them. (...) In addition, TVP appreciates the fact that the band removed the clip from their fan page and deprived it of its status of an official music video (TVP Statement 2018 in ibid)

Furthermore, TVP’s director of the entertainment department, one that approved Girls on Fire to perform during the Festival, got later fired by said TV station due to his pro-feminist decision (ibid.).

Year later, in 2019, the Festival begun to regain its pre-2017 popularity. Having attracted a bit over 2 million viewers, that year the Festival had a 21% in TV market share (Kurdupski 2019). Apart from its fixed segments – the *Debuts* competition, the *From Opole to Opole* (Pol. Od Opola do Opola), the *Premiers* (Pol. Premiery), and the *Alternative Stage* (Pol. Scena Alternatywna) concerts. The Festival presented also two thematic events – the *Suitcases Full of Dreams... Poet’s Journey* (Pol. Walizki moje pełne snów...czyli podróż poety), and the *Don’t Ask about Poland...#30YearsofFreedom* (Nie pytaj o Polskę, #30latwolności) concerts. And while the former concert presented classic travel-related Polish songs, mainly written by song poets such as Wojciech Młynarski and Marek Gechuta. The latter focused on music that presumably spoke either about freedom (as in the title), or that was created after Poland’s first semi-democratic elections in 1989. Interestingly enough, however, out of 42 songs presented,



only one of them – Obywatel GC’s “Don’t Ask about Poland” (Pol. Nie pytaj o Polskę) is commonly associated with people’s yearn for freedom during the communistic times. The song, written by Grzegorz Ciechowski in 1988, is often regarded as one of the more modern patriotic songs (Gochniewski 2022). “Don’t Ask about Poland” describes the author’s decision to stay in the country, despite the gray and gloomy communistic reality (ibid.). By describing Poland as “not his lover, but I sleep with Her”, Ciechowski paints a very erotic picture of the country. In the lyrics, he defends his decision to stay with Her (i.e., Poland), by singing –

*Don’t ask me, what I still see in Her/Don’t ask me, why I don’t want a different one/Don’t ask me, why I still want to/Fall asleep and wake up in Her/I meet Her at those dirty train stations/Those crowds, that silently swear/That drunk, that murmurs in his sleep/That as long as we live, She lives as well* (own translation) (Ciechowski 1988)

At the same time, however, and despite the symbolic lyrics, the song has a very disco-influenced character. As Ciechowski himself admitted, he wanted “Don’t Ask about Poland” to sound like a pretty, yet sad dance song (Ciechowski in Olszewski 2022). The rest of the songs presented in this segment, however, were mainly summer and dance hits produced after 1989. Songs, such as Sidney Polak’s “I Open Wine” (Pol. Otwieram wino), which’s lyrics speak about Polak having wine with his girlfriend, or Reni Jusis’ “Crazy” (Pol. Zakręcona) where Jusis sings about being fun and crazy. As result, TVP presented a cheerful picture of the Polish (music) history since the fall of communism. A portrayal that is relatively uncommon among the public. Until then, most music events related to post-communistic history, prompted the anti-establishment artists, especially the 1970’s and 1980’s rock musicians. For instance, since 2019 (due to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first semi-democratic elections), many Polish cities, towns, TV stations, and state institutions have organized concerts titled after the band’s Chłopcy z Placu Broni hit song from 1989 – “I Love Freedom” (Pol. Kocham Wolność; sometimes Wolność, kocham i rozumiem). The majority of said events shared relatively similar setlists, with songs originally performed by 1980’s bands such as Perfect, Dżem, Maanam, Chłopcy z Placu Broni, Tilt, or Obywatel GC (for example see rdn.pl 2022; Polsat 2019; Niepodległa 2021; Festival Group 2019; ekutno.pl 2019). Reni Jusis or Sidney Polak did not perform in any of mentioned shows.

In the end, that segment of the Festival was the least popular among the TV viewers, though it aired at the most popular time – from 8 pm until midnight (Kurdupski 2019). While it is hard to evaluate why the audience was not interested in the *Don’t Ask about Poland...#30YearsofFreedom* concert. Simultaneously, the show’s structure was highly puzzling. For as, its name suggested that one could expect to listen to mainly 1980’s music.

Songs, that have become cultural and historical artifacts, symbolizing the Solidarity and the transformation. Yet, as it was described, TVP decided to go in a completely different direction and showcased mainly modern dance hits – music, that have no ‘mythical’ value in this context. This culturally-laden dissonance was arguably caused by two reasons. On one hand, TVP as public television was pressured to mark this tremendously important historic event – thus the name of the segment. On the other, however, since 2015 both TVN and PO have been actively claiming the 1980’s Solidarity era music as a part of their discourse. Thus, to avoid any possible connections with the ‘other side’, TVP propagated music that better suited their PiS-controlled cultural character. In the end, the audience’s disinterest might have been caused either by the name, which was too closely related to the PO’s agenda; or due to unfitting (as for the occasion) music. Hence, instead of creating a show that would suit most of the public, despite their political views; TVP decided to mark their political favoritism, even if that would mean poor viewing results. Lastly, it is also worth mentioning that that was the last edition that was supposed to happen right before the 2020 elections – as explained in the second chapter, the elections were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it is also possible that PiS used the Festival and the anniversary as a foundation for Andrzej Duda’s campaign. To presumably demonstrate, that now that the PO elites have been voted out from the government, the nation can forget about the gloomy days of the transformation, and enjoy the PiS-made, dance-laden and carefree reality. And additionally, to rewrite the historic and cultural discourse surrounding the modern history.

In 2020, the Festival had once again one of the smallest audiences in its history and over half a million fewer viewers than the year before (Kurdupski 2020). Its most popular segment that year was the *Festival, Festival!!! – Opole’s Golden Hits* concert (Pol. Festiwal, Festiwal!!! – Złote Opolskie Przeboje) (ibid.). During the said concert, TVP presented the Festival’s presumably most known songs and artists. Nevertheless, just as in the previous year, out of all 39 songs given, only two came from a 1980’s band –Maanam (muzyka.interia.pl 2020). Maanam’s songs that were chosen this year (“Gray Mirages”, Pol. Szare Miraże; “Godly Buenos”, Pol. Boskie Buenos), were arguably the least political out of all the bands’ repertoire (ibid.). And although the Festival has been running for over 50 years, and it prompted numerous Polish hits. Yet, TVP’s decision to not include any politically-laden 1980’s rock songs that have been so special to Opole’s history of freedom of speech, was perplexing. As a result, one could once again argue that the channel did not want to make any music connections with the Opposition and the TVN.

Next year, in 2021, the Festival has again gained a lot of attention from anti-PiS media. Apart from criticizing TVP for poor music selections, as well as employing inexperienced hosts; some argued that that year's edition's "let's be together" (Pol. bądźmy razem) slogan sounded grotesque considering TVP's biased and polarizing agenda (Radkowski 2021). This situation was also commented on by artists performing during the Festival. For instance, on the first day of the Festival, Kamil Bednarek – a well-known reggae singer, remarked after his performance that he hoped that "(...) times when music wasn't polarizing would come back again. For as music should connect us, not divide us, right?" (Bednarek 2021 in *ibid.*). At the same time, anti-PiS ex-TVP journalist, Maciej Orłoś, argued in a Facebook post, that musicians should be ashamed of themselves for having performed for the TVP. "How can they promote with their faces, last names, personal brands, all the evilness (viewers' manipulation, pro-government propaganda, public media appropriation, fueling of societal polarization (...)) that is cultivated by the very own channel (i.e., TVP) they are working for?" (Orłoś 2021). Many Facebook users replied to his post and agreed with his statement. As one person wrote – "Like channel, like artist (i.e., an adaptation of 'like father like son' saying). Both have no honor" ([user1]).

This year's (2022) edition of the Festival is set to happen in the middle of June. Though the program of the Festival has not yet been fully announced; TVP in their promotional materials revealed this year's main theme – folk music ([festiwalopole.tvp.pl](http://festiwalopole.tvp.pl) 2022). Furthermore, some of the main stars of the Festival this year include a disco-polo musician Sławomir, folk bands Golec uOrkiestra and Zakopower, and a folk/pop Czech singer – Helena Vondráčková (*ibid.*). The 2022 edition of the Festival might be the last one before the parliamentary elections in 2023. For as, while usually said elections are organized in Autumn, PiS' politicians are mentioning the possibility of holding them already in Spring in 2023 (for example see Pytlak 2022; Poreda 2022). And while the Festival has not yet happened, and it is difficult to analyze any ideological contexts. Nevertheless, the announced acts and main motive might indicate a similar situation, to the one in 2019. When, as previously argued, the Festival was used as an ideological, propagandist foundation for Andrzej Duda's campaign.

In the end, as Korzeniewska argues, the Festival, as well as the TVP, have once again since the transformation, become tools in the State's driven propagandist discourse (2021, 119).

After 2015, the organizational restrictions which were imposed on the Festival, as an event *de facto* created by public television, became the subject of public debate. After a period in which the public media were subject to the limits mostly of the free market, after the supremacy of the concept of freedom of speech and expression, one can see the symptoms of ever-stronger political and ideological interference even into the realm of entertainment. Public television, almost 30 years after the political transformation in Poland, has again become a tool

of blatant propaganda and transmission of a clearly defined socio-cultural worldview (ibid., 122).

By exercising their power, censoring, and excluding anti-PiS artists and favoring disco-polo and folk music genres; PiS sent a clear message to the Polish society: that it is now ‘the people’s time to lead, and not the elites (‘them’). That it is the winners of transformation that should be ashamed of their anti-Polish, anti-Catholic views, and not the proud, disco-polo loving losers of transformation. And ultimately, that there’s only one choice – either you are with ‘us’ (meaning Poland), or you are with ‘them’ (meaning the elites, and the outgroups). At very last, PiS used, and continue to use, both the music and the public media as conveyors to their message, and as elements that strengthen their and their voters' social identity. As a classifiable judgment, that organizes the society based on their music and political preferences. Additionally, as a tool that helps them in rewriting the history, creating new myths, and impacting people’s common assumptions.

#### **5.1.4 The Sopot Festival**

While the Opole festival had, and still has, a huge impact on Poland’s music and its history; The Sopot International Song Festival, on the other hand, played a crucial role not only in the country but also in the entire Soviet Union. The Sopot International Song Festival (hereinafter the Sopot festival) was established in 1961 by Władysław Szpilman (Rosenberg 2012). Although at first the Sopot festival was meant to bring back the tradition of jazz festivals; shortly after, it changed its original formula, and became more universal genre-wise (ibid.). Furthermore, in the 1970s, TVP decided to transform the Sopot festival into something much bigger, meaning the Soviet Union’s version of the Eurovision – the Intervision (ibid.). As Soviet Union’s biggest and most popular song contest, the Intervision not only helped Polish, as well as international musicians, get more globally known. But also, as Steve Rosenberg explains, “[for] millions of viewers in the Soviet bloc, it was not the song contest itself that had them glued to their TV screens; it was the interval acts. Big names from the West made special guest appearances in Sopot among them, Gloria Gaynor, Petula Clarke, and Boney-M. This was a rare chance for music lovers in the East to get a taste of the West” (ibid.).

After the fall of communism, the Sopot festival lost its importance and popularity. Furthermore, in 2005, the city of Sopot unconvinced with TVP’s organizational abilities, decided to give the television rights to the TVN. Nevertheless, after just 4 years, TVN dropped the event from its programming, and the PiS-leaning Polsat became the Sopot festival’s new

organizer. In the end, and after a 3-year long break (2014-2017), TVN once again became the Sopot festival's organizer.

The Sopot festival, since 2017 and TVN's return as its main media partner, has become highly political, with many musicians and journalists openly criticizing the government during the event. In 2017, TVN announced that they would once again produce the Sopot festival in July – that is right in the middle of the Opole festival controversy (Szewczyk 2017). Thus, arguably TVN decided to bring back the Sopot festival, as a response to TVP's Opole and Kielce festivals. That year, the Sopot festival gathered half a million more viewers than the controversial Opole festival (Stapiński 2017). Furthermore, TVN invited many anti-PiS musicians to perform during their event. Out of all 30 musicians, 11 artists were known for their disapproval of PiS (including 1980's punk and rock bands Oddział Zamknięty and Kobranocka) (eska.pl 2017). In the end, TVN's PO-leaning artistic lineup was not positively received by pro-PiS public. As one user commented under a news story on the Sopot festival – “I see! A whole galaxy of POfreaks and ‘music stars’, that didn't want to perform in Opole. Such ‘big stars’” ([user2] in Szewczyk 2017). Another one replied with “But the deceitful and pro-regime TVN is not boycotted by all these ‘stars’?” ([user3], *ibid.*).

