

# Medijsko portretiranje izbjegličke krize: komparativna analiza vizualnih narativa europskih i američkih medija na Twitteru

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Sveučilište u Zagrebu  
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Anja Stević

**MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS:  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VISUAL NARRATIVES IN  
EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN MEDIA ON TWITTER**

**DIPLOMSKI RAD**

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**DIPLOMSKI RAD**

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Zagreb  
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Izjavljujem da sam diplomski rad “Media portrayals of refugee and migrant crisis: comparative analysis of visual narratives in European and American media twitter accounts”, koji sam predala na ocjenu mentorici doc. dr. sc. Viktoriji Car, napisala samostalno i da je u potpunosti riječ o mojem autorskom radu. Također, izjavljujem da dotični rad nije objavljen ni korišten u svrhe ispunjenja nastavnih obaveza na ovom ili nekom drugom učilištu, te da na temelju njega nisam stekla ECTS- bodove.

Nadalje, izjavljujem da sam u radu poštivala etička pravila znanstvenog i akademskog rada, a posebno članke 16-19. Etičkoga kodeksa Sveučilišta u Zagrebu.

Anja Stević

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# 1 Introduction

Human international migration movements are not a new phenomenon. They have been occurring for centuries and are not different than they were before. It can be said that it is a constant situation in certain parts of the world. It has huge impact on social cohesiveness and “over the past one hundred years, international migration has often been at the center stage of major events that reshaped the world” (Benhabib, 2004: 6).

Today there are around 59.5 million displaced people in the world, which includes refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. Increasing numbers of refugees and migrants are deciding to undertake dangerous journeys because they are in need of international protection, escaping from war, persecution and violence in their country of origin. Most of the refugees nowadays stem from Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan (UNHCR, 2015). However, starting from the last year (2015) it has gained unprecedented turn. With the cause of Syrian civil war in 2011, millions of people started to flee to neighboring countries, and due to the Germany’s open call to accept refugees from Turkey, unseen migration flows started to dominate European continent. Not only did they happen expeditiously, but this conditions did not wane and soon became ‘the new normal’ contingent. With this seldom sense of migrants and refugee flow, different European countries had to find the best solution to cope with the emerging humanitarian crisis.

The central role in perceiving this tragic circumstances is held by the media which refers to it as ‘refugee crisis’. The media gave considerable insights to human tragedies in unforeseen ways, explicitly presenting desperate conditions and deaths which should not be taken for granted. Public interest in refugees dramatically escalated after the image of drowned toddler Aylan Kurdi got published. It sparked the debate about crisis immensely since it spread over the social media. By now, it is considered as iconic photograph which represents Syrian refugee crisis and demonstrates the power of single visual image which strongly evokes viewer’s reactions. Even though it evoked rather compassionate and humanitarian responses, another event propelled negative discussion. Terrorist attacks in Paris, as diametrically opposite event, caused security



and threat headlines and commentaries towards the refugees and migrants. The media's attention and focus on this events are responsible for bringing viewers images of the ongoing humanitarian problems.

Those assumptions rise the question of how the key role of representing refugees and migrants is expressed by the media and how is public reacting to it? The power of the visual imagery and visual rhetoric has received little attention in media studies research on the representation of migration. It stays clear, that audiences have already seen similar images and everyone has a strong visual sense of what refugee looks like. Photographic portrayals of refugees are extremely abundant, yet they play essential role in forming the stereotype of "the refugee" (Wright, 2002: 53). As refugees are "universalized visually in the media and other public areas" (Mannik, 2012: 273) their predominance in media representation determines how we see refugees and mostly may result with objectifying "the refugee" in the role of the "illegal alien" (Wright, 2002: 64).

Given the fact that nowadays online mediascapes function to inform audiences about global world events, Twitter strikes as the legitimate and fastest news sharing provider, as confirmed by Haewoon Kwak et al. (2010). Therefore, it is a platform being used in conducting this research. With the usage of Big Data methodology and Social Media Tracking Analysis System to depict the most prominent images shared by media organizations, it sets the ground for analyzing photojournalistic tendencies in covering the refugee crisis. This research aims to understand the fluctuation of images and visual narratives in social media which compiled the latest crisis since "migration is essentially mobile 'narrativized' experience" (King and Wood 2001: 10). After examining visual rhetoric of the most prominent photographs shared on Twitter, special attention is given to the commentaries underneath those images. Thus, presenting overall situation of shaping and framing the 'refugee crisis'.

