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INTRODUCTION

Tactics for Becoming Visible: South Asian Minorities in the Times of Communicative Capitalism

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Abstract
We explore the tactics of becoming visible and their relationship to alleviating or exacerbating precarious forms of life for minorities in South Asia. These tactics emerge from and respond to three interdependent moments: The frames that define how minorities can become visible, the interplay between limits and thresholds of visibility, and how capture fragments articulations and makes them easy to appropriate.

Keywords Visibility · Activism · South Asia · Minorities · Frames · Limits · Thresholds · Capture · Communicative capitalism

Introduction

The last decade has brought remarkable changes to South Asia's media landscapes. In 2017, studies estimated that across South Asia, 650 million television viewers are joined by more than 300 million newspaper readers and over 250 million internet users (Udupa and McDowell 2017). In 2023, India is estimated to have 862 million social media users (Basuroy 2023). In Pakistan, only 10% of the population used the internet in 2012; according to the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority, 114 million people were online in 2022—around 52% of its population. The Delhi-based Center for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) has published a report on social media usage in times of election. The report points out that,

> [b]ack in 2014, merely one of every ten voters (9%) was found by Lokniti's election-time survey to be using Facebook. This figure of usage has increased steadily since, doubling to 20 percent by 2017, and then increasing further to

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> 32 percent during the recent 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The usage of WhatsApp (bought over by Facebook in 2014) in the country has also followed the same trend […] The only other social media platform that currently matches the popularity of Facebook and WhatsApp in India is YouTube (Lokniti Report 2019, 11).

Even though television is still the most popular mass medium in South Asia, mobilizations around marginalized identities have increasingly moved online and have afforded people the possibility to appear to larger audiences. Especially the rise of mobile phone connectivity has extended the reach of social networking sites as spaces of political mobilization. While many poorer South Asians may not have access to a computer, mobile phones have increasingly become their primary access to political information (Lokniti Report 2019).

When to become visible, how to become visible, where to become visible, and to whom, or, in fact, whether to become visible at all, have become central questions for many members of minority communities. While many accounts—especially from human rights organizations, NGOs, activists, or even anthropologists—often seem to assume that providing transparency is the high road to tackling human rights violations, there is an intricate yet not necessary link between visibility and emancipation. On the one hand, a certain degree of visibility is crucial to call attention to precarious forms of life in an attempt to ameliorate the situaiton. On the other hand, the idea that the visibility of injustices would necessarily trigger a process of their elimination does not hold (Winter 2012, 202). Kotef, for example, shows how human rights transgressions may be highly visible to a global audience for many decades without any tangible impact for people on the ground (2020). Some forms of emancipation indeed build on networks of solidarity with sympathetic parties; visibility, however, does not necessarily lead to recognition and the end of oppression.

Following Udupa and McDowell (2017), we believe that in an increasingly media-saturated environment, visibility becomes a central concept to understanding how marginalized, persecuted, or oppressed individuals and communities want to make their struggles known. Udupa and McDowell speak in this regard about "structured visibilities" as the social conditions of publicity (2017, 6). They argue that visibility is always defined through postcolonial nation-building, state-driven pedagogical discourses, and other socialities such as caste and religious nationalisms. We wish to extend Udupa and McDowell's concept of the limits of visibility by locating it within the conditions produced by communicative capitalism. We argue for an in-depth exploration of what the concept of visibility can do beyond its metaphorical relation to publicity and recognition.

To narrow our attention, we foreground how practices of becoming visible (what we will call tactics in the following) may link to either alleviating or exacerbating precarity. In other words, while practices of becoming visible may at times produce precarious forms of life, at other times, they may delimit them. Some minorities may experience more precarity due to being overlooked by society or the nation-state. These groups often put much effort into making their grievances and demands heard to produce wide networks of solidarity. Other marginalized groups, however, might have to endure precarious conditions due to their environment's excessive interest in them. Here, visibility emerges as a threat in the form of surveillance, exposure, denunciation, or, in the most extreme case, vigilante justice directed against them. In this context, many scholars have pointed out the synergies between platform capitalists' business models and the cynical politics of the new right in Brazil, Europe, India, the Philippines, and the US (Fielitz and Marcks 2020; Eder et al. 2020; Sundaram 2020; Udupa and Dattatreyan 2023). How such structures influence minorities and their attempts to become visible, however, has thus far not been widely researched.

