

# **“Imagine This Kebab is the Greek National Economy”: Metaphor Scenarios in Mediatized Explanations of Economic News**

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## **Abstract**

This article investigates a series of explainer videos that offer explanations of financial institutions, policies, and terms used in news coverage of the European financial crisis, particularly as reported in relation to the 2015 Greek bailout negotiations. By approaching digital news explainers as multimodal meta-commentaries, the study focuses on the prevailing metaphorical scenarios (Musolf, 2012) and their strategic use as key stylistic resources for explaining complex financial issues. In addition to the dystopic metaphors of DISASTER or WAR found in mainstream financial reporting, financial matters are explained in my data primarily through metaphors that liken national economies and currencies to FOOD and economic policies to COOKING. The article discusses how verbal and visual modes work together in projecting metaphorical scenarios from the domain of home economics that embed specific evaluations and stances toward national economic policies. The study concludes with a critical discussion of the implications of such metaphorical scenarios for discourses of agency and accountability in the European financial crisis, and situates the digital genre of explainers in the context of wider sociocultural shifts related to the process of mediatization.

## **Introduction**

It is by now well-accepted that talk of economics and finance is no longer limited to experts and institutions. Instead, specialized terms like "negative growth," "sovereign debt," and "hedge funds" are increasingly embedded in everyday conversations among laypeople. This erosion of boundaries between expert and lay discourse about economics cannot be viewed in isolation from recent developments in traditional and digital media environments. Social media, in particular, have offered new formats for news reporting (e.g., stock market live feeds), alternative means for audience engagement (e.g., through commenting, blogging, and tweeting), as well as increased opportunities for combining multiple modes (e.g., text, image, video) and multiple texts (e.g., reports, tweets, explainers) in mainstream reporting of economic news.[\[1\]](#)

In order to explore the role of media and, particularly, of alternative digital news formats, such as news explainers, in rendering expert economic discourse more accessible to laypeople, this study draws on the notion of 'mediatization' as a key framing for analyzing discourse in interplay with broader sociocultural processes. Although the term has been used with varied meanings in media and communication studies (e.g., Livingstone, 2009; Lundby, 2009) and linguistic anthropology (e.g., Agha, 2011; Jaffe, 2009), mediatization is defined here as "a facet of socio-cultural change that is specifically tied to the expansion and differentiation of communication media" (Androutsopoulos, 2014, p. 12). In the context of news discourse, shifts in mediating technologies, their communicative affordances, and media institutions are intimately linked with broader sociolinguistic processes that contribute to the blurring of previously assumed boundaries between public and private, expert and lay, vernacular and standard (cf. 'conversationalization,' Fairclough, 1994; 'informalization,' Bell, 2003; 'vernacularization,' Coupland, 2014).

With the advent of social media, the scope of research on news discourse extends further toward the study of the organization and multimodal composition of news on screen (e.g., Johansson, 2014) and user-generated content, particularly users' comments on online news articles (e.g., Deschrijver, this issue). Nevertheless, the potential to re-engage with informalization processes of news discourse through shifts in journalistic practice has been largely overlooked. The multiplicity and fragmentation of news streams in the social mediascape has given rise to a range of peripheral texts often produced by journalists in order to accompany and comment on mainstream news reports. This article addresses this gap by investigating a particular type of such non-mainstream journalistic texts, namely video news explainers, and their role in mediatizing and rendering economic news more accessible to lay readers and viewers.

News explainers are blogs, text commentaries, and videos that aim to provide the public with background information about a popular news story. Stories related to the recent European financial crisis and global economic processes are often accompanied by news explainers that attempt to clarify specialized and complex concepts for the lay audience. Similar to economic news articles, explainers appear to capitalize on metaphorical language in order to explain the expert domain of economics. Drawing on Musolff's (2006) model of 'metaphor scenarios,' this study analyses a sample of video news explainers in order to address the following questions: (1) What metaphor scenarios are mobilized to explain the economy and the European financial crisis? (2) To what extent are mainstream economic metaphors recontextualised in news explainers? and (3) What ideology-laden understandings of the economy may be embedded in the evaluative and attitudinal elements of the specific metaphor scenarios? The article concludes with a critical discussion of the metaphor scenarios by taking into account the communicative purposes, audiences, and modes of news explainers, and it evaluates the role of such news genres in the sociocultural process of mediatization.

## **Literature Review**

### **Metaphors in Economic News Discourse**

As noted by El Refaie (2003, p. 84), metaphors can "represent the unknown, unresolved or problematic in terms of something more familiar and more easily imaginable." Considering that economic terms often refer to abstract and complex concepts, metaphors represent a prime resource for both journalists and economists in their explanations and reports on economic news (Ohlsson, 2012; Stewart, 2011). Previous research on economic news discourse explored metaphorical language associated with reporting a range of key events, including the 1997 stock market crash, corporate mergers and acquisitions, the European monetary union, and the 2008 global financial crisis, as well as the more recent European sovereign debt crisis. [2] In this section, I critically discuss how this line of research reflects recent advances in metaphor studies, moving from purely cognitive perspectives to more socio-cognitive, critical, and multimodal approaches to metaphorical language.

Drawig on cognitive approaches to metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), previous studies have been preoccupied with identifying the types of conceptual metaphors mobilized in economic news discourse (e.g., Domínguez, 2015; Ho, 2016; Williams et al., 2011). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphors are articulated in terms of systematic correspondences between two separate domains: an abstract, vague, and complex domain or "target" (e.g., the financial crisis) and a more concrete domain, vehicle, or "source" to which the abstract concept is metaphorically compared (e.g., the financial crisis is an earthquake) and thus rendered more accessible. For example, Arrese (2015, p. 31) applied content analysis to the study of conceptual metaphors in the Spanish press coverage of the euro crisis and argues about the prevalence of two conceptual metaphors, i.e., crisis is DISEASE and/or NATURAL DISASTER, across a range of newspapers. In an

attempt to tease out Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) claims about the universality of conceptual metaphors, some studies have undertaken corpus-based comparative analyses of economic metaphors in national press coverage of the same event across different countries and languages (e.g., Charteris-Black & Ennis, 2001; Semino, 2002; Wang et al., 2013). Their findings converge toward arguing about metaphor uniformity in the selection of source domains for talking about the economy (e.g., living ORGANISM, BIRTH, MOVEMENT, JOURNEY), with subtle differences in terms of the metaphors' frequency, linguistic expression, and positive/negative use. Such differences are usually attributed to cultural factors (e.g., christening metaphors in the Italian press; Semino, 2002) or socio-political changes (e.g., shift in positive/negative use before and after the Spanish elections, López & Llopis, 2010).

