

Letting Diasporic Voices Be Heard *Refugees and Migrants in European Media*

Míriam Díez Bosch, Josep Lluís Micó Sanz, and Alba Sabaté Gauxachs

Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations (Ramon Llull University, Barcelona)

Abstract

More than 68.5 million people were forced to move from their countries, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, in 2018. Forced displacements are caused by poverty, war, and lack of safety. Since 2015, Europe has been experiencing a so-called refugee crisis that calls European values and policies into question. Beyond data, there are the experiences of those who are on the move. The number of people arriving on the continent has made integration a decisive topic. This research aims to discover the portrayal of refugees and migrants in media. This goal includes the challenge of making European media evaluate their work to improve the treatment given to complex subjects such as migration. This article is the result of research derived from the project Refugees Reporting in 2017, coordinated by the Europe Region of the World Association for Christian Communication and the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.

Keywords

refugees, migration, Europe, media, media narrative, reporting

More than 68.5 million people all over the world have been forced to move from their countries.¹ In 2016, more than 360,000 people risked their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe.² Forced displacements are caused by poverty, war, and general lack of security and hope for the future.³ Since 2015, the old continent has been experiencing a so-called refugee crisis that calls European values and institutional policies into question.⁴ Beyond data, and beyond the stigma of being a refugee or migrant – with its attendant political and social implications – there are the different experiences of those who are on the move.⁵ The huge number of people arriving on the continent from all over the world has made the integration of refugees and migrants a highly decisive political, economic, and cultural topic.⁶

The main objective of this research is to assess media representation of refugees and migrants in Europe. We aim to discover their portrayal and participation in media: how they are presented and the real presence of their voice in the public debate on this issue. This goal carries the challenge of making European media and journalists evaluate their work and become conscious of its consequences, primarily to improve the treatment that complex subjects such as migration receive in media.⁷ Global research, such

- ¹ United Nations Refugee Agency. “Global Trends. Forced displacement 2017,” <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017>.
- ² International Organization for Migration, “Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Top 363,348 in 2016; Deaths at Sea: 5,079,” Press Release, 1 June 2016, <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-top-363-348-2016-deaths-sea-5079>.
- ³ International Organization for Migration, “World Migration Report 2018,” <https://www.iom.int/wmr/world-migration-report-2018>; World Economic Forum, *Migration and its Impact on Cities* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).
- ⁴ Joaquín Arango, Ramón Mahía, David Moya, and Elena Sánchez-Montijano, eds, *El año de los refugiados*, Anuario CIDOB de la Inmigración 2015–2016 (nueva época) (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2016), https://www.cidob.org/es/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/anuario_cidob_de_la_inmigracion/el_ano_de_los_refugiados_anuario_cidob_de_la_inmigracion_2015_2016_nueva_epoca.
- ⁵ Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, “Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe’s ‘Migration Crisis,’” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44:1 (2018), 48–64.
- ⁶ Koen Leurs and Sandra Ponzanesi, “Connected Migrants: Encapsulation and Cosmopolitanization,” *Popular Communication* 16:1 (2018), 4–20; Alberto Ares, *La rueda migratoria: Tejiendo historias y experiencias de integración* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 2017).
- ⁷ Janine Allwright, *Media Framing of Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Minneapolis: Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies, 2018); Hajo Boomgaarden, Jörg Mathes, and Sophie Lecheler, “Refugees, Media, and Public Opinion: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives,” *Mass Communication and Society* 21:4 (2018), 531–32; Greg Philo, Emma Briant, and Pauline Donald, *Bad News for Refugees* (New York: Pluto Press, 2013).

as the World Migration Report⁸ and the International Migration Report 2017,⁹ are also a basis for this investigation.

This is research derived from the international project Refugees Reporting in 2017, coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC)–Europe Region and the Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), which aims to support the communication rights of refugees seeking safe passage into and through Europe and to challenge public attitudes of intolerance and discrimination against them.

The concept of communication rights is based on the charter of human rights of people everywhere to express themselves individually and collectively.¹⁰ According to WACC Global, these rights are vital for full participation in society, essential for human dignity and for democratic participation.¹¹ Communication rights also create conditions for all voices to be taken into account. Nowadays, the classical communication paradigm has been interrupted by the interactivity of digital media. The unidirectional conceptualization of communication has been broken by new media that has led the audience to become communicators. Where are refugees placed in this process? Do they have the right to express themselves? For underrepresented people – in this case, refugees living in Europe – having their communication rights respected means being able to express themselves in the media without restrictions.

Internationally, there are organizations that are working to ensure that journalists carry out their profession in an ethical and responsible manner. An example is the Ethical Journalism Network. It has established numerous guidelines to provide a frame of reference for professionals. According to its work, the five core principles of ethical journalism are accuracy, independence, impartiality, humanity, and accountability. This organization has also established five specific reporting guidelines on migration and asylum: present fact not bias; know the law; show humanity; speak for all; and challenge hate.

⁸ International Organization for Migration, “World Migration Report 2018.”

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migration Report 2017*, (New York: United Nations, 2017), <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017.pdf>.

¹⁰ Andrew Calabrese, “Human Need as a Justification for Communication Rights,” *The Communication Review* 20:2 (2017), 98–121; Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpenter, *Human Need as a Justification for Communication Rights* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2007).

¹¹ Koen Leurs, “Keywords Communication Rights, Digital Archives, Europe, Human Rights, Margins, Performativity, Pocket Archives, Refugee Youth, Smartphones, The Netherlands,” *International Communication Gazette* 79:6-7 (2017), 674–98.

The State of the Matter

Refugees' and migrants' contact with global citizens is mainly through the media. In this respect, it is the journalists' own responsibility to present refugees and their stories to readers and to depict them beyond the labels of refugees, migrants, or asylum seekers. This is an issue of considerable international interest and has motivated the creation of guidelines that, like those mentioned above, help journalists to work from a solid ethical base. In 2008 in Italy, the Consiglio Nazionale dell'Ordine dei Giornalisti (CNOG) and the Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana (FNSI) signed the Carta di Roma, a deontological protocol dealing with the issue of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and victims of human trafficking. In collaboration with the National Union of Journalists in Ireland and the Irish Refugee Council, the United Nations refugee agency UNHCR agreed to a series of recommendations to avoid harming people when talking about refugees and migrants. Several national bodies have issued guidelines for journalism in this regard, such as the UK National Union of Journalists, who worked on the issue of race.

