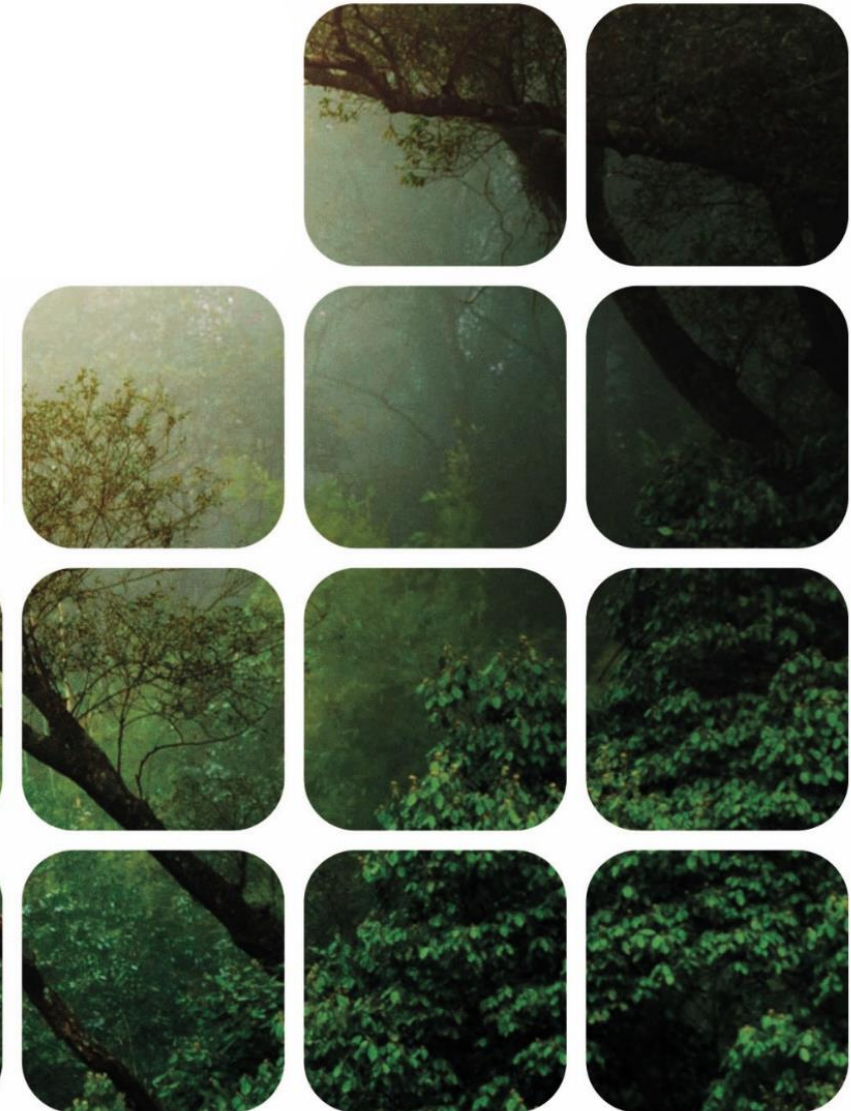


# Greenpeace memes for communicating climate change

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Gorilla on bike meme, @greenpeacequebec


## Plan:

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- Greenpeace and memes research
- Corpus collection
- Types of humor in memes
- Humor techniques in Greenpeace memes
- Multimodal analysis and the role of memes
- Outcomes
- Limitations



# Greenpeace communication research

- Role of new media in creating and disseminating messages about the environment and climate change (Anderson, 2015; Fløttum, 2010; Holmes & Richardson, 2020; Wamsler et al., 2020)
  - Problems associated with communicating climate change, by analyzing the history of climate change communication produced by Greenpeace since the early 1990s (Doyle, 2007)
  - Analysis of online visual communication in environmentalist Greenpeace campaigns, typology of “post-environmentalist” images (Catellani, 2018)
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# Greenpeace and climate change memes

- Memes as a form of protest or activism (Davis, Glantz, and Novak, 2016).
- The research was focused on a series of memes by Greenpeace produced to parody the campaign of Shell Oil. Nevertheless, the memes for the analysis were mostly spread on the Arctic Ready website.
- Our research **complements** the previous investigations by analyzing memes published by official Instagram accounts of Greenpeace in French-speaking countries.



