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Frontlash at the Checkout: Commercial Performances of Migrant Inclusion and the Civil Sphere

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Research Article

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Abstract

Advertisements and corporate practices that present migrants as ordinary members of society regularly provoke boycotts, party interventions, and state action. Drawing on civil sphere theory, cultural pragmatics, and genre theory, this article treats such episodes as interventions by an *uninvited civil actor*: a market actor whose claims about civil membership, whether made by the firm or attributed to it by opponents, are judged through the civil code. Expectations are confronted with an exploratory catalogue of twenty-five episodes in eight countries and one global campaign (2014–2025), with context coded only from pre-episode sources. Backlash framing followed apocalyptic repertoires about a group rather than acute securitizing measures, which instead cast firms as partisans. Danger framing appeared when the stranger was placed, by the script or by opponents, at centers where the nation reproduces itself; placement at centers where it represents itself produced contests over representativeness. Translation into institutional action was asymmetric: action against inclusion required officeholders and a legal instrument, whereas autonomous civil institutions acted against backlash on their own motion. The article offers five falsifiable propositions and a codebook for comparative research.

1. Introduction

“Refuse the order if it’s not delivered by a Romanian. Stop encouraging the import of unskilled workers from Asia and Africa. Wake up!” In August 2025 a member of parliament and vice-president of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) posted this appeal on Facebook (Europa Liberă România, 2025). Romania, for three decades a country of emigration, had begun to receive workers from South Asia and Africa, visible chiefly as couriers delivering food ordered through platform apps. The appeal asked consumers to turn the doorstep into a border. Days later a man punched a Bangladeshi courier in Bucharest, calling him an “invader,” and was later convicted (Europa FM, 2026); Romanian couriers wrote “Sunt român” (“I am Romanian”) on their bags (G4Media, 2025); the equality body opened an investigation on its own initiative, and in 2026 prosecutors charged the MP with incitement to hatred (TVR Info, 2025; Găzarul, 2026).

Eight years earlier a market performance followed the reverse trajectory. On 5 February 2017, nine days after the United States suspended entry for nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries, Budweiser broadcast a Super Bowl advertisement dramatizing the arrival of its German founder. The company insisted that the spot had nothing to do with policy (CNN, 2017), but #BoycottBudweiser circulated alongside praise: a founding myth had been pulled into a classification in which arriving foreigners were coded as dangerous.

In both episodes what happens at the checkout is treated as a statement about who belongs, and the struggle does not stay in the market. This article argues that such episodes are struggles over the boundaries of civil solidarity that take place in, and are partly constituted by, the market. It builds on civil sphere theory (Alexander, 2006), on its accounts of incorporation (Alexander, 2001, 2013; Kivisto & Sciortino, 2015, 2025), frontlash and backlash (Alexander, 2019a), societalization (Alexander, 2018, 2019b), and civil repair (Alexander, 2024), and on cultural pragmatics (Alexander, 2004) and the theory of narrative genre (Smith, 2005). The empirical basis is an exploratory documentary catalogue of twenty-five episodes.

The article makes three contributions. First, it specifies a figure civil sphere theory has not theorized, the *uninvited civil actor*, and distinguishes performances that firms assume from performances that opponents attribute to them. Second, it proposes that commercial performances of inclusion are judged by where they place the stranger: at centers where the nation *represents* itself in the present, which provokes contests over representativeness, or at centers where it *reproduces* itself into the future, which activates apocalyptic narratives. The distinction gives empirical content to the coupling of national and civil membership that recent work identifies as a gap in civil sphere theory (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025). Third, it shows that securitization reaches the market through two temporalities, the slow accumulation of repertoires, which frames backlash, and the acute measure, which politicizes firms, and that the translation of market controversies into institutional action is asymmetric.

The article addresses four research questions:

- **RQ1.** Against which groups is hostile reception of commercial performances of inclusion directed: those whose demographic presence is largest or growing fastest, or those already coded as a threat in public discourse?
- **RQ2.** What shapes how such backlash is framed: acute securitizing measures, longer-standing narratives about a group, or the place a script gives to the stranger?
- **RQ3.** When, and in which direction, is market backlash translated into formal action by civil and state institutions?
- **RQ4.** How are the commercial performers themselves coded by audiences?

2. Literatures

2.1 Marketing and management: diversity and the political firm

Research on diversity in advertising (Uduehi, Saint Clair & Crabbe, 2025) relies mainly on psychological mechanisms such as in-group identification and perceived authenticity (Khan, Kim, Choi & Labroo, 2025), typologizes reactions into supportive and hostile segments (Wilkie, Burgess, Mirzaei & Dolan, 2023), and, in a meta-analysis of 106 papers in 21 countries finds modest effects of ethnic diversity that vary with country-level migration rates and rule of law (Eisend, Rößner & Hermann, 2025). Consumer ethnocentrism research shows that some consumers treat buying foreign goods as morally wrong (Shimp & Sharma, 1987), a disposition the Romanian appeal extends from goods to the people who deliver them. The contextual variables of this field are demographic and institutional; the meaning of the group at the moment of reception is missing.

Management research has theorized firms as political actors. Political corporate social responsibility describes corporations assuming state-like roles in global governance (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011); corporate political advocacy describes public stands on contested social issues such as marriage equality (Wettstein & Baur, 2016); and work on brand activism shows that such stands carry asymmetric risks (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020; Hydock, Paharia & Blair, 2020). These literatures ask whether and when firms should take stands. They treat politics as a stance a firm chooses, and they do not ask how publics that dispute the firm's standing decode its claim. Civil sphere theory supplies what is missing: a binary code through which both the claim and the authority of its author are judged, and an account of how market acts become civil events whether or not the firm intends them as stands.

2.2 Security studies: audiences and the vernacular

Securitization theory analyzes how issues are removed from normal politics by being framed as existential threats that justify extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998); migration is among its paradigmatic domains (Huysmans, 2000, 2006; Bigo, 2002). The sociological version makes success depend on audiences, context, and power (Balzacq, 2005), yet the audience is usually inferred from policy outcomes rather than observed (Côté, 2016), and it is plural, since securitizing actors need moral support from the public and formal support from institutions (Roe, 2008). Dramaturgical readings treat securitization as a staged performance (Salter, 2008); critics note its Western assumptions (Wilkinson, 2007) and narrow range of cases (Baele & Jalea, 2023), and non-Western analyses, such as that of the "love jihad" narrative in India (Malji & Raza, 2021), show the same move from cultural threat to authorized exception. A vernacular turn studies how ordinary people articulate security in their own terms (Jarvis & Lister, 2013) and how non-elite knowledge can reinforce or disrupt official security narratives (Vaughan-Williams & Stevens, 2016). Its evidence, however, consists mostly of talk elicited in focus groups. The market offers a site where audiences perform acceptance or refusal of securitizing frames in public acts, unprompted by researchers.