Beyond guidelines, there are reports and resources on this subject. The Finnish Institute in London and the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux Countries edited a study entitled "Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage." Based on an analysis of eight newspapers in Finland, Belgium, and the UK in 2016, this work concluded that refugees' voices are heard less often than those of politicians and experts. A report by the Council of Europe (CoE), "Media Coverage of the 'Refugee Crisis': A Cross-European Perspective," analyzed media coverage of refugees in eight European countries during summer and winter 2015. This assessment also showed that refugees have limited opportunities to speak up and, in most cases, they were depicted as victims.

There is also a report by the Migration Observatory, which carried out research on British media coverage of immigration between 2006 and 2015. The results were published in "A Decade of Immigration in the British Press," in which the language used by newspapers regarding immigration was analyzed. The study found that the three most-used adjectives regarding immigration in British newspapers were "mass," "net," and "illegal."

Numbers and emotions were the two dominating themes found in the 2015 report of the Ethical Journalism Network about this issue. They also found that the language used regarding this subject had negative connotations. Orgad analyzes how media in general could affect the collective viewpoint and view of the audience: "We take images, stories, accounts and voices that we encounter daily on television and the Internet, advertising and newspapers as a kind of background to our social lives, but they shape our individual and collective imaginations in consequential ways."¹² In this respect,

¹² Shani Orgad, *Media Representation and the Global Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012).

Esses, Medianu, and Lawson studied the specific case of the depiction of refugees.¹³ These authors worked on how uncertainty around issues such as immigration policies and the treatment of immigrants and refugees in media could portray immigrants as enemies and promote dehumanization: “These portrayals include depictions that suggest that immigrants spread infectious diseases, that refugee claimants are often bogus, and that terrorists may gain entry to western nations disguised as refugees.” Terence Wright explores the visual representations of refugees across a range of media forms.¹⁴

In *Media and Migration*, Russell King and Nancy Wood analyze the media as an index of entry to a new country for refugees and migrants. According to these authors, migration tends to be objectified as a time-space event or a process that is largely explained in economic, demographic, or sociological terms and linked to the issues of employment, development, population redistribution, class segregation, and the creation of ethnic communities.¹⁵

Some have concentrated their research on a specific kind of media and a specific country. This is the case of Majid Khosravini in the UK, who studied strategies employed by various British newspapers between 1996 and 2006 in their representation of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.¹⁶

As regards the recent terrorism events in Europe, several media depictions could lead to a misunderstanding of immigration and the refugees’ situation. One of the hardest stereotypes to challenge is the view that some people who arrive in a new European country could be terrorists. The Radicalisation Awareness Network analyzes how to change this narrative to prevent online and offline extremism. Bourekba studied the Barcelona case following the 17 August 2017 attack. Jelmer Brouwer, Maartje van der Woude, and Joanne van der Leun analyzed the concept “cimmigration” in studying media representation of unauthorized immigrants in the Netherlands. This investigation also contemplated the popular belief that migrants are always portrayed negatively. Authors such as Lentin and Titley have focused specifically on the multicultural backlash in Europe narrative. In Spain, the Observatory of Islamophobia in Media carries

¹³ Victoria M. Esses, Stelian Medianu, and Andrea S. Lawson, “Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees,” *Journal of Social Issues* 69:3 (2013), 518–36.

¹⁴ Terence Wright, “Moving Images: The Media Representation of Refugees,” *Visual Studies* 17:1 (2002), 53–66; <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586022000005053>.

¹⁵ Russell King and Nancy Wood, *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁶ Majid Khosravini, “The Representation of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in British Newspapers during the Balkan Conflict (1999) and the British General Election (2005),” *Discourse and Society* 20:4 (2009), 477–98; <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926509104024>.

out the task of detecting it.¹⁷ Lilie Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolic analyzed how news images of the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis visualize refugees, concluding that there is a failure to depict refugees as human beings. According to them, this requires rethinking the conception of the media's responsibility toward vulnerable incomers.¹⁸

The United States has also produced some significant analyses of refugees' media depiction. Hickerson and Dunsmore study how refugees are portrayed in community discourses based on the media coverage of World Refugee Day, an initiative to bring attention to this issue. They use quantitative and qualitative analysis to examine how refugees are portrayed as people and as a political issue in the US press.¹⁹ On the other hand, Georgiou and Risam study how migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers represent themselves through digital media.²⁰

As regards anthropology, studies about the concept of "placemaking" are also relevant. These studies focus on the physical and nonphysical elements that make people shape their place. Gupta and Ferguson argue that mass media help to break down the notion that places are containers of integrated cultures. According to them, "the words and images of mass media travel to you rather than you having to travel to them; they are commonly understood to be an alienated discourse, not the expression of the consciousness and worldview of a collective 'people' seen as originating authors."²¹

Peter Berger established that each individual lives in a framework of a system of power and prestige perfectly delimited, so that everyone knows their place. The author argues

¹⁷ Radicalisation Awareness Network, "Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism Delivering Counter – or Alternative Narratives," RAN Collections of Approaches and Practices (2018); Moussa Bourekba, *Revisiting the Barcelona Attacks: Reactions, Explanations and Pending Discussions*, CIDOB Report No. 2, 2018 (Barcelona: CIDOB, 2018); Jelmer Brouwer, Maartje van der Woude, and Joanne van der Leun, "Framing Migration and the Process of Crimmigration: A Systematic Analysis of the Media Representation of Unauthorized Immigrants in the Netherlands," *European Journal of Criminology* 14:1 (2017), 100–19; Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, "The Crisis of 'Multiculturalism' in Europe: Mediated Minarets, Intolerable Subjects," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15:2 (2012), 123–38.