The shift toward the cross-cultural study of metaphor is arguably concurrent with a wider turn in metaphor studies that examines the pragmatic and rhetorical function of metaphors in real contexts of use. Combining a cognitive with a pragmatic approach, Charteris-Black and Musolf (2003) move beyond the mere consideration of source domains and take into account the range of pragmatic goals realized by metaphor use, such as “sustaining reader interest, establishing authorial identity, evaluation and other stylistic considerations such as humour and the branding of a particular style” (p. 158). In their study of euro trading metaphors in the British and German press, for example, the same source domain (e.g., euro trading is COMBAT) has been found to achieve different rhetorical effects for the intended audiences, as the euro was portrayed as an active agent for the British readers and as a passive 'thing' or beneficiary for the German readers (Charteris-Black & Musolf, 2003).

Drawing on the aforementioned turn toward complementing cognitive with pragmatic perspectives, more recent work on economic metaphors combines cognitive theory with critical approaches to discourse (e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis: Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2001) in an attempt to explore further the link between metaphor and ideology (see Arrese & Vara-Miguel, 2016; Bickes et al., 2015; Ming, 2015; O'Mara-Shimek et al., 2015). As Semino (2008, p. 32) points out, “metaphors are seldom neutral”; in fact, construing the economy in terms of a particular source domain inevitably results in highlighting or hiding certain aspects of the target concept (i.e., the economy). If we accept that news discourse is inherently ideological (van Dijk, 2009), then the study of particular uses of economic metaphors in the news also has the potential to reveal dominant and/or editorial positions toward the events reported, such as the financial crisis or stock market crashes. Koller's (2002, 2005a) work on news reporting of mergers and acquisitions is pioneering in demonstrating the ideological underpinnings of the “evolutionary struggle” metaphor, which follows a neoliberal ideology of economics in terms of Darwinian theories of natural evolution and selection, on the one hand, and promotes gender (male-dominated) construals of the target domain through the prominence of fighting and war metaphors, on the other. The construal of the financial crisis as “disease” or “natural disaster” also echoes a perspective on crisis as part of a natural process, something beyond human control, and thus not attributable to the agency of particular social actors such as governments, bankers, or citizens (Arrese & Vara-Miguel, 2016; Bickes et al., 2014; Bounegru & Forceville, 2011).

Moving beyond metaphor as a purely verbal phenomenon, a growing body of work examines visual or multimodal economic metaphors in news reporting, particularly in magazine articles, front covers, and editorial cartoons. This line of work fruitfully combines multimodal analysis frameworks (e.g., social semiotics: Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) with the aforementioned cognitive and/or critical approaches to metaphor. From a cognitive perspective, Bounegru and Forceville (2011) and Domínguez (2015) analyse prevalent source domains in visual metaphors of editorial cartoons. From a more rhetorical and critical/ideological perspective, Koller's (2005b) and Tseronis's (2015) studies contribute to a better understanding of how visual resources in economic metaphors work together

with verbal cues in projecting the publications' editorial style and stances toward the reported news. Despite the shift in focus to visual metaphors in multimodal news genres (e.g., front covers or editorial cartoons), this line of research also reveals the use of a similar range of source domains for economic metaphors (e.g., financial crisis as natural disaster, illness, or death).

Despite the subtle differences attributed to mainly sociocultural factors, the study of primarily news articles (as well as some limited research on editorial cartoons) reveals relative uniformity in the choice of source domains for economic metaphors. This is evident not only when comparing findings from different studies but also in findings of research with a clear comparative focus. Arrese and Vara-Miguel (2016), in particular, explain the issue of uniformity in economic metaphors by reflecting on aspects related to the particular genre of economic news articles that primarily target the expert audiences of financial advisors, corporations, and institutions. As a result, similar interpretations of the financial crisis arise from the global capitalist and neoliberal economic discourse circulated and recycled within these networks of elite-to-elite communication (Arrese & Vara-Miguel, 2016). If this is the case for traditional journalistic genres (such as the news article), it remains to explore the extent to which similar metaphors and interpretations are offered in alternative formats of online journalism that explicitly target assumed lay audiences, i.e., in news explainers.

### **Online News Explainers and Social Mediatization**

According to the Oxford Dictionaries, the word 'explainer' refers to "a statement, article, or video that provides an explanation of a concept, topic, situation, etc." The close association of explainers with news is evident in the example provided under the definition: "If you're confused, Reuters has a quick explainer on how the Italian election works" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d., n.p.). As put by Norris (2015, n.p.), "if news content focuses on the 'Who, What, When, and Where,' explainer journalism looks to inform the reader of the 'How and Why.'" In other words, explainers summarize background information about the news story concisely for lay audiences. The notion of providing a brief summary of the key outline and context of a story is not new: Feature stories in the traditional format of news articles have always included a short paragraph with exactly the same function (*The Economist*, 2014). In the current social mediascape, though, this paragraph appears to be acquiring a life of its own and taking on various shapes and sizes. Explainers are found embedded in mainstream news outlets and couched in the form of daily blogs (e.g., *The Economist explains*), longer text commentaries with smart graphics (e.g., *The Upshot* at *New York Times*), and videos (e.g., *BBC Explainers*). They can even cluster together and form explainer web domains, such as *Vox.com*. So, how can we "explain" the proliferation of news explainers online?