In 2018, the Sopot festival was mainly dedicated to the 1980's and 1990's music. That year, the festival also brought back its international song competition, as well as presented four special segments, all dedicated to four bands that have celebrated their anniversaries. Said bands were Lady Pank – a well-known anti-communistic 1980's band, which's songs, just like Maanam's, were often banned by the communistic censorship; 1990's pop band Blue Café, 1970's band BAJM (also known for their anti-communistic stance); and 1980's punk/satiric band Big Cyc (player.pl 2018). During the 2018 edition of the Festival the viewers could also see other popular 1980's bands, as well as 2017 Opole's censored act – Dr Misio.

At the Festival, Dr Misio and Big Cyc performed the latter band's song “Poles” (Pol. Polacy). And though the song was written in 1991, the lyrics are arguably still very relevant. Their decision to perform “Poles” at the Festival, could also be perceived as their protest against PiS' discourse, and cultural agenda. Especially, considering that in the previous year, Dr Misio's anti-clergy views were silenced by the TVP. The lyrics relate to the Polish messianism and a sort-of cultural and identitarian bipolarity of Polish society. For instance, as the bands sang,

*We the hussars and Mickiewicz/Chopin, Boniek, Cyrankiewicz/The Wawel castle and beautiful frescoes/Kowin-Mikke, Mazowiecki. (...) It is so beautiful in our country/Shipyards, steel mills, and mines/The Vistula River flows, the sun is shining/Policemen and poets (own translation) (Big Cyc 1991)*

With such comparisons between Janusz Korwin-Mikke (highly controversial far-right politician; MP) and Tadeusz Mazowiecki (last Prime Minister in the Polish People's Republic, and first in democratic Poland), or the Vistula River and shipyards, the band play with the juxtaposition of an idealized, mythical picture of the country, and the ordinary, gray, and gloomy reality. A rhetoric trick that can also be seen in PiS' representation of the modern cultural history. For example, as it was argued, instead of including more transformation- and freedom-related songs in the Opole Festival's segment on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of semi-democratic elections, TVP decided to prompt dance music. The same phenomenon was seen in Andrzej Duda's speeches, where he often paralleled the PO government with the PiS government and argued that due to the latter, the nation has it better. Thus, while PiS and TVP are covering any imperfections with the use of culture, and views such as Polish messianism; Big Cyc, and TVN (for instance, by promoting such artists) are, on the other hand, intentionally highlighting the struggles of the Polish society. A view that also suits PO's and Trzaskowski's discourse, for as argued in the next chapter, Trzaskowski portrayed his voters as the ones that are nowadays oppressed. And further, as ones that again, just as in the communistic times, must fight the regime and their propagandist, populist discourse.

Before the concert, the band was asked by journalists about their inspiration, and writing process. As the band's writers, Krzysztof Skiba and Jacek Jędrzejak, answered –

Our reality gives us [inspiration] almost every day. (...) Furthermore, I think we are also shrewd observers of the Polish reality; the reality that does not let us rest, and all the time gives us new ideas. What is also important to mention, is that we often joke around, but at the same time we do sing about very important issues. Thus, often our goofing around is just a mask that we wear, so we can talk about the most crucial societal and political issues (Skiba & Jędrzejak in tvnpl 2018)

In the end, while in 2018 TVP tried to influence the viewers' interpretation of Girls on Fire's song. TVN, on the other hand, in the same year, made sure that Big Cyc could freely explain what their songs were about, and let them criticize the societal and political situation in the country, both before and during the event. This way the channel could also be seen as strengthening the freedom of speech and artistic expression, and as an unbiased source of information – unlike the TVP. As the only reliable source of information, especially for the anti-PiS public.

Year later, in 2019, the Sopot Festival once again focused predominantly on the classic Polish hits, mainly political anthems from the 1980's (and some from 1960's and 1970's). It was due to the already mentioned 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the semi-democratic elections. TVN's music selection was very different from TVP. Instead of promoting mainly dance hits from

after 1989; TVN invited popular anti-communistic bands such as Perfect, Sztywny Pal Azji, Chłopcy z Placu Broni, and Jary Oddział Zamknięty. Songs presented that year included Perfect's "We Want to Be Ourselves" (Pol. Chcemy być sobą), Dżem's "Dream of Victoria" (Pol. Sen o Victorii), Czesław Niemen's "Strange is This World" (Pol. Dziwny jest ten świat), Kult's (which is Kazik's band) "Arahja", Obywatel GC's "Don't Ask about Poland", and Lombard's "Feel it Yourself" (Pol. Przeżyj to sam). All the mentioned songs are often described as protest songs. Their lyrics speak about freedom, fighting communism, patriotism, and historical events, such as the Berlin Wall ("Arahja"). Some of them were also banned during the communism – for instance, Lombard's song was taken down from the Radio 3's chart, and the original tape was destroyed by the censorship (Caruk & Stróżniak 2015). Furthermore, many of these songs have again become anti-establishment anthems. Yet nowadays – against PiS' government. For instance, "Arahja", written in Aesopian language (a type of allegorical/cryptic writing; used to hide political meaning under potentially unpolitical texts), originally described the differences between the West and the East Berlin. As the song goes,

*[my] house's divided by the wall/the stairs are divided by the wall/the bathroom's on the left side/the stove's on the right side (...) My street divided by the wall/the right side glows with neon lights/the left side's all pitch dark/From behind the curtain, I can see both its sides (own translation) (Staszewski et al. 1987)*

Today, however, many associate Kult's song with the current political and societal situation in the country – and especially with the PiS-led polarization. For instance, in 2017, Polish band Hey performed a cover of "Arahja" during the Przystanek Woodstock Festival (Eng. Woodstock Station; Poland's biggest and free rock open-air festival). Their emotional cover of "Arahja" went viral and got over 11 million views on YouTube (KręciołaTV 2017). Most of the comments under said video spoke about political and societal polarization in the country, and how people associated the lyrics of "Arahja" with current circumstances. For instance, as one of the users commented, "[my] house's divided by the wall... This is so fucking real again! I remember when I used to sing this song back in the 1980's. I thought these times would never come back. But hell, I was so wrong" ([user4] 2020). Another user linked the lyrics to the 2020 presidential election – "Elections 2020. I listen and cry. Though there are no official results, it still fits" ([user5] 2020). Lastly, there were also comments comparing this type of music and concerts to disco polo; "[disco polo] musician could NEVER evoke such feelings. They can get even 2 billion views, but this, this they could never do" ([user6] 2020).

Though most of the mentioned entries, used the song and its lyrics to comment on the current political situation, and to criticize the polarization; at the same time, they have arguably as well contributed to said phenomenon. For instance, [user6] compared “Arahja” to disco-polo and argued that the latter genre could never evoke similar feelings. Hence, to that user, disco-polo, out of all possible genres, was the most different from Kult and Hey. Another user replied to this comment, and claimed that “[their] empty souls do not need such emotions. All they need is a little bit of thud and a picture of a polka dot panties (i.e., title of one of the most-known disco-polo songs – “Polka dot panties”). This is the furthest their emotional imagination reach” ([user7]). To both, disco-polo was simple, blank, and inauthentic – essentially lacking any artistic value. “Arahja”, on the other hand, spoke to their identities, memories, emotions, and taste. In the end, both users (and arguably a lot of other people that liked both comments) saw “Arahja” as “our” music, and disco-polo as “their” music. As a classificatory practice that sorted people in suitable categories – “us” that value emotion-laden sounds, and “them” with “empty souls”. In consequence, TVN by positioning itself on the side of anti-communistic music, and not dance music and disco-polo, made it clear, which viewers the station wanted to attract with its show. That they wanted to speak to the fans of all the bands that have created for years politically-laden anthems, that nowadays still resonate with certain group of people. A part of society, that views their music as part of their identity, and disco-polo as a complete opposite of their views and beliefs.

In 2021<sup>6</sup> the Festival’s final day was fully dedicated to TVN24’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. TVN24, the TVN’s 24/7 news channel, has since 2015 became the opposition’s greatest ‘weapon’ against TVP’s (and especially TVP Info’s) pro-PiS propaganda (see Klimkiewicz 2021). Thus, when TVN decided to utilize the Sopot festival’s last day as a celebration of TVN24; journalists and musicians affiliated with said station used their opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction with the ruling party. To sing songs which for years were associated with the transformation and Poland’s won fight with communism, and which nowadays have gained a new, anti-PiS meaning. And as one of journalists from Onet.pl, one of Poland’s most popular news websites commented, “[this] is what distinguished the TVN’s Sopot Festival from the TVP’s Opole Festival. In Opole such songs would simply just not pass. And although the setlist of the Sopot Festival was relatively similar to many other festivals, yet no artists were ashamed of performing for TVN. For as, they had no reasons to boycott it” (Piotrowicz 2021).

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<sup>6</sup> In 2020 the Festival was not arranged due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



The majority of the speeches given that day commented on PiS' discourse and reforms. For instance, Piotr Jacoń, one of the TVN24's journalists, mentioned the ruling party's anti-LGBT+ discourse and argued that "(...) [someone] once told me – always fight for minorities' rights, because you never know, when you'll become a part of one" (tvn24.pl 2021). Another TVN24's journalist, Grzegorz Kajdanowicz, compared independent media to oxygen and argued that, just as people cannot live without oxygen, so does democracy cannot function without free and independent media (ibid.). Lastly, one of the hosts, Agnieszka Woźniak-Starak, before announcing Big Cyc's hit song "West Berlin" (Pol. Berlin Zachodni) argued that "[this] song was made in different times. Times, when we all celebrated freedom. And alright, maybe we still have it, but as we know, there are people that want to take it away from us" (Piotrowicz 2021). This way, Woźniak-Starak and the TVN also told their viewers how they should interpret the songs. They gave a new meaning to them – as anti-PiS anthems, and made it clear that their public understood the references and hints given during the Festival.

When it comes to the music selection, as mentioned, TVN24's journalists picked predominantly the 1980s rock anthems. Thus, throughout the event, the audience could listen to such hits as Tilt's "It can still be beautiful", Maanam's "Cracow's Spleen" (pol. *Krakowski Spleen*), and Obywatel G.C.'s "Don't Ask About Poland". The latter song was performed by Michał Szpak – artist and musician, who often criticize PiS for their views, and anti-LGBT+ and anti-feminist discourse (pomponik.pl 2021). For instance, in 2021 Szpak lost his job in a TVP's talent show, due to his participation in the All-Women Strike – nation-wide protests against PiS' abortion ban (ibid.). During the Festival, Szpak sang "Don't Ask About Poland" dressed in a black suit, high-heels, and a black veil. Additionally, he attached an eagle brooch to his jacket. The eagle, which looked the same as in the Poland's coat of arms, lacked its crown. Some of YouTube users commented on Szpak's outfit and interpreted it as the artist's way to show his mourning over the recent situation in Poland (Festival Group 2021). Others complemented his version of the song and commented on the TVP's Opole Festival – "[This version is] better than the original! On TVP, on the other hand, there's only disco for intellectual 'concrete'...." ([user7], 2021). This user, just as people commenting on Hey's cover of "Arahja", as well perceived disco (presumably disco-polo) as a low-value music. A genre, that would be only enjoyable to a certain group of people.

In the end, as Kayah, a well-known Polish musician and one of the artists that boycotted the Opole festival in 2017, argued in-between the songs – "This is a very meaningful setlist. All these songs share a common denominator – the desire to change the world for the better" (ibid.).