Greenpeace memes from Arctic Ready website



# Research questions

- Which types and techniques of humor are **used** in Greenpeace memes?
- Which humor types and techniques attract more audience's **attention**?
- What is the **role** of Greenpeace's memes for communicating climate change on Instagram?

# Meme

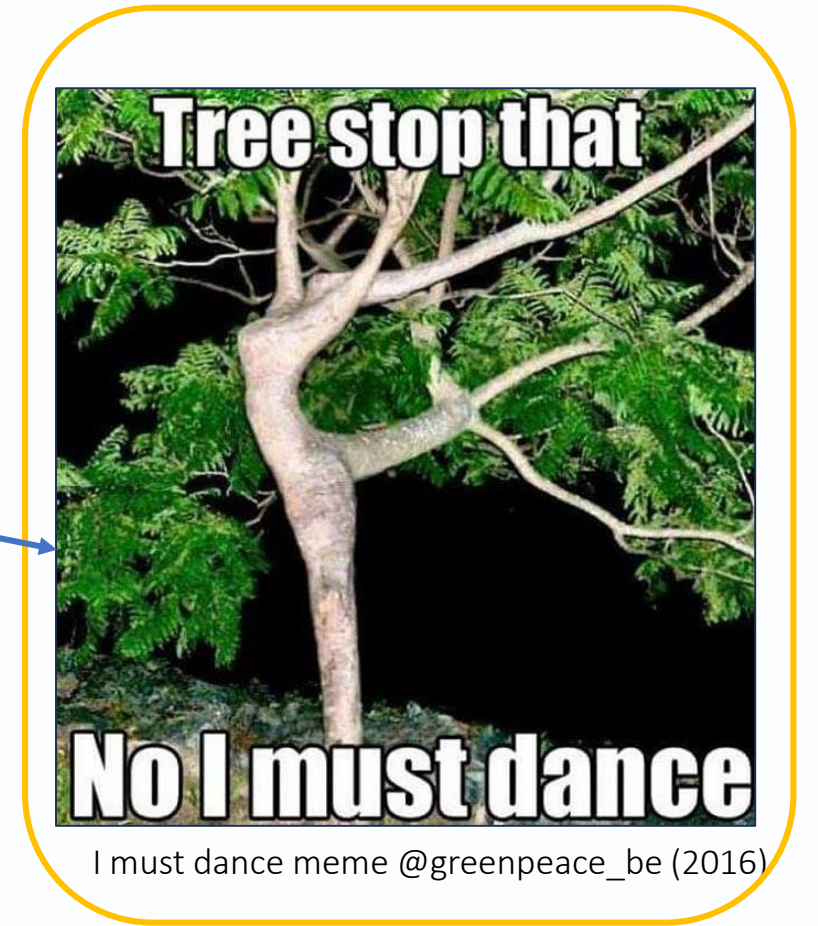
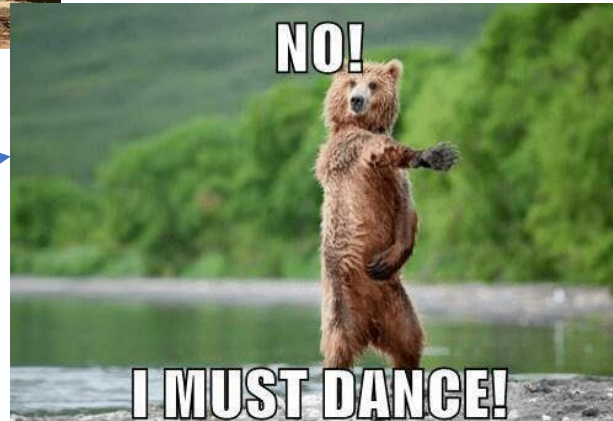
- An Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a **joke**, which gains influence through online transmission (Davison, 2012).
- Propagation of content such as **jokes**, rumors, videos, or websites from one person to others via the Internet (Shifman, 2013).