In one of the early blogs about explainers, the media critic and journalism professor Jay Rosen (2008, n.p.) talks about news stories "where until I grasp the *whole* I am unable to make sense of *any part* [of that story]" and continues by protesting that "the very frequency of the updates alienates me from the providers of those updates because the news stream is adding daily to my feeling of being ill-informed, overwhelmed, out of the loop." Economic news stories – namely, about the US subprime mortgage crisis (2008) – are offered as a key example in Rosen's blog. Such stories associated with specialized domains of knowledge are rendered even more obscure by the columnist who "typically assumes too much knowledge ('mortgage-backed securities'?) or has too little space, or is bored with the elementary task of explanation and prefers that more sophisticated work appear under his byline" (Rosen, 2008, n. p.).

Based on Rosen's account, online news explainers arguably capture and respond to key sociocultural processes of social mediatization, especially as played out in the domain of news discourse. First, explainers arise in response to the widely attested fragmentation and diversity of information

amplified through constant streams of news updates, tweets, comments, etc. (Androutsopoulos, 2014). By clarifying technical terms (e.g., economic concepts) and offering background information, explainers aim at assisting lay readers in navigating through and contextualizing the overflow of multiple and fragmented online news updates. Second, they are added to the increasing share of side texts (cf. 'paratexts'; Genette, 1997) that accompany the increasingly less autonomous and loosely coherent main text (i.e., the main news story) "in an inviting, describing, orientating, commenting or subsidiary way" (Schmitz, 2014, p. 290). Third, video explainers, in particular, attest to the increasing multimodal composition of media products (Androutsopoulos, 2014). And, fourth, they seem to challenge the formats of elite-to-elite communication associated with traditional practices of financial journalism, as argued by previous scholars (e.g., Kunelius & Reunanen, 2012) and evident in Rosen's quote about columnists who assume too much knowledge or produce too sophisticated content for the lay reader.

## Data and Methodology

In order to investigate economic metaphors in these alternative news formats and associated processes of mediatization of the economy, I collected news explainers from two main sources: the US-based explainer website *Vox* and the UK-based mainstream news outlet *BBC News*. The choice of the two sites is motivated partly by the prevalence of news explainers in the respective online spaces and partly by the focus of previous research on economic metaphors in primarily English-speaking (US and UK) news publications. It was deemed more appropriate to limit the sample to cultural contexts that have been widely researched in the past so that insights in metaphor uses through comparison with previous literature are not undermined by cultural differences. At the same time, the focus on two different types of news sites echoes the two main ways in which explainers are accessed online: either by seeking news explanations in dedicated web sites (e.g., *Vox*) or by taking up explainer prompts that accompany online articles in mainstream news outlets (e.g., *BBC News*).

Launched in 2014, *Vox* has been marketed as the quintessential website of explainer journalism: It describes itself as "a general interest news site for the 21<sup>st</sup> century," with a simple mission: "Explain the news." The site consists of a range of explainers that take the form of traditional commentary articles, short videos, interactive maps with smart graphics, and card stacks, i.e., a series of cards that include short texts and images and follow one another in a linear order. In contrast, *BBC News* consists primarily of feature news articles, with explainers accompanying and shedding light on the main news story. Visitors to the site can access recent explainers through a hyperlink under 'More' on the site's masthead or click on topic-related explainers that might appear as additional material next to a news story. Similar to *Vox*, *BBC News* explainers can take the form of commentary articles, short videos, and maps with smart graphics ('infographics').

This article analyses news explainers that are associated with two events that have received increased media attention on a global scale and have an emblematic position in the recent history of the ongoing European crisis: namely, the Greek financial crisis and bailout referendum (2015) and the UK European membership referendum (2016). In addition to being popularly labeled with the similar terms 'Grexit' and 'Brexit,' these two events present further similarities as they involve very complex processes of negotiation at highly specialized political and economic levels, while at the same time calling for laypeople to be actively involved in these processes by voting in the relevant referendums. In this context, news explainers can play a key role in rendering the economy more accessible to laypeople and in facilitating the public's understandings or decisions in relation to these events. Keywords, such as 'Greek exit,' 'Greek crisis,' and 'EU referendum,' [3] were used in order to retrieve news explainers related to the two main events under investigation. The top 10 results for each search were included in the sample and, after eliminating links that appeared duplicated on the

sites' results, the search yielded a total of 52 explainers: 29 on the Greek crisis and bailout referendum and 23 on the Brexit referendum. In terms of format, *Vox* results included a range of videos (n=4), listicles (n=4), longer text commentaries (n=17), and cardstacks (n=2). *BBC* results, in contrast, included two main explainer formats: videos (n=14) and text commentaries (n=11). For the purposes of this article, the study zooms in on the format of video explainers, which makes use of a range of semiotic resources afforded by digital media: that is, language, image, and sound. For the selection of the video explainers to be analysed in more detail, I have also taken into account the videos' uptake in social media (e.g., repostings on YouTube, user views, and comments), as well as the timing of their upload online in relation to key events. The selected videos were uploaded close to the dates of the relevant referendums or at key moments in the Greek bailout negotiations and received increased attention in both social and mainstream media, as will be demonstrated in the following sections.

The analysis of metaphors in news explainers draws on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) key premises and extends them in ways that resonate with a more socially-situated, critical, and multimodal investigation of economic metaphors in news discourse. Rather than 'conceptual metaphors' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), this study analyses source scenarios of economic metaphors in news explainers. Musolff (2006) defines a 'source scenario' as

a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about "typical" aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the "dramatic" storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc. (p. 28)

After identifying metaphorical expressions conveyed through either verbal or visual (or both) means, metaphor scenarios are analysed in terms of their argumentative uses; that is, the ways in which they shape public debates and conceptualizations of the economy "by *framing* the attitudinal and evaluative preferences in the respective discourse communities" (Musolff, 2006, p. 28). The concept of 'framing' is primarily associated with mainstream news reporting and "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, p. 164). Although news explainers arguably have a meta-function (i.e., explaining news and their associated framings), they also have the potential to offer similar or alternative framings of the financial crisis and the economy through recontextualisations of mainstream economic metaphors. The analysis aims to shed light on how metaphor scenarios and domains associated with news articles are recontextualised in news explainers. In order to account systematically for the varied ways in which a particular metaphor may be used in different genres (i.e., news articles and news explainers), the final discussion takes into account the varying communicative purposes, audiences, and modes associated with each genre (cf. Semino et al., 2013).