¹⁸ Lilie Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolic, "Rethinking Media Responsibility in the Refugee 'Crisis': A Visual Typology of European News," *Media, Culture & Society* 39:8 (2017), 1162–77.

¹⁹ Andrea Hickerson and Kate Dunsmore, "Locating Refugees: A Media Analysis of Refugees in the United States in 'World Refugee Day' Coverage," *Journalism Practice* 10:3 (2016), 424–38.

²⁰ Myria Georgiou, "Does the Subaltern Speak? Migrant Voices in Digital Europe," *Popular Communication*, 16:1 (2018), 45–57; Roopika Risam, "Now You See Them: Self-representation and the Refugee Selfie," *Popular Communication* 16:1 (2018), 58–71.

²¹ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997).

that we live our lives within a complex network of recognitions, and so individuals work to achieve the confirmation by others of that which they consider themselves to be. According to this notion, prejudices not only affect the objective fate of the individual, but also their consciousness. The worst consequence of a prejudice is that people end up being what prejudice says they are.²² Academics such as McKenzie, Hughes, and most recently Alberto Ares have studied models of integration, proposing the mixed integration model. For Ulrich Beck, collectively we have been cast in a cosmopolitan situation, insofar as becoming irretrievably dependent on each other and bound to exercise reciprocal influence.²³ In his book *Ich und Du*, Martin Buber talks about this first moment of encounter with the other and explains that there are three spheres that build the world of relationships: life with nature, life with humans, and life with spiritual essence. For Buber, relationship is reciprocity.²⁴

Empathy has also been studied in disciplines such as philosophy and theology. Lévinas makes a contribution on ethics by contemplating encounters with “others,” whom he represents using three specific figures: the stranger, the widow, and the orphan.²⁵ In her contribution on empathy, Edith Stein concludes that a moment of total empathy is very difficult to achieve. According to her, four elements can help people to get to know others much better: their face, their nonverbal elements, their life’s work, and their silences.²⁶

Žižek refers to the fear of refugees as a method of reaffirming their own European identity. “Despite our prejudices about refugees being true, the paranoid discourse about immigrants’ threat would continue to be an ideological pathology.”²⁷ The author discusses two specific reactions in Europe to refugees’ arrival: first, their fear and rejection, and second, the self-blaming posture, in which they talk about how Europe has betrayed its values by letting a lot of people die in the Mediterranean, which according to him is a narcissistic view. The author also mentions Descartes’ statement that when

²² Peter Berger, *Social Construction of the Reality* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

²³ Everett C. Hughes, *Where Peoples Meet: Racial and Ethnic Frontiers* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1952); Roderick D. McKenzie, *Oriental Exclusion: The Effect of American Immigration Laws, Regulations, and Judicial Decisions Upon the Chinese and Japanese on the American Pacific Coast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928); Alberto Ares Mateos, *La ruca migratoria: Tejiendo historias y experiencias de integración* (Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2017); Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006).

²⁴ Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923).

²⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *Ethics and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985).

²⁶ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1916).

²⁷ Slavoj Žižek, “Qué dice sobre Europa nuestro miedo a los refugiados,” in *¿Dónde vas Europa?*, ed. Miquel Seguró (Barcelona: Herder, 2017).

he was young, he found strangers' customs eccentric, but later wondered if his customs might also be eccentric for strangers. Žižek concludes that it is all about recognizing the stranger in ourselves, not recognizing ourselves in the strangers. Knowing and accepting that we all are strangers is the only hope for coexistence.²⁸

Based on the figure of the migrant, Yasmin Gunaratnam has worked on the concept of social pain. Gunaratnam investigates stories of migrants dying in the UK and how their experience of migration has affected their health, both physical and psychological.²⁹

In this field, the concept of diaspora has also been debated. Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin review the topic and examine its main concepts and theories, including migration, ethnicity, and post-colonialism.³⁰ They also provide an overview of selected historical diasporas: Jewish, Irish and African American, among others. For Tsagarousianou, diasporas should be seen as depending not so much on displacement but on connectivity. The author suggests that diasporas should be seen not as given communities, a logical extension of an ethnic group, but as imagined communities, continuously re portrayed and reinvented.³¹

Koen Leurs and Sandra Ponzanesi study the emergent research field known as digital migrations, focused on connected migrants and e-diasporas, and also digital diasporas. They argue how borders, identity, and affectivity have been reconfigured through medium-specific technological mechanisms. These authors also consider the term “digital Europe,” and refer to the reality of the stories of refugees' uprooting and marginalization and their participation, connectedness, and remaking of Europe from inside, a remaking that has taken many different shapes. They also introduce the concepts of encapsulation and cosmopolitanization.³²

Some sociologists, such as Castles, De Haas, and Miller, have called our times “the migrations era.”³³ Beyond the effects of migration on migrant people as well as hosting people, we can observe that the influence of the emergency of technology and its role in these situations is the foremost issue debated in academic contexts. However, we

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Yasmin Gunaratnam, *Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders and Care* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

³⁰ Kim Knott and Sean McLoughlin. “Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections,” *Identities* (2010), 12–13.

³¹ Roza Tsagarousianou, “Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalised World,” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 1:1 (2004), 52–65.

³² Leurs and Ponzanesi, “Connected Migrants.”

³³ Stephen Castles, Hein De Haas, and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014).

should ask whether technology can help migrants avoid melancholy or whether it is a tool that creates isolated individuals in the great era of connectivity and communication.

Methodology

The main technique used in this research was content analysis.³⁴ Taking into account our main goal, we applied a programmed system of analysis to study the material using scientific criteria. This system of media monitoring has been recognized internationally and has been used by WACC in the Global Media Monitoring Project since 1995. This methodology includes both quantitative and qualitative components. The former provides an objective assessment of the representation of refugees in the news. The qualitative part comprises a more in-depth analytics of news stories to find out if stereotypes were challenged or not.