## 2 Migrants and refugees' framework

Migration is constant human phenomenon and exists from the evolution of mankind, it is “both an individual and collective phenomenon, tied to initiatives and aspirations of a person, family and bigger community, even a society in general” (Friganović, 1989: 23). However, over times it is changing in a way of intensity and form. Moving from one place to another has always been characteristic for people aiming to change or improve their conditions and “it is predominantly expression of longing for better economic welfare but can also be a demonstration of aspirations for bigger individual and collective freedom” (Friganović, 1989: 23) and it usually occurs during relevant historical periods, e.g. wars. In defining types of migration according to cause, it is divided between “political escape as refugee and free migration as economic-social type” (Friganović, 1989: 25).

Why does it occur and what causes the massive migration movements? As Pinar Yazgan et al. (2015) explain, “migration is initiated by discomforts, difficulties, restrictions, clashes, and finally violence and wars at the country of origin. People only decide to move when they see that given conflict as a threat, an environment of insecurity, which is unmanageable”. Based on migration literature, often mentioned migration myths refer to the ways in which “people make decisions to move based on hearsay - often good stories relayed by past movers” (Yazgan et al., 2015: 184). Eventually, that leads to bigger migration flows from underdeveloped to developed countries forming considerable political, religious and economic problems.

Immigration policy of the European Union came in the spotlight due to the large influx of refugees on its borders in 2015. Nella Popović (2015: 30-34) describes how can and will European Union pass this test and resolve the immigration problems. In her article she outlines crucial documents which formed migration policies. First policies of European Union which dealt with immigration appeared in 1970s and were related only to migrants who were nationals of other member states and not third countries. In the Maastricht Treaty (signed in 1992) immigration is defined as a “matter of common interest” (Perchining 2006: 74 in Popović, 2015: 31) and it introduced the concept of citizenship of the Union's citizens which brought them a political right on international and European level. In the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed in 1997),

European immigration policy began to develop in direction of emphasizing human rights and the integration of third country nationals, and not just immigrants from other member states. However, European legislation still does not require harmonization of the status of immigrants in all member states. Since refugees arriving in Europe are mainly competent working-age population, member states have recognized the importance of immigration for its labor market, but the policy of immigration and citizenship remain areas of their exclusive sovereignty. Thus this refugee crisis is warning about the need for greater coordination among the member states, but also shows the gap between the European and national approach on issues concerning immigration and asylum. It confirms overextension between transnational tendency of the European Commission as its main driver on the one hand and national immigration policy on the other.

Institutionally, refugees' status is regulated by several arrangements, which date from the middle of last century. United Nations adopted the Geneva Convention on Refugees in 1951, subsequently extended with the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1967, in which states agreed to provide protection to refugees who left their countries 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion' (Carr, 2015: 21). European Union has introduced the right to asylum in the 1990s, but as part of the Schengen agreement to those not granted asylum in one country enables application in another member state of the EU. Member states still have high competence and decide on number of people they want to receive from third countries in the case of legal migration, for example, and thus the number of asylum seekers (Mađarević, 2015). The creation of the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), and the formation of the World Court, and most recently of an International Criminal Court are developments intended to protect those whose right to have rights has been denied (Benhabib, 2004: 67). As Benhabib states, development of those institutions which are responsible for the migration express the learning process of the nations in dealing with the horrors of this century. There are other legislative documents regarding migration. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948) recognizes the right to freedom of movement across boundaries: a right to emigrate – that is, to leave a country - but not a right to immigrate - a right to enter a country (Article 13). Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights anchors the right to asylum as a

universal human right: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from prosecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.” Nevertheless, while the right to seek asylum is recognized as a human right, the obligation to grant asylum continues to be jealously guarded by states as a sovereign privilege (Benhabib, 2004: 69). That privilege, Benhabib explains in the realm of the state's control over migration, both immigration and emigration, which is crucial to state sovereignty (2004: 2). The logical conclusion drafted from these laws is explained by Benhabib (2004) “while the ark of political equality extends to protect some, it can never extend shelter to all, for then we would not have individual polities but a world state”.

## 2.1 Various (mis)interpretations of refugees’

Migration terminology will be briefly elaborated to provide context for understanding variety of media texts, keywords and hashtags being used in tweets and research. It is often usual for media and public to misinterpret those definitions or not to use them appropriately, e.g. replacing refugees for ‘illegal’ migrants and causing negative effects. When defining refugees, economic migrants and asylum seekers it is necessary to bear in mind that those categories do overlap. Mitchell (2006:1) explains those terms:

"Asylum seeker" is a person who has applied for asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees’ on the ground that if he is returned to his country of origin he has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political belief or membership of a particular social group. He remains an asylum seeker for so long as his application or an appeal against refusal of his application is pending. "Refugee" in its broader context means a person fleeing e.g. civil war or natural disaster, but it also means an asylum seeker whose application has been successful. "Economic migrant" is a person who has left his own country and seeks by lawful or unlawful means to find employment in another country.