2.3 Cultural sociology: incorporation, nationhood, and images

Alexander (2001) distinguishes assimilation, hyphenation, and multiculturalism as modes of civil participation, and Alexander (2013) documents the European backlash against the multicultural mode. Kivisto and Sciortino (2015) extended the framework to incorporation and justice and have argued that civil sphere theory neglects the boundaries specific to migration and the coupling of national and civil membership (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025). Voyer (2024) has reconceived incorporation as emplacement and acceptance, and Tajic and Lund (2023) have shown how migrant students experience belonging as "ordinariness." In the theory's international network (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2023; Jaworsky, Worschech & Alexander, 2026), Jaworsky (2021) has shown how news about refugees in the United States and Canada is organized around representations of the nation, and Jaworsky, Rétiová and Binder (2023) have used interviews with Czech residents to show how viewers draw symbolic boundaries around photographs of people crossing borders. These studies analyze how audiences read images of migrants produced by news media; the present article turns to images and practices produced by firms.

Nationhood is reproduced through banal symbols and everyday practices (Billig, 1995; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008), also in settled times (Bonikowski, 2016). Consumption is a medium of boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2001); ethnic markets are constructed through marketing (Dávila, 2001); brands carry moral and political claims (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012) and become icons by performing national myths (Holt, 2004) and mobilizing consumers' meanings (Arvidsson, 2006); and markets are moral projects (Fourcade & Healy, 2007). Civil sphere theory locates the market among the non-civil spheres, whose relations to the civil sphere take the form of facilitating inputs, destructive intrusions, and civil repair (Alexander, 2006). Commercial performances of migrant inclusion fit none of these: they are claims *about* civil membership, evaluated through the civil code, made by an actor whose authority to make them is in question.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 The code and the stranger

Democratic solidarity is organized by a binary discourse in which worthy members are represented as rational, autonomous, honest, and open, and unworthy ones as irrational, dependent, deceitful, and secretive (Alexander, 2006). Migrants' incorporation requires that qualities attributed to them be bracketed as private, hyphenated with national identity, or valued as contributions to a plural civil sphere (Alexander, 2001), and each mode can be reversed. Kivisto and Sciortino (2025) sharpen the point. Migrants are, in Mary Douglas's phrase, "matter out of place": "occasionally deemed necessary, but rarely welcomed," and "suspected, at least occasionally, of being potentially polluting" (p. 45). The codes applied to them are those that members apply to one another, "oriented, however toward the outside and the future" (p. 46): wanted migrants are coded as young, dynamic, and disciplined members-in-waiting, unwanted ones as passive, backward, and dependent. Integration discourse reproduces the asymmetry when it defines the "migrant other" by a "lack" of competence and rewards the "good" migrant who fills labor-market niches (Pötzsch & Saksela-Bergholm, 2023, pp. 47–48); the Romanian appeal against "unskilled workers" draws on this anti-civil pole. Because civil membership is tightly coupled with national membership (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025), the stranger's claim to civil standing is always also a claim to belong to a particular nation.

3.2 Repertoires, genre, and the authorization of exception

The code tells us who is polluted; narrative genre tells us how much is at stake. Smith (2005) shows that the justification of war depends on whether a crisis is narrated in the low-mimetic, tragic, romantic, or apocalyptic genre; in the apocalyptic genre the stakes are civilizational and extraordinary action becomes obligatory (see also Smith & Howe, 2015). Securitization, read through this lens, combines anti-civil coding of a group, apocalyptic emplotment of its presence, and the authorization of extraordinary measures (Roe, 2008).

This article distinguishes two temporalities of securitization. The *repertoire* is a stock of apocalyptic narratives about a group (invasion, replacement, covert conversion) that political entrepreneurs develop over months or years and that is available to anyone who wishes to use it. Repertoires are not confined to the society in which they were developed: codes about migrants are "abstract enough to travel easily," and "nativist literature and icons are often appropriated by different actors in different countries" (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025, p. 46). The *acute measure* is a specific authorized exception, such as a travel ban or the closing of ports, that dramatizes the repertoire at a particular moment.

3.3 Advertising as performance and the center

Cultural pragmatics treats social action as performance whose success depends on the fusion of background representations, scripts, actors, means of symbolic production, mise-en-scène, social power, and audiences (Alexander, 2004). Advertising is a low-mimetic genre: in Schudson's (1984) phrase, it works through a "capitalist realism" that presents idealized scenes of ordinary life as typical. An inclusive advertisement makes the claim *this is normal*, through images experienced as carrying moral depth (Alexander, 2008; Alexander, Bartmanski & Giesen, 2012), and depends on background representations it does not control.

Collective representations are organized around centers, the loci of a society's ultimate values (Shils, 1975) dramatized through ritual (Geertz, 1977); a brand that places the stranger inside a national myth intervenes in the myth itself (Holt, 2004). The codebook (Appendix A) distinguishes five types of center: national symbols and rituals; founding narratives and the canon; kinship and reproduction; national institutions of collective life; and majority religious ritual. Kivisto and Sciortino (2025) observe that nation-states justify themselves by the need to protect "the reproduction of a distinctive social and cultural group" that "stretches from a common past far into the future" (p. 44), and that migrants are "the tea leaves through which participants in the civil sphere read what they think will be the nation's fate" (p. 46). This suggests that centers differ in function: some are places where the nation represents itself in the present, others places where it reproduces itself into the future. Because in liberal democracies "the physical presence of immigrants triggers, almost automatically, the anticipation of their (at least legal) inclusion" (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025, p. 46), opponents may also read a script that depicts the stranger at the periphery as a claim about the nation's future, a possibility examined below as *re-placement*.

3.4 The uninvited civil actor

Frontlash is the extension of civil inclusion to groups previously polluted; backlash is the reaction of those who experience frontlash as a threat to the community they recognize as their own (Alexander, 2019a). When a firm performs the inclusion of migrants, it enters the frontlash as an *uninvited civil actor*: an actor located in a non-civil sphere whose market acts are received as claims about civil membership, without a mandate from civil institutions, and are therefore evaluated through the civil code.