First, we selected the main media to analyze. We aimed to study representative media in each country, selected by quantitative criteria: the number of readers. The targets were those media known as mainstream. The media analyzed included not only major national newspapers but also local, secular, and faith-based media, as well as media from all political spectrums. We analyzed news stories and articles; we did not include opinion articles and interviews because of the scope of this research, which is based only on news. To select the relevant news, we consulted leading official audience reports and rankings. We selected those media leading the rankings during the previous audiences' measurement surveys before the study. As this investigation started in May 2017, we used the results of the media surveys on the first semester of 2017. The choice of the three supports (print, online, and Twitter) is justified by the need to gauge the influence of these media through their main channels. In Europe, Twitter is the social network where media have the most presence.

According to these criteria, a sample of 140 European media (newspaper, online, and Twitter accounts) was chosen from selected countries: Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Serbia, the UK, Sweden, and Norway. In the selection process for countries, the

³⁴ Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1952); Matthew Lombard, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Cheryl Campanella Bracken, "Content Analysis in Mass Communication: Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability," *Human Communication Research* 28:4 (2002), 587–604; Teun A. Van Dijk, *News as Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2013).

country in question was considered to be either an entry, transit, or destination country for migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers.³⁵

The monitoring task was carried out on this selected sample. This was done on three specific days: 30 May, 7 June, and 12 June 2017. These dates were constrained by the overall timing of the project. We took into account that this monitoring was to be carried out in eight countries at the same time, coordinated by WACC Europe and CCME. These three days were selected according to the project timeline and attempted to avoid specific events in all participating countries. These possible events might have affected media coverage for reasons other than those considered in our study.

During these days, in the nine selected countries we identified a total of 154 printed newspaper pieces talking about the subject of migration, refugees, and asylum. At the same time, 296 online news items and 121 media publications on Twitter dealt with this issue. In total the number of pieces analyzed was 571.

The quantitative analysis of the data gave a picture of the frequency of stories published about refugees, in which stories they appeared, and the role they played. In compiling this information, we followed a monitoring guide in which we coded each aspect of interest to the research. On the other hand, qualitative analysis gives us a more global picture of the situation. With this analysis, the goal was to obtain basic patterns of the news reporting about refugees.

The structure of the analysis form was based on several questions about the main issues to analyze: the story, journalists, people in the story, analysis, basic information about each new story, and comments and explanations. The first area gives information about the main topic of the article, its geographical scope, and reference to any part of human rights or refugee legislation. The field designated as journalists aimed to provide detailed information about the author of the piece. The people in the story provides detailed information about characters, specifically those identified as refugees or migrants. Also included were gender, age, country, occupation, function in the story, terminology, quotes, and whether or not they experienced any acts of violence, terrorism, or disaster. The section analysis deals with the tone of the story and studies whether it promotes or challenges stereotypes. Basic information is focused on data to identify the story, such as the link to it, and finally, there was an optional field available for extra comments or observations.

³⁵ See WACC Europe/CCME, *Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe* (Brussels: WACC Europe/CCME, 2017), http://www.refugeesreporting.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Changing_the_Narrative_Media_Representation_of_Refugees_and_Migrants_in_Europe.pdf.

Under each one of these issues were several questions that we answered using a numerical code. We used a monitoring guide that indicated which code was assigned to each answer, depending on the question. There were 35 main labels assignable to each story, and in turn they were classified into six main thematic groups: politics and policy, social and health, economy, displacement, crime, and other.

This methodology was given a test run using all the members working in the monitoring team at an international level. Using the forms, we tested the methodology on several news stories and pieces and discussed elements that might cause doubt. With this test run, we could hypothesize the causes of possible misunderstandings and propose ways of solving it in each case, thus guaranteeing the equality of criteria at the moment of monitoring. The report titled “Reporting of Refugees (Guidance by and for Journalists)” and edited by the United Nations Refugee Agency was also used as a recognized reference document to guide this task and check which concepts and definitions should be assigned to particular stories.

This section presented issues that were raised in the surveys with refugee group representatives, interviews with media professionals, and consultations in Brussels in September 2017. The surveys and interviews identified issues specific to each group, while the discussion in Brussels provided an occasion for dialogue, sharing of advice, and suggestions for working together.

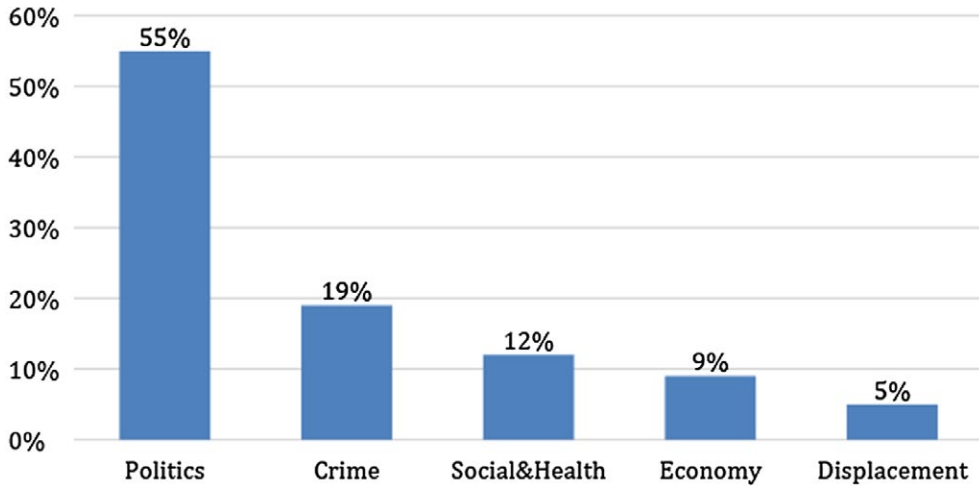
The methodology also included a space for promoting discussion between refugees and media professionals. Accordingly, a consultation was held in Brussels in September 2017 with the aim to provide an opportunity for face-to-face conversation between these two groups to complete the research.