However, Yazgan et al. (2015: 182) claim “the difference between a refugee and an economic migrant is ‘imagined’”. They elaborate this statement by saying that most economic migrants have some story of difficulty driving them to other countries, whilst all refugees have an obvious economic cause along with the immediate threat they are escaping from. What nations and states

are witnessing through the past year is large influx of people on their borders which is causing different usage of regulations connected to these definitions. UNHCR (2015) states that during mass movements of refugees (usually as a result of conflicts or generalized violence as opposed to individual persecution), there is not - and never will be - a capacity to conduct individual asylum interviews for everyone who has crossed the border. Nor is it usually necessary, since in such circumstances it is generally evident why they have fled. As a result, such groups are often declared "prima facie" refugees.

Refugees flee from war thrown areas to find asylum in developed western countries. In their transit routes they are not regarded as citizens, but as possible asylum seekers. When entering the country one has to bear in mind the hierarchy of citizenship which is explained by Stephen Castels (2005) and the ways how it functions in a world of unequal nation-states. According to his understanding everybody in the country is meant to belong, while the rest of the world is excluded: foreigners cannot belong. The East-West divide has been replaced by a new division between North and South. This statement pretty much sums up the present condition of migrations, since we witness the big division between northern and southern countries in Europe who are confronted with taking in the refugees. Moreover, Castels emphasizes that "the worst thing to be in a world of nation-states is to be non-citizen". Bridget Anderson goes in the same direction explaining how refugees are stateless people without citizenship. In a world of nation-states, statelessness equals social death. When arriving in the territory of the new country non-citizens are divided into three broad categories of entrant: workers and refugees, asylum seekers, and family members (Anderson, 2013: 53).

In her comprehensive book on immigration 'Us and them', Bridget Anderson (2013: 55-57) pointed out how the 'image' of refugee in the Europe changed during the course of time. She explains how 1951 Geneva Convention framed the concept of the 'refugee' as the liberal individual fleeing Communist oppression. The refugee was the embodiment of liberal polity, not only fleeing persecution but practicing liberal politics, both a subject of human rights violations and one who is explicitly demanding human rights. Until 1980s there was a (relative) openness to refugees and a sympathetic public response to them. They were associated with Hungarian freedom fighters or Russian ballet dancers, which was accompanied with strong class

associations. Later on, intensity of conflicts and state breakdowns increased and international travel became easier. Hence, the numbers of people claiming asylum increased throughout 1990s and there was a move from the figure of the white political refugee fleeing the oppressive Soviets to the black asylum seeker, running away from a failed state, or the Eastern European criminal looking for a better life, both likely to be referred to as 'bogus'. The binary opposition of good refugee/bad economic migrant which had moved in the late 1990s and early 2000s to bad asylum seeker/good economic migrant, then became bad asylum seeker/bad economic migrant. However, the rhetoric of good genuine refugee and good highly skilled migrant remains constant and still prevails in framing policy documents.

## 2.2 The 'refugee crisis' is not to be considered as something 'new'

To explain and interpret the scope of the latest refugee crisis is to provide broader context and explanation why and how did it happen. This 'refugee crisis' was threatening Europe for the past several years, but in 2015 it reached its peak (Tatalović, 2015: 23). According to Turkish scholars Pinar Yazgan et al. (2015: 181) who investigated the core of crisis explaining how "with the growing insurrections in Syria in 2011, an exodus in large numbers has emerged, the turmoil and violence have caused mass migration to destinations both within the region and beyond". The current "refugee crisis" has escalated sharply and its impact is widening from neighboring countries toward Europe.

Public attention and focus on fast emerging 'refugee crisis' started to occur in the spring of 2015. After seeing devastating news about vessels full of people being drained in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach the shores of southern European countries, attention shifted towards migrants and refugees fleeing from Middle East and Africa. Their deaths were harbingers of what United Nations called "an unprecedented crisis for European Union" (UNHCR, 2015). Amnesty International (2015) has stated that starting from the last year the world is witnessing "the worst refugee crisis since World War II". These specific migrant movements are not new and have been constant since the start of Syrian civil war in 2011. The latest wave of fleeing is happening since the past year and is even expected to be bigger. As stated by Yazgan et al. (2015: 183) "one of the main reasons for migration escalation was Germany's announcement to

admit half a million Syrians per year, but there were already a large number of Syrians leaving Turkey long before... the potential impact of the agreement signed between Turkey and the EU on 16 December 2013 on ‘the readmission’ of persons residing without authorization” which was ratified by Turkey on 25th June 2014. When signed, it was expected that the agreement is fully implemented in three years. That means in 2016, this agreement may come into force fully. The numbers of people leaving the countries accelerated fast and there is no single reason for this increase, but the intensification of the fighting and the destruction of the Syria’s economy which have created a growing sense among the population that as the war enters its fifth year, no end is in sight (Trilling, 2015). In addition to political turbulence, economic motivations were also strong to pave the way for migration flows from Syria (Yazgan et al. 2015: 185).