Visibility and precarity

Instead of approaching online visibility through political-phenomenology or political-aesthetics, we are interested in its relationship with precariousness. Simply put, precarious environments often confine people in their ability to act due to structural circumstances that position some agents in more powerful positions than others. The adjective precarious essentially describes agencies "depending on uncertain premises" or "on the will or pleasure of another."[1] Discussions on precariousness and its cognates (precarity and precariat) usually describe the adverse effects of neoliberal capitalism. Precariousness is often conceptualized as a vulnerable state induced by low wages and short contract-based employment (Bourdieu 1998), frequently exacerbated by an economizing tendency of formerly non-economic spheres (Brown 1995). For some scholars, precariousness produces a new socio-economic class, "the precariat" (Standing 2016) with its own creative ways of protest (Marchart 2014). The notion of precariousness, however, has also detached itself from dealing solely with economic planes of life and found its way into more philosophical and anthropological debates.

Judith Butler, who is one of our references in this regard, grounds the discussion of precarity in a "bodily ontology," which states that life as such is precarious and that it "can be expunged at will or by accident" (2016, 25). This precariousness, although equally shared by all bodies, is strategically distributed to minimize insecurity for some, often at the expense of others. An example from Pakistan may illustrate this. By declaring the Ahmadiyya sect as a non-Muslim group in 1974, the Bhutto government increased the community's precariousness to solidify its political power. Bhutto's move aimed at shutting down the insecurities brought about by the street pressure of religious groups through giving in to their demands and ostracizing the Ahmadiyya community, de facto making them second-class citizens. The politics behind this distribution of precariousness is what Judith Butler calls "precarity" (ibid. 3). For the political theorist Isabell Lorey, the nature of precarity can be both "*symbolic and material*" (2015, 21) (italics in original), thus including not only economic insecurity or institutionalized violence, but also prejudice, stereotyping, or villainizing. Butler writes about precarity that it:

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[1] Both found at https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/precarious

> designates that political induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence, to street or domestic violence, or other forms not enacted by states but for which the judicial instruments of states fail to provide sufficient protection or redress (2015, 33).

With its traditional emphasis on the intersection of capitalist exploitation and symbolic capture, seen in the work of Bourdieu, Standing, and Butler, the concept of precarity is particularly suitable as a lens to analyze the tactics of becoming visible in the times of communicative capitalism.

Communicative capitalism

Many media scholars have claimed until recently that the expansion of online communication promotes democratic values, openness, connectivity, and inclusion (Castells 2015; Khosrokhavar 2016; Papacharissi 2002). Increasingly, however, many have started to criticize this idea as merely a utopian interpretation of online communication's infrastructures (Srnicek 2017; Moulier-Boutang 2011; Berardi 2012). The political theorist Jodi Dean argues that we are currently in a late stage of capitalism in which "productivity derives from its expropriation and exploitation of communicative processes" (2014, 4). Dean calls this current juncture "communicative capitalism" as communication itself becomes the means of capitalist accumulation and increasingly neo-feudal value extraction (2021). Once communicative interactions produce financial value, the conditions under which people converse online significantly change.

Capitalist platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram aim to increase user time and user interactions through "affective feedback loops" (Boler and Davis 2018). These recursively influence users' personal, emotional, and informational content through functions such as "like" or "follow." The average social media user feeds algorithms with personal preferences, which become the ground for individualized content and advertisement. Private companies may praise their platforms as spaces of free speech which provide unrestrained exchanges of ideas. Simultaneously, however, they dictate the rules of communicative interactions based on the highest possible value extraction (Fuchs 2021). We understand such spaces as "proprietary communicative environments" (Schaflechner 2023, 142) which dictate not only the "what" but also the "how" of people's interactions based on the whims of companies and shareholders.