Results and Discussion

Applying this methodology, we compiled the results about the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Based on the total number of pieces analyzed, the first observation was that the issue of migration and asylum are not at the forefront of European news. This observation is derived not only from the quantitative analysis, but also from the qualitative one.

To obtain this result, we monitored the topics most appearing in the news stories analyzed. These were classified into the 35 topics, then grouped in five categories: politics, economy, social and health, displacement, and crime. Of the news stories, 55% were about politics; 19% talked about crime; 12% were about social and health; while economy and displacement had 9% and 5% respectively.

Main topics in asylum and migration news stories



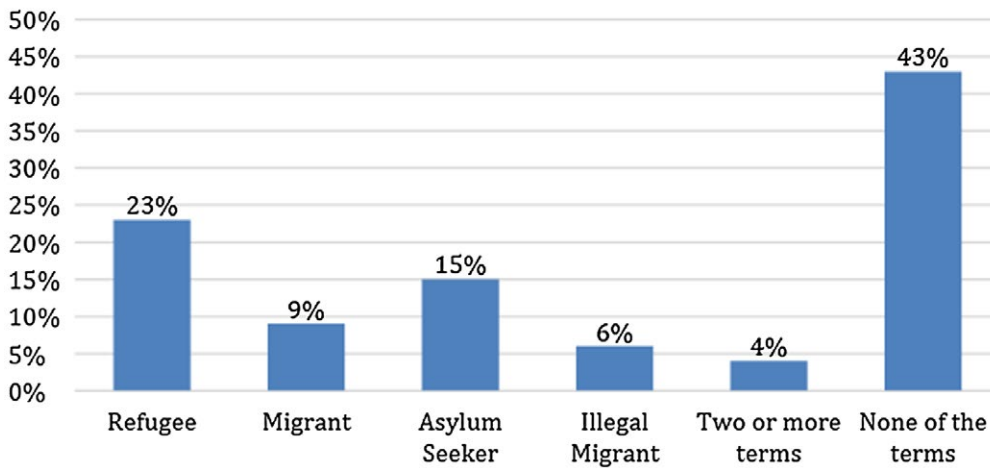
Source: World Association for Christian Communication and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.
[Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com] *Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe*, 2017.

The politics category contained more detail in subtopics, which permitted us to detect differences between the countries in the study: national legislation was the most prevalent subtopic in Norway, Sweden, and the UK; integration in Italy and Spain; relocation in Serbia; and returns and deportation in Greece. These results reflect the focus of the social and political discourse concerning migration and asylum in each country. It is also important to stress that in the majority of the countries, the scope of the news about refugees was national, both in print and online newspapers. The exceptions were Greece and Spain, where the majority of stories had a local and an international scope, respectively.

After reflecting on the media treatment of refugees, the study also aimed to discern if the articles provided a legal background to the stories published. This question addressed the United Nations' core principles of accuracy and impartiality and whether the story was written in a context that made use of the appropriate legal frameworks to challenge hate, reducing the possibilities of misunderstanding and misuse of information. Results show that 26% of printed newspapers and 25% of the online newspapers made reference to human rights or refugee legislation. Norway was the only place where legal aspects were mentioned in more than 50% of the stories analyzed.

The people who were the object of the story was another important facet to analyze to measure the maturity of the country and the media as regards migration issues. Of all the countries and media analyzed, in 21% of the people in the stories were referred to as migrants or refugees. This is considered a low representation and shows how the debate about these issues is mainly framed by politicians' discourses. The most affected people are excluded from the debate. This situation can create a distancing between refugees and the general public. This percentage was especially low in the UK. Another exception was Serbia, where 100% of people in the stories were identified as migrants or refugees. Focusing on gender, men were the most named in the articles, and only 32% of all people in these stories were women.

Terminology used to refer to migrants/refugees in the news stories



Source: World Association for Christian Communication and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.
[Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com] *Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe*, 2017.

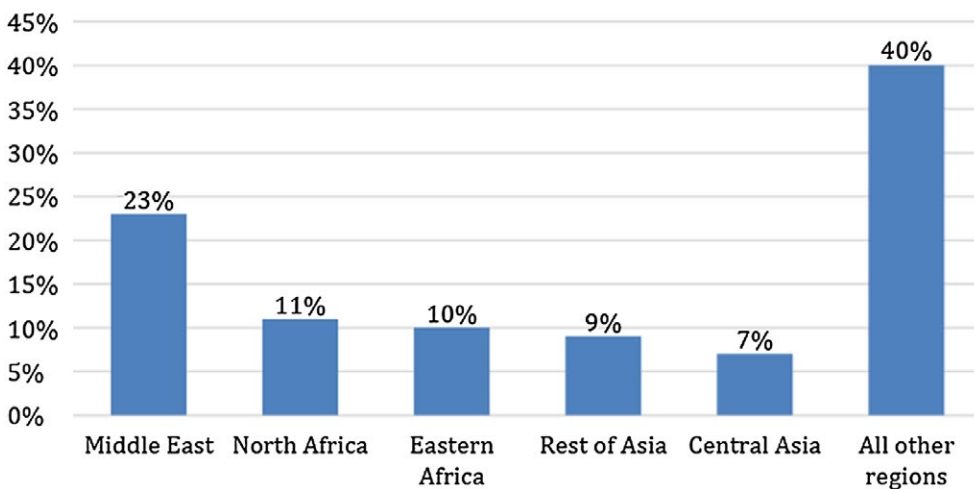
Terminology is important when reporting on this subject. Using the proper terminology avoids reader confusion when talking about migration and refugees. For the purposes of this study, the categories available to assign were the following: refugee; migrant; asylum seeker; illegal migrant; two or more terms used to refer to the same person; and none of the terms used. The most frequently used category was specifically none of the terms, revealing that in 43% of the cases, none of the established concepts was repeatedly used, while terms such as “foreigner” were more used. “Refugee” was

used in 23% of stories and “asylum seeker” in 15%. “Illegal migrant” was used in only 6% of the news stories analyzed. Norway is the country where the term “refugee” was most used – in 79% of the stories. The low incidence of terms that could promote a negative view of people showed a rise of awareness among media about the negative connotation of some terms. However, it is important to state that other terms used to refer to people were not specifically these ones, but nevertheless were also negative.