Advertising travels through the mass media, which belong to the communicative institutions of the civil sphere (Alexander, 2006), but they carry it as paid speech whose author is a market actor: the medium is civil, the speaker is not. Partnerships with civil organizations reduce but do not remove the question of authority, as Benetton learned when the organization whose photograph it used withdrew its endorsement.

The concept must also be distinguished from a facilitating input, a resource that a non-civil sphere contributes to civil life without making claims about membership. Wages paid to a refugee are a facilitating input; a public pledge to hire refugees, announced two days after a travel ban, is a claim. A performance of this second kind is *assumed*: the firm makes the claim public. But a market act can also become a claim without the firm's intention, when opponents make a practice public and read it as a statement about who belongs. Such a performance is *attributed*. The uninvited civil actor can thus be made by its opponents: a bakery that hires two foreign workers makes no claim, but once a village mobilizes against the hire, its decision to keep or dismiss them is judged as one.

The uninvited civil actor is vulnerable in two ways. From the anti-civil pole, its commercial authorship can be decoded as strategy, that is, as *deceit*. From the civil pole, it can be decoded as symbolic inclusion that substitutes for structural change: critical research on inclusion warns that "the very promise of inclusion can be the concealment of exclusion" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 183, as cited in Pötzsch & Saksela-Bergholm, 2023, p. 48), and that inclusion "remains structurally fragile when reduced to symbolic gestures rather than systemic transformation" (Carrasco-Mella, Paz-Maldonado, Orozco, Véliz-Campos & Veliz, 2026, Abstract). And because the firm depends on broad publics, it can be sanctioned through everyday acts, such as not buying, which become performances of membership in their own right (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005; Kam & Deichert, 2020).

3.5 Cross-sphere translation

Societalization occurs when a problem arising in a non-civil sphere is recoded as a threat to the civil sphere and becomes the object of intervention by civil institutions (Alexander, 2018, 2019b). This article isolates the mechanism at its heart, *cross-sphere translation*: the conversion of an event in a non-civil sphere into an event in civil institutions, measured by formal acts such as regulatory proceedings, legislation, or prosecutions. The usage is narrower than translation in actor-network theory, where it designates the enrollment of actors into networks (Callon, 1986), and orthogonal to Stritzel's (2011) reading of securitization as the travel of security meanings across contexts: it concerns the movement of an *event* between institutional spheres. Translation is distinct from backlash, which can remain entirely in the market, and requires carriers with institutional access and, for formal action, an applicable legal or regulatory instrument. It can run against a market performance of inclusion, when political carriers mobilize institutions in the name of a national, religious, or familial solidarity presented as civil (cf. Alexander, 2023), or against the backlash, when autonomous civil institutions take up the controversy; the latter is called *counter-translation*.

3.6 Backlash as civil performance

Backlash actors rarely present themselves as opponents of civil values. They present themselves as defenders of unity, law, children, honest representation, and ordinary citizens against corporations that impose values while pursuing profit. Backlash is itself a civil performance, one that codes migrants as dangerous and firms as deceitful and elite; the analysis below reconstructs these self-presentations from the documented record.

3.7 Expectations

The framework yields five expectations. They are sensitizing expectations in the sense of abductive analysis (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), meant to reveal surprises and refine the theory rather than hypotheses tested on a probability sample. E1, E2, and E4 were formulated before the catalogue was assembled; E3 and E5 took shape during a first reading of the material and therefore constitute weaker tests.

E1 (RQ1, coding over demography). Hostile reception will target groups already coded as anti-civil in public discourse rather than those whose demographic presence is largest or growing fastest.

E2 (RQ2, securitization and genre). Where migration is securitized, backlash will be framed in apocalyptic terms (danger, invasion, replacement); where it is not, in low-mimetic terms (taste, unity, representativeness).

E3 (RQ2, placement). Scripts that place the stranger at a center of collective life will draw more hostility than scripts that place the stranger at its periphery.

E4 (RQ3, translation). Backlash will be translated into formal institutional action only where carriers with institutional access take it up, and the direction of action will depend on where anti-civil carriers are institutionally located.

E5 (RQ4, double exposure). Firms performing inclusion will be exposed to charges of deceit from the anti-civil pole and of exploitation from the civil pole.

4. Data and methods

4.1 Design

The design is abductive (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Expectations derived from theory are confronted with an exploratory documentary catalogue; departures from them are used to revise the theory, and the revised theory is stated as propositions (Section 6). The catalogue is not a sample from a defined population and cannot support statistical inference; because the propositions were refined on the material on which the expectations were confronted, they require out-of-sample testing.

4.2 Inclusion criteria and search

An episode was included if (a) a commercial firm made a public communication or took a public action concerning migrants or people of migrant background, or consumers were publicly called to use their purchasing to include or exclude migrants; (b) the communication or action drew documented public contestation; and (c) the episode was documented in at least two independent sources. Episodes concerning religious minorities, sexual minorities, and racialized citizens were included as *scope cases* where the group was framed in public discourse as a threat. Two *contrast cases* without documented backlash were included deliberately as a partial check on selection on controversy (Tecate, 2016; Diesel, 2017), and two *inverse episodes*, in which firms were contested from the civil pole for perceived alignment with securitizing actors or measures (Goya, 2020; Home Depot, 2025). Searches covered English, German, Italian, Polish, Romanian, and Hungarian sources for 2014–2025. Table 1 shows the structure of the catalogue.

Table 1
Structure of the catalogue

Type	Episodes (Table 2)	Informs
Core: commercial performances depicting migrants or people of migrant background	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 21	RQ1–RQ4
Core: corporate practices concerning migrants	4, 5, 17, 23	RQ1–RQ3
Mixed: diversity campaign including migrants among other groups	22	RQ1
Scope cases: other groups framed as threats	14, 16, 19, 20	RQ2, RQ3
Contrast cases: no documented backlash	3, 10	RQ2
Inverse episodes: firms contested for alignment with securitization	18, 24	RQ4
Political appeal to consumers	25	RQ1, RQ3

The search for Hungary located no episode in which a major brand depicted migrants sympathetically between 2015 and 2019, despite the government's anti-migration billboard campaigns (NPR, 2015); this absence is consistent with anticipatory silence by firms but cannot establish it.

4.3 Coding

All episodes were coded by the author using the codebook in Appendix A. Four decisions guard against circularity.