It is hard not to notice how politics and related to them media, used music to highlight and deepen the existing social, cultural, and political cleavages within the Polish nation. While the TVP, as PiS' propaganda tool, complemented the ruling party's populist, pro-'the people', discourse by favoring disco-polo, and censoring anti-PiS artists. TVN, on the other hand, as the opposition's ally, followed PO's 'anti-communism = anti-PiS' music discourse, and dedicated most of their music-related programs to the 1980s rock anthems. Furthermore, by completely excluding disco-polo from their events, they sent a clear message to their audience – that this genre belongs to PiS' and their supporters. A message, which arguably very strongly resonated with the TVN public, based on the comments posted on social media. For as it was described, TVN viewers and 1980's rock fans, saw disco-polo as the opposite of their favorite songs and artists. Additionally, they used the genre as a negatively laden description, and as one of the underlying differences between the groups. Meaning, people that enjoyed dance and disco-polo music were perceived as the ones that did not understand a higher culture, and as the part of the 'them' group. Music have thus become a classifiable judgment and a classificatory practice. That is, the genre that resonated most with the audiences' identities and emotions, classified them in the categories destined first by the political discourse, and later by the society. This split was also visible in 2019 and both channels' concerts dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the semi-democratic elections. While the public TVP, which theoretically should produce content for the whole nation and not a chosen group, showed Poland's history from a certain political viewpoint. Demonstrated that people gained freedom not with the transformation, but with PiS' reforms and agenda. And rewrote the cultural history of the country, by persuading the viewers that it is disco and dance music that really highlights Poland's democratic history, and not the anti-communistic rock music of the 1980s. TVN, which has so often described itself as the pillar of the independent media, and as the only unbiased source of information. By theoretically uncovering PiS' and TVP's ideological discourse, created a competing one that portrayed the current situation as if the communistic regime had once again taken control over the country. A polemic that followed PO's and Trzaskowski's description of the PiS' government, yet one that did not mirror the whole nation's views of the situation. For as, with their numerous pro-societal reforms, PiS has arguably introduced social support programs, that did positively impact the quality of life of certain groups in the society. Nevertheless, to TVN viewers, to quote one of the YouTube users – these people were the "intellectual concrete". For as, and also due to their musical taste, they were seen as the ones that were unable to see how the politicians divided the people and used entertainment to subject position them in two, competing groups. A split, that the TVN viewers

criticized, yet have as well contributed to. To TVP viewers, on the other hand, musicians that performed during the TVN's shows, were seen as sell-outs and as blind followers of PO. As one of the users commented, they were "POfreaks". Furthermore, they criticized their decisions to boycott the Opole Festival.

In the end and based on the comments left by social media users, music became a part of one's political and social identity. Instead of being 'just' an entertainment, left out from the political settings, it got brought in into the discourse by both the political parties and the media, and used as a dividing matter. As in, either you enjoy our view of the reality and like this type of music, or you are with 'them'. Hence, by sustaining the artificial splits made by the political discourse, music had a negative impact on the polarization.

## **6 Music and the political discourse**

In this chapter, I will describe campaign speeches performed by the two most voted and popular contenders – PiS-backed President Andrzej Duda, and Koalicja Obywatelska's (Eng. The Civic Coalition – a coalition established by the PO; hereinafter KO) candidate Rafał Trzaskowski. When examining the speeches, I will predominantly point out ways in which the candidates have been picturing and framing both the country and its nation. Furthermore, I will also investigate how their choice of language and music correlated to the discourses and social identities they have constructed in line with their politics and agenda. The overarching question for this chapter is:

RQ1: What are the usages, functions, and effects of music in the context of Polish politics at the current historical juncture?

My sample consists of four speeches – two from each candidate. I began my search by studying Duda's and Trzaskowski's official YouTube channels and acquired my material mainly from there. While there is a plethora of campaign clips on their channels, I chose to narrow down my sample to the four I have mentioned for two reasons. One, when selecting the material, I looked for performances that have been done in relatively comparable settings – meaning either from the same city or a similar type of event. By doing so, I hoped to get a clearer and more balanced picture of how Andrzej Duda and Rafał Trzaskowski respectively shaped their rhetoric and presentations in relation to broader cultural, societal, and historical contexts. And two, I wanted to find speeches that really captured the ways in which the two candidates tried to convince and persuade the voters. This way, I believe I can better understand how both candidates aimed to subject-position their supporters in "us" and "them" groups, and

intentionally emphasized and deepened existing cultural and societal cleavages within the Polish nation. In the end, while my sample is moderate, it is also important to mention, that in a textual analytical study the quantity of data does not matter as much as its quality. And, as argued, I believe that the speeches chosen the best represented each candidate's music choices and music's ideological potential.

### **6.1 The speeches**

While touring the country, both candidates focused mainly on places that were favorable to them. So, while Rafał Trzaskowski visited mostly medium to big cities, specifically in the west of Poland; Andrzej Duda met with voters from rural areas, mainly in the east and south of the country (mamprawowiedziec.pl 2020). This type of division follows the previously mentioned in this project, concept of Poland A and B. Said socio-economic and ideological spatial disparities seemed to have not only impacted on each candidate's touring pattern, but also on their speeches, election promises, and most importantly, choice of music. For as indicated in the previous chapter, PiS with the use of TVP promoted mainly folk and disco-polo music. To them then, it was important that in the areas that were most favorable to them – mainly Poland B, their candidate's speeches were accompanied by this type of music, that they strategically designated to. However, when Andrzej Duda performed in front of the crowds that were arguably more likely to watch TVN and vote on Rafał Trzaskowski, he decided to not include any music in his events. This way he would not cause any negative feelings and memories among the public. Furthermore, the use of very specific, politically-inclined music in the areas that were not pro-PiS, could rather unmask ideological properties of his texts, than make them persuasive. Trzaskowski, on the other hand, was more consistent with his music choice. Meaning, no matter whether the crowd was pro- or anti-PO, he always included same type of music – that is the anti-communistic rock anthems. Furthermore, he often described said anthems, as highly relevant in the current political settings, indicating that the PiS' government was bringing in negative changes and transforming Poland into a one-party, authoritarian state. He thus used music as a signifier to his anti-PiS message. As a sonic description of the current situation. Andrzej Duda, on the other hand, used music mainly as a part of 'the people' identity.

In the next subchapter, I will describe speeches presented in the same city (Opole) on the same day (yet during two separate events). Here, Rafał Trzaskowski complemented his discourse with numerous music elements. Andrzej Duda, on the other hand, did not make any music references. It is, as argued above, mainly due to the fact that Opole is known for their strong loyalty towards PO. Thus there, music such as folk or disco-polo would not complement

Duda's discourse in any way. Rather, judging on the comments described in the previous part, would be seen as inauthentic and blank.

I found both speeches highly relevant to this project, due to the described music festival in Opole. Considering, that the event has been so strongly impacted by PiS' cultural, propagandist discourse, it seemed rather intuitive that Andrzej Duda would make many references to the event and invite musicians to perform during his campaign performance. However, as described, he chose not to do so. I argue thus that music has gained such an important function in the discourse, as an identity-building component, and further – that it has got so strongly politicized by the parties and media. That despite the music-laden character of the city and arguably a music-centered identities of the inhabitants of Opole. Andrzej Duda preferred not to make any music 'mistakes', rather than follow the official party line. Seen from a strictly music perspective, Rafał Trzaskowski then used the place and the crowds identification in a more persuasive way. He often referenced to the Festival, mentioned the controversies, cited the lyrics, and included music in his event. And judging based on the final results, where Trzaskowski received one of the best scores among all the cities in Poland (67%) – his music-laden performance really resonated with the voters. For this reason, music could be also seen as one of the decisive elements in the discourse and in voters electoral decisions.

### **6.1.1 Speeches performed in the same, mid-size city – Opole**

#### **6.1.1.1 Rafał Trzaskowski**

In Opole, Trzaskowski presented his speech at the city's Freedom Square. Surrounded by a couple of thousands of people, he began his event with Tilt's 1989 hit song "Jeszcze będzie przepięknie" (eng. "It can still be beautiful"<sup>7</sup>) (Trzaskowski 2020a, 0:52).

"It can still be beautiful", which debuted on Radio 3's chart list on June 17, 1989, just 13 days after the country first semi-democratic elections, has since then been associated with the hope people had for new, more beautiful, and normal times to come (trojka.polskieradio.pl 2014). And while not losing its original, anti-communistic meaning, in 2020 Tilt's song seemed to have also gained a new anti-PiS 'symbolism', mainly due to Trzaskowski's use of said ballad as a campaign anthem. Furthermore, moving from 48<sup>th</sup> place on Radio 3's Polish All-Time Top<sup>8</sup> in 2019, to 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2020, the song has been again gaining popularity, and arguably

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<sup>7</sup> Title (as well as some parts of the lyrics) can't be exactly translated into English, however, it is somewhere along the lines of "someday it'll all change, and it'll be all beautiful again".

<sup>8</sup> A chart list similar to the one mentioned in the introduction of this project. In Polish All-Time Top it was also the audience that picked song's order by voting on them on the Internet. However, in contrast to Radio 3's Chart List, Polish All-Time Top aired only once a year and listed only Polish music.

‘accumulating’ also a new group of listeners - people too young to remember communism. Lastly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Tilt’s song has often been performed during the TVN’s events. The public thus, even before the election, was used to this link between said song and the anti-PiS discourse.

Right after “It can still be beautiful’s” looped chorus (“It can still be beautiful/it can still be normal”) faded, Trzaskowski entered the stage accompanied by Opole’s Mayor Arkadiusz Wiśniewski (nonpartisan; previously PO). Wiśniewski was the first one to speak. He started his speech by asking the crowd to sing the Polish national anthem, for as he explained “Opole is known for its passion for singing as a Polish capital of music” (2:45<sup>9</sup>). After the anthem, Wiśniewski mentioned that the last time he had experienced such crowds on Opole’s main square was during the “Light Chain” protests<sup>10</sup> (4:40). Furthermore, Opole’s Mayor praised Trzaskowski for his work as Mayor of Warsaw and for his understanding of “common people’s problems” (5:00). Lastly, Wiśniewski said that he hoped for a president that would be independent – “someone who would fight the system and would voice his own opinions” (6:17), and could proudly represent Poland internationally – “not like Andrzej Duda, who stood by Donald Trump’s desk like a waiter” (6:59). Wiśniewski finished his speech by claiming that he believed that Trzaskowski “wouldn’t allow Poland to leave the EU” (8:00), and that “he would care about the people, and not like Andrzej Duda, try to organize elections amid the pandemic” (8:15).

Trzaskowski began his speech by describing Opole as Poland’s symbol – “symbol of free culture; symbol of The National Festival of Polish Song” (9:09). He then asked the crowd if they remembered what “*they* wanted to do to the festival? Censoring it and moving it to different city! But *we* will never let that happen” (9:19). Afterwards, Trzaskowski described his personal relation to the Festival. As he explained, his father Andrzej Trzaskowski, used to conduct the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and has thus often performed at the Opole’s Festival. Later, Trzaskowski referenced the 1967 festival’s winning song – Czesław Niemen’s “Dziwny jest ten świat” (eng. “Strange Is This World”). As he argued, its lyrics are “exceptionally relevant nowadays” (10:18), and he thus proceeded to recite them. While he was reading out the lines:

*Strange is this world!/ where even now/ there lives such evil./ And even stranger still/ is that after all these years/ man despises fellow man./ However even so, People of goodwill are*

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<sup>9</sup> All of following YouTube citations have been shortened for easier readability.

<sup>10</sup> A so-called “Light Chain” was a Poland-wide civic protest organized “in support of the courts” and against PiS’ effort to enact three unlawful legislations concerning the National Court Register, the common courts, and the Supreme Court.

*greater,/ and I strongly believe in that./ That this world/ will never perish because of them/ NO! No! No!// The Time has now come!// High Time!// To destroy the hate within ourselves”* (own translation) (Niemen 1967),  
people joined him to shout “No! No” as in the lyrics (11:06).

Niemen, as well as his “Strange Is This World”, has a very special place in Polish music history. While on one side being widely beloved among young people due to his very ‘American’/hippie-like appearance, on the other hand, Niemen’s image and lyrics were often regarded by the communistic officials as rebellious and ‘threatening’ (as in protest-inciting) (see Mazierska 2016 in Mazierska 2016). As Mazierska explains, “Niemen was probably the first Polish male rock star who understood the importance of appearance in creating star quality. His distinctive look was the subject of public debate, being read as an aspect of his posture as a rebel” (ibid., 245). Nevertheless, at that time, he often claimed that he was not interested in politics and found it “unworthy of artistic pursuit” (ibid., 248). Furthermore, when explaining his rationale behind the lyrics of “Strange Is This World”, he said that he wrote it as a “protest song against protest songs” (ibid., 249). However, while Niemen did not want his music to be perceived as political or anti-communistic, the audience, nevertheless, treated it differently (Piskadło 2022). In the end “Strange Is This World” became a sort-of an anthem of the 1960s (polskieradio24.pl 2020), and even nowadays is performed in political scenarios. For instance, when on January 14, 2019 Gdańsk’s Mayor Paweł Adamowicz (PO) was brutally murdered on stage during a charity concert, the Warsaw University’s Library played Niemen’s song in his honor (Gawlik 2019). Additionally, “Strange Is This World” has as well often been showed during the TVN’s events. It has thus as well been politicized by PO as an anti-PiS anthem. By referencing Niemen and mentioning the Opole Festival right at the beginning of his speech, Trzaskowski thus made it sure that the public would find his speech authentic and as of representing this part of the society, that perceived this kind of music as of being of a higher artistic value. That people that listen to him, felt as if they were a part of a group that shared the same identity, and political and cultural values.