## Characteristics of memes

- their tendency to «**mock** and **deride**, often through the utilization of **humor**» (Ross & Rivers, 2019);
- **repetition and variability**, each meme should give birth to a number of different versions (Bertin & Granier, 2020);
- **longevity** (Davis, Glantz & Novak, 2016);
- **circulation** between the accounts and platforms.



I must dance meme, 1st version (2014)



I must dance meme @greenpeace\_be (2016)

# Research corpus

Instagram account	Number of publications	Number of followers	Number of following	Number of memes
greenpeace_be	1423	26300	475	17
greenpeace_france	453	197000	209	5
greenpeacequebec	986	10700	203	45

Total number of publications **observed**: 2862

Total number of memes **collected**: 67



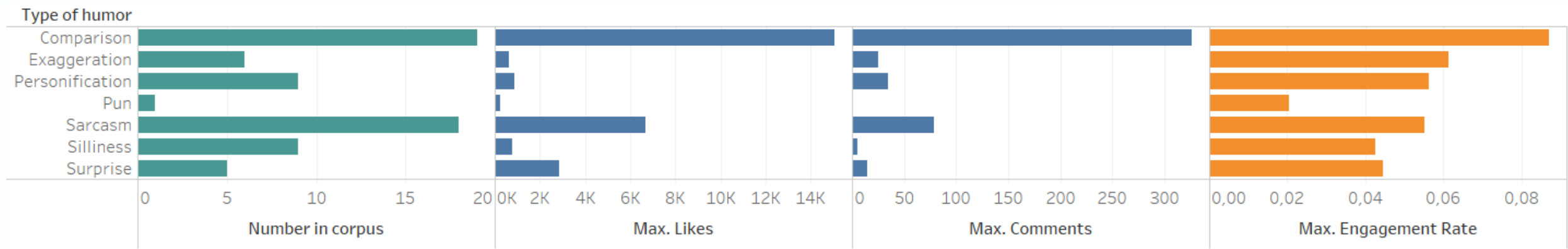
# Types of humor

Humor type	Description	Guidelines
<i>Comparison</i>	Combining two or more elements to produce a humorous situation	This meme is humorous because of the comparison.
<i>Personification</i>	Attributing human characteristics to animals, plants and objects	This meme has personified animals, plants, or objects. This makes the meme humorous.
<i>Exaggeration</i>	Overstating and magnifying something out of proportion to reality	This meme is humorous because of the overstatement of some elements.
<i>Pun</i>	Using elements of language to create new humorous meanings	This meme is humorous because of the uncommon use of language.
<i>Sarcasm</i>	Providing blatant ironic responses or situations	This meme expresses an element that is not the real intention of the sender or it communicates sarcastically.
<i>Silliness</i>	Making funny faces in response to ludicrous situations	This meme is humorous because of the silliness of the elements in it, such as the character, person, or a situation.
<i>Surprise</i>	Humor arising from unexpected situations	This meme has a surprise ending or resolution.

(Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015)

The most liked and commented publications – **comparison** and **sarcasm**.

The memes with highest engagement rate – **comparison, exaggeration, and personification**.



# Comparison and sarcasm in Greenpeace memes



imgflip.com

JAKE-CLARK.TUMBLR

Two buttons meme, @greenpeacequebec



Fish plastic bag meme, @greenpeacequebec

**Most liked and most commented Greenpeace meme**

4 versions of Drake Hotline meme in the corpus – **variability of the meme**

This version of the meme circulates online since 2016 – **longevity of the meme**



Dénoncer  
l'inaction  
climatique

Les  
voyages  
en avion

Drake Hotline meme, @greenpeace\_france



Drake Hotline meme, @greenpeacequebec



Utiliser les profits  
d'Amazon et son labo  
d'innovation pour  
créer des emballages  
réutilisables et lutter  
contre la crise du  
plastique.