Context is coded only from sources that predate the episode, on two variables. **A (acute measure)** records whether an authorized extraordinary measure concerning the group was adopted in the thirty days before the episode; ongoing enforcement under earlier measures is not coded as acute. **R (repertoire)** records whether an apocalyptic narrative about the group was documented before the episode, and whether its carriers were governing, opposition, or fringe actors. Where no pre-episode source could be located, R is coded "not established." The pre-episode sources are listed in Online Resource 1.

Placement is coded by type of center and, in a second step, by function: *representation* (national symbols, founding narratives, national institutions and teams, majority rituals) or *reproduction* (marriage, pregnancy and birth, the family household, or children presented as the nation's next generation). The functional rule was added during analysis, when a first reading suggested that danger framing clustered

around scenes of kinship rather than around national centers as such; all episodes were then recoded under it, so the placement codes are exploratory and offered for ex ante use in future research. *Re-placement*, where backlash carriers narrated the stranger's future presence at centers of reproduction, is coded separately from the script's placement, and so is *authorship* (assumed or attributed performance).

Escalation is coded independently of carriers, as the presence of a formal institutional act: 0 = no documented contestation; 1 = contestation without a formal act; 2a = formal act against the performance; 2b = formal act against backlash carriers.

Backlash framing is coded from statements of backlash participants quoted in the sources and, for Coca-Cola 2014, from a critical discourse analysis of more than 8,000 tweets (Hoffman, 2016), using six categories: taste/offense; unity/law; representativeness; betrayal/elite imposition; danger; exploitation.

4.4 Limitations

All codes were assigned by the author from secondary sources. Codes resting on a single or weak source are marked † in Tables 3 and 4: the Kinder framing (one social-movement post), the Edeka framing (scattered mockery), the date of Lidl's Ukrainian subtitles, and the Kaufland reaction (one partisan site, dated more than a year after the carts were launched). For Benetton's 2017 classroom photograph, the search located announcement coverage but no retrievable record of public reception; the episode therefore does not meet criterion (b), but it is retained, with its reception coded "not documented," because it is the only script in the catalogue that places children of migrants at a center of reproduction, and excluding it would hide a possible counterexample. The catalogue is selected on visibility, and press quotation distorts the distribution of reactions: Hoffman (2016) found that supportive tweets dominated the 2014 Coca-Cola hashtags and that media coverage overstated opposition. "Dominant framing" therefore refers to the framing most prominent in the documented record, not to the distribution of attitudes.

5. Findings

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the catalogue.

Table 2
Episodes

#	Episode	Object; group	Script; placement (function)	Firm response
1	Coca-Cola "It's Beautiful," US, Feb. 2014	Ad; migrants, linguistic minorities	Multicultural; national symbol (i) (representation)	Persisted; re-aired 2017
2	Kinder chocolate Euro 2016 edition, Germany, May 2016	Packaging; national-team players of migrant background, as children	Ordinariness; national team (iv) (representation)	Persisted; distanced itself from xenophobia
3	Tecate "Beer Wall," US, Sept. 2016 (contrast)	Ad; Mexicans and Americans	Comic parody of the border wall; none	Persisted
4	Chobani refugee hiring, US, 2016	Practice; refugees	Workplace; periphery	Persisted
5	Starbucks refugee-hiring pledge, US, Jan. 2017	Practice; refugees	Workplace; periphery	Persisted
6	Coca-Cola re-air, US, Feb. 2017	Ad; as #1	As #1 (representation)	Persisted
7	Budweiser "Born the Hard Way," US, Feb. 2017	Ad; immigrant founder	Assimilationist; founding narrative (ii) (representation)	Persisted; denied politics
8	Airbnb "We Accept," US, Feb. 2017	Ad and pledge; all origins	Multicultural; periphery	Persisted; housing pledge
9	84 Lumber "The Journey Begins," US, Feb. 2017	Ad; migrant journey	Humanitarian; border; periphery	Altered (network refused wall ending)
10	Diesel "Make Love Not Walls," global, Feb. 2017 (contrast)	Ad; all origins, LGBTQ+ performers	Carnivalesque; none	Persisted
11	Edeka "#Vielfalt," Germany, Aug. 2017	In-store action and film; foreign products, diverse staff	Multicultural metaphor; periphery	Persisted (minimal comment)
12	Benetton school class, Italy, Dec. 2017	Ad; children of 13 nationalities	Ordinariness; national canon (ii), public school (iv); children as next generation (reproduction)	Persisted
13	Benetton rescue photo, Italy, June 2018	Ad; rescued migrants	Humanitarian (suffering); border; periphery	Removed branded post; kept agency photo
14	Surf Excel Holi, India, Mar. 2019 (scope)	Ad; religious minority	Friendship; majority religious ritual (v) (representation)	Persisted
15	Deutsche Bahn brand campaign, Germany, Apr. 2019	Ad; people of migrant background	Ordinariness; national institution (iv) (representation)	Defended
16	Coca-Cola #LoveIsLove, Hungary, Aug.–Oct. 2019 (scope)	Ad; sexual minority	Ordinariness; couples (iii) (reproduction)	Fined
17	Ditrău bakery hires Sri Lankan workers, Romania, Jan.–Feb. 2020	Practice; migrant workers	Workplace (bread production); periphery	Moved workers out of bread production, then announced it would keep them
18	Goya Foods CEO praise of the President, US, July 2020 (inverse)	Corporate statement; Hispanic consumers	—	Persisted
19	Tanishq *Ekatvam*, India, Oct. 2020 (scope)	Ad; religious minority	Interfaith family; baby shower (iii) (reproduction)	Withdrew
20	Sainsbury's Christmas, UK, Nov. 2020 (scope)	Ad; racialized citizens	Ordinariness; family Christmas (iii) (reproduction)	Defended
21	Lidl Ukrainian-language ads and announcements, Poland, 2022	Ad subtitles, in-store announcements; refugees from Ukraine	Practical ordinariness; periphery	Defended

#	Episode	Object; group	Script; placement (function)	Firm response
22	Kaufland "Cărucioarele Diversității," Romania, 2023 (reaction Aug. 2024)	In-store campaign; gender, disability, culture, age	Diversity pillars; periphery	No documented retreat
23	IKEA/mBank and TV Republika, Poland, Jan. 2024	Media buying; migrants	Withdrawal of ads from anti-migrant channel; non-depiction	Maintained withdrawal
24	Home Depot and immigration raids, US, June–Nov. 2025 (inverse)	Store premises; immigrant day laborers	—	Denied coordination; otherwise silent
25	"Refuse the order," Romania, Aug. 2025	Political appeal to consumers; migrant workers	Doorstep delivery; periphery	Employers rebutted