After having recited the lyrics, Trzaskowski asked his supporters if they remembered what happened in the last years and months – “when they attempted to censor the festival? when they tried to censor Radio 3? (...) Culture must remain free!” (11:33). Next, he spoke about the controversy surrounding Kazik’s song “Your Pain is Better than Mine”. As he argued “it can’t be so, that some songs are removed from the radio, because the “chairman” (pol. prezes; meaning Jarosław Kaczyński - PiS’ leader) doesn’t like it – culture must remain free! (...) Culture must provoke thinking, and *some* do not want to be provoked into thinking!” (12:40). Furthermore, he claimed that music and culture mean freedom, and “if *someone* wants

to censor it - we must be alarmed” (12:57). Lastly, Trzaskowski argued that “it can’t be so that someone’s sensitivity, taste, or pain are more important. We are all equal!” (13:22).

After the introduction, Trzaskowski proceeded to talk about his program, as well as changes that he hoped to bring into politics. He began this part of his speech by describing a conversation he has had in a small town nearby, where local fire fighters and female musicians from one of the farmer’s wives’ associations (pol. koło gospodyń wiejskich) complained to him that they have had enough of social divisions (14:12). “We have had enough!” (pol. mamy dość) shouted Trzaskowski (14:27). It is worth mentioning too that throughout his campaign “mamy dość” became also Trzaskowski’s main slogan. Furthermore, Trzaskowski continued his speech, by saying that “we have had enough of social divisions; of them splitting us based on double standards (pol. równi i równiejsi<sup>11</sup>). [Splitting us] on those, who come from small cities, and big cities, rural areas, and towns – we are all the same! We are all proud to be Polish” (14:48). Furthermore, he argued that instead of planning on building a new airport (i.e., New Central Polish Airport (CPK) – introduced by PiS, CPK would replace most airports in Poland); the government should focus on people’s everyday problems (like unemployment or strengthening the national healthcare system) (16:09). Next, Trzaskowski introduced his three main election promises – (1) introduction of local development centers, (2) 10.000 Polish złoty (ca. 2.200 USD) to every family that would like to replace their coal furnaces to solar-panels or exterior wall insulation, and lastly (3) free kindergartens and nurseries (18:15-20:00).

After having presented his election promises, Trzaskowski spoke about Andrzej Duda. Having acknowledged that Duda was soon to be presenting his own speech in Opole (which sparked a very negative reaction from the audience), he requested that his supporters faced the President and asked him questions. In response, the crowd began to chant “constitution” (20:42).

Trzaskowski’s first question was hence about the Constitution, and more precisely about PiS’ constitutional violations, their double-standards when following the law, or how they have never resolved any of their affairs (21:00-21:42). Next, Trzaskowski asked about mail-only elections (“why did the President agree to an unfair electoral process?”), and about TVP (“why is the President not reacting to TVP’s hateful language, manipulation, and pitting people against each other?”) (22:05-23:20). Lastly, Trzaskowski asked about Duda’s polarizing reforms and hypocrisy. “The President agreed to changes in the judiciary system, since as he

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<sup>11</sup> “Równi i równiejsi” – an idiom, that could be loosely translated into “double standard”. In this case, it meant dividing people into those who have only some rights, and those who have all the rights.



argued, some of the judges were ‘commies’ (Pol. komuchy). At the same time, however” as Trzaskowski argued “the President did not have problems with appointing an ex-communistic Attorney General (i.e., Stanisław Piotrowicz, PiS) as a judge in the Constitutional Court” (24:50). He also mentioned that he has had enough of name calling – as in Duda’s use of term “commies”. In the last part of his speech, Trzaskowski spoke mainly about the mining industry, climate change, the European Union, and Andrzej Duda’s unfulfilled election promises (27:57-32:30).

Trzaskowski finished his speech in a similar manner to how he started it, that is by quoting another song that has been performed in Opole’s Festival in 1967 – Wojciech Młynarski’s “W co się bawić” (eng. “What to Play”).

Młynarski, known mostly due to his songwriting skills, became first popular in the late 1960s. Extremely proficient in Aesopian language, Młynarski often hid anti-communistic, and -establishment hints in his songs and poetry (spiewajmypolske.pl 2022). For this reason, Młynarski often had problems with the state and its Central Control Office of the Press, Publications and Public Performances.

After having recited the song’s first verse,

*To give an answer to that is not that easy/ 'Cause in the end I'd like to settle something once and for all/Haven't we overfrolicked lately a little too much?* (own translation) (Młynarski 1967)

Trzaskowski left the stage, once again accompanied by Tilt’s “It can still be beautiful” (33:00-34:00).

While in Opole, Trzaskowski did not cite any songs that could be linked to the Festival after PiS’ takeover of the TVP. Furthermore, he did not include any dance and disco-polo songs. On the contrary, he almost inclusively quoted and played anti-communistic and anti-establishment music. By doing so, he followed the TVN and PO’s cultural discourse. Furthermore, by indirectly juxtaposing PiS with communistic authorities, Trzaskowski made a point that these elections were not only about choosing a new president, but rather about freedom and democracy. An argument that he has specifically highlighted in his campaign finale.

His music agenda shows also who he did not perceive as the designated audience of his speeches. For as argued, disco-polo, dance and folk music were highly popular among a certain group of the society – meaning mainly people that watch TVP. Thus, by excluding said genres Trzaskowski indirectly indicated that the fans of disco-polo and folk were the part of the ‘them’. That they were the ones that followed PiS and agreed with Andrzej Duda’s polarizing discourse.

### 6.1.1.2 Andrzej Duda

Andrzej Duda's speech in Opole, was surrounded by a controversy he has caused hours before in a nearby town – Brzeg (brzeg.pl 2020; tvn24.pl 2020). There, the President described the members of the LGBT+ community as not people but an ideology. As he argued, “*they* force us to think that they are people (meaning members of LGBT+ community) – they are not! It's just an ideology” (wiadomosci.onet.pl 2020; rp.pl 2020). Furthermore, he compared LGBT+ “ideology” to neo-bolshevism, by claiming that just as in communism children were being indoctrinated (“that was bolshevism!”), so are they also today (“but with a different ideology. This is a sort of a neo-bolshevism! (...) *They* are ‘sexualizing’ children”) (ibid.). Thus, after his arrival to Opole, all the media attention was from the beginning directed at him, speculating whether the President would explain his anti-LGBT+ views.

In Opole, Andrzej Duda was surrounded by a much smaller crowd than Trzaskowski, and not accompanied by Opole's Mayor. At the start, Duda quickly explained, that his visit to Opole was due to two reasons – (1) wanting to meet his supporters, and (2) letting them know that he had approved the city's plans for its new ER ward. In reference to the latter, as he explained, he stepped in because “it's the state's job to help local authorities, especially when they face issues they cannot fix themselves” (Duda 2020, 3:40). Furthermore, Duda continued to criticize the local government and argued that, since *they* are too inept to protect the natural environment, then *he*, as the head of state, will take the lead on this matter as well, and help them find a solution (4:20).

In the next part of his speech, Duda spoke about the elections, and asked his supporters for their participation. As he reasoned, “in a democratic country, and I want our country to have a strong and mature democracy, it is one's right and duty to vote” (5:20). Further, the President explained why he decided to stand for election 5 years before – “I had enough of all those 8 years of *their* destructive rule (i.e., their meaning PO)! It was enough of this antisocial ruling, of government that only cared for the elites” (6:26). Moreover, Duda described PO's politicians as being “insecure and with hang-ups”, and as “taking care of someone else's interests” (7:09). He, on the other hand, “wanted a different government, one that is proud and cares for its citizens” (7:23), and, as he argued, it all became real. To this his supporters scanted “thank you!”.

After having spoken about the PO, Duda began listing reforms and election promises, that he had successfully introduced in his former term. The first improvement that he mentioned was his decision to bring the pension eligibility age down, after PO's “unfair choice” to raise it (7:48). As he explained, he did it “for you (meaning the gathered crowd)! For the Polish

people!” (8:00). Furthermore, Duda argued that he followed the Constitution’s article 18 and took care of the Polish families – “Previous government’s obviously didn’t read the Constitution. They didn’t manage to introduce any of their pro-family reforms, yet they did promise to do so” (8:36). He, on the other hand, established the 500+, 300+, Mom+ (pol. mama+), and YoungParents+ (pol. młodzi rodzice+) programs, and he did it “despite the opposition’s protests, and despite their accusations that he would destroy the budget” (9:03). Duda was then given flowers from children, and after having thanked them, he argued that “children know what it means for their parents to have enough money; to have enough to survive” (9:42). Lastly, he claimed that before 2015, there were no jobs in Poland, people were underpaid, did not have a normal life, and in the end, were forced to move abroad. “But now it is different! These last 5 years have changed this situation completely – and I am extremely proud of that!” (10:06).

Next, Duda spoke about his programs for senior citizens. As he explained, “family is not only parents and their children. It is not only a woman, a man, and their kids. It is also their grandparents! They also deserve our respect, and support from the state. This is how I see a family (...), as people who are united in love” (11:11). Further, Duda listed his already introduced programs for the seniors – (1) improved pension valorization, and (2) 13<sup>th</sup> pension (i.e., seniors are given one additional pension a year). Afterwards, he mentioned that he would also like to start a new program – 14<sup>th</sup> pension, and promised, that as long as he was the President, none of his programs would be withdrawn. Lastly, he told his supporters, that all of above-mentioned reforms were funded with money, that were taken away “from the thieves... Money, that the previous government stole from us! Our money that *they* allowed to be stolen! Money that was taken from state’s 50 billion worth VAT” (13:25).

Duda continued criticizing previous governments, by claiming that they did not follow the Constitution, and that they only picked these articles from the document that suited them best. He also stated that they were the first ones to claim that PiS was violating the Constitution, when in fact, it was the opposition. As an example of PO’s lack of regard for the Constitution, Duda argued that PO did not protect the families. “Why didn’t they follow Constitutional provisions regarding parenting? Why didn’t they let parents raise their children as they wanted? Raise them in line with their personal ideologies? (...)” (15:00). Duda also argued that PO did not care about laws considering marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman, and that they did not protect Polish mothers.

In the next part of his speech, Duda spoke about “*the* ideology” – as in “LGBT+ ideology” (16:40). Yet, in contrast to his previous performance, he did not mention the term

LGBT+. Nevertheless, he made it clear to what type of ideology he was referring to – “I remember when I was in school, and they tried to indoctrinate me with communistic ideology. (...) Today I don’t want our children to be indoctrinated with any other ideology. I don’t want schoolbooks filled with ideology – an ideology that harms our children morally, that sexualizes them” (17:48). He further argued that all parents, despite their religious and moral beliefs should be respected.

Furthermore, Duda spoke about art and popular culture. As he contested, he was against the idea that the elites would impose the contents of movies, “presentations”, and theatrical plays. “What is this!? Ideologizing of everything and everyone!?” (18:50). The President also explained that, to him, the most important is patriotic upbringing, and that youth would be taught “real history” – “they should know the difference between heroes and traitors” (19:20).

Later, Andrzej Duda described his plans for Poland. “I want Poland to be work-attractive! I want young people to stay in our county – that they wouldn’t have to move to Germany or anywhere else. This is the Poland I want. Poland that is modern, Poland that has a well-developed infrastructure, Poland that attracts modern industries, Poland that is safe!” (20:15). Furthermore, he declared that he would stop people from moving abroad by making them richer. Lastly, Duda explained that he has had established local investment fund initiatives, so every local government would receive enough EU funds to improve their infrastructure, and/or cultural and sports facilities. As he argued, such funds would make every part of Poland better – especially rural areas and provinces.