Utiliser le labo  
d'innovation  
d'Amazon pour faire  
du greenwashing en  
investissant dans de  
fausses solutions  
comme le recyclage.



Annoncer que  
le Canada va  
devenir une  
nation sans  
déchets  
plastiques

Interdire  
seulement 6  
plastiques à  
usage unique et  
penser que la  
pensée magique  
du recyclage va  
faire le reste

## Personification in Greenpeace memes

me and my coworkers logging into all of our meetings remotely for the next couple of weeks



Me and my coworkers meme, @greenpeace\_be

Moi dehors à 7h du matin pour m'assurer que mes plantes vont bien

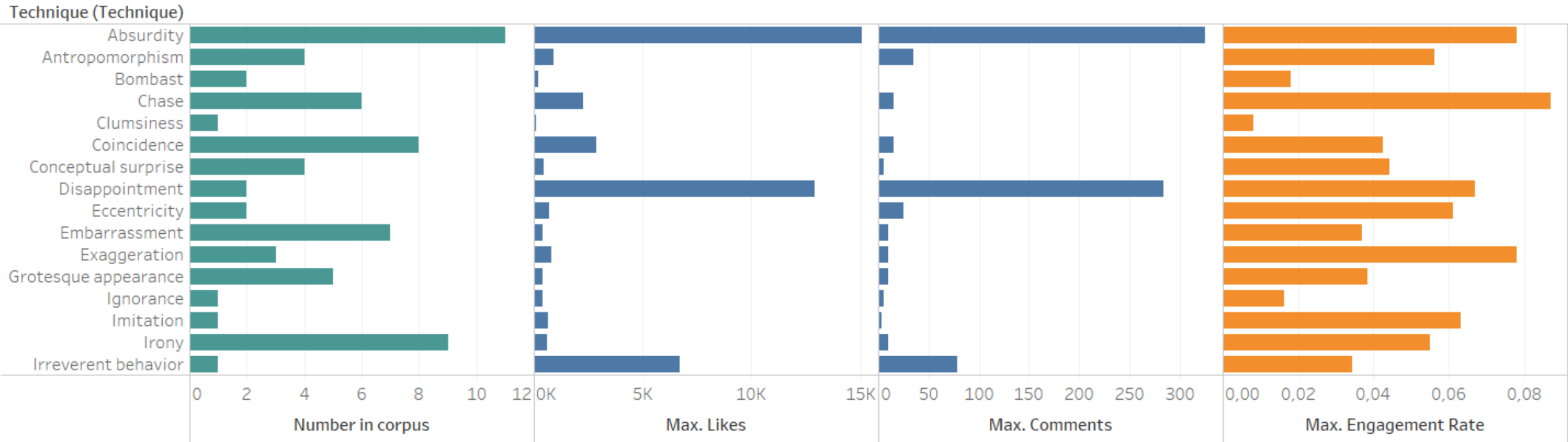


Yoda meme, @greenpeacequebec

# Humor techniques

	Humor technique	Short description
✓	<i>Absurdity</i>	Nonsense, a situation that goes against all logical rules
✓	<i>Anthropomorphism</i>	Objects or animals with human features
✓	<i>Bombast</i>	Talking in a high-flown, grandiloquent, or rhetorical manner
✓	<i>Chase</i>	A pursuit or chase of someone or something
	<i>Clownish behavior</i>	Making vigorous arm and leg movements, demonstrating irregular physical behavior
✓	<i>Clumsiness</i>	Lacking dexterity or grace
✓	<i>Coincidence</i>	A coincidental and unexpected occurrence
✓	<i>Conceptual surprise</i>	Misleading the audience by means of a sudden unexpected change of concept