Who are “refugees”?

This research also took account of the region of origin and age of refugees and migrants in the stories studied. Results show that the predominant age group was 19–34 and the majority of them came from the Middle East. However, the age of refugees does not appear in 49% of the news stories analyzed. Specifically, the main regions of origin were the Middle East (23%), North Africa (11%), Eastern Africa (10%), Rest of Asia (9%), and Central Asia (7%). Regarding religion, in 83% of the stories studied, this information was not present. The audience cannot determine the religion of origin of refugees and migrants, so it is not taken into account. This result contradicts the automatic assumption that refugees are Muslims. However, when religion is mentioned, in most cases it is indeed Islam (15%). Christianity is mentioned in 1% of the analyzed news.

Top five regions of origin of migrants/refugees in the news stories



Source: World Association for Christian Communication and Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe.

[Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com] *Changing the Narrative: Media Representation of Refugees and Migrants in Europe*, 2017.

The lack, or omission, of information on migrants' identity reveals their clear underrepresentation in European media. Beyond this information, this study also shows in how many stories refugees are quoted so that their voice is present, considering that quoting them is offering refugees more space to express themselves. This consideration is also supported by the European Journalists Network principle of "speak for all." In this respect, 40% of the articles and Tweets in this research include quotes from refugees and migrants. The country where refugees are quoted more is Norway (88%), followed by Sweden (50%). In the rest of the studied countries, the percentage of refugees and migrants quoted in news stories is under 50%. This finding is in accordance with the result of the study carried out by the Council of Europe and the Finnish Cultural Institute, which found that voices of refugees and migrants do not get much media space.

The function assigned to refugees and migrants in the story is also important to be able to understand the role and the space assigned to them in media. This research established five possible functions: Subject, Spokesperson, Expert/Commentator, Personal Experience, and Eye Witness. In most of the cases, refugees and migrants are given the function of Subject of the story (67%). They are presented as Experts or Commentators only in 3% of the news analyzed. These results reinforce the idea that refugees are only present in society when news stories talk about them.

These results are in accordance with the part of the survey regarding people's profession. In 43% of the cases, this is not stated. In 27% of the news, people are identified as migrant, refugee, or asylum seeker. Politicians (49%) or activists (8%) are the most frequent occupations of people in the news stories studied who are not refugees. The low representation of professional affiliation in the articles shows that the debate on topics directly affecting them is happening without taking their presence and opinion into account. This might seem an irrelevant detail; however, their low representation makes it easier for readers to distance themselves from the refugees and migration issue.

It is also important to highlight that in 33% of the cases, refugees are identified as perpetrators of acts of war, terrorism, discrimination, and domestic and nondomestic violence. Specifically, 45% of them are identified as perpetrators of terrorism. In contrast, only 26% of refugees were identified as victims or survivors.

Qualitative analysis of the articles was carried out to capture the tone of the stories and if they promoted or challenged negative stereotypes. The stories that promoted or challenged stereotypes were selected for this analysis. Results show that, with the exception of Spain, in the countries analyzed, the news did not actively challenge stereotypes. Focusing on the topic of stereotypes, most of them were about displacement (76%),

followed by social and health issues (42%), economy (38%), politics (35%), and crime (14%). When studying specifically negative stereotypes promoted by media, crime was the main topic (in 57% of cases). The UK was the country where there were the most news stories promoting stereotypes against refugees (54%). Regarding the tone of the stories, 33% were considered sympathetic toward refugees, 17% unsympathetic, and 50% neutral.

The media's role

Public opinion is created and moulded significantly by media.³⁶ The role played by media is central, given that social media, television, radio, and newspapers are the main way the public get informed, particularly about issues in which audiences have neither direct access nor knowledge. Despite the recent digital transformation, the media still continues to be the public sphere that Habermas defined as a virtual or collective community that does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space but nevertheless is the place where individuals can freely discuss and identify society-wide problems and, through this discussion, influence political action.³⁷

During recent years, refugees who try to reach Europe have been on the front covers and in the headlines of media all over the world. The public arena has been the place where European policies about migration have been most debated. It is also where faces of migrating people have appeared.

The figure of the migrant has become central in popular communication, mobilizing imaginaries about digital media practices and the place they have in the construction of the haves and the have-nots. This creates hierarchical cultural, social, and political ordering mechanisms between the West and the Rest, magnifying broader patterns of inequality between the Global North and the Global South.³⁸

However, the research at hand shows that this issue is no longer at the forefront of European media. According to Martini, there are eight elements that make a story newsworthy: timing, originality and differentiation, future evolution of the events, significance, proximity, human interest, prominence of the people involved, and the inclusion of those displaced.³⁹ Taking these elements into account, refugees and migrants

³⁶ Catherine Happer and Greg Philo, "The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 1:1 (2013), 321–36.

³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Boston: MIT Press, 1962).

³⁸ Leurs and Ponzanesi, "Connected Migrants."

³⁹ Stella Martini, *Periodismo, Noticia Y Noticiabilidad* (Barcelona: Editorial Norma, 2000).

stories complied with some of these criteria at the beginning. However, as the months passed, these stories became less newsworthy, and debate about refugees lost media presence. Out of a total of 140 European media analyzed during the three selected days, this study found 571 pieces about refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.

Talking about no-people

Drawing from the results regarding the details and characteristics revealed in each story about refugees, it is possible to consider that the label “refugee” has acquired an empty meaning. This research clearly shows this situation. For instance, in some cases the public does not know where migrants or refugees come from because it was not specified in the piece. In the majority of cases (67%), they are referred to as the subjects of the story but are not presented as experts. In fact, in 43% of these stories, their profession is not even mentioned. However, in 33% of cases they are directly referred to as perpetrators of crimes. Moreover, the audience is not made aware of their religion. In 83% of the stories, this information is not mentioned or talked about. When it is mentioned, the news talks of Islam (15%). For the vast majority of the public, migrants and refugees are Muslims, and this is not always the case. This is further proof of how omission of information can create a stereotype.