Furthermore, when market logics are extended to forms of communication, fast-paced circulation is favored over slow content engagement. The Italian philosopher Franco Berardi writes:

> In the sphere of the digital economy, the faster information circulates, the faster value is accumulated. But meaning slows down this process, as meaning needs time to be produced and to be elaborated and understood. So the acceleration of the info-flow implies an elimination of meaning (2012, 105).

Once the primary activity of communicative interactions shifts from meaning to forwarding content—or in other terms, from use value to exchange value—messages are produced to gain maximum abstract visibility. Egalitarian access and non-hierarchical circulation of content, both crucial parts of the democratic process, give away to popularity contests.

Lazlo Barabasi's research on networks is essential in this regard. Barabasi speaks of the "power law" of complex networks, where specific nodes, be they academic citations, phone networks, or even ecological systems, tend to have more connections than others (Barabási and Bonabeau 2003, 62–64). This leads to a power law of distribution where 20% of the nodes produce 80% of all engagements. Online networks, too, tend to reward popularity, meaning that those who are a part of the 20% are widely visible online, while at the same time, a large number of users are not noticed at all (Dean 2009, 25–30; Barabási 2003). Thus, after an initial euphoria about the possibilities of online communication, we need to realize that although social media has indeed brought new opportunities for marginalized communities, their visibility is opaquely linked to a whole array of infrastructural features that serve the accumulation of capital and have been shown to increase insecurities for historically disadvantaged groups.

The ubiquity of smartphones and the logic of algorithms that power the leading content-sharing apps such as Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube have changed how, what, and when people become visible globally and locally. Prosumer cultures and citizen journalism have radically altered how information spreads and who can disseminate it. In this way, social media platforms are not only gatekeepers—a role formerly played by editors, journalists, or NGOs—but also define the rules of communication in ways that produce the most financial capital. Such proprietary communication has various effects. In online activism, for example, processes of commodification standardize and decontextualize grievances leading to sedimented frames of representation.

Different media practitioners have to deal differently with the processes described above. Artists, documentary filmmakers, grassroot activists, and online influencers have to face different challenges depending on the aesthetic form they choose and their tactical way of interacting with the communicative capitalist environment. In the remainder of this section, we will briefly address some problems that many of our activist-interlocuters face when they try to become visible online.

Through the work of Clifford Bob (2005) and Makau Mutua (2002) we understand how NGOs have long tweaked their messages to fit the marketplace. Their narratives often reduce complexities and reproduce clear-cut lines of good and evil to gain popularity and induce public indignation. In the age of communicative capitalism and its prosumer cultures, this commodification of grievances has shifted towards citizens and their access to social media platforms. In other words, studying the media practices of our interlocuters has revealed how many activists organize their tactics of becoming visible in ways that are in tune with the entertainment, affective, and circulatory infrastructures of social media. Some activists have long understood that to utilize social media's network effects, they need to translate their grievances into affectively charged and easily circulatable content. Since they know which content travels quickly and gains a lot of popularity, many activists help crowdsource content to popularity with clear moral lines and frequently enhance their message with affectively charged content (Schaflechner 2023). Such examples are not confined to South Asia but are a particular way citizen activists make their grievances visible in the time of communicative capitalism.

Tactics of becoming visible

Tactics are planned actions in a dynamic and constantly shifting volatile space. These actions include advances and retreats, contextual interventions, and a certain spontaneity to respond to the unforeseeable. There is yet another meaning when we speak about the ways in which precariously situated media practitioners become visible today: If communicative capitalism captures communication in the above given ways, if it accelerates the circulation of content while standardizing interactions, and if the process of reaching larger audiences is fraught with power asymmetries, then tactics refer to processes of learning how to navigate this volatile online space. With their articulations our interlocutors aim to arrange time, space, and affect (Kramer 2022) since their precarious lifeworlds often lack the institutions which could sustain their actions in strategic ways. Consequently, we find the term "tactics" more fitting for certain practices in digital capitalism than, for example, "strategies," as the latter implies long-term perspectives and the capacity to structure the space of interaction (de Certeau 1984; De Ridder 2015; Giraud 2018; Manovich 2009; Poole et al. 2021).