✓	<i>Disappointment</i>	A situation that leads to (minor) disappointment
✓	<i>Eccentricity</i>	Someone who deviates from the norms, an odd character
✓	<i>Embarrassment</i>	An awkward situation in which someone gets a sense of discomfort, uneasiness, or shame
✓	<i>Exaggeration</i>	Exaggerating the qualities of a person or product, reacting in an exaggerated way
✓	<i>Grotesque appearance</i>	Someone who has a bizarre or monstrous appearance with striking features
	<i>Ignorance</i>	Someone acts in a foolish, naive, gullible, or childish manner
	<i>Imitation</i>	Mimicking or copying someone's appearance while keeping one's own identity at the same time
	<i>Impersonation</i>	Taking on the identity of another person, intentionally or unintentionally
	<i>Infantilism</i>	Playing with the sound of words
✓	<i>Irony</i>	Saying one thing and meaning something else or exactly the opposite
✓	<i>Irreverent behavior</i>	Lacking proper respect for authority or the prevailing standards

**Absurdity** and **irony** are the **most presented** humor techniques. However, **most liked and commented** publications are with the technique **absurdity and disappointment**. **Chase** is the technique with the highest engagement rate.



# Absurdity in Greenpeace memes

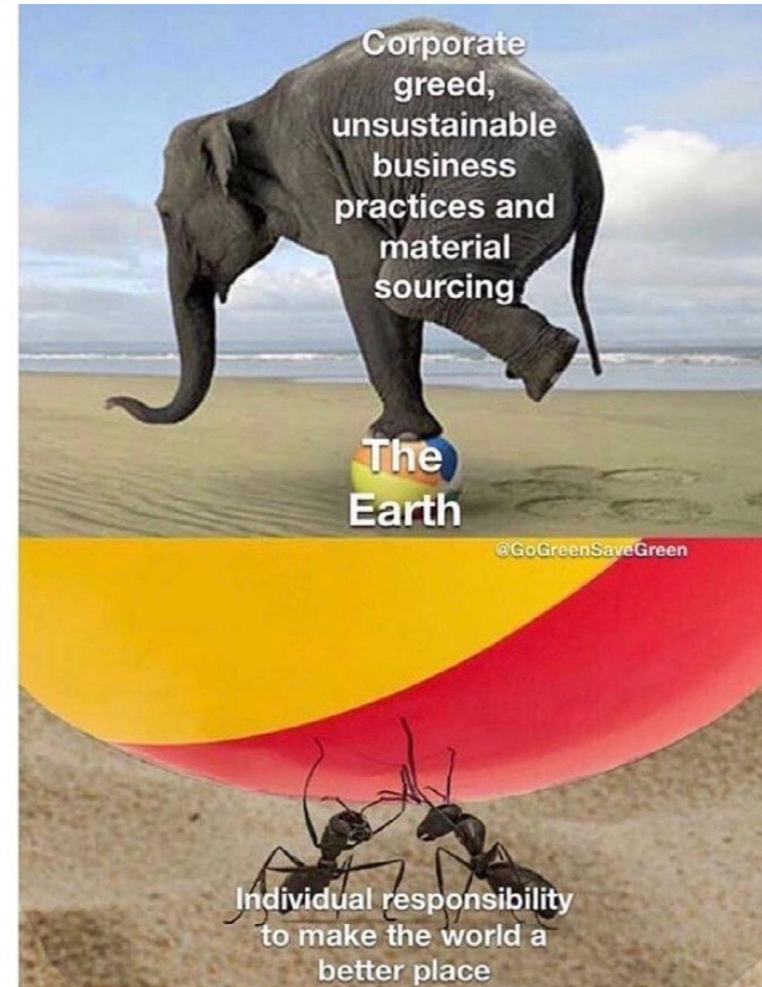
Un enfant de 6 ans: Tu veux acheter des cailloux?