In the last part of his appeal, Duda asked for his supporters help. As he explained, “those, who are competing with me, they already had their chance. They had 8 years of ruling, and they didn’t pass their exam! (...) And now we can’t give them their power back! We can’t! Their government was anti-Polish! Anti-social!” (23:13). Moreover, the President argued that his competitors would like to reverse all his reforms and bring their elites back. “They want to bring us back in time. They want to have a caste state all over again! But I do not agree with that!” (23:50).

Before walking down the stage, Duda also answered a question/poster (it is not specifically shown in the clip) on climate specific reforms from one of the attendees. As he argued – “reforms considering climate change were established in these last 5 years. Show me at least one reform that was introduced before 2015!?” (24:42). He then turned to the rest of his supporters and began listing the already established pro-environmental programs and reforms, such as YourElectricity (pol. program Twój Prąd), FreshAir (pol. program Czyste Powietrze), WePlant (pol. Sadzimy), offshore wind farms, and furnace replacements. However,

as he debated, it was also important to him that nothing would slow down other industries. For as he said – “we have to follow common-sense rules while protecting the climate” (26:00). The President ended his speech with a “long live Poland!” cheer.

During Duda’s event in Opole, there was no background music or band performing before or after the speech. Furthermore, there were no folkloric, patriotic, or religious groups accompanying Duda on or besides the stage. This lack of cultural elements, however, was, as mentioned, unsurprising. For as, whenever Duda has been visiting places that were unfavorable to him, especially cities and bigger towns, he has often been toning down these traditional, provincial accents. For instance – on Andrzej Duda’s official YouTube channel (Andrzej Duda 2022), only 35 out of all 61 posted campaign speeches, have had folkloric or traditional bands present at the event. Moreover, in 8 out of said 35 places, Andrzej Duda lost to Trzaskowski. However, all these 8 pro-Trzaskowski cities were either situated in “Poland A” or were considerably bigger than majority of towns and provinces in “Poland B”. When looking into the remaining 26 speeches (i.e., events with no cultural details) – in only 9 of these places did Duda win with Trzaskowski. These were mainly small towns and rural areas located in “Poland B”. Furthermore, in Opole, as well as in other densely populated places (for example also Wrocław and Kraków), Duda very rarely mentioned disparities between cities and provinces. On the contrary, he often commented on how nicely developed these areas were or talked about how competitive these cities were. This shows that he has been slightly adjusting his speeches when performing in front of more cosmopolitan, liberal (as in Poland A) crowds. I will further highlight this point when looking into both candidates’ campaign finales.

The only time Duda referenced the culture, was in relation to the “LGBT+ ideology” and elites, and how they were imposing their views on art. As he argued, no one should dictate what is being shown. This way Duda made it clear that, he, in opposition to PO and TVN, is against the politicization of art and history. At the same time however, he also described how the culture, art and history should be shown to the youth. This way he indicated that he is the one to promote the ‘real’ and authentic culture, one that is patriotic and truly Polish. Which would also include TVP, disco-polo and folk music. That these genres were quintessentially Polish and belong to ‘the people’. Everything that cannot be described this way – arguably also TVN and their music shows, was hence threatening to the Polish nation.

### **6.1.2 Same event – campaign finales**

Campaign finales are every candidate’s last chance to approach the public before electoral silence. And although these happen late in the evening, finales are popular among TV-viewers,

mostly because TV presenters and journalists frame them as a sort of debate/competition-like shows. Furthermore, while fighting for the audience's attention, many candidates enrich their events with music performances, or by inviting well-known public figures.

#### **6.1.2.1 Rafał Trzaskowski**

Trzaskowski held his campaign finale in Rybnik, a medium-sized city in southern Poland. Rybnik and surrounding towns and provinces were strategically important to Trzaskowski. While situated in "Poland A" and in close proximity to the rich and highly developed cities of Kraków and Katowice, throughout the elections Rybnik had slightly been leaning towards Andrzej Duda. Thus, while provinces and rural areas were dedicated to Andrzej Duda, and big cities and towns were favorable to Trzaskowski, medium-sized towns and cities tended to be divided between the two candidates. In consequence, the candidate that would manage to get just slightly more votes from these areas was basically the one to win the entire elections.

Trzaskowski's event began with a presentation of short video clips – 2 of Trzaskowski's campaign spots, and an endorsement video from Krzysztof Zalewski (a well-known rock musician) (Trzaskowski 2020b, 3:44)

Zalewski became first popular in 2002, after having won in a TV talent show, *Idol*. Since then, he has released 5 albums (including a record with covers of Czesław Niemen songs), won numerous awards (including 7 Fryderyk's – the Polish equivalent of a Grammy), and acted in several movies and series. However, apart from his artistic career, Zalewski has also become famous for his radio shows, and most importantly, for his political views. For instance, in one of his acceptance speeches at the *Fryderyki* event, Zalewski openly criticized PiS and Konfederacja by quoting a popular slang saying – "five stars, three stars and Konfederacja" (Kowalczyk 2021). This descriptive message first became 'viral' on social media during the 2020 presidential elections as "\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*" – *jebać PiS* (Eng. fuck PiS). Later on, said saying expanded to "\*\*\*\*\* \*\*\* and Konfederacja", and has even sparked a youth movement – Eight Stars Movement (Ruch Ośmiu Gwiazd). Furthermore, when it comes to Zalewski's radio show, he first hosted it on the Radio 3, and so after having been fired from said station, he moved it to a newly created Radio 357. A couple of months later, he let his Instagram followers know what he thought of Radio 3, by posting a picture of himself showing a middle finger with hashtags – "Standing behind Niedźwiedź (i.e., Marek Niedźwiecki). My country's disappearing. Middle finger is for the chairman (i.e., Jarosław Kaczyński), and not for journalists" (Pol. murem za Niedźwiedziem. Mój kraj znika. Palec nie dla dziennikarzy, tylko dla prezesa) (Dobski 2020).

Right after the video clips, Sebastian Riedel's band Cree appeared on stage and performed a cover of a well-known rock ballad "Dream of Victoria" (Pol. *Sen o Victorii*).

"Dream of Victoria", performed originally by Sebastian's father, Ryszard Riedel, and his band Dżem, was released in 1991 and instantly became a hit on Radio 3's chart list. "Dream of Victoria" spoke about freedom and hope, both on a more 'global' level, as in new times to come after the fall of communism, and on a personal level – Riedel's hope to get sober and to free himself from his drug addiction (see Skaradziński 1998). Furthermore, just as the other songs used by Trzaskowski during his campaign, "Dream of Victoria" has been very often performed during TVN's music events. And especially at the Sopot Festival – for instance during their celebration of the anniversary of the semi-democratic elections.

Right after the song, Trzaskowski's wife Małgorzata gave a small speech, addressing mainly Polish women. Referring mainly to PiS' abortion ban reform, she argued that "Polish women shouldn't let anyone decide for them" (14:27), and later encouraged them to vote for her husband.

In the first part of his speech, Trzaskowski spoke about all the hardships and difficulties that he, as well as rest of Poland, had to face both before the elections, as well as during the last 5 years of PiS' and Andrzej Duda's ruling. As he explained, "*they* were constantly attacking and dividing us. *They* were attacking everyone – Silesians, teachers, doctors, inhabitants of big cities, as well as parents of children with disabilities" (17:25). He then argued that the only person in Poland, that had not been 'attacked' by PiS' was their chairman Jarosław Kaczyński. Further, Trzaskowski used his slogan "we have had enough" and promised that once he would win the elections, there would not be any more social divisions, nor attacks on the society – "we have had enough of hatred!" (18:14).

Next, Trzaskowski spoke about all things and virtues that were 'lost' due to PiS' reforms and changes. "Years ago, we didn't fear for our judicial system; we didn't have to worry that women would lose their rights or teachers their dignity; (...) we didn't think that media would lose their independence! Yet, it all changed with Andrzej Duda's and PiS' five-year rule! They reminded us how important all these things were!" (19:45). Furthermore, Trzaskowski argued that Andrzej Duda tried to impose on the society a picture of a perfect family and an ideal patriot. And as he further concluded – "this is exactly what these elections are about! These elections show that we can lose things, things that we normally do not have to worry about! Things that grant us freedom! Things like independent courts and media!" (21:30).

Furthermore, Trzaskowski spoke about communism. He recalled how gray and sad the country used to be in the late 1980s, and how much has changed with the transformation. “Suddenly we believed that everything could be different in Poland. (...) [We] believed that we could be the greatest country in Europe! (...) If someone would have told us back then, that we would join the EU and NATO, that there would be great possibilities for our children and grandchildren in the country – we probably wouldn’t have believed in all that!” (24:30). However, as he argued, in its five-year rule, PiS has been constantly bringing Poland back to its pre-transformation state. “Once again, we have to face people that want to divide us; people who believe in double standards; people who want to teach us how to think or what patriotism is; people that search for a ‘hidden/camouflaged German fraction’<sup>12</sup>; people that ban in vitro; that attack us and destroy our educational system” (24:52). Thus, as he debated, these elections were not only about electing a president; they were about freedom and democracy, about positive or negative changes.

Later on, Trzaskowski argued that while *some people* were still stuck in “mental trenches”, Poland, on the other hand, should once again focus on its development, and on rebuilding human connections. He also claimed that in opposition to Andrzej Duda, he would be an independent and fair president; one that would not be controlled by Jarosław Kaczyński. Further, Trzaskowski spoke about TVP, and described it as a “propagandist road roller”. And, as he argued, “on one side there’s propaganda, there’s prime minister, PiS’ politicians, the President... But *we*, we are on the other side, the side of civil society!” (32:00). Moreover, Trzaskowski claimed that as a future president, he would work for the nation, and not for Jarosław Kaczyński, and that he would stand behind the people and would stop social divisions. “If *they* continue to attack inhabitants of big cities, small cities, Silesians – just know, that I will always protect you from government’s attacks and insults!” (36:00). Lastly, Trzaskowski mentioned how ashamed he was when he had to explain his children what was happening in Poland. “I had to explain myself for Poland! For the President! Shame on you!” (38:00).

In the end, Trzaskowski encouraged his supporters to participate in elections. For as he explained, there was a chance that they would wake up in a better Poland. “Poland that is European, open, tolerant; Poland that respects traditions, where people are not divided. And lastly... in Poland, where no one shouts at you” (39:00).

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<sup>12</sup> Pol. Ukryta/zakamuflowana opcja niemiecka – way in which Jarosław Kaczyński described Upper Silesians. Due to historical events, Upper Silesians, as the largest minority group in Poland, consist nowadays of people who declared themselves to be of Silesian, Polish, and/or German nationality.



Right after Trzaskowski's speech, Tomasz Lipiński from Tilt entered the stage and performed "It can still be beautiful". Afterwards, Lipiński thanked Trzaskowski's supporters, and promised, that "it will all be beautiful again, and it will all be normal again" (44:27).

Following Lipiński's performance, Zbigniew Hołdys' endorsement video was shown on a screen. Hołdys, mostly known from the 1980s band Perfect, performed one of the band's best-known songs, "We want to be ourselves" (Pol. *Chcemy być sobą*).

"We want to be ourselves" was written and composed by Hołdys himself. Released in 1981 and debuting on Radio 3's chart list in 1982; "We want to be ourselves" quickly became a major anti-communistic and anti-establishment hit in Poland. Partially written in Aesopian language too; Perfect's song is known for its also different title and chorus – "we want to fight ZOMO" (Pol. *chcemy bić ZOMO*; ZOMO - communistic paramilitary-police) (e-legnickie.pl 2019). Similarly, as Tilt's song, "We want to be ourselves" has also gained an anti-PiS symbolism – mostly due to Hołdys' political activism, as well as band's frequent participation in numerous TVN-organized concerts. Furthermore, it is also hard not to notice how Trzaskowski used similar descriptions in his speeches, as the one's in the song's lyrics. For instance, in the first verse of the song, Hołdys sang –

*As every single day, early in the morning/I eat my bread with butter, and take a sip of my coffee/There's a stain on my newspaper, no one can tell me how I should live my life/I throw the glass against the wall, and I want to leave/Scared caretaker stands right next to the entry/He won't even greet me, he holds a broomstick in his hand/I grab him by his gray tracksuit/And scream right at his scared face/I want to be myself!* (own translation) (Hołdys 1981)

Trzaskowski in his speech often mentioned the gray communistic reality. He as well noticed how people were scared of losing their freedom and democratic rights. He thus used the songs not only as a sonic signifier, a description of the current reality. But also created his speeches as if they were anti-communistic (and anti-PiS) rock anthems as well. This way he could make them more relatable for the audience. Furthermore, due to the years-long politicization of said music through TVN, he knew that his speeches, filled with music references, would really speak to his voters identities and group-identification. That the audience would immediately 'catch' his hints and feel as if they spoke the same language. And further, that they were united not only in their political views, but also by in the same experiences, emotions, cultural and music tastes. Music has thus completed his discourse, so as the policy-based issues would not be the most important, but rather the feeling of belonging. As of representing a unanimous majority. In the end, music, by creating social and group identities, made Trzaskowski's speeches highly persuasive.