## **Analysis**

### **"How the Euro Caused the Greek Crisis"**

The three-minute *Vox* explainer sets out to explain the causes of the Greek financial crisis and discusses the ways in which the implementation of a monetary union in Europe had resulted in the crisis. The video first appears embedded in a short explainer article with the title "How the euro caused the Greek crisis" on July 2, 2015, that is, three days before the Greek bailout referendum and during the week when "Greece [...] in a state of economic and financial crisis [...] dominated global headlines," as stated in the opening line of the article. The same video is recycled in subsequent

explainer articles uploaded on *Vox* during the week of the referendum;<sup>[4]</sup> it is also available on the site's YouTube channel with more than a million views and over 2,000 comments.

The video starts its explanation of the Greek and European crisis by explicitly setting up a metaphor scenario through the use of cognitive verbs (“to understand ... think about...”) that function as signaling devices for metaphorical language (Goatly, 1997). Viewers are directly addressed through imperative forms and are invited to (re)conceptualise the monetary union of European countries in terms of a more familiar gathering, that of a “dinner party” (Extract 1,<sup>[5]</sup> line 3). The target public domain of political and fiscal unions is reinterpreted in terms of the workings of private and everyday life. The setting up of the metaphor scenario involves a shift from the public sphere to the private domains of cooking and dinner parties, which is also achieved visually by moving from scenes of protesting crowds in the streets (lines 1-3) to scenes of leafing through recipe books (line 4).

#### Extract 1

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. to understand what's happening   | ((crowd protesting & carrying Greek flags))        |
| 2. with Greece and the Eurozone (.) | ((crowd protesting & carrying Greek and EU flags)) |
| 3. think about a dinner             |  |
| 4. party                            | ((front cover of a recipe book))                   |

The initial dinner party scenario is further elaborated, presenting the fiscal issues of the monetary union as an everyday problem of ordinary people: namely, choosing the menu for multiple guests at dinner party. The concrete domains of 'house keeping' and 'cooking' are invoked by a range of metaphorical expressions that draw on both verbal and visual means: references to dietary requirements of individual guests ('vegetarian,' 'gluten free,' 'soy allergy'), a picture of a distressed housewife, as well as visual enactment of leafing through recipe books and decision-making by crossing out recipes (Extract 2, lines 5-12). In this scenario, the Eurozone is the 'distressed housewife' who is trying to satisfy the diverse 'dietary'/economic requirements of multiple 'guests'/countries at a dinner party.

#### Extract 2



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 5. if you're cooking just for yourself      | ((leafing through the recipe book))                        |
| 6. and your spouse it's easy (.)            |  |
| 7. you make something you both like         | ((lamb recipe circled; "Yum" written on screen))           |
| 8. but if you've got guests things get      | ((stacking recipe books))                                  |
| 9. harder (.) if you need to                |  |
| 10. accommodate a vegetarian (.)            | ((chicken recipe crossed out; "Nope" written))             |
| 11. and someone who is gluten free (.)      | ((recipe crossed out; "Nope" written on screen))           |
| 12. and someone with a soy allergy (.)      | ((bottle labeled "Japanese Style Dark Soy Sauce"))         |
| 13. your options get really limited (.)     | ((distressed housewife; picture in black & white))         |
| 14. and that's the problem with             | ((("The Problem" written over map of Europe))              |
| 15. Europe's idea of having a whole         |  |
| 16. bunch of countries (.)                  |  |
| 17. all use the same currency (.)           | ((euro coin symbol next to map of Europe))                 |
| 18. so Greece's economy is in a disaster    | ((graph: unemployment rates in Greece, by age              |
| 19. (.) a quarter of the population         | group))  |
| 20. is <u>unemployed</u> (.)                |  |
| 21. and it has this very high debt burden   | ((Europe map graph: Public debt as % of GDP))              |
| 22. (1) normally (.)                        |  |
| 23. if you've got really high               | ((machine printing currency notes))                        |
| 24. unemployment (.)                        |  |
| 25. what happens is that a country          | ((smart graphics, arrows pointing to written text:         |
| 26. makes its currency cheaper by           | "print more money"))                                       |
| 27. printing extra money (.) that makes     |  |
| 28. its products cheaper                    |  |
| 29. on world markets it makes it a          | ((smart graphics: "high unemployment" text appearing;      |
| 30. more attractive tourist destination (.) | followed by arrow to "print more money"; followed by       |
| 31. and it means that foreign investors     | arrow to icons & text "exports," "tourism," "investment")) |
| 32. can get great bargains (.)              |  |

If the Eurozone is facing "hosting and cooking problems," Greece is, then, portrayed as the guest who tends to create such problems ('the only vegetarian') and, subsequently, is left with limited or no options at the 'barbeque' (line 51, Extract 3). Within this scenario, currencies are 'menu dishes' and economic policies are portrayed as 'cooking,' with the visual means playing an important role in reinforcing such metaphors with images of sausages being grilled and out of bounds for the only vegetarian at the barbeque, as well as multiple forks digging in single plates of euro notes.