Sources: 1: NPR (2014), Hoffman (2016); 2: t-online (2016), 20 Minuten (2016); 3: Vice (2016), Adweek (2016); 4: Christian Science Monitor (2016), CBC Radio (2016); 5: Fortune (2017), Euronews (2017); 6: Yahoo Finance (2017); 7: CNN (2017); 8: Fox News (2017), SFist (2017); 9: CBS Detroit (2017), *Washington Post* (2017); 10: The Drum (2017), HuffPost (2017), Adweek (2017), Dazed (2017); 11: Horizont (2017), Meedia (2017); 12: Brand News (2017), *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (2017); 13: *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (2018), The Local Italy (2018), Maritime Executive (2018); 14: Exchange4media (2026), Deccan Chronicle (2019); 15: Horizont (2019); 16: CNN Business (2019), Daily News Hungary (2019), European Parliament (2019), CJEU (2026); 17: HotNews (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d), Digi24 (2020); 18: NPR (2020), Al Jazeera (2020a), CNN Business (2020); 19: Al Jazeera (2020b), India TV News (2020); 20: Global Citizen (2020); 21: money.pl (2022), Wiadomości Handlowe (2022); 22: Revista Cariere (2023), Adevărul (2023), ActiveNews (2024); 23: Notes from Poland (2024), Euronews (2024); 24: NPR (2025), Newsweek (2025), Watson Coleman (2026); 25: Europa Liberă România (2025), TVR Info (2025), G4Media (2025), Găzarul (2026), Europa FM (2026).

Table 3
Context, reception, and escalation

#	A: acute measure (≤ 30 days)	R: prior apocalyptic repertoire	Dominant framing	Carriers	Esc.
1	No	Not established	Unity/law	Users	1
2	No	Yes (movement, since 2014)	Representativeness ("undeutsch")†	Social movement (Pegida chapter)	1
3	No	Yes (candidate, Dec. 2015)	None documented	None	0
4	No	Yes (candidate, Dec. 2015)	Danger, with re-placement ("importing Muslims")	Users, partisan media	1
5	Yes (travel ban)	Yes (governing)	Betrayal	Users, partisan media	1
6	Yes	Yes (governing)	Unity/betrayal	Users	1
7	Yes	Yes (governing)	Betrayal/politicization	Users	1
8	Yes	Yes (governing)	Betrayal/partisanship	Users	1
9	Yes	Yes (governing)	Partisanship	Users; network gatekeeping	1
10	Yes	Yes (governing)	None documented	None	0
11	No	Not established	Taste/hypocrisy†	Users	1
12	No	Yes (opposition; League "Stop invasione" since 2014)	Not documented	—	0
13	Yes (ports closed)	Yes (governing)	Hypocrisy/elite; exploitation	Officeholders; NGO	1
14	No	Yes (nationalist movement)	Betrayal	Users	1
15	No	Not established	Representativeness	Officeholders (mayor; party leader)	1
16	No	Yes (governing, May 2019)	Danger (to children)	Officeholders	2a
17	No	Not established nationally; activated locally at onset	Danger, with re-placement ("a school, a church"; "their families")	Local priest; residents; Facebook group	2b
18	No	Yes (governing)	Betrayal (civil pole)	Officeholders on both sides	1
19	No	Yes (nationalist movement, since 2009)	Danger	Users; political figures	1
20	No	Not established	Danger (replacement)	Users	1
21	No	Not established (for Ukrainians, 2022)	Unity/law (language)†	Users	1
22	No	Yes, about sexual minorities (2018 referendum campaign)	Elite imposition ("LGBT" carts)†	Partisan media	1
23	No	Yes (former governing, 2023)	Betrayal	Partisan media; officeholder (MEP)	1
24	No (ongoing enforcement)	Yes (governing)	Complicity/betrayal (civil pole)	Activist coalitions; officeholder (member of Congress, Feb. 2026)	1
25	No	Yes (opposition, 2024–25 campaigns)	Danger ("invader"); native preference	Officeholder (MP)	2b

Escalation

0 = no documented contestation; 1 = contestation without a formal institutional act; 2a = formal act against the performance; 2b = formal act against the backlash carrier (counter-translation).

5.1 Backlash is common and not confined to securitized moments (RQ1, RQ2)

Backlash occurred across script types and in the absence of acute measures. Coca-Cola's 2014 advertisement, in which "America the Beautiful" was sung in several languages (NPR, 2014), drew #BoycottCoke and #SpeakAmerican without any acute measure, as did Edeka in 2017, Deutsche Bahn in 2019, Sainsbury's in 2020, and Lidl's Ukrainian-language announcements in Poland in 2022. Conversely, Budweiser's assimilationist script, the one civil sphere theory would expect to be least provocative, drew a boycott campaign in the week of the travel ban. What varies is how backlash is framed and whether it is translated into institutions.

5.2 Configurations of context, placement, and framing (RQ2)

Table 4 presents the observed combinations of acute measure (A), repertoire (R), and placement function, with the resulting framing. It is a descriptive device, not a qualitative comparative analysis: it reports no consistency or coverage measures, cells contain one to four episodes, and inverse episodes are excluded. The regularities below hold without exception *in this catalogue*, and claim no more.

Table 4
Observed configurations (non-inverse episodes)

Row	A	R	Placement (function)	Episodes	Observed framing
1	Yes	Yes	Representation	6, 7	Unity, betrayal, politicization
2	Yes	Yes	Periphery	5, 8, 9, 13	Betrayal, partisanship, elite hypocrisy
3	Yes	Yes	None (carnivalesque)	10	No documented backlash
4	No	Yes	None (comic)	3	No documented backlash
5	No	Yes	Reproduction	16, 19	Danger
6	No	Not established	Reproduction	20	Danger (replacement)
7	No	Yes	Reproduction	12	Reception not documented
8	No	Yes	Representation	2†, 14	Representativeness; betrayal
9	No	Not established	Representation	1, 15	Unity/law; representativeness
10	No	Yes, or activated locally at onset	Periphery, with re-placement by carriers	4, 17, 25	Danger
11	No	Yes	Periphery or non-depiction, without re-placement	22†, 23	Elite imposition; betrayal
12	No	Not established	Periphery	11†, 21†	Taste/hypocrisy; unity/law

Note: Episode numbers refer to Table 2. † = low-confidence code (Section 4.4). Rows 7 and 12 rest on undocumented or low-confidence codes and support no proposition.