### 6.1.2.2 Andrzej Duda

Andrzej Duda held his campaign finale in Zamość – a medium-sized southeastern City, situated close to the Ukrainian border. Furthermore, Zamość, has been for years strongly dedicated to PiS and Andrzej Duda.

Before the President entered the stage, a group of scouts accompanied by traditionally dressed women (probably from a local farmer wives' association) performed Polish traditional, religious, and folk songs (HBC Network 2020, 4:10). For instance, one of the compositions performed was TerazMy's song titled "Hulanka" (it's a dialect word for "loud party"). TerazMy is a rather unknown, modern folk band coming from a relatively closely situated town of Sanok. Their song, written entirely in the Sanok dialect, speaks about having fun, dancing, and drinking alcohol. With its light and lively sounds – "Hulanka" is a traditional, festive song. It thus fitted TVP's and PiS' dance, light, disco-laden cultural discourse, while at the same time pictured the local character of Zamość – mainly due to the lyrics written in the dialect from the same area. As already explained, having this sort of band sing at his campaign events, especially in areas favorable to him, was typical for Andrzej Duda. Seeing that he has been mainly reaching rural and provincial areas, arguably Duda wanted, with the help of local musicians, to highlight the traditional and religious character of said places, and his speeches. Lastly, by surrounding himself with these very folkloristic cultural artefacts, Duda presented himself as one of 'the people', rather than a representative of the elites or big city 'folks'.

Shortly after said music performance, Duda entered the stage accompanied by Piotr Duda – leader of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity".

Solidarity known predominantly for its first leader Lech Wałęsa, was founded in Gdańsk's Lenin Shipyard in 1980. As a first independent trade union in communistic Poland, Solidarity went down in history as an anti-authoritarian movement that almost single-handedly brought communism down in Poland (Riches & Palmowski 2021). Nowadays, Solidarity has no longer such a strong political role in Poland, yet it still remains active as a trades' union organization (ibid.).

Piotr Duda was the first one to speak. As he explained, Solidarity has been constantly accompanying Andrzej Duda in the last five years, and helped him change Poland, and especially "workers' Poland" (41:41). Furthermore, Piotr Duda argued that before Andrzej Duda's presidency, Solidarity has been constantly fighting with PO's government. "However, it all changed in 2015. Since then, Andrzej Duda has been our partner, our ally. He is a good man; a man who understood and continues to understand Polish workers" (42:42). Moreover, Solidarity's leader complimented the President for his honesty and hard work. Later, he argued

that while Andrzej Duda brought the retiring age down, this issue has been once again pressing due to Rafał Trzaskowski's lies. "He says that he wouldn't raise the retiring age, yet we all know that he was in both Donald Tusk's (PO) and Ewa Kopacz's (PO) governments, and we all know what he did and how he voted" (44:24). Piotr Duda continued to criticize Trzaskowski, by claiming that he wanted to annoy Polish people as an "unrepentant liberal" (45:11). "He wanted Polish people to work until their deaths!" (45:20).

In the next part of his speech, Solidarity's leader listed all reforms he and Andrzej Duda managed to introduce – low retiring age, better paid hourly rate and minimum wage, social funds, and trades' union pluralism. Furthermore, Piotr Duda compared Trzaskowski to the former President Bronisław Komorowski (PO), and argued that although Trzaskowski described himself as independent, he would nevertheless sign any reform that PO would ask him to – "just as Komorowski did" (48:26). Lastly, Piotr Duda asked all of Solidarity's members, and all of Poland's worker to participate in the elections. "You should vote this Sunday on a good president – on Andrzej Duda!" (48:54).

In the end, Piotr Duda mentioned that Andrzej Duda signed Solidarity's project that established non-trading Sundays. "Finally, instead of toiling on Sundays, mothers can stay with their children at home!" (49:10). Duda finished off his speech by describing Andrzej Duda as his friend, and once again complimented him on his hard work and for being a wonderful person (52:40).

At the beginning of his speech, Andrzej Duda thanked Piotr Duda and Solidarity for their support and years of cooperation. Further, he thanked his supporters for their commitment and trust. "Thank you for all the support! Support that is coming from Solidarity, from working people, people who toil everyday – often physically, hard-handed people. These are the people I respect – they are the salt of the earth. And if one deals with politics, one does it for them!" (55:07). Further, Duda mentioned Poland's previous President – Lech Kaczyński (PiS), who died tragically in a plane accident near Smolensk. As he explained, "I think my President, Professor Lech Kaczyński, who was also a member of Solidarity, would've been proud of me today. And proud of my cooperation with Solidarity" (55:26). Duda also explained that throughout his time as a President of Poland, he has been constantly looking up to and following Lech Kaczyński's legacy and footsteps.

Next, Andrzej Duda recalled some of meetings he has had with his supporters while on a campaign tour. "I talked to a father that thanked me for my reforms. As he explained, thanks to my policies he had enough money to provide for his family and send his daughter off to a medical university" (56:42). As the President argued, most of families would not have been

able to afford this kind of expanses before PiS' ruling. Further, he remembered a lady he met, that told him about her daughters. As she explained, thanks to his reforms, they could relocate back to Poland, after years spent abroad (57:06). Lastly, he recollected how touched he were, when he saw a young mother with two of her sons, waving Polish flags at Duda's campaign bus. "There were no houses around, just empty fields. And then I saw it – a tiny roadside chapel! And by that chapel stood a woman – a young girl. She stood there with two of her sons. (...) They came there especially for me! That was extraordinary! Dear lady, thank you so much!" (59:11). Such descriptions in Duda's speeches, made his texts seem as if they were sentimental, religious folk songs. Especially, with motives such as a tiny roadside chapel in the middle of nowhere, or a loving mother holding her children. For as, there are plenty of disco-polo songs mentioning small chapels. For instance, one of the most-known disco-polo bands, Bayer Full, have a song titled "Tiny Chapel" (Pol. Kapliczka) with lyrics very similar to Duda's story. As the first verse goes,

*On the hill, where the chapel is/In the woods, right next to it, used to also be a house/I saw you once in my dream/Oh so beautiful our country was* (own translation) (Bayer Full 1992).

Another disco-polo song, written by a band Chanel and titled "Tiny Chapel" as well, described a small roadside chapel, hidden behind woods (Chanel 1993). Thus, by using such music-related descriptions, Duda amplified and naturalized his discourse. And brought to light certain images of Poland and its society. A picture of a pure, almost utopian-like country, freed from any struggles and problems, that were so often highlighted by his opponent.

In the next part of his speech, Andrzej Duda motivated his supporters to participate in the elections. "Don't listen to liars that tell you that you don't have to vote in the second round!<sup>13</sup> They try to push us off the path that Poland has been on for the last few years! Path of development; of support for families; of seeing other people's struggles; of respect for core values! (...)" (1:00:34). Furthermore, just as in previously mentioned speeches, Duda talked about "family- and identity-harming ideologies" (1:00:43). Lastly, the President described his plans for Poland – "I want there to be a place for everyone in Poland! That there was work for everyone! I want everyone to pursue their ambitions – just as they wish!" (1:01:14). He also argued that with five more years of his presidency, he would continue to change Poland. "In five years, Poland could be equally developed! (...) It could have an improved judiciary system – a system, that people would trust in! With judges that are respected! Poland could have elites

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<sup>13</sup> The President is referring here to some memes and fake/humoristic articles that were circulating before the second round, telling Andrzej Duda's supporters that they do not have to vote again (wprost.pl 2020).

that are respected, that are approved by the society!” (1:02:12). In the end, Duda contended that if he would win, then the law would be equal for all. He also claimed that instead of cynicism and lies, people would choose honesty. “The Polish state would protect the weaker and the inferior! They wouldn’t have to fear the stronger! This is the Poland I want!” (1:02:40).

In the end, the President argued that people were frustrated with the previous governments. “People were working for many years, and while they could see others getting richer, they were nevertheless not included in the ‘goods’ distribution. Because said ‘goods’ were given only to a small group of people” (1:03:10).

Andrzej Duda finished off his speech by arguing that if he did not win, Poland would once again face pro-elitist politics. While thanking people for their support, the President explained that everything he has done so far, he did it for future generations. He also mentioned how thankful he was to large families – “Thank you for performing such a patriotic deed!” (1:08:00). In the end, he explained that Poland is established on two pillars – patriotic values and modernity (1:09:05). “We don’t need politics that is concerned with divisions and reform-blocking; politics that want to overthrow the government! We need politics of cooperation, of development, and of pro-Polish reforms” (1:09:55).

Right after Duda’s speech, Ewa Maziarz, a local church singer and organist, appeared on stage and performed Leonard Cohen’s well-known ballad “Hallelujah” (Telewizja Zamość zamosc.tv 2020, 1:55:18).

Cohen’s Polish-translated “Hallelujah” became an anthem at the end of Duda’s campaign. It was mainly due to his supporters’ changed lyrics – instead of singing “hallelujah” during song’s chorus, people were often singing “Andrzej Duda” (for example, see 1:58:23).

Arguably, despite its more modern character (when for instance compared with traditional Polish songs); “Hallelujah” suited well Andrzej Duda’s image. While often portraying himself as a “man of the people”, a leader that cares for families, traditions, and core Polish values (including Catholicism), “Hallelujah” with its religious accents, complemented Duda’s discourse rather perfectly. Furthermore, this connection between the word “hallelujah”, which in religious settings is used as an expression of praise and worship to God, and Duda’s name, also demonstrates how he was perceived by his supporters. How in this musically-laden process of deification he was compared to God, and seen not only as the President, but rather as a savior or defender of the weaker. Videos capturing people singing “Andrzej Duda” instead of “Hallelujah” became viral on YouTube during the elections. With clickbait titles such as “The President had tears in his eyes! In Skoczowo people sang for Duda a famous hit “Hallelujah” (natemat.pl 2020), said clips combined gathered over million views. Nevertheless,

majority of the comments underneath said videos criticized the changed lyrics. As one of the users argued – “This used to be a beautiful song, and now they used it as a part of their propaganda!” ([user8] 2020). Another person joked from the video’s title and commented – “I also cried...from laughter” ([user9] 2020). There were also people arguing that “Hallelujah”- Andrzej Duda demonstrated how the country and people’s mentality really is. As one user wrote – “Pfff like country, like ‘Hallelujah’” ([user10] 2020). There were only few comments that perceived Andrzej Duda-praising lyrics positively – “This really touched me. (...) I’m so glad we have such a wonderful president. And not one that comes from Berlin, but from Cracow! Only Andrzej Duda! We love you Mr. President!” ([user11] 2020). For this person, the song also pictured Andrzej Duda’s pro-Polish, anti-West image. It captured his reforms and brought his discourse into light.

### **6.1.3 The “Us” and the “Them”**

One of the ever-repeating themes in both candidates speeches, were numerous “us” and “them” comparisons. A discursive feature that is not only integral to populist communication, but also acts as an affective social identification in the “Us versus Them” polarization (see Reinemann et al. 2017; McCoy et al. 2018).

