

# 16th ESA Conference 2024: Tension, Trust and Transformation

## Abstract – RN25 Social Movements

### Media Representation of Environmental Movements: Unveiling Frames in news articles on the *Last Generation* in Austria

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In this paper we examine how one of the most controversial and polarizing environmental movements of our time, the *Last Generation*, and its messages are portrayed and framed in the Austrian media. While supported by parts of the population, some politicians have labeled the activists as climate terrorists for their disruptive forms of protest (e.g., gluing themselves to the streets). The *Last Generation* strategically uses the media to generate attention and promote their warnings and demands. Our goal is to understand how different media portray the movement and how their representation contributes to the public discourse on environmental movements and climate change. With this aim, we conduct a media analysis on two of Austria's largest daily newspapers, exemplarily comparing the what one could label as 'yellow press' with 'quality' newspapers with the help of computational social science methods. The media corpus consists of ca. 400 news articles about the *Last Generation* published between February and December 2023. In addition to the article analysis, we plan to analyze some 200,000 comments on these articles. Surprisingly, first results from a sentiment analysis show hardly any differences between the yellow press and the quality newspaper. In order to gain a more nuanced insight, we extend our analysis to include a combination of content and framing analysis, shedding light on emerging frames in the portrayal of the *Last Generation*. By contrasting these with existing frames from the literature, we make a fine-tuned empirical contribution to the current debate on the media representation of environmental movements.

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