In her contribution to this special issue, Nida Kirmani researches the online tactics of family members of victims of forced disappearances in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. Against some critique concerning the usage of online visibility, especially on Twitter, she shows how social media has become a powerful support in an environment where the state has all but blacked out the information about missing persons in the mainstream media. She demonstrates how Baluch activists have become conscious of the various mechanisms of surveillance and appropriation that come with the use of social media and how they tactically maneuver it while utilizing Twitter as an "affective digital counter-public," which often provides "the last hope " for people forced to live within such precarious circumstances. However, the usage of Twitter also extends beyond providing relief to Baluch victims and activists, as making oneself visible regarding such issues is fraught with danger, given the state's scrutiny of online communications. Kirmani's interlocutors, and to a certain extent, the author herself, reflect on and tactically leverage the limits and thresholds inherent in the online space to navigate the extensive surveillance system implemented by the state.

Mikaela Chase analyses in her paper the online tactics employed by the Jain minority in India regarding the legality of *santhara*, the practice of fasting to death. Within the Jain community, *santhara* is viewed as an expression of religious freedom, while the Indian government argues that it contravenes legislation criminalizing suicide and its abetment. Focusing on Jain community groups on Facebook, Chase shows how the discussion around *santhara* also has a gendered aspect, with many women participating in the defense of the practice. Comparing this discourse to how *santhara* is discussed and presented on X and Instagram, she demonstrates how her interlocutors engage tactically with different "ways, modes, and tempos" of framing the matter produced by various online media affordances.

When reflecting on such and similar issues related to the ways in which minorities in South Asia tactically become visible today, three *interdependent* features strike us as essential: frames, limits and thresholds, and capture.

Frames

Frames are the sedimented narrative and aesthetic patterns which determine how minorities become visible as subjects worthy of concern or as a problem to the nation-state. Since nation-states produce categories of minority and majority (Appadurai 2006), it makes sense to ask how state institutions, but also popular culture and nationalist ideologies frame minorities. On both sides of the border, in India and Pakistan, religious belonging has become one of the main frames through which citizenship is imagined today. Although in different intensities, India and Pakistan therefore can be analyzed through the lens of religious nationalism, which—like any other nationalism—is an ideology of order (Juergensmeyer 2010). Particular to religious nation-states or ethnic democracies (Jaffrelot 2021), however, is that this process of organizing makes ideas of religious reform movements available for nationalist endeavors and solidifies them into forms of government (Van der Veer 1994). Through the work of political thinkers, we know that the construction of a nation and a people proceeds through the exclusion of an Other. This framework defines how minorities may appear in discourse, be they ethnic or religious.

In her book, *The Politics of De-secularization,* Saeed describes three conflicting discourses which mark Pakistan's search for identity since its inception (2017). A liberal discourse advocates for a secular Pakistan, often citing its founding fathers' liberal leanings. This interpretation of what it means to be a Pakistani is often highlighted by activists, religious minorities, and members of civil society. Secondly, the discourse of Islamic egalitarianism similarly builds on concepts of equality and human rights but has a basis in the Quran and the Hadith. Thirdly, Pakistan's religious nationalism, which, according to Saeed, supersedes both liberal and egalitarian interpretations of citizenship, is often suspicious of any deviation from hegemonic Sunni-Islamic teachings (2017). Pakistan's repeated emphasis on religion as the meaning of Pakistan often organizes unity through the othering of whatever is considered to be outside the fold of "true Islam" (mirrored in the frequently heard slogan "What is the meaning of Pakistan? There is no God but Allah!" "*Pakistan ka matlab kya? La ilahah lilla allah!*"). Such exclusions from the nation-state project are produced and repeated in governmental policies (notwithstanding the elected party in power), day-to-day interactions, and, most significantly, in the media.