### Extract 3

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 47. and Greece's problem is that                 | ((map graph for "Unemployment in Europe"))              |
| 48. it's small poor and geographically           | ((crowd protesting; 10 euro note foregrounded))         |
| 49. isolated from the rest of the                | ((EU flag outside Greek parliament))                    |
| 50. Eurozone (.) it's like                       |   |
| 51. the only vegetarian at a barbeque            | ((sausages on barbeque grill))                          |
| 52. except when it comes to currencies           |   |
| 53. (.) there's no side dishes (.)               |   |
| 54. and so there's plenty of specific            | ((news clipping: "Greece admits fudging euro"))         |
| 55. decisions we can                             |   |
| 56. second guess (.)                             | ((news clipping: "IMF official admits austerity is      |
| 57. plenty of things Greece did                  | harming Greece"))                                       |
| 58. and various banks did that we can            | ((news clipping: "Wall St. Helped to Mask"))            |
| 59. question (.) but <u>fundamentally</u> having |   |
| 60. all these countries come to a dinner         | ((4 forks pointing to single plate with 50 euro notes)) |
| 61. party with only one dish on the menu         |   |
| 62. was a mistake                                |   |



In addition to the aforementioned scenario, which appears to capitalize on novel source domains (i.e., cooking and house management), some of the domains previously coined in economic metaphors of traditional feature news articles are also identified. For example, financial crisis as 'disaster' and economy as 'machine' (through images of a money printing machine, extract 2, line 23) or 'flow/movement' (in graphics where euro coins flow across Europe) are noted in the video. Nevertheless, they do not represent the main metaphor scenario as explicitly introduced in the opening of the explainer. The *Vox* video appears to oscillate between the everyday (verbal and visual) discourse of dinner parties and the expert discourse of financial analysis: Discourse markers (e.g., 'so') appear to signal transitions between these two discourses. Taking Extract 2 (line 18 onwards) as an example, we notice that the explanatory metaphor scenario of dinner party is replaced with the 'disaster' metaphor domain ("Greece's economy is in a disaster," line 18) and a shift toward a more factual and expert discourse that is signaled through both verbal and visual means: a statistical graph of unemployment rates in Greece and an audio-commentary stating that "a quarter of the population is unemployed" (lines 19-20).

The use of private and ordinary life as source scenarios for economic metaphors is not new. For example, the 'marriage' metaphor has been used for economic mergers (Koller, 2002). With respect, though, to metaphors related to the financial crisis, previous literature has demonstrated a convergence across news publications on framing the economy as suffering due to uncontrollable agents like natural disaster or illness. As a result, the 'dinner party' metaphor scenario presents a departure from previously established framings: The financial crisis is (re)interpreted as the result of bad housekeeping (e.g., having only one dish at a dinner party) and personal lifestyle choices (e.g., being a vegetarian). Although there is an element of personification of the economy in both cases (e.g., 'disaster/illness' and 'housekeeping'), the evaluative and attitudinal aspects in each scenario are different. While the 'disaster/illness' scenario assigns responsibility to the relevant parties (e.g., countries, financial institutions) only at the level of managing a natural (non-human) force, the main scenario of the *Vox* explainer attributes agency and responsibility to the European Union (i.e., the party host) and Greece (i.e., the vegetarian) for the ensuing economic (i.e., house) crisis. The particular arrangement of roles and relations in the metaphor also reveals different levels of responsibility, with the European Union (host) being more responsible than Greece (guest) in the creation of a potential crisis through (house) mismanagement. The more specific attitudinal stances revealed through the relevant positionings of the key actors in the dinner party scenario that point the finger more to the EU (rather than individual countries) can be understood in relation to the intended US-based audience of *Vox* explainers. With explicit comparisons between the EU and the US (in later parts of the explainer), the monetary union is continuously presented as a failing project compared to the American model of a union of states.

### **"Greek Euro Exit Explained – With Kebab"**

The three-minute *BBC* video explainer focuses on the process through which Greece could exit the European monetary union. The video, available both on the *BBC* news site and on their YouTube channel (more than 23,000 views and over 130 comments at the time of data collection), appeared on February 19, 2015 – that is, during a week of intense negotiations between Greece and the Eurogroup and on the day Germany rejected Greece's request for a bailout extension, an act feared by many as potentially triggering a Greek exit from the monetary union. Similarly to the *Vox* explainer, viewers are invited to (re)conceptualize the political and fiscal process of Grexit in terms of more familiar and everyday activities such as going out and having a kebab. Even before the start of the actual video, the metaphor scenario is set up by the explainer title "Greek euro exit explained – with kebab" and the close-up of a huge piece of meat on a vertical spit. The choice of 'kebab' as a key element in the unfolding scenario indicates the heavy reliance of metaphor scenarios on socioculturally mediated information (Musolff, 2006): The relation between the target domain

(Grexit) and its source (going out/eating kebab) capitalizes on social stereotyping about national dishes. Indeed, the specific explainer received attention in the media and was criticized on Twitter by other journalists, viewers, and academics as “stereotyping dross.” [6]

After a short introduction to the Greek crisis as a news item (through the meta-reflexive practice of montaging BBC news snippets, see extract 4, [7] lines 1-8), the opening part of the video explicitly frames the discourse as metaphorical through the use of verbs describing cognitive processes (e.g., 'to understand,' 'let's think,' 'imagine') and an analogy between the Greek national economy and the kebab. A shift from the public and political domains of news to more ordinary and everyday contexts is also marked through visuals that move from news scenes associated with the financial crisis (e.g., reporters outside the parliament, PM talking to crowds, etc.) to scenes of everyday life (e.g., a man/reporter leaving a Greek restaurant with wrapped food). Similar to Vox, the metaphor scenario is elaborated by presenting the national economy as 'food' and economic policies as 'cooking' (e.g., 'it must never stop turning'). Overall, the financial crisis ('spoilt food') is presented as the outcome of everyday activities, such as inadequate cooking and inappropriate processing of food.

#### Extract 4

1. <i>Greece may exit the single currency</i>	((scenes from BBC News programmes))
2. <i>could lead to a Greek exit</i>	((News headlines & pic of National Bank of Greece))
3. <i>the Greek exit</i>	((scene of presenter talking to reporter in Athens))
4. <i>a possible Greek exit</i>	((BBC news scene: Greek PM addressing crowd))
5. <i>for Greece to exit and if that</i>	((BBC news scenes: Breaking News Greece Crisis))
6. <i>so something of a Greek chorus is</i>	((multiple BBC news scenes))
7. <i>built up about a Greek exit from the</i>	
8. <i>euro (2)</i>	
9. <i>in fact they've even invented a</i>	((black background, white font: GREEK EXIT))
10. <i>word for it (2) the Grexit (.) but</i>	((black background, text in white font: GREXIT))
11. <i>if Greece really does decide</i>	
12. <i>to leave the euro</i>	(('GREXIT' moves vertically))
13. <i>how will it do it (.) it's a pretty harsh</i>	(('GREXIT' squeezed between Greek pillars))
14. <i>economic climate out there (6)</i>	((scenes of main entrance of Greek restaurant))
15. <i>to understand this let's think of a</i>	((man/BBC reporter leaving restaurant with
16. <i>more familiar kind of Greek exit (.)</i>	wrapped food))
17. <i>let's do it with the help of one of</i>	
18. <i>the Mediterranean's finest exports</i>	
19. <i>(.) the kebab (2) think of it this way</i>	((close up of kebab turning on vertical spit))
20. <i>(.) imagine this kebab is the Greek</i>	
21. <i>national economy</i>	
22. <i>(5)</i>	((kebab guy sharpening knives to cut doner))
23. <i>it sustains people by providing</i>	((close up of grill & kebab))
24. <i>essentials like wages and mortgages</i>	
25. <i>it must never stop</i>	
26. <i>turning or it will be spoilt</i>	((previous shot turning black & white))