First, no configuration that included an acute measure produced danger framing (rows 1–3). After the US travel ban and the Italian closure of ports, backlash framed firms as partisans or traitors: Starbucks was accused of putting refugees before veterans (Euronews, 2017), Budweiser and Airbnb of taking sides, and Benetton of elite hypocrisy (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2018). An acute measure makes any sympathetic depiction legible as a position *on the measure*.

Second, every reproductive script with a documented reception drew danger framing (rows 5–6), whether or not a repertoire was documented among parties. Tanishq's advertisement was read through the "love jihad" narrative, which Hindu nationalist activists had promoted since 2009 as a covert assault on the community's reproduction (Strohl, 2019; Malji & Raza, 2021; Siddiqui, 2025). Coca-Cola's Hungarian campaign was attacked in the name of protecting children three months after the Speaker of Parliament had declared advocacy for adoption by same-sex couples morally equivalent to pedophilia (Index.hu, 2019). Sainsbury's family Christmas drew the narrative of white people becoming "a minority in our own country" (Global Citizen, 2020). The three cases are scope cases, and a fourth

reproductive script, Benetton's 2017 classroom, has no documented reception (row 7). If its reception was in fact uneventful, it is a counterexample; the sources do not allow a decision.

Third, no script that placed the stranger at a center of representation drew danger framing (rows 1, 8, 9). Coca-Cola's multilingual anthem, Deutsche Bahn's railway, and Kinder's national team drew contests over unity, representativeness, or partisanship.

Fourth, peripheral scripts drew danger framing only when backlash carriers *re-placed* the stranger at centers of reproduction by narrating settlement, families, and demographic succession (row 10). Chobani's employment of refugees was attacked through claims that its founder was "importing Muslims" (Christian Science Monitor, 2016), drawing on a repertoire a leading presidential candidate had nationalized in December 2015 (Trump, 2015). In Ditrău, the village priest answered the news that one of two Sri Lankan bakers was Catholic with "I'm not interested. Today two come, tomorrow seven, then they need a school, a church, and after that?" (HotNews, 2020a), and a resident predicted that "after two years these six will bring their families and after another four or five years we'll be surrounded by black people" (Digi24, 2020). The Romanian appeal of 2025 spoke of the "import" of foreign workers, and the assault that followed used the vocabulary of invasion. Without re-placement (row 11) or a repertoire (row 12), peripheral scripts drew imposition, betrayal, taste, or unity framings. Lidl's Ukrainian-language announcements, addressed to about 2.9 million Ukrainians living in Poland in 2022 (Bieńkowska, Kubiciel-Lodzińska, Maj & Tworek, 2025, p. 199), drew only the objection "Do German shops make announcements in Polish?" (money.pl, 2022).

Ditrău qualifies the role of repertoires. No apocalyptic repertoire about non-EU workers was documented in Romanian national discourse in January 2020. The danger narrative was voiced at the onset by carriers with authority in the community: the priest, who later headed a petition of more than 1,800 residents asking the bakery not to hire foreigners (HotNews, 2020d), and a Facebook group of about 2,500 members calling for "a Ditrău without migrants" (Digi24, 2020). The repertoire may have been generated locally or imported from the Hungarian government's anti-migration campaigns of 2015–2019 (Bajomi-Lázár, 2019), which a protester echoed in invoking migration in Europe (HotNews, 2020a); the sources do not allow the readings to be separated. Either way, a repertoire need not be established nationally to be activated locally. Ditrău is also the clearest *attributed* performance in the catalogue: the bakery made no claim, and its hiring became a claim about membership only when the village made it one.

5.3 Reading the scripts: representation and reproduction (RQ2)

Kinder (Germany, 2016). For its Euro 2016 edition, Ferrero replaced the child's face on the wrapper with childhood photographs of national-team players, including İlkay Gündoğan and Jérôme Boateng (20 Minuten, 2016). The edition particularized an icon of generic German childhood with children who had grown up to represent the nation. A Pegida chapter captioned the images "Vor nichts wird Halt gemacht" ("nothing is off-limits") (t-online, 2016). The objection concerned who may stand for the nation now, and it was answered in the same register, by the football federation's president calling the team "one of the best examples of successful integration" (t-online, 2016).

Benetton (Italy, 2017). The classroom photograph shows twenty-eight children of thirteen nationalities around a teacher reading *Pinocchio* (Brand News, 2017), the Italian story of a puppet who becomes a real boy. The image claimed not that migrants already represent Italy but that the children of migrants are Italy's next generation, when the *ius soli* bill that would have recognized many of them as citizens was dying in the Senate (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2017). Pupils of foreign citizenship made up about a tenth of students in Italian schools, nearly two-thirds of them born in Italy, and under the 1992 citizenship law children born in Italy to foreign parents could claim citizenship only after uninterrupted legal residence until eighteen (Giudici, Trappolini & Vicari, 2021, p. 4). Conflicts over citizenship are "the most meaning-loaded controversies in liberal democracies" (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025, p. 53). The reading concerns the script; as noted, its reception is undocumented.

Surf Excel and Tanishq (India, 2019 and 2020). In Surf Excel's film, a Hindu girl invites other children to drench her with Holi colors until they run out, so that she can escort her Muslim friend to the mosque unstained; the tagline is "Daag acche hain" ("stains are good") (Exchange4media, 2026; Deccan Chronicle, 2019). The majority child holds the initiative and the minority child is protected. In Tanishq's film, a pregnant Hindu daughter-in-law is honored by her Muslim in-laws with the Hindu baby-shower ritual (Al Jazeera, 2020b): the minority family is the host and the scene is the continuation of a family line across the religious boundary. The first was attacked as "appeasement" and kept on air; the second was read through a repertoire built on intermarriage and birth and was withdrawn.

These readings, with the re-placement observed in Chobani, Ditrău, and Romania, suggest that what activates apocalyptic narratives is not the depiction of strangers at national centers as such but the claim, made by the script or attributed to it by its opponents, that strangers will take part in the nation's reproduction. Claims about the present composition of the nation, however provocative, are

contested in the vocabulary of representation. Representational scripts claim civil standing for those already present; reproductive scripts claim a share in the nation's future, where national membership is most jealously guarded (Kivisto & Sciortino, 2025).