During the current Hindu nationalist government in India, the country's Muslim minority has come under increasing pressure, with some commentators and institutions even seeing genocide as an immanent possibility (Genocide Watch 2022). The build up to the current scenario included a dramatic increase in mob lynching incidents in Northern India (Citizens Against Hate 2019), scrapping the special status of Kashmir, the inauguration of the Ram temple on the site of the destroyed Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in 2024, and the rewriting of schoolbooks and the renaming of cities to strip Muslimness from the history of India (Doninger and Nussbaum 2015; Jaffrelot 2021). These processes came to a head in December 2019 when the Hindu nationalist government of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which provides access to Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities including Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, and Christians who migrated to India from other South Asian countries (before 2014). Muslims are conspicuously absent from the list. Another policy that goes hand in glove with CAA, the National Register of Citizenship (NRC), seeks to enforce compulsory registration for all Indian citizens. It forces Indian residents to prove their citizenship with identity documents that precarious communities usually do not have full access to. This could lead to deportation and incarceration for many Indian Muslims and expose them to the threat of statelessness. These legislations point toward an "attenuation of religion-neutral laws of citizenship" in India, and a shift towards a regime where "the laws, rules and the jurisprudence of citizenship have come to be increasingly […] inflected by religion" (Jayal 2019, 33–34).

Many scholars of Muslim politics in India have commented on how precarious Muslims fold their articulations into the frame of the secular nation-state, especially into constitutionalism (Ahmed 2019). This goes as far as even the reformist organisation Jamaat-e-Islami—staunchly pursuing an Islamic state in neighbouring countries—arguing in favour of minority rights within the secular constitutional frame of the Indian Union (Ahmad 2009; Islam 2015). Thus, the larger frames of Indian Muslim minority politics are the opposition to Hindu nationalism on the one hand and the defence of constitutionalist secular-nationalism on the other. The shades and complexities between liberal, reformist, traditional, anti-caste, and elite positions are routinely evaded or—as we will show below—captured in bursts of moral outrage that inform digital circulations in India and beyond (Sundaram 2020).

Concerning the tactics through which minorities gain visibility in communicative capitalism, frames play a crucial role. They translate intricate and intersectional forms of *discrimination* experienced in everyday contexts into more readily commodified and abstract tropes of *persecution* in the online sphere (Schaflechner forthcoming). But instead of suggesting that this is a calculated attempt by gatekeepers to commodify suffering—even though this might also be the case—certain frames may be a response to the affordances of social media platforms. Under the term "affectivism," Schaflechner portrays the ambivalent tactics of becoming visible employed by marginalized communities. He demonstrates how activists from minority communities leverage stereotypes embedded in sedimented frames of identity, as these circulate rapidly online. By producing recognizable content—both as a tactic and in response to the demands of social media affordances—activists attract global attention, which they then use to highlight other challenges they face (2023).

In this special issue, Britta Ohm provides an example of such framing by her investigation of the political usages of the term "*pasmanda.*" The term stands for a form of lower-caste Muslim activism and she shows its different usages in three different Indian locations. Ohm questions the damaged media landscape in India as being "ghettoized" in various ways that not only further endanger the lives of lower castes and Indian Muslims, but also lower the effective addressability of the term *pasmanda* that could, otherwise, stand for a more powerful form of political subjectivation. In her paper, the term "visibility" appears three times with different meanings. First, she notices how the term *pasmanda* was picked up in academia around the time that it lost its representational function, its "currency" for institutionalized politics in the north Indian state of Bihar. It became a frame open to appropriation in the absence of an institutional structure to support it. Second, she discusses how lower-caste Muslim men became the primary target of Delhi's infamous police force because their invisibility and namelessness made them "touchable" by the state. Third, she argues that "personal media visibility and exposure" involve "the logic of regional echo chambers, easy to play off against one another in the presence and absence of information." In short, although Ohm doesn't operationalize a concept of visibility, through her usages, we can grasp how frames of visibility are related to structures which distribute vulnerabilities in a climate of fear and repression. Ohm also flags how, in the absence of powerful institutional structures, the public visibility of terms such as *pasmanda* can opened up to processes of ghettoization, privatization, and appropriation by political opponents.

Limits and thresholds

For Deleuze and Guattari, there is an important conceptual difference between limits and thresholds. The limit "designates the penultimate marking […] and the threshold the ultimate marking [of] an inevitable change" (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 438–439). Concerning the becoming visible of content online, we read this distinction as follows. Limits are the furthest point an articulation—the communicative form—can reach without changing its composition, while thresholds are the hard-to-predict boundaries after which the articulations are decontextualized and their "*elements chang[e] in nature*" (italics in original Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 31).