Trzaskowski in his speeches, focused predominantly on drawing parallels between current socio-political and cultural situation in Poland, and that of the communistic times. A juxtaposition which he especially highlighted with carefully selected music. In Opole he recited Czesław Niemien’s and Wojciech Młynarski’s songs, for as he argued both lyrics “were still very relevant nowadays”. By using such time- and history-specific music examples, Trzaskowski argued that PiS was bringing the country back to its “gray and sad” communistic history. Furthermore, he often spoke about the positive changes that were brought with the new system. By mainly describing emotions that accompanied said change – “people began to smile, to have hopes”, he painted a very black and white picture of the Polish transformation. A rhetoric that would especially suit his voters, considering that he has predominantly visited places inhabited by the winners of transformation. However, while with a use of such hegemonic descriptions – winners/losers, Trzaskowski’s supporters could be seen as of being in a powerful majority; he quite smartly inverted this polemic by highlighting how authoritarian, and regime-like PiS’ government was. This could be for instance seen in his choice of words. When talking about controversies surrounding Radio 3, Kazik’s song, or Opole Festival – he often used the word ‘censorship’. A term, which when mentioned in cultural context, reminds one of Communist Poland’s Main Office of Control of Press,

Publications and Performances and of the songs he used. Furthermore, when talking about TVP, Trzaskowski regularly described it as propagandist and pro-PiS. He argued also that PiS' government not only controlled the media, but also restricted "our" freedom and independence – just as an oppressive regime would do. In the end, with affect-laden arguments such as "*they* are attacking *us*" and "*they* are dividing *us*", he subject-positions his supporters in a 'struggle based' group. A side of the "civil society" that cared for freedom, women's rights, and media and courts' independence, and now had all these things taken away from them by people, who were stuck in "mental trenches" (i.e., the losers of transformation). Thus, despite their often more fortunate economic position, "us", meaning predominantly winners of transformation, in Trzaskowski's communication were the real 'victims' of PiS' ruling.

When it comes to "them" in Trzaskowski's discourse, he referred predominantly to PiS' politicians and their supporters. Furthermore, as argued above, it could be also seen as a way of describing losers of transformation, or more specifically – people that could be perceived as homo sovieticus. It is mainly due to Trzaskowski's expressions such as "being stuck in mental trenches", or "not wanting to be provoked into thinking". As Aleksandra Leyk explained, modern homo sovieticus are people who did not adjust to the new system, and who due to their disadvantageous position in these new, neocapitalistic times, have high demands towards the state (see 2016). Thus, in this simplified view of the Polish society – losers of transformations are not only the ones that live off the winners, but also the ones to deliberately bring Poland back to its pre-transformational years.

And while Trzaskowski numerously highlighted that he opposed social divisions and PiS-driven polarization, nevertheless, he as well contributed to said phenomenon. For as, by modeling the society in this one-dimensional perspective – 'oppressed' winners, and 'oppressive' losers; he moved people's focus away from policy- to affective-based differences (see McCoy et al., 2018). This was especially evident during his event in Rybnik. Throughout his entire speech, Trzaskowski not even once mentioned any of his election promises. On the contrary, he gave all possible arguments for why "they" posed a major threat to "us". He did it predominantly by using emotion-evoking terms, such as – *we believed*, *we hoped*, or *they attacked*, *they destroyed* etc. And by complementing his speeches with descriptions that seemed to be taken straight from the anti-communistic songs that he have been citing and using throughout his events.

When it comes to Andrzej Duda, one could argue that he had two different types of "us" in his speeches – "us" meaning him and the PiS' government, and "us" as in "the people". When it comes to the first group, he often referred to it with a use of verbs and pronouns in

their plural forms. For instance, while in Opole, he often made statements like “we can’t give them their power back” (meaning PiS cannot let PO regain its power), and “we have to follow common-sense rules while protecting the climate” (again – “we” meaning the government). This way Duda straightforwardly highlighted who has power both in and behind the discourse. By using these ‘softer’ labels for establishment, he made it seem as if the government was acting in “the people’s” will. As if their laws and reforms were mirroring what the nation wanted, and not the vice versa.

In “us” meaning “the people”, on the other hand, it is quite difficult to give a detailed description of the group he was referring to. It is because Duda often used this label as an “empty signifier” to unite various specific social groups under just one common term (see Laclau 2005; Mény & Surel 2002 in Reinemann et al. 2017, 16). As described in the theory, this vagueness of in his communication is quite common for populists (see Reinemann et al 2017, 16). By appealing to such an unspecified group of people – Duda made it seem as if he was speaking to the whole nation. Furthermore, by bringing in terms such as “family”, “wives and husbands”, “mothers and fathers”, “grandparents”, or “hard-working people”; Duda positions his supporters under these affectively charged positive labels. This way he made them feel as if they belonged to a community; a majority that was linked with similar values and views (ibid., 19). In the end, he created a shared social identity of a proud patriot – a ‘real’, Catholic Pole, that was unaffected by “elitists ideologies” such as the “LGBT+ ideology”.

In Andrzej Duda’s speeches “them” referred mainly to the notion of “elites.” This is a group that included PO’s politicians, their supporters, rich people, inhabitants of big cities, intellectuals, judges, local governments, and the West (mainly Germany). Thus, in this context one could argue that “them” described predominantly Poland A, and more precisely – winners of transformation. Furthermore, by describing elites as anti-Polish and anti-social, Duda argued that “they” were a threat to “the people”. Additionally, Duda often contended that his duty as the President is to protect “the people” from the elites. In result, by describing elites with affective, negatively-laden terms such as “thieves” and “commies”; he not only as well contributed to the “us versus them” polarization, but also via workings of social comparisons, used “them” to amplify “the people’s” social identities (see Reinemann et al. 2017, 20; Bourdieu 1984). Meaning, apart from characterizing “the people” with only positive values, he also indicated who they were not – anti-social, anti-Polish, communists, thieves etc. It is thus this constant comparison between “us” and “them” in Duda’s speeches, that helps one better understand who he meant as “the people”. In result, as McCoy et al. described it – Duda created “a dominant cleavage around which other cleavages [aligned]” (ibid., 18).



#### 6.1.4 Populism

Apart from references to “the people”, and attacks on “elites”; Andrzej Duda used one more populist element in his speeches, namely exclusion of out-groups (see Reinemann et al. 2017). For this reason, Duda arguably represented Reinemann et al.’s fourth type of populism – *complete populism* (ibid.).

Exclusion of out-groups is not a novelty in PiS’ political discourse. For instance, in both the parliamentary and the presidential elections in 2015, PiS deliberately portrayed refugees and non-EU immigrants as a threat to Polish people’s wellbeing (see Cap 2017). And while the party described itself as a sort-of messiah, that would keep the country and its people safe from the Others (Yermakova 2021, 5). Simultaneously, they presented PO as of being incompetent, and West/EU-dependent (see Cap 2017; Yermakova 2021). Later on, between 2016-2019, “radical feminists” (meaning mainly women that did not agree with PiS’ abortion-banning reform) became a new out-group in PiS’ discourse (see Gwiazda 2020). For as, with their pro-Western, and -“Gender” agenda; said “radical feminists” posed a major threat to two most crucial Polish values – Catholicism, and motherhood (see ibid.). Thus, once again PiS swore to protect the nation (meaning mainly Polish families) from threatening pro-Western outgroups. Furthermore, apart from ‘saving’ the nation from refugees and “radical feminists”, PiS has also successfully repelled attacks from other West-corrupted outgroups, such as vegetarians, cyclists, climate activists, and ‘coal-hating’ Czechs (see Żuk & Żuk 2022; Riedel 2020; Król & Pustułka 2018; Bill 2022; Davies 2016; Easton 2016).

In 2020, in his campaign speeches, Andrzej Duda introduced yet another outgroup – “the LGBT+ ideology”. As he explained, said ideology – “not people”, was “indoctrinating and sexualizing Polish children”. He, on the other hand, through the Constitution and his programs – swore to protect Polish families and their children. For as, “it is due to parents how they want to raise their children”. And although very vaguely described by Duda, arguably the LGBT+ community was as threatening as the rest of mentioned out-groups – mainly due to their PiS-asserted pro-Western, -European, and -elitist character. In the end, Duda used all the out-groups to not only highlight his image as the defender of the weaker – a messiah that was praised with songs such as “Hallelujah”. But also used them to fragment the “them”. To make it seem as if they were not a united group – a suitable counterweight to ‘the people’. But rather a gathering of smaller minorities that had as a goal to destroy the dream-like, pure, and safe reality created by the PiS. To show that him, together with PiS and ‘the people’ are strong enough to defend the country and save Polish children from all these threatening groups.

### 6.1.5 Music in Rafal Trzaskowski's campaign

Trzaskowski by opening and closing each of his events with his campaign anthem – Tilt's "It can still be beautiful"; used music as a medium and a manifestation of his political values and views. Or more specifically, as a sort of a prolongation of his second (right after "we have had enough") most used slogan – "positive change". For as already described, "It can still be beautiful" aired for the first time just days after the first democratic elections in 1989. Since then, the song has arguably gained a higher-level/mythical meaning linked to the transformation, and people's yearning for freedom and democracy. Thus, as a 'sonic' signifier, "It can still be beautiful" not only set the stage for Trzaskowski, but also complemented his affectively laden discourse with its sound, lyrics, and connotive meaning. It's ideological potential could be seen in people's comments on YouTube and Facebook. For example, as one of the Facebook users commented during Tilt's song– "Wonderful campaign! Let's not waste what the Solidarity gave us! Vote for Rafal!" ([user13] 2020). Another user replied with – "(...) I wept with emotion. Just as I did back in 1989. Beautiful! I'm starting to have a hope, again! IT IS NOW OR NEVER!" ([user14] 2020).

Furthermore, as it was described in the second chapter, in the late 1980s rock and punk music played quite an important role in the creation of pro-democratic social identities (for example see Garczewska & Garczewski 2014). By spreading anti-establishment views through Aesopian language-written lyrics, these politically charged 'hymns' often motivated people to stand up to the regime. Thus, by playing well-known songs performed by bands such as Dżem or Perfect; Trzaskowski prompted his supporters to not only stand by him, but most importantly, to participate in the elections. This is especially crucial, considering that in the last couple of years, many of the potential PO voters – meaning young and middle-aged, highly educated people, were rather hesitantly joining the elections (Szymczak 2020). Their lack of interest, and arguably quite individualistic stance, could be linked to Morawski's and Ratajczak's theories on liberal individualism (see 2014; 2017). As they argued, social transformation impacted losers and winners of transformation quite differently. While the first group, dissatisfied and lost in the new system, continued to hold tight to communism-enforced collectivism. The latter, on the other hand, easily adapted to post-transitional "I"-centered neocapitalism (see Morawski 2014; Ratajczak 2017; Leyk 2016). Hence, Trzaskowski by arguing, that the elections were about more important issues than 'just' electing a new president – such as freedom, democracy, and positive change. Showed his supporters, that they have once again found themselves in a situation, where they had to be united. In consequence, he used music to first 'resurrect' an anti-communistic identity, and so to rebuild it so it would

better suit current PiS-dominated social reality. For instance, as one of Facebook users commented by paraphrasing Dżem's song – "Oh Victoria, my Victoria! Let's make our dream of independent Poland come true! [This is all] so beautiful, patriotic, moving! (...) *whole Poland* [italics added] should vote for Rafał!" ([user15] 2020). Such calls for countermobilization were very common during music breaks.

Lastly, Trzaskowski used music as a tool in uncovering PiS' ideological power in and behind discourse. For instance, while in Opole, Trzaskowski mentioned how PiS removed Kazik's song from Radio 3's Chart list, and in result "censored" Radio 3. And as he argued by citing song's lyrics – "it can't be so that someone's sensitivity, taste, or *pain are more important* [italics added]. We are all equal!". For as mentioned in the introduction, Kazik's song "Your Pain is Better than Mine", described Jarosław Kaczyński's visit to his mothers' grave, and the graves of victims of the Smolensk air disaster, while all the cemeteries in Poland were close due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Thus, as Kazik sung in his song –

*Cemeteries closed as a result of the recent events/Of recent weeks, of recent events/I look at the chains, I wipe away my tears/Just like you, just like you/The gate opens, I can't believe my eyes/Perhaps things have changed after all/I run over, your heavies shout "stop!" /because your pain is better than mine* (own translation) (Staszewski 2020)

Although the artist did not mention Kaczyński by name, nevertheless the allusion was clear.

The song, seen as a protest song to both COVID-19 restrictions, and PiS' hypocrisy and quickly became a huge hit in Poland. And, in result, right after its official release reached the top of Radio 3's chart list. Nevertheless, shortly after the show, the song got first moved to the fourth place, and later the whole program got cancelled by the radio (Easton 2020).