The contrast cases fit this reading from the other side. Tecate's "Beer Wall" (September 2016) parodied the candidate's "tremendous wall" with a foot-high wall for sharing beer (Vice, 2016; Adweek, 2016), and Diesel's "Make Love Not Walls" (February 2017) showed dancers passing through a heart-shaped hole in a wall (HuffPost, 2017; Adweek, 2017). Both were comic or carnivalesque and placed no one at an American center; their smaller reach could alone explain the absence of backlash, so they are consistent with the argument but do not demonstrate it.

5.4 Translation: an asymmetry (RQ3)

Formal institutional acts occurred in three episodes: Hungary, Ditrău, and the 2025 Romanian appeal. Officeholders took up several others without any formal act following: the Italian interior minister called Benetton's rescue photograph "squalid" (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2018); the mayor of Tübingen asked of Deutsche Bahn's campaign "Which society is this supposed to represent?" (Horizont, 2019); a Law and Justice MEP joined a boycott of IKEA (Notes from Poland, 2024); members of Congress called for a boycott of Goya while the President promoted the brand (NPR, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020a). Officeholder involvement is not sufficient for translation.

The three acts ran in different directions. In Hungary, the only case of formal action *against* an inclusive performance, a boycott call by a vice-president of the governing party was followed by a fine imposed by consumer protection authorities under an advertising provision protecting minors (Daily News Hungary, 2019; European Parliament, 2019); the governing coalition later extended such restrictions by statute, which the Court of Justice of the European Union held in April 2026 to violate EU law, including the values of Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (CJEU, 2026). Officeholders carried the backlash, and an instrument was available. In Italy the governing party had no instrument applicable to a humanitarian photograph, and in Poland, by January 2024, Law and Justice was in opposition.

In Ditrău, formal action ran *against* the backlash and was not initiated by officeholders. The national equality body opened proceedings on its own motion after the bakery announced that it would move its Sri Lankan workers out of bread production, and the county police opened a criminal investigation *in rem* for incitement to hatred or discrimination (HotNews, 2020b); the labor minister ordered inspections (Digi24, 2020). Local officeholders neither carried nor opposed the backlash; a member of parliament for the area said he had observed "no xenophobic tendencies," only "a conflict between factory owners and locals" (Digi24, 2020). Sympathy from officeholders without an applicable instrument produced no anti-civil translation. In 2025 the equality body again acted on its own motion against the AUR appeal, and prosecutors later charged the MP (TVR Info, 2025; Găzarul, 2026).

The evidence suggests an asymmetry: anti-civil translation required officeholders and an instrument, whereas counter-translation was initiated by autonomous institutions (the equality body, the police, and in the Hungarian case the European Court) using anti-discrimination and criminal law. Anti-civil translation is illustrated by a single case, which concerns a sexual minority; the asymmetry is offered for testing, not as an established finding.

5.5 Firm responses and commercial consequences (RQ4)

Firms overwhelmingly persisted. 84 Lumber altered its film when the network refused the ending; Benetton removed the branded version of its rescue photograph while keeping a news-agency version (Maritime Executive, 2018); the Ditrău bakery first moved its bakers out of bread production "for the village's peace" and then, amid national criticism, announced that they would "continue working as bakers" (HotNews, 2020b, 2020c); Tanishq withdrew its film, citing staff safety; Coca-Cola was fined in Hungary. Where measured, commercial consequences were small or contested (Euronews, 2017; Hoffman, 2016), although the 2023 boycott of Bud Light, outside the catalogue, cost the brand its position as the best-selling U.S. beer (PBS NewsHour, 2023). The catalogue cannot settle the magnitude of commercial effects.

5.6 Double exposure and inverse episodes (RQ4)

The humanitarian organization whose ship had rescued the migrants in Benetton's 2018 photograph dissociated itself, calling the use of the tragedy commercial (*Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2018; The Local Italy, 2018). Benetton was polluted from both poles at once: by the governing party as a hypocritical elite and by a civil actor as an exploiter of suffering. Diesel's "Hate Couture" line of 2018, which printed online insults onto clothing to "reclaim" them, met the civil-side objection when LGBTQ+ commentators argued that a jacket bearing a slur reproduced the harm it claimed to neutralize (The Advocate, 2018). Both brands openly acknowledge commercial motives ("of course we want to sell jeans," said David LaChapelle of the Diesel campaign; Dazed, 2017), which pre-empts the charge of hidden motives, but not that of exploitation.

The inverse episodes show the arena operating in the other direction. In July 2020, after Goya's chief executive praised the President, Latino consumers and members of Congress called for a boycott under #Goyaway, answered by a presidential "buycott" (NPR, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020a; CNN Business, 2020). In 2025, as federal immigration enforcement repeatedly targeted day laborers in Home Depot parking lots, activist coalitions organized boycotts; the company said it was not coordinating with immigration authorities and otherwise kept silent, and in February 2026 a member of Congress demanded an explanation (NPR, 2025; Newsweek, 2025; Watson Coleman, 2026). Under sustained enforcement, silence itself became legible as a position.

5.7 Romania: from local to national coding (RQ1)

The Romanian episodes trace how the object of market backlash follows the coding of groups rather than demography. In January 2020, when migration was not a national political theme, the Ditrău backlash was local: a Hungarian-speaking village mobilized by its priest against two bakers hired through a recruitment agency after vacancies advertised for two months drew no local applicants (HotNews, 2020a, 2020d). In 2023 Kaufland Romania introduced colored shopping carts for Diversity Month, each color standing for a pillar of its diversity policy, including cultural acceptance, in a workforce of seventeen nationalities (Revista Cariere, 2023). The documented hostile reaction came in August 2024, when a conservative site presented the carts as "LGBT" carts and a commenter proposed filling them with goods and abandoning them at the checkout (ActiveNews, 2024). The cultural pillar went unremarked, although about 140,000 non-EU workers were by then employed in Romania (Știripesurse, 2024); the group nationally coded as a threat was sexual minorities, the object of a 2018 referendum campaign (Balkan Insight, 2018).

Within months the national coding shifted. In October 2024 a national news site headlined the arrival of Asian workers as an "Asian invasion" (Știripesurse, 2024), and in a televised debate in May 2025 the AUR presidential candidate contrasted the "Indians, Pakistanis, people from Bangladesh" seen in Bucharest and Cluj with his concern for Romanians (Ziare.com, 2025). The August 2025 appeal was not a translation of a market event but a *political mobilization of consumers*, in which a party actor enlisted consumption as a performance of exclusion and the migrant worker became the object of the boycott. Couriers who wrote "Sunt român" on their bags performed national membership in return (G4Media, 2025).