In contrast to the Vox video whose aim is to explain something that has already happened (i.e., the financial crisis), this explainer also has a prospective function: to explain what will happen in the case of Grexit. In the relevant section outlining future economic policies (Extract 5), the explainer returns to the use of 'food' as a resource for talking about economics. Currencies (e.g., the euro, the drachma) are 'ingredients' within the kebab dish (e.g., rice) and capital controls are 'food items' consisting of such ingredients (e.g., stuffed vine leaves with rice). In Extract 5, the metaphor scenario is also reinforced by accompanying visuals where the journalist manipulates food items to explain the financial procedures (see lines 52-56, 59-61, 62-63 where the journalist's hand places, moves,

and removes food items). While we view the enactment of the financial policies through activities that appear, at times, as cooking (e.g., moving ingredients from one container to another) and, at times, as food play (e.g., rearranging food on a plate), previously coined economic metaphors associated with news articles are also mobilized: particularly, war ('operation,' 'deploy,' 'remove') and flow/movement ('swap,' 'moving,' 'switching'). Unlike the previous video, where there is a shift between discourses and types of metaphors, here war and flow/movement domains are embedded within the main food-related metaphorical scenario. For example, 'war' is a resource for describing relations between food items, where the act of moving rice between dishes becomes an 'operation' and stuffed vine leaves are 'deployed' or 'removed' like military troops that safeguard the much valued 'rice.'

#### Extract 5

43. (2) let's go back to the kebab to	((close up of kebab dish))
44. understand (.) what other	
45. safeguards would have to be put in	
46. place (.) during this delicate period	
47. (1) imagine the rice inside this	((close up of rice in kebab dish))
48. kebab is the euro (2)	
49. I need to swap it for this other rice	((kebab dish next to rice in take away box))
50. (.) the drachma (.) it's a delicate	
51. operation (.)	
52. so I'm going to deploy these	((hand placing four stuffed wine leaves around the kebab))
53. dolmades (.) they represent capital	
54. controls (.) which ban people from	
55. moving their money (.) the dolmades	
56. wrap up the rice (.) so that no one	
57. can take it out of the country (.)	((close up of stuffed vine leave next to rice))
58. while I'm switching currency (2)	
59. the rice is swapped and placed back	((hand moving rice from box to kebab dish))
60. inside the pita bread covering (.)	
61. ready for consumption to resume	
62. (2) the dolmades can now be safely	((hand removing stuffed wine leaves and placing them in box))
63. removed (4)	

In terms of agency and control over the suggested economic policies, the metaphor scenario unfolding above is highly agentive. Visually, the viewer sees the narrator's hand moving and rearranging food items with intent, providing a visual commentary that complements the description of the necessary economic measures through the voice-over. In addition, the grammatical constructions used in the voice-over reveal human agency: "I need to swap it for...," "I'm going to deploy these...," "I'm switching..." Even when the audio shifts to passive constructions (from lines 59 onwards) the visual mode sustains agentive action as viewers follow the hand undertaking the actions of swapping, placing, and removing ingredients. Through the agentive framing of prospective actions, the financial processes triggered by Grexit appear as the result of calculated and intentional decision-making. The recontextualisation of mainstream economic metaphors (war, physical movement) within a cooking/food play scenario is associated with the producers' perceptions of intended audience as lay: Journalists appear to break away from the widely recycled economic metaphors of physical movement documented in expert economic discourse.

**EU Referendum: "The Brussels Budget Smoothie" – "The Maastricht Ratatouille" – "The Brussels Sponge Cake"**

During the week leading to the referendum about the UK's future as a member of the European Union and with the topic dominating global news, *BBC* news online published a series of video explainers under the general title “EU referendum” (June 17, 2016). The aim of the videos is to explain the EU’s organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities, as well as its key institutions and treaties. Unlike the previous videos, the referendum explainers are shorter (less than one minute) and there is no voice-over: The explanation is primarily communicated through written text, accompanying visuals, and background music/sounds. Nevertheless, the videos display striking similarities with the previous examples: 'Food' and 'cooking' appear, again, as the key source scenarios for explaining the inner workings of the economy and European institutions. The metaphor scenario is achieved even before the start of the video with close-ups of the drink or dish to be prepared and the associated captions labeling them as “The Brussels budget smoothie,” “The Maastricht ratatouille,” and “The Brussels sponge cake.”

Unlike previous examples, where the explicit framing of the metaphor is done within the video, here, cognitive verbs such as 'imagine...,' 'think...,' and 'see...' are placed in the short introductory text that accompanies the explainer. [8] The opening sequence of all videos follows the visual conventions and register of a cooking recipe (Extracts 6a-c). First, the ingredients needed are specified and visually presented to the audience. Then, we find a sequence of verbal directives ('add,' 'blend') and visually enacted acts related to cooking (e.g., placing ingredients in a bowl, pouring smoothie in a glass, chopping vegetables, pouring olive oil, spreading cream on cake sponges, sprinkling chocolate, etc.). The videos finish with a close-up of the end product ('drink' or 'dish') and the question “got it?”