In the meantime, the circumstances give space to populist discourses that take advantage of the situation. Political parties such as the UKIP (UK), Northern League (Italy), and National Front (France) are putting religion to a populist use. The mis- and under-representation that media are promoting fuel callous discourses against migration, based on “us” vs. “them.”

As the underlying details are not being specified, the media talks about no-people in unknown circumstances that might arouse audience empathy. Visual stimulation such as images and videos can have this effect. However, the repetition and juxtaposition of pictures, especially in social media, about people trying to cross the Mediterranean have a kind of anesthetising effect on audiences. At the same time, the public distances itself from the situation by not recognizing individual identities, rather only a great mass of anonymous people. This, together with the lack of information, allows the audience to depersonalize the situation.

Furthermore, only in a few cases did the media give voice to refugees and migrants. Their words are quoted in only 40% of the stories analyzed, but more so in countries such as Norway and Sweden. In the rest of Europe, the media talk about refugees without talking with refugees. The direct representation and voice of refugees and migrants in articles about refugees and migrants is sparse, and even so, women are

underrepresented. Taking this lack of presence into account, we may assert that some communities of migrants and refugees are completely invisible in the news.

A politically correct society

The results obtained show that the refugees' situation is becoming a new issue in the long list of global challenges that people see as difficult to solve, such as global poverty or climate change. This has a "big issue" effect that is a barrier and complicates the active implication and intervention of society when faced with social injustice.

Especially for Northern societies, discourses on these issues contain strong help messages. The news analyzed in this research depicts national campaigns asking for help for refugees. However, while society is explicitly asking for aid, some media are linking crimes directly with migration. A spiral of silence on this issue is apparent.⁴⁰ While asking for help more through discourse and less through direct action, European society is cloaking itself in a certain and silent suspicion as regards refugees and migrants. Media have also highlighted crimes that were carried out by migrants, sometimes without waiting for a clear criminal judgement on the case (19% of stories analyzed talked about crime). The omission of religion in the news pieces analyzed also reveals this phenomenon.

However, this research shows clearly just how politically correct European societies would like to be. Only in 21% of the stories were the people referred to as refugees, migrants, or asylum seekers. Actually, the term "illegal migrant" is barely used. This research found that they are referred to using a wide variety of terms, all of which try to avoid being too harsh.

European maturity as regards migration

Beyond crime, it is important to highlight that this research showed that politics is the main issue addressed by media when talking about migration. News about political decisions are the most frequent ones in general. However, within the topic of politics, the most debated subtopics in each country are also noteworthy because they could be interpreted as an indicator of a country's maturity regarding migration. While northern Europe is debating legislation on migration (Norway, Sweden, and the UK), eastern Europe (Serbia and Greece) is concerned about relocation and deportation, and in southern Europe (Italy and Spain) the main issue is integration, related to coexistence. These results reflect how mature each country is when it comes to reception of

⁴⁰ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "Public Opinion du Jour: An Examination of the Spiral of Silence," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48:4 (1984), 731–40.

migrants and managing of migration. The state of each one could also be related to the moment in their history when they started to face this phenomenon and the different level of host culture in each country. Within the countries analyzed, the UK is where migration started first. The different concerns as regards migration are also a clear picture of how each country addresses migration, depending on its culture and on how many years it has been receiving migrants.

Reception is not a simple issue. Contexts of reception are varied and, in different ways, promote the future development and aspirations of migrants.⁴¹ In this respect, there are several agents for people to take into account when deciding where to go: health care guarantees, employment, and social conditions foremost.

It is important how the host country regards the reception of migrants. When discovering that in two of the analyzed countries, Spain and Italy, the main concern on migration is the integration of refugees, it is significant to analyze what the concept of integration means, because it is a manifestly complex, multilayered concept subject to contradictory interpretations.⁴² It is important to highlight that there are several models of integration, and with fuzzy limits: assimilation, melting pot, multiculturalism, interculturalism, segregation, and exclusion.⁴³ All of these concepts are being used to define what happens to individuals who have grown up in one cultural backdrop when they attempt to re-establish their lives in another, and how a society might manage this situation.⁴⁴

Academics such as McKenzie and Hughes have studied these models.⁴⁵ Taking them into account, Ares studied these models and classified them into two main groups: models of inclusion and models of exclusion.⁴⁶ The first group includes assimilation (according to the Chicago school's theory, integrated by McKenzie and Hughes), melting pot, multiculturalism, and interculturalism. Assimilation is considered the unilateral adaptation of immigrants to the values, culture, and lifestyle of the hosting society, gradually eliminating differences. Melting pot is defined as the bidirectional process of

⁴¹ Ayumi Takenaka and Karsten Paerregaard, "How Contexts of Reception Matter: Comparing Peruvian Migrants' Economic Trajectories in Japan and the US," *International Migration* 53:2 (2015), 236–49.

⁴² Rainier Geissler and Sonja Weber-Menges, "Media Reception and Ideas on Media Integration among Turkish, Italian and Russo-German Migrants in Germany," in *Media - Migration - Integration: European and North American Perspectives*, ed. R. Geissler and H. Pöttker (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), 27–43.

⁴³ Ares, *La rueda migratoria*.

⁴⁴ John W. Berry, "Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation," *Applied Psychology* 46:1 (1997), 5–34.

⁴⁵ McKenzie, *Oriental Exclusion*; Hughes, *Where Peoples Meet*.