Activists and other media practitioners often aim to stay within certain limits of becoming visible to retain a degree of control over their form. Once a threshold is crossed, snippets of communicative content circulate beyond the chosen presentational form. In this process they acquire new meanings and new intensities in an accelerated and highly volatile sensorium. Such fragments can easily be coopted (this process is elaborated in the section "capture" below). Under the conditions of communicative capitalism, retaining messages' intended meaning has become increasingly challenging. Due to the acceleration and broader circulation of symbols and affects, as well as due to the destabilization of the representative function of signifiers—something Slavoj Žižek calls the "demise of symbolic efficiency" (2000, 388–404)—messages often cross from within relatively stable limits over thresholds into uncertain milieus. This uncontrollable abstract visibility carries a risk for our interlocuters as it may lead to recognition, indignation, and solidarity but often yields unwanted exposure, surveillance, and even imprisonment.

While much of what we discussed as thresholds conditions the work of precarious media practitioners world-wide, the postcolonial context of India and Pakistan further exacerbates the problem. The British colonizers imagined the colonial Indian subject as irrationally emotional and prone to mass violence. Hence, it was part of the colonial civilizing mission to manage these religious communities seemingly in perennial conflict with each other through policing the limits of expression (Pandey 2006). Today, the threat of crossing the threshold into mass visibility (and potential mass violence) has become the basis of right-wing public performances, which utilize postcolonial crowd-control legislations for their own agenda (Mazzarella 2013; Hansen 2021). We want to flesh out these conceptual differences—between limits and thresholds— through two case studies from India and Pakistan.

Since the Kashmir Conflict is intensely contested in many places where Kashmiri filmmaker Iffat Fatima screens her film *Khoon Diy Baraav* (2017, literally *Blood leaves its trail*) almost every screening involves a danger for her of participating in nationalist outrage. Fatima may give the DVD to strangers who approach her after screenings, but always with the request not to upload it on any digital platform. When Kramer asked her about this, Fatima said:

> I can't see the possibility to challenge it [Hindu nationalist actors] in the public sphere as it stands today – institutions, everything is working towards that [Hindun ationalist hegemony]. That space exists at a certain community level. There is control, it is linked to spectacle, but at the same time, there are these subgroups that are working. […] We have to look at the world as a mobile, constantly changing space, and the possibilities of opening out have to be created.[…] For work it is important to keep a low profile, to somehow invisibilize yourself. That helps you in the work you want to do – to get that free space in which you function. Where you can maintain that invisibility. (Iffat Fatima, 05.02.22)

The choice of the prefix "sub" for the groups mentioned by Fatima suggests that they are somewhat underground. She is talking about institutions such as film clubs, pockets in academia, neighborhood film screenings, alternative film festivals, and so on. When Fatima speaks of connecting to sub-groups, she is tactical: she introduces film as an affective-material-arrangement into a space that is defined by Hindu nationalist and Indian secular hegemonies (Kramer 2022). In Fatima's terms, her film is affectively "charged" at the threshold of mass publicity (Mazzarella 2013). Once it crosses this threshold, meanings and affects are easily captured and fragmented within the circuits of Hindu nationalism that draws on notions of postcolonial crowd control. Fatima tries to avoid this capture by keeping it under the threshold of mass publicity. Thus, an open communication without addressee (see Ohm, this edition), is bound to a dialectic where an increase in reach may destroy the form—that is, the communicative heart of a film. Hence, digital environments and their everyday interfaces threaten to fragment the very time, space, and affect that Fatima carves out for the creation of political subjectivities through her film.

Fatima stays vigilant when it comes to visibility. All those aspects of her practice that can be captured in nationalist outrage require invisibility, while those that can open up and mobilize a more sustained sense of what it means to live in occupied Kashmir should become visible and debatable. Her film is not circulated as something ready-made. Instead, it gets introduced into specific contexts again and again as a fluid and highly mobile arrangement. The "subgroups" (film clubs, universities, etc.) mentioned by Fatima are not durable enough to sustain a public sphere as such. She constantly monitors the sensorium of her practice while traveling along with her film, fine-tuning tactics of framing through bodily co-presence (Kramer 2018). Hence it is a visibility that emerges through the lack of a sustainable space of political appearance.