**Extract 6a**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. today...                              | ((four glasses of smoothie))                |
| 2. the EU budget smoothie                | ((foregrounded glass of smoothie))          |
| 3. you will need                         | ((clean table surface))                     |
| 4. carrots grapes a grapefruit garlic    | ((subsequent shots of each ingredient))     |
| 5. and the EU treasury bowl (this thing) | ((bowl surrounded by previous ingredients)) |

**Extract 6b**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. today... the Maastricht ratatouille      | ((vegetables))                          |
| 2. you will need                            | ((clean table surface))                 |
| 3. tomatoes yellow chilli onion courgette   | ((subsequent shots of each ingredient)) |
| 4. aubergine green chilli red chilli garlic |   |

**Extract 6c**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. today... Brussels sponge cake       | ((close up of cake))                |
| 2. you will need                       | ((clean table surface))             |
| 3. whipped cream icing marshmallows    | ((subsequent shots of ingredients)) |
| 4. toppings chocolate whatever this is |                                     |
| 5. 1 2 3 sponges                       | ((three sponges))                   |

Through both verbal and visual conventions of online cooking recipes, national budgets and countries, often metonymically used to refer to their economies, are recipe 'ingredients' (e.g., vegetables, fruits, icing sugar) and European institutions (the EU treasury, the EU, European Parliament, European Commission, and European council) are cooking 'containers' (e.g., bowl, tray, sponge base). In the case of 'the Brussels budget smoothie,' this is achieved verbally through directives in the recipe register (e.g., 'add'), as well as the visual conventions of recipe videos that consist of a series of close-up shots of hands (re)arranging, blending, and pouring ingredients (Extract 7). In the case of the other two EU referendum explainers, the 'cooking' scenario is primarily sustained through the visual mode and the depicted actions of chopping, pouring, and sprinkling,



while the verbal text shifts to a more descriptive register presenting the roles and responsibilities of the EU political and fiscal institutions (Extract 8).

#### Extract 7

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 16. garlic: Latvia            | ((garlic on table))                                     |
| 17. Latvia gives 1            | ((hand placing one clove with other ingredients))       |
| 18. Latvia gets 4             | ((hand placing four cloves next to remaining garlic))   |
| 19. add rest of the countries | ((hand placing selected and other ingredients in bowl)) |
| 20. and blend for 45 seconds  | ((ingredients in bowl))                                 |

#### Extract 8

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 18. the EU now has 28 members the point    | ((close up of vegetables))                       |
| 19. of the EU is to make trade easier...   |  |
| 20. allow its people to move freely...     | ((hand moving vegetables in tray))               |
| 21. people                                 | ((arrow pointing to vegetables))                 |
| 22. and foster cooperation on fields like: | ((hand pouring olive oil over vegetables))       |
| 23. science education and the arts         | ((close up of olive oil poured over vegetables)) |

In terms of previously-coined metaphors, the cooking scenario projects understandings of economy (and economic policy) as 'movement' and fiscal bodies as 'containers.' National budgets as 'ingredients' are moved around, blended, and mixed in line with the register conventions of online cooking recipes. Similarly to the previous videos, the use of a cooking scenario invites the lay audience to reconceptualise complex economic agreements as familiar processes, rendering the economy both accessible and manageable. At the same time, though, the visual enactment of cooking acts foregrounds a particular understanding of the economy where (human) agency plays a more central role in the implementation of economic and organizational policies.

#### Concluding Discussion

Using online video explainers associated with news coverage of major economic and political events such as the Greek financial crisis and the Brexit referendum, I showed how the social mediatization of the economy is manifest in the expansion of news genres and, particularly, in the proliferation of peripheral texts that orient lay audiences vis-à-vis the ongoing stream of news reports in both print and digital media. News explainers, in particular, are aimed at contextualizing the main news story by presenting background information related to the main event (e.g., "how the euro caused the Greek crisis") or clarifying key terms and processes associated with the main event (e.g., "Greek euro exit" or "EU budget"). In this article, video explainers have been approached as an example of news paratexts that draw heavily on social media affordances such as the mobilization of multiple semiotic resources for meaning-making and social media hypermediality that affords textual embeddedness and (re)circulation of videos across different sites.

Drawing on (critical) discourse analysis and the concept of 'metaphor scenario,' I demonstrated how verbal and visual resources were combined in order to explain complex economic concepts and processes in terms of more familiar food ingredients (e.g., rice, carrots, etc.) and related everyday scenarios of cooking and house management. With respect to economic metaphors previously attested in news discourse (as explained in the review of previous literature), I showed that they are recontextualised in video explainers in two main ways: Previously attested metaphors either indicate a shift to more specialized and expert discourse (co-occurring with the use of visual graphs and statistics) or are embedded and blended with the everyday scenarios of cooking and food management. In both cases, though, food, cooking, and house management figure the main metaphor scenario, which is indexed, for example, through cognitive verbs in the introduction and returned to repeatedly in later parts of the explainers. By taking into account the roles and relations

assigned to relevant countries and fiscal institutions in the main scenario, I have argued that the news explainers appear to assign agency and responsibility to individual countries (e.g., Greece, Germany, Latvia) and European institutions for economic policies and the financial crisis. Rather than presenting the crisis as a natural and unavoidable phenomenon through metaphors of natural disaster and disease, the main metaphor scenario in the video explainers opts for a portrayal of economic problems as the result of inadequate decision-making and economic policy implementation. Although the cooking and house management scenarios of the news explainers remind us of Margaret Thatcher's words that "any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country," [9] it is still premature to speculate whether the selection of certain metaphor scenarios indicates a shift in public discourse from the non-interventionist neoliberal portrayals of crisis as a natural phenomenon (Koller, 2002, 2005a) to a more conservative neoliberal discourse that attributes blame and responsibility to individual countries and, perhaps, justifies a higher degree of nation-state control and intervention in response to global or international crises. This issue can be addressed with further research on the extent to which food, cooking, and house management scenarios are recontextualised beyond explainers in other domains of public, political, and economic discourse.