Un adulte: Personne n'achète des choses qui sont gratuites.

L'industrie de l'eau embouteillée:



Monkey puppet meme, @greenpeacequebec



Elephant ants meme, @greenpeacequebec



## Disappointment in Greenpeace memes



Distracted boyfriend, @greenpeace\_france

# Chase in Greenpeace memes



Polar bear meme, @greenpeace\_be



Polar bear meme, @greenpeacequebec

# Levels of multimodal analysis

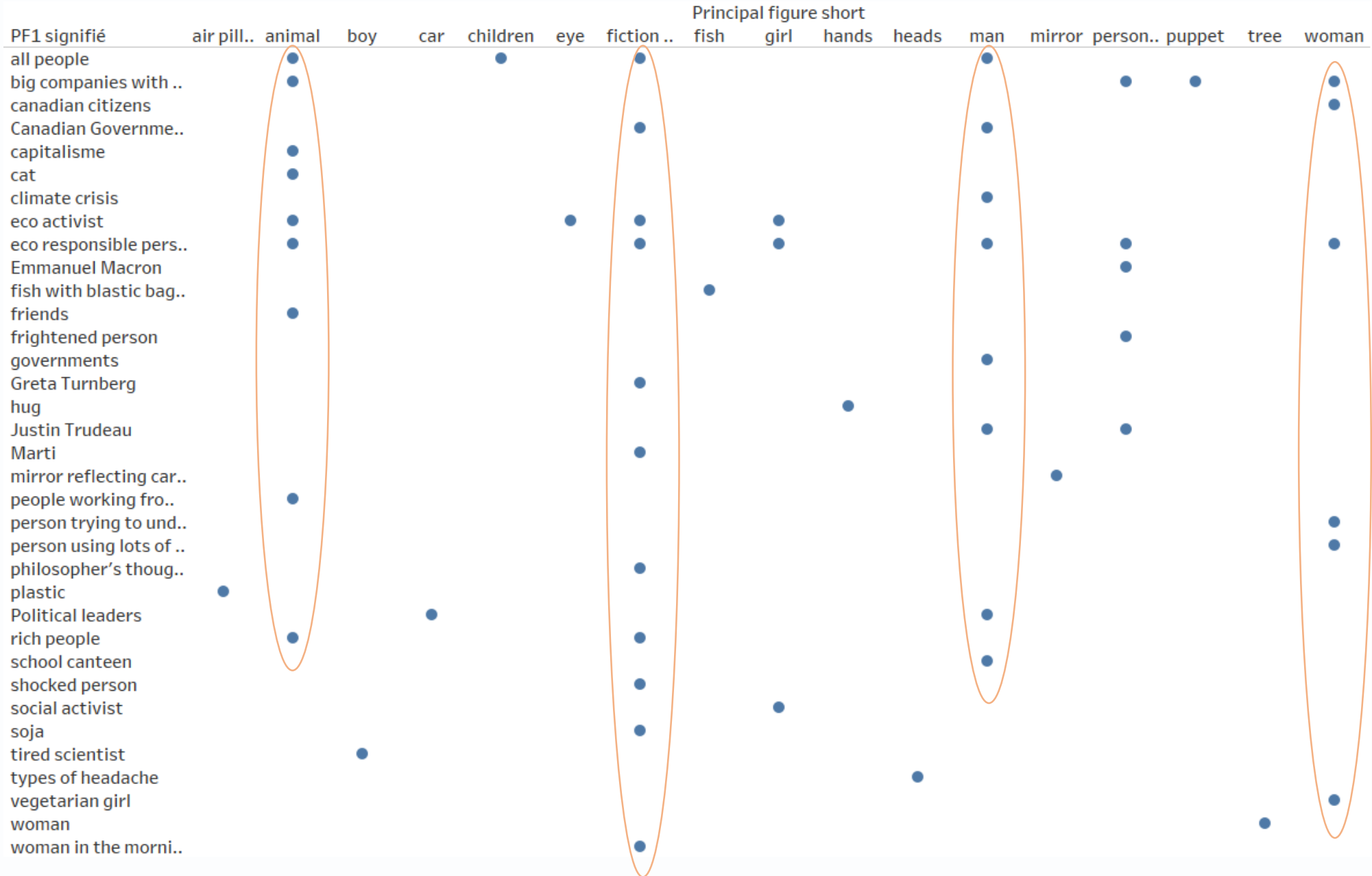
- Plastic message (colors, positions)
- Iconic message
- Linguistic message