During that time, PiS engineered two competing discourses to shift public's focus from the censorship. One – that it was Marek Niedźwiecki (host of the chart list) that manipulated the list (for example see Brudziński 2020). Here they also argued that Niedźwiecki was an ex-communist (Kowalski 2020), and that he purposely manipulated listeners (Karnkowski 2021) – presumably in an act of a 'communist-led conspiracy' (Kościńska 2020). And two – as argued mainly by the Prime Minister,

This whole situation has nothing to do with this song. It is just a "red herring"; a part of a journalistic manipulation. What in my opinion is crucial in this situation, is the fact how the Polish State, its representatives (regardless of their political affiliation), and finally, all of us – as a Community, relate to the breakthrough events in Polish history. And just as it would be incomprehensible if tomorrow we did not celebrate the 100th birthday of John Paul II, it is equally incomprehensible to me that we would question the importance of the anniversary of the Smolensk Catastrophe (Morawiecki 2020)

Meaning – Jarosław Kaczyński, as a representative of the State, visited Warsaw’s cemetery in the name of the Polish people. Thus, it is wrong of Kazik to comment on this situation, and it is wrong of the media to make a thing out of this situation.

In result, Trzaskowski by mentioning this controversy, proved to his supporters that PiS tried to ideologically shift the discourse, and reinforce inequalities. And while doing so, they claimed that they did it for ‘the people’ and in line with their collective will.

#### **6.1.6 Music in Andrzej Duda’s campaign**

Andrzej Duda used music predominantly as a part of his populist agenda to subject position his voters. For as previously mentioned, music was not a set element during his events. It’s presence seemed to be mainly connected to size and location of a visited place. For instance, in Zamość Duda not only had a farmers’ wives association, and a group of scouts perform right before him, but he also closed his event with Cohen’s “Hallelujah” sung by a local church singer. In Opole, on the other hand, he did not include any music-related elements. It is due to the fact that, the crowd in Opole social identity-wise is more likely to be associated with the winners of transformation, rather than the loser. Thus, this whole music-driven picture of an ‘underdog uprising’, would be in a best scenario just ‘lost in translation’ among them. And furthermore, in a worst scenario, perceived as a rather negative message; as a passive-aggressive reminder of their presumably ‘elitist’, privileged situation. Thus, while speaking to crowds situated in a better-developed areas, or big cities – Duda predominantly focused on presenting his industry-, and infrastructure-related plans, and on ‘praising’ his already introduced reforms. In consequence, since these religio-cultural, traditional accents would just not resonate with these arguably more West-minded groups of voters; he decided to leave the music out of the discourse completely.

Moreover, there was also another risk connected to these music-linked accents – namely, that as a part of a common knowledge, it could uncover discourse’s ideological properties. For instance, as one of pro-PO YouTube users commented under Trzaskowski’s video – “A wonderful end to the election campaign. Great choice of music. *Let’s leave the “Hallelujah” at church* [italics added]. This is the normal Poland. We do not want any fanatics and hypocrites. Poland is Europe (...)” ([user16] 2020). This statement proves that Trzaskowski’s electorate, and more generally Poland A voters, were very negatively inclined to Duda’s cultural artefact. That they saw them as a part of Duda’s propaganda. In this view, music also becomes one of the Bourdieusian classifiable judgments. Meaning, “Hallelujah”

and traditional music are ‘reserved’ for ‘them’ (churchgoers and hypocrites), ‘we’, on the other hand, the ‘normal’ Poles, associate with anti-communistic, -PiS rock ‘anthems’.

In rural areas and towns, however, the situation was different. There, Duda’s voters, who finally have been acknowledged by politicians, perceived this kind of music as an expression of their values and beliefs. As a crucial discursive figure, that authenticated Duda’s message and spoke to their collective identity – ‘the people’. In these types of situations, music thus worked as a ‘sonic’ signifier to Duda’s populist agenda. It highlighted the traditional and religious character of Poland B. And further, Duda’s closeness to the local community – especially that most of the times he was accompanied by local bands. Additionally, this type of music resonated quite strongly with the oldest voters, and specially with their affective memories of communism and the ‘better past’. As explained by Patryk Galuszka and Katarzyna M. Wyrzykowska, “[during] the first stage of Stalinism (1948–1956), authorities combatted all manifestations of resistance, imposing only the “right,” “soc-realist” version of culture. Jazz, for instance, was an unwelcome genre, played only unofficially and secretively in private homes” (2020, 130 in Galuszka 2020). In consequence, during said period, the music industry and radio channels were forced to produce and play records that were stylistically ‘highly-Polish’ – meaning either Polish classical music (although not every composer or style was allowed), or folk music (which was also under strict state control). Thus, many of young people in that time were raised on and influenced by a quite traditional, strictly-Polish ‘popular’ culture. Nowadays, however, such music genres are less popular, than West-influenced rock, pop, or hip-hop. Thus, people that grew up on folk and classical music have a harder time relating to both – the new system, and the new, westernized popular culture. Thus, by including folk music in his discourse; Andrzej Duda not only highlighted his anti-West agenda, but also brought into light his presumed understanding of senior citizens and their needs.

At the same time, however, by including descriptions in his speeches that sounded as if they came from disco-polo songs, Duda simultaneously spoke to the younger voters, and the viewers of TVP. To the audience that has been for years prepared for these kinds of music-laden links in the political discourse TVP’s music events. Thus, when hearing stories such as “a loving mother and her two boys standing next to a tiny chapel”, they associated Duda’s speeches with the cultural discourse of the TVP and PiS. Of their portrayal of the current reality and post-transformational history, as better times. A phantasy, utopian like reality, that could only happen thanks to Andrzej Duda and PiS.

## 7 Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis has been to conceptualize the state of politics in Poland, and at the same time, to discover what role music plays in this. Further, I proposed an in-depth study of the connection between music and a deepening societal “Us versus Them” polarization. I have performed a close textual analysis of 4 campaign speeches given during the 2020 presidential elections by Poland’s most-voted candidates – Rafał Trzaskowski and Andrzej Duda. I have also analyzed music-centered TV programs, that is New Year’s Eve concerts, and the Opole and Sopot festivals.

In this project, I aimed to answer to two research questions:

RQ1: What are the usages, functions, and effects of music in the context of Polish politics at the current historical juncture?

RQ2: Is there a connection between music and political polarization in Poland and, if so, how can it be understood?

As the analysis has shown, music has had two main functions in each politicians’ discourses.

Firstly, it’s role could be compared to that of a signifier. As explained in the fourth chapter, semioticians describe signifier as a “(...) sound or an image that is attached to a signified” (Rose 2016, 113).

In Rafał Trzaskowski’s speeches, music as a signifier, was meant to bring back the pictures and memories connected to the transformation and communism. To on one hand, underline the hardships that were brought with the old system, and on the other hand, to highlight the positive emotions people had for the new system. Thus, by constructing his speeches, as if they were as well written in Aesopian-language – just like the anti-communistic rock anthems. Trzaskowski emotionalized and naturalized his image and agenda. He persuaded his voters, that the PiS-made reality is not as wonderful as the ruling party claims, and that he is the only one that could bring in the positive change. Trzaskowski thus used music to unmask PiS’ ideology, yet at the same time, cover his own.

In Andrzej Duda’s speeches, music as a signifier, was used predominantly as an authentication of his image as ‘the man of the people’, and as a sonic description of ‘the people’. Hence, by complementing his discourse with traditional folk music, as well as Leonard Cohen’s Polish-translated “Hallelujah”; he ‘painted’ a picture of ‘the people’ as a Catholic, traditionist, and provincial group. One that has been forgotten by the pro-West elites, yet now, thanks to Andrzej Duda – the praised defender of the weaker, their needs, values, and beliefs were finally acknowledged. Music thus was meant to make people believe, that the good times

are back. That there is nothing to be afraid of, because Andrzej Duda, as a strong leader, will always be here for his country.

Secondly, both candidates used music to build social identities. By creating two antagonistic subject positions – “Us” and “Them”; they used music as one of the main differences that inscribed one in a right group. Thus, music through the workings of Bourdieusian classifiable judgments and classificatory practices, helped also subjects in designating other subjects to suitable for them positions. For as Fairclough argued, subjects are both passive and active. Passive, because they are constrained by the discourse, but also active, because they as well produce discourses and position other subjects (2013, 31).

In Rafał Trzaskowski’s discourse one was either positioned as an oppressed winner of transformation (“Us”); or an oppressive loser of transformation (“Them”). Music in this case had a categorizing function – meaning, if one felt a strong emotional connection to the 1980’s anti-communistic anthems than this person belonged to “Us”. To, as one of the users commented, “real Poland”. To the group that understands high, emotional, authentic art. However, if one felt more emotionally connected to a low-value, inauthentic disco-polo or to church-linked, hypocritic “Hallelujah”; then this person belonged to “Them”. To the losers of transformation; living in the past homo sovieticus – people that would rather lose many of their democratic privileges, just to get State-given benefits. And lastly, people that were to blind to see how propagandist and populist Andrzej Duda’s communication was. For as, while “Us”, disliked the social and political divisions and felt as if they were above them. At the same time, as well contributed to them – mainly based on one’s cultural capital and taste.

As presented in the analysis, Andrzej Duda’s speeches were highly populist. Thus, in his discourse one could either be a part of ‘the people’ (‘Us’), or ‘Them’ (which consisted of both the elites, and the out-groups). Hence, when visiting areas that were pro-PiS, Duda used traditional, religious, and dance music during his events. Music that would most likely speak to his electorate’s, TVP- and PiS-constructed identity. For as that was the sound of ‘better times’ – of unproblematic communistic childhood, and unproblematic PiS-made phantasy-like reality. However, when he spoke in places that were presumably inhabited by the winners of transformation – instead of changing the ‘sound’ of his campaign, to better suit other tastes and identities, he opted for no music at all. For as, otherwise music could uncover his text’s ideological properties, and push this part of the society towards his opponent. For based on the classificatory practices and classifiable judgments, if one could not relate with Duda’s music, than one possibly belonged to “Them”, since these were the only possible options.

In the end, music became one of the ‘cleavages’ aligned around the dominant cleavage – meaning “Us” versus “Them” division. Hence, apart from the Left-Right, or in Polish case – PO-PiS, Poland A-Poland B, big city-province, religious-secular axes; one had to choose also between disco-polo/folk music and 1980’s rock anthems. A choice that was especially reflected and amplified by the two most popular and biased TV channels in Poland – PiS’ controlled TVP, and pro-PO TVN. For as, since PiS’ win in the 2015 elections, both channels began to mirror their parties music agenda. Or more specifically, TVP was arguably forced to do so, while TVN followed the suit to attract its preferred viewers. In the end, TVP focused almost completely on prompting disco-polo and folk musicians, while TVN cut these genres completely from its programming. Instead, the station began to give more space to anti-PiS and 1980’s musicians. As a result, the society was presented with only two possible choices – either I stand with “us” and watch “our” TV and listen to “our” music, or I am a part of “Them”. Choices that not only constituted one’s political views, but more importantly – had an enormous impact on one’s view of oneself and the others.

For this reason, I argue that there is not only a connection between music and polarization in Poland. But also, that music helped in deepening said process, and had a negative influence on the country and its society.

Although the relationship between music and politics is extensively studied by both international and Polish scholars, there is nevertheless a visible lack of literature on the relationship between music and polarization. Thus, further analysis of similarly polarized countries, and especially in the post-Soviet bloc, could not only broaden the understanding on how music operates in these specific socio-political conditions. But also help in systematizing patterns of polarizations, and well as bring in new perspectives to research on music’s political power.

In the end, as this thesis demonstrated, it is tremendously difficult to study Poland’s current political situation, without referring to its pre-transformational history. And although it has been over thirty years since Poland became an independent, democratic country; communism and what came after it, seem to still have a strong hold over the Polish society, politics, and culture. As some say – “(...) Poles are moving forward, but with their heads turned backward” (Galuszka 2020, 15). It is due to the fact, that mentality-wise the country seems to be continuously stuck in this history-laden halfway point. Not any longer a communistic state, but



not yet ready to let that part of its identity go. Thus, one could argue that to understand modern Poland, one must first know its history – no matter how difficult and tangled it might be.

In consequence, I hope that this project not only complemented the existing research on music and politics, but also brought a new, different perspective to the studies on Polish identity, culture, and society.

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