Similar forms of safeguarding the limits of one's visibility are found in Pakistan, where journalists, social activists, and citizen-journalists have started to utilize tactics to thwart the decontextualized circulation of news stories. The following will exemplify this. In November 2020, a journalist working for a widely read Pakistani newspaper was called to report on an alleged blasphemy case in one of Karachi's middle-class neighborhoods. In an interview, the journalist stated that apparently some kids had played with colored powder in the compound and had left their handprints on a Hindu resident's dog. A picture of the dog later went viral where some argued that the handprint resembles the word "Allah" when written in Arabic. Since writing the name of God on an impure animal is considered by many in Pakistan to be an act of blasphemy, people on social media started to demand the punishment of those responsible. Shortly thereafter, the online outrage crossed the threshold into mass publicity, further translating into an angry mob gathering outside the compound. The demand was that the blasphemers be given over to them for punishment. When the mob became increasingly agitated and threatened to enter the compound, some local Muslim residents assembled to intervene and shield their neighborhood from further attacks. In an attempt to safeguard the limits of their visibility, many residents requested the journalist not to highlight the blasphemy accusation in the reporting as this would merely worsen the threat to their community. The final article, therefore, does not mention any allegation of blasphemy as the reason why the mob had gathered in the first place. The article also reframes the story by highlighting that some local Muslim residents bravely opposed an attack on Hindus. Such tactics have become common among journalists in Pakistan, who often need to decide on the spot how to report specific attacks on minorities.

To sum up, the difference between limits and threshold aims to point at people's frequently challenging work to control their becoming visible. Under communicative capitalism, limits are increasingly hard to contain. Once decontextualized snippets of meaning have crossed a certain threshold, they can easily be appropriated by political opponents, as we will show in the following.

Capture

The concept of capture refers to machinic processes. These involve what we discussed in the section on communicative capitalism: the lack of symbolic efficiency. Capture disrupts established frameworks by inducing speed through the circulation of affective intensities to sustain capitalist business models. Furthermore, capture brings a great deal of uncertainty as many algorithms involved remain black boxes for users. At the same time, the machinic disruptions of meaning allow for new configurations of the originally intended, which can be appropriated in diverse ways, often diverging from its initial purpose. Although capture always disrupts contexts, it does so in historically and algorithmically patterned ways. Udupa and Dattatreyan stress that a concept of capture needs to account for longer colonial histories and their continuation in contemporary processes of control and disciplining by the nation-state:

> Capture, as we employ the concept here, signals processes of appropriating and disciplining labor, time, meanings, and bodies for digital capitalist accumulation, by laying a recursive trap of continuous online engagement that is observable, traceable, plottable, and in historically specific ways, manipulable (2023, 97).

If we approach such a "recursive trap" from the perspective of precariously situated media practitioners, then it becomes clear that capture not only fragments and accelerates meaning, but also pre-sorts the sensorium in ways adverse to the political articulations of some of our interlocutors. More importantly, the visual itself can be seen as a form of capture that is linked to the ocularcentrism of Euro-American modernity (Rukavina 2013) and the way this particular history has coded the current fragmentation and acceleration of meaning on digital platforms.

To give an example of capture as appropriation, we want to analyze the so-called forced conversions of Hindu women to Islam in the Islamic Republic. Usually, cases of alleged forced conversion follow the same sequence: a young Hindu, or Christian, woman disappears from her house or working place and reappears again as a married and newly converted Muslim. Such disappearances roughly fall into two different categories. On the one hand, there is little doubt that conversion to Islam is often utilized to cover up sexual crimes against women and minors. This includes rape, child marriage, and sometimes even human trafficking (Schaflechner 2016). On the other hand, many cases originate from the rigid patriarchal structures of the minority communities themselves and are often represented by family members as forced disappearances to avoid the social stigma of a woman wanting to decide herself whom to marry. In almost all cases, however, Islamic zeal or theological deliberation plays a minor role (Schaflechner 2017).