(Floch, 2010)

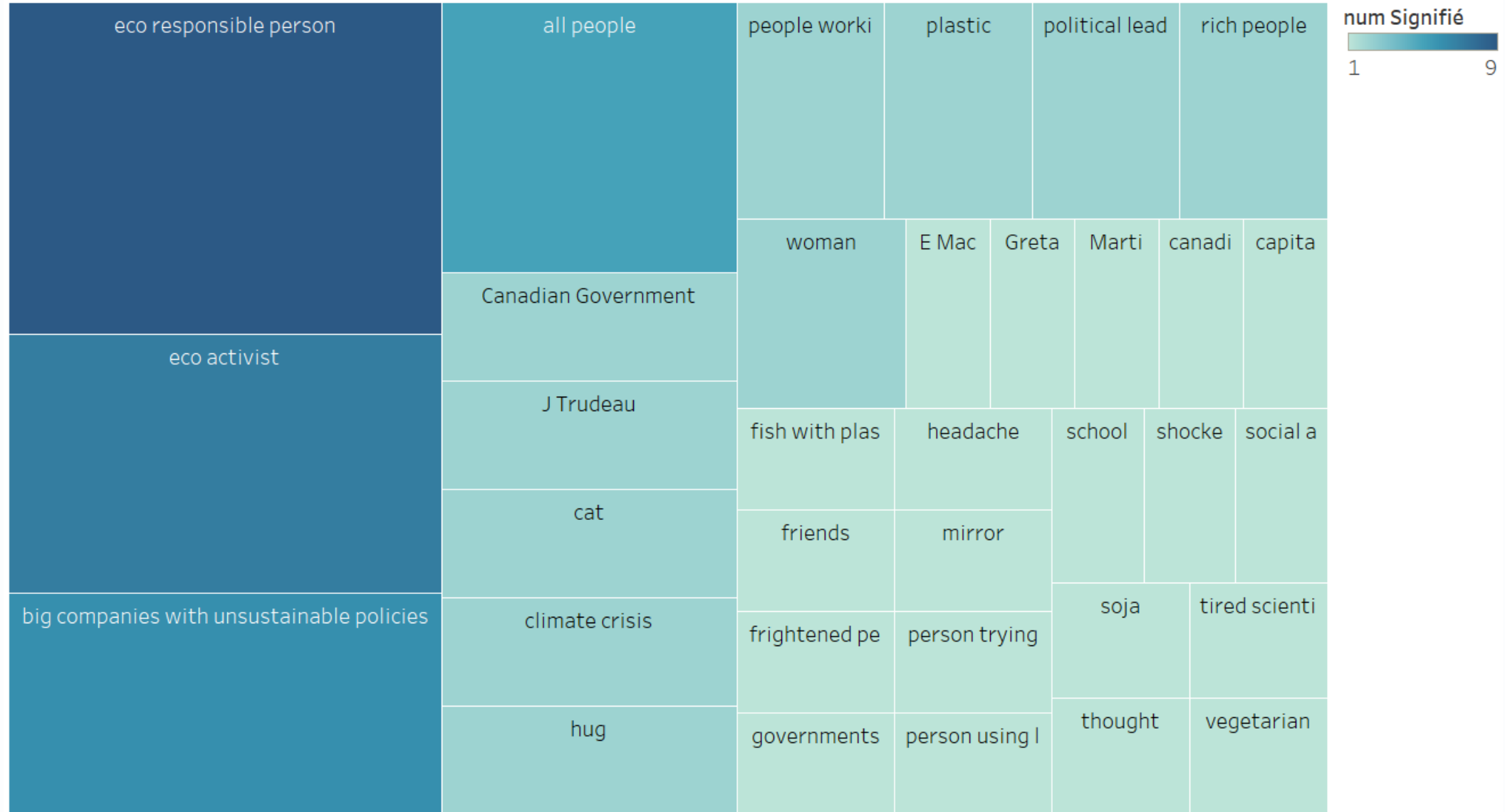


This is fine meme, @greenpeace\_france

# Principal figures of memes and what they signify – iconic message



# Signified elements in the corpus



PF1 signifié. La couleur met en avant le/la somme de num Signifié. La taille correspond au/à la somme de num Signifié. Les repères sont étiquetés par PF1 signifié.

# Greenpeace memes as a form of opposition and criticism

**Nobody:**

**Amazon: I think it needs more plastic**



Nobody me meme, @greenpeace\_be

**Personne:**

**Moi: Je m'habillerais bien comme un colis Amazon aujourd'hui.**



Nobody me meme, @greenpeacequebec

Big corporations

**Earth:** HELP! I'm overheating!

**Scientists:** We need to act on the massive impact industrial meat has on the climate!

**Our political leaders:**



Everything is fine meme @greenpeace\_be

**Governments**

Les gouvernements qui tentent de réparer l'économie sans changer le système



Me trying to fix meme @greenpeace\_france



Exit 12 meme @greenpeace\_quebec

Certaines personnes:  
Y fait frette en ta\*! Réchauffement climatique, mon oeil !

La crise climatique :

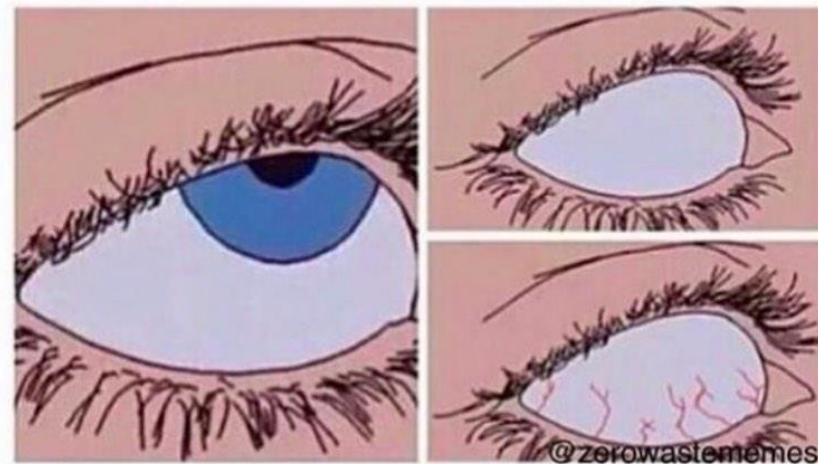


Am I a joke to you meme @greenpeacequebec

Climate sceptics

Them: so you're like really into the environment then?

Me:



Yes, Susan. I'm really "into" the survival of all living things.

Eyes rolled meme @greenpeace\_be





# Results

- Dominant types of humor in Greenpeace memes: comparison and sarcasm.
- Absurdity and irony – most used humor techniques.
- Memes with absurdity, disappointment, and chase as humor techniques attract more audience's attention.
- They show the **opposition** between the governments' actions and climate activism, climate sceptics and eco activists.
- Memes are an intense form of communication – **criticism** (of the governments, politicians, companies, climate sceptics).



## Limitations

- The representativity of the corpus is relatively small, one could also analyze regional Greenpeace accounts
- More detailed analysis is needed to the verbal component – textual message accompanying the image
- Lack of detailed investigation of the audience's perception – analysis of comments
- Analysis of memes as a part of Greenpeace campaigns



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