⁴⁶ Ares, *La rueda migratoria*.

interaction in which dominant and subordinate cultures interact with each other to create a new nation, establishing also an agreement on a status of formal equality. Multiculturalism is a model of interethnic relationships that supports social equality and the right to be different, promoting minority cultures and maintaining a shared reference framework. The latest model in the first group is interculturalism, defined as a dynamic conception of culture, the creation of a new cultural synthesis and a social unity that highlights common characteristics. The models of exclusion group is composed of the segregation and the exclusion models, which promote segmented societies by differencing two autonomous groups – dominants and subordinates – having a certain interaction in economic issues. Finally, Ares finds what he calls the “mixed model of integration” to be the more realistic model identified in several countries, taking into account that the characteristics of all models are present in the real models applied.⁴⁷

These models are clearly reflected in some of the replies and results obtained. In this respect, according to *Popular Communication*,⁴⁸ after several centuries spent on dreams of cultural assimilation and convergence, and on the ensuing practices, society begins to face up to the prospect of a mixture of interaction and friction among a multiplicity of irreducibly diverse identities of neighbouring and/or intermixed cultural diasporas. For the author, European society needs to take on board that this is not a temporary phenomenon and, citing Pope Francis, the author reminds us that the pontiff already told us about implementing the art of dialogue for reducing inequalities.

Media: A double-edged sword

While Europe is going through and managing the phenomenon analyzed, media are narrating it. In fact, the media – and particularly nowadays digital media – are where audiences can get to know refugees’ situation better and form their own collective viewpoint on the situation, the people depicted, their stories, and their lives. However, the results show that the main characteristics of media action regarding refugees and migration in Europe are the following:

- **Omission of information:** Through lack of knowledge, that is, not giving the details, media can directly contribute to promoting stereotypes;
- **Lack of in-depth knowledge:** Through omission of information together with the lack of specific information about a particular issue, media could contribute to

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Leurs and Ponzanesi, “Connected Migrants.”

a social lack of knowledge. For instance, legislation around this issue is mentioned or detailed in very few stories about migration and refugees.

- **Political correctness:** By directly avoiding promoting stereotypes, media rather indirectly do so by not challenging them.
- **Information from the North:** It is important to highlight that the scope of the news analyzed about refugees is national, in most cases (with the exception of Greece and Spain). Here is where the research detects a certain kind of ethnocentrism in the way information is created by media, always from the same approach and, as we mentioned, without giving space to refugees to express themselves. To change the narrative, refugees and migrants need to be able to talk for themselves.
- **Fast journalism:** The influence of the pressure of cost and time in our instantaneous digital model, in which journalists have to treat and analyze several issues at the same time, promotes biased information and forces a kind of competition among media to obtain the higher number of clicks.

These facets, together with the role media are supposed to play in representing and covering refugees' stories, transform the media into a major double-edged sword in this situation. As a main social agent, media have the function of informing. However, the way information is produced and published is contributing to projecting a biased image of migrant people by not challenging stereotypes, but instead indirectly promoting them, thereby contributing to acute lifelong social anguish.⁴⁹

European media: Unsocial media

Additionally, this study showed how media are also present in the interactive digital debate about the refugee issue on social media. The business viewpoint in the media in all countries was also analyzed. Their articles about migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are a good way of broadening the reach of their stories about this issue. The media generally use social media as a tool of diffusion and advertising, but not as an agent for discussion and debate.

Currently, the interactive function of social media is not exploited by media for promoting discussion about migration. Social media is a passive agent for producing and publishing posts with the goal of getting more clicks. The individualization of society also manifests itself indirectly in this individual and ethnocentric social media practice.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Gunaratnam, *Death and the Migrant*.

⁵⁰ Fernando Robles Salgado, "Contramodernidad y Desigualdad Social: Individualización e individuación, inclusión/exclusión y construcción de identidad. La necesidad de una sociología de la exclusión," *Revista Mad: Revista del Magíster en Análisis Sistemico Aplicado a la Sociedad* 12 (2005).

Journalists' profiles have not been included in this research: their role in this respect is a possible topic of future research.

Conclusion

There are significant, identifiable, and noteworthy trends that reveal how refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are portrayed. The main conclusion of this research is that in a globalized world, both media and society systematically treat migration from an ethnocentric approach.

At all levels, the sample of this research could be interpreted as reflecting Europe's maturity as regards migration. The study shows how the issue of migration is no longer must-have breaking news in European media. The direct presence of migrants is even less conspicuous if we take into account that in most cases, the issue of migration appears in European media when it talks about politics. In some countries, the politics are about migration (northern Europe); in others, about deportation (eastern Europe); and in the rest, about integration (southern Europe).

It is important to highlight that when migrants themselves do appear in media, they are neither fairly identified and described nor given space to express themselves. Media reproduce the same role and character as European society at large. Media show awareness about the situation, but do not promote action and invariably treat information from the same Northern approach: the right to information is not balanced with other human rights. The right to intimacy and honour are brought into the debate when showing certain kinds of images and referring to migrant people with demeaning labels. In this respect, the ethical debate is also invoked. In Europe, a politically correct society with politically correct media gives rise to a certain spiral of silence.⁵¹ Interpreted as a positive detail, demeaning terminology about migrants seems to be less present in the media analyzed, showing at least some kind of awareness in the coverage of this subject.

In this context, the media become a double-edged sword. Media have the potential to allow refugees to make themselves known, but recently one of the principal agents is contributing to a generalized ignorance that does little for peaceful coexistence. Further research must address new ways of reporting the situation and guarantee future coexistence in a diverse society. Authors such as Ares remind us how important it is to highlight that migration is not a temporary phenomenon, and that European society is

⁵¹ Noelle-Neumann, "Public Opinion du Jour."

treating it through an outdated and ethnocentric approach. The research clearly shows how the media is pursuing and contributing to this trend.

In a globalized world, migration is a constant, continuing, and inescapable phenomenon. It is important to get to know, accept, and integrate incomers in the realization that building walls is not the way a global society should live. Accordingly, stimulating, enhancing, and guaranteeing coexistence is a fundamental pre-condition for this process to happen. In this enormous challenge, the media and journalists have a key role to play by talking about migrants, talking to migrants, but, above all, letting migrants talk.