Once the story of a disappeared Hindu women goes public, Hindu nationalists appropriate the images of non-Muslim women for their own ideology and agenda. Under the guise of struggling for (non-Muslim) women's emancipation, they produce and perpetuate stereotypes about Islam and the nemesis Pakistan. In the Indian media, for example, forced conversion is frequently appropriated as a symptom of Pakistan's maliciousness and its increasingly deteriorating situation. Reports on cases of so-called forced conversion are often made to fit already established conspiracy theories and stereotypes about Pakistan. The following translation from a recent Hindi news article is but one example:

> The condition of Hindu girls is getting worse in Pakistan. In Imran Khan's "naya Pakistan," the Sindh province has become infamous for the forceful conversion of Hindu girls. Every day, Hindu girls are forcefully kidnapped,

> converted to Islam, and married off. This is the reason why Pakistan has become infamous all over the world […].[2]

Aside from Indian media, cases of disappeared women are also appropriated in India's internal politics. During discussions around the aforementioned 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the fate of non-Muslim women served as an argument for why the parliament needed to pass the bill.

Lorea et al. highlight such a process of visibility as capture in this issue. In their study of the online visibilities of Matua, a Dalit religion in Bengal, they argue that an "[…] accelerated and unprecedented visibility in cyberspace […] does not necessarily translate into an increased visibility in the social and political public space." Lorea et al. operationalize a concept of visibility that merges questions of recognition with those of sensing. The concept of visibility raises questions about who can represent a community in a primarily visible medium and how this relates to differential access to the means of representation based on class and gender. But crucially, in a community that relied on non-ocular senses, Lorea et al. argue that the kind of sensing involved in social media, ocularcentric and textual, "might clash with the preferred sensory registers that religious communities have traditionally used to raise their voice and make themselves audible." They stress that it is crucial not to simply align a concept of visibility with recognition in a generalized way, but rather to ask how the visual itself may already be an impoverishment to certain political articulations. This is precisely what capture is, as only those parts that easily circulate in digital networks can become part of such processes driven by the data hunger of platforms.

Another example for the interplay between capture as appropriation and frames is Kelso's piece. She engages with what we might call the "*fahaashi* frame" that shapes how activist women are perceived in some Pakistani public discourses—namely, as vulgar, un-Islamic, and westernized. While this has its historical roots in the Zia ul-Haq era, she demonstrates how this frame remains salient in online cultures today. Conservative and fundamentalist actors appropriate these frames online and offline to demonize their enemies and consolidate their political power. Kelso's case study of the Karachi Aurat March illuminates the tactics by which minoritized female subjectivities evade the *fahaashi* frame and resist the appropriation of their movement by patriarchal forces. Here, Kelso is clear about the stakes of this endeavour: if right-wing forces capture the march's central slogan (*mera jism meri marzi:* "my body my choice"), it spells the end of the solidarity that is constituent of the nascent movement.

Conclusion: What are *tactics for becoming visible*?

On the basis of what has been said, what do we mean by tactics for becoming visible? First, when speaking of tactics we emphasize precarious actors' ways of learning to navigate a volatile online space in the times of communicative capitalism.

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[2] https://www.punjabkesari.in/national/news/forced-conversion-of-hindu-girls-in-pakistan-continues-with-fake-dacuments-1426677

Second, when discussing visibility, we refer to its impact on alleviating or exacerbating precarious forms of life for minorities. Thus, on one hand, we use visibility as a metaphor that highlights the relationship between political power and recognition. Here visibility stands in for citizens' political significance with regards to the question of *who can appear on what stage and make a claim to the political community?* On the other hand, visibility also directs our attention to the surveillance, tracking, targeting, and misappropriation of an audio-visual sensorium as it concerns marginalized communities and individuals. In other words, when examined through the lens of visibility, the agency of our precarious interlocutors appears as constantly being composed, decomposed and, at times, already impoverished by the medium itself. Finally, we introduced the conceptual language of capture, limits, and thresholds, and frames to analyze our interlocuters' tactics.

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