5.8 Expectations and evidence

Table 5
Expectations confronted with the evidence

Expectation	Evidence	Status
E1 Coding over demography	Romania: local danger framing (2020); hostility to sexual minorities while about 140,000 non-EU workers went unremarked (2024); national mobilization against migrant couriers after the coding shifted (2025). Poland: no danger framing of Ukrainians in 2022 despite about 2.9 million residents (Sections 5.2, 5.7)	Supported (two national settings; requires comparative test)
E2 Securitization produces apocalyptic framing	No danger framing in any configuration with an acute measure; danger framing where a repertoire, national or activated locally, met reproductive placement or re-placement (Table 4)	Revised: repertoires frame, acute measures politicize; repertoires need not be national
E3 Central placement draws more hostility	Reproductive scripts with documented reception drew danger framing (3 of 3; one further script undocumented); representational scripts did not; peripheral scripts did so only with re-placement (Table 4)	Reformulated (weaker test): reproduction versus representation, including re-placement
E4 Translation requires institutional carriers; direction by location	Formal action against inclusion only in Hungary (officeholders and instrument); against backlash in Ditrău and Romania 2025, initiated by autonomous institutions (Section 5.4)	Revised: translation is asymmetric (one anti-civil case)
E5 Double exposure	Benetton 2018 and Diesel 2018 drew civil-side charges of exploitation; inverse episodes show civil-pole boycotts of firms seen as aligned with securitization (Section 5.6)	Supported and extended (weaker test)

6. Propositions

The propositions restate the expectations in the form the evidence supports; having been refined on the same material, they require out-of-sample tests.

Proposition 1

(Coding over demography). Hostile reception of commercial performances of inclusion targets the groups coded as anti-civil in public discourse at the time, not those whose demographic presence is largest or growing fastest. *Falsified if*, across matched campaigns, hostility tracks the size or growth of depicted groups rather than their prior coding.

Proposition 2

(Repertoires frame, acute measures politicize). Danger framing requires an apocalyptic repertoire about the group, established in public discourse before the episode or activated at its onset by carriers with authority in the relevant community. Acute measures frame firms as partisans rather than the group as a danger. *Falsified if* danger framing occurs where no repertoire, national or locally activated, can be documented, or if acute measures are followed by danger framing without reproductive placement or re-placement.

Proposition 3

(Representation and reproduction). Danger framing arises when the stranger is placed at a center where the nation reproduces itself (marriage, birth, the family household, the next generation), by the script or by backlash carriers who re-place the stranger there. Placement at centers where the nation represents itself in the present produces contests over representativeness, unity, or partisanship. *Evidence*: three scope episodes and three peripheral episodes with re-placement; the rule was formulated on this material, and one reproductive script lacks a documented reception. *Falsified if*, among campaigns of comparable reach coded ex ante with Appendix A, danger framing is no more frequent for reproductive placements and re-placements than for representational or peripheral ones.

Proposition 4

(Asymmetric translation). Formal action against a commercial performance of inclusion requires officeholders among the backlash carriers and an applicable legal or regulatory instrument; formal action against backlash carriers can be initiated by autonomous civil institutions where anti-discrimination or criminal law provides an instrument. *Evidence*: illustrated by one anti-civil case (Hungary, a sexual minority) and two counter-translations (Ditrău; Romania 2025). *Falsified if* formal action against inclusive performances occurs without officeholder carriers or an applicable instrument, or if counter-action occurs only where officeholders initiate it.

Proposition 5

(Double exposure). Commercial performers of inclusion are exposed to pollution from both poles of the civil code: from the anti-civil pole as deceitful partisans or elites, and from the civil pole as exploiters, especially when scripts use suffering or injury. Firms perceived as aligned with securitizing measures are exposed to boycott from the civil pole, and under sustained measures silence is coded as alignment. *Falsified if* civil-side charges of exploitation are no more frequent for humanitarian or injury-based scripts than for scripts of ordinariness.

7. A research program

Three steps follow. First, the codebook should be applied ex ante to samples from advertising archives, including campaigns that passed without controversy, where Propositions 1 and 3 are tested. Second, repertoires and acute measures should be measured in public discourse as national time series. Third, Romania offers a rare opportunity to observe the emergence of migrant coding in real time; a corpus of Romanian advertisements and employer-branding campaigns featuring foreign workers (2019–2026), compared with Hungary, Poland, Germany, and Italy, would allow coding and demography to be separated, within the comparative framework of the civil sphere network's work on the region (Jaworsky, Worschech & Alexander, 2026) and in response to critiques of the concentration of cultural sociology and securitization research on Western cases (Alexander, Smith & Jacobs, 2021; Wilkinson, 2007).

8. Discussion

For civil sphere theory, the article makes three claims. The market's relations with the civil sphere include the performance of civil claims by uninvited market actors, whether assumed by firms or attributed to them by opponents, alongside facilitating inputs, destructive intrusions, and civil repair. Societalization rests on a mechanism of cross-sphere translation that appears to be asymmetric: anti-civil translation depends on officeholders and legal instruments, whereas counter-translation can be initiated by autonomous civil institutions. And backlash is itself a civil performance that borrows the civil code to pollute strangers and the firms that depict them; the inverse episodes show the civil pole using the same market repertoire. The distinction between representation and reproduction specifies where national membership bears on civil incorporation: claims about who may represent the nation now are contested in civil terms, whereas

claims about who will take part in the nation's future activate apocalyptic narratives, and opponents can produce such claims from scripts that make none.

For research on political corporate responsibility and brand activism, the article shows that a firm's political standing is not only chosen but conferred: a firm can become a civil actor through the readings of its opponents, and its stance is judged by a code that evaluates its authority as well as its claim. For security studies, it shows that the two temporalities of securitization have distinct effects on audience practice, and that the market is a place where vernacular responses to securitization can be observed as public acts rather than elicited talk.

The argument applies to societies whose civil sphere is developed enough for market acts to be received as claims about membership, and to groups whose membership is contested; its empirical basis has the limits set out in Section 4.4. Within these limits, the catalogue shows that the question of who belongs is argued not only in parliaments, newsrooms, and courts but also at the checkout and on the doorstep.

Declarations

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, competing interests, and ethics. See the title page.

Author Contribution

M.M. conceived and designed the study, compiled the episode catalogue, coded all episodes, carried out the analysis, prepared the tables, and wrote and revised the manuscript. M.M. is the sole author and takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Data availability.

Tables 2–4 and Appendix A are included in the article; pre-episode context sources are provided in Online Resource 1.

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