In order to probe further into understanding what my analysis reveals as a departure from mainstream economic metaphors in news articles, one needs to take into account the varying communicative purposes fulfilled by the two news genres (i.e., news articles and news explainers). Unlike news articles that arguably report on the 'who,' 'what,' 'when,' and 'where' of an event, explainers aim to address the 'how' and 'why' of certain aspects related to the main event. Rather than merely (re)presenting a news event, explainers set out to shed light on the reasons and processes that may have led to the particular event and, in so doing, are prone to take more explicit evaluative and attitudinal stances than mainstream news reporting. Explicit and elaborate metaphor scenarios are a useful discursive resource not only for simplifying a complex situation but also for evaluating key participants and their actions in the novel constructed scenario. As a result, one wonders whether the more agentive scenarios of cooking and house management are partly related to the communicative purposes of the specific genre whose explanatory function justifies more explicit (re)presentational and evaluative work.

In addition to communicative purposes, audience perceptions vary between news articles and explainers and may play a role in the selection and unfolding of certain metaphor scenarios. In the context of economic news, in particular, previous research argues about the recycling of a close set of mainstream economic metaphors employed by both financial experts and journalists (Arrese & Vara-Miguel, 2016). The reiteration of the same metaphors suggests that economic news articles represent a case of elite-to-elite communication with journalists acting as mediators between decision makers in the inter-related economic and political domains (Kunelius & Reunanen, 2012). The relatively unexpected use of food and cooking as metaphor scenarios for explaining economic policies arguably projects alternative audience perceptions, constructing the intended addressees as lay (rather than expert). In this type of expert-to-lay communication, members of the audience are explicitly addressed in, for example, the introductory set up of the metaphor scenario (e.g., 'imagine,' 'think') or cooking recipe conventions (e.g., 'blend,' 'add'). The mobilization of cultural stereotypes in explainers' metaphor scenarios, facilitated by the selection of food or perceived national dishes, also operates within a similar frame of expert-to-lay communication.

Metaphor scenarios in news explainers and their departure from mainstream economic metaphors should also be viewed in relation to the semiotic modes available for meaning making in each genre. Unlike news articles and the focus of previous research on primarily verbal metaphors, video explainers combine visual and verbal means in setting up and developing the metaphor scenarios. The two modes show different configurations, with source domains represented, at times, through



both verbal and visual means (e.g., the EU ‘budget smoothie’ portrayed both verbally and visually) and, at times, through just the visual mode. The visual conventions of the media genre of online cooking recipes used in the EU referendum explainers also enable the sustaining of a more agentic metaphor scenario, whereby the viewer continues to witness the agentic hand making decisions and implementing specific actions even when the verbal narrative is moving to more passive constructions. More importantly, video explainers and the multimodal make-up of metaphor scenarios appear to respond to wider changes in the way news is consumed in the age of social media: namely, the fact that news is primarily *viewed* on the screens of users' phones, tablets, and computers.

This article thus offers a lens to approach the social mediatization of the economy through the rise of peripheral news texts, such as explainers, that respond to and, at the same time, are part of the multiple (re)tellings of news stories across platforms, for different audiences and in a range of formats (cf. Cotter, 2015). News explainers or explanatory journalism arguably compensate for the stream of multiple and continuous updates on often expert or complicated economic news that may be leaving readers feeling confused or misinformed. Video explainers, in particular, do so by orienting to social media news readers as viewers, addressing them directly, and adopting a more informal style than mainstream news articles. Through the lens of news explainers, the social mediatization of the economy is achieved through wider processes of informalization of public discourse that involve “journalists wanting to be your friend at the bar and say hey this is the way a story is playing out” (Brookings Institution, 2016).

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### Notes

1. See Georgakopoulou (2014) for audience engagement with news in social media, and Schmitz (2014) for changes in the multimodal and textual composition of mainstream news.
2. For metaphors related to news reporting of the 1997 stock market crash, see Charteris-Black and Ennis (2001); for financial mergers and acquisitions, see Koller (2002, 2005a); for the European monetary union, see Charteris-Black and Musolf (2003) and Semino (2002); for the 2008 global financial crisis, see Ho (2016), López and Llopis (2010), O’Mara-Shimek et al. (2015), and Wang et al. (2013); for international currency disputes, see Ming (2015); and for the more recent European sovereign debt crisis, see Arrese (2015), Arrese and Vara Miguel (2016); and Bickes et al. (2014),.
3. For *BBC* search, I used the keywords with the word ‘explained’ appended (e.g., “Greek exit explained”) to avoid the inclusion of feature articles in the results. There was no need to do the same for *Vox*, as it is an explainer website.
4. <="">“Greece’s debt crisis, explained in charts and maps” by Ezra Klein (July 6, 2015) <http://www.vox.com/2015/7/1/8871509/greece-charts>; “Greek referendum projections show a “no” vote. Here’s what you need to know,” by Timothy Lee (July 5, 2015) <http://www.vox.com/2015/7/2/8883393/greece-crisis-referendum-explained>
5. The transcription of video explainers is organized as follows: The first column includes a transcript of audio text (i.e., the explainer’s voice over) and the second column a description of visuals accompanying the text. The transcription conventions used are: (.) brief pause; (3) timed pause; word stressed word; ((word)) gloss of visuals.

6. *MailOnline* reported on the public's reaction to the *BBC* explainer (Burrows, T., 2015. *BBC* skewered for using *KEBAB* to explain Greece's potential exit from the Eurozone to viewers. *Mail Online*. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2961781/BBC-criticised-using-KEBAB-explain-Greece-s-potential-exit-eurozone-viewers.html>
7. In lines 1-5 (text in italics), I transcribed what *BBC* journalists say in the explainer's montage of snippets from *BBC* news. The explainer voice-over starts in line 6.
8. "Imagine each country's contribution as an ingredient in a fruit smoothie" (*EU budget smoothie*); "You might choose to think of it [Brussels] as a giant sponge cake" (*Brussels sponge cake*); "You might choose to see it [EU] as a ratatouille" (*The Maastricht ratatouille*).
9. *The Telegraph*. (2013, April 8). Margaret Thatcher: A life in words. Available online: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/9979399/Margaret-Thatcher-A-life-in-words.html>

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