As this crisis is not influencing the European countries equally, the ones which are exposed to refugee crisis react to it differently (Tatalović, 2015: 23). Hazel Healy (2016) explains how Europe has dysfunctional asylum policy which majors in shifting responsibility for refugees and migrants instead of sharing it. He stresses opinion of academic Hein de Hass who believes the Left has boxed itself in, when it comes to migration, by drawing on humanitarian arguments and neglecting practical ones. Migrants are attracted by labor markets – economies that perform well. And on balance, they contribute more to economies than they take away. Stephen Castels (2005: 690) goes in the same vein by explaining how the right sees immigrants as a threat to national identity and security, while the left is concerned about social cohesion and the weakening of welfare states. Increasingly, immigrants and asylum seekers are seen as potential threats to security. The problem is not the movement of people but xenophobia fueled by politicians and the media. Therefore, immigration has become a powerful symbol of the perceived threat of globalization. However, an increasingly fractured European Union has been unable to come up with a concerted response to what is the biggest refugee crisis with some 60 million people displaced by conflict and grinding poverty. That political failure has turned an immigration crisis into a humanitarian one. While international law protects political refugees - and not economic migrants - sorting them out has caused further political friction in Europe (Bajekal, 2015). As scholars state, “focus is still on raising walls, strengthening borders and futile categorizations of movers as ‘refugees’ and ‘economic migrants’” (Yazgan et al., 2015).

The 'crisis' is going to stay permanent issue, since the environment of human insecurity in Syria gives no signs to change in the close future. That being said, intensifying human tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea diverted public as well policy makers' attention to the subject. Particularly, policy makers whose main focus on possible impacts of refugees on their country became to discuss humanitarian aspect of the topic and they also emphasized the importance of a collective responsibility in the field (Yazgan et al., 2015: 184).

### 2.3 'Refugee crisis' as social phenomena of media 'moral panic'

Refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, Libya have been on the journey full of military borders, obstacles, police, detention centers, facing deaths and violations of the basic human rights, with media pin pointing their tragedies and losses. Main destination for most of those people is western European countries which tend to offer the best asylum protection, working conditions and potential of full integration. In their journeys and "temporary sojourns" (Benhabib, 2004) refugees confront opposing array of responses, they are "policed as fugitives, tolerated as guests, cared for as victims, identified as cultural threats to European secular social life, and attacked as militant enemies" (Cottee, 2015 in Naimou 2015: 1). The frames that are used for describing refugees are pallet of polarized constructions referring to them as innocent victims or stealth terrorists. Simultaneously with media coverage those terms arose in public spheres and speech, which is well demonstrated in variety of shared hashtags on Twitter (e.g. #opentheborders, #marchofhope, #migrantinvasion, #defendeurope, #refugeesnotwelcome etc.). This is what appears to be the proof for scholar statements that "all human mobility is down to some kind of a conflict and that our culture of migration model is conflict driven." That can be interpreted through "constant clashes, violence and antagonism towards 'others'" (Yazgan et al., 2015: 182).

What the media tend to present is based upon those assumptions. Through various media channels public sees those "militarized visual spectacles of border security" (Brown, 2010 in Naimou, 2015: 1) which then block view on the reality of the situation wrapping it in one sided negative context. As other descriptions of refugees appear, e.g. illegal migrants, criminals, terrorists etc. public witnesses upstaging the refugees arrivals "as evidence that illegal entry



remains the only route to legal asylum” (Popp, 2015 in Naimou, 2015: 1). This constant struggle for clear and deeper representation of refugees and migrants seems to be elusive. For that reason, the concept which McLuhan (1964) defines as “moral panic” created and fueled by the media is explaining the broader representations of the refugees in the mediascapes. According to Krinsky (2013) “a moral panic may be defined as an episode, often triggered by alarming media stories and reinforced by reactive laws and public policy, of exaggerated or misdirected public concern, anxiety, fear or anger over a perceived threat to social order.”

### 3 Photojournalism and visual communication

As this research’s focus is on the visual media representation of the refugees and migrants, special emphasize is on addressing photojournalism role in shaping the imagery of refugees. To explain the meaning of photojournalism and photography in covering the events, the famous definition of Henri Cartier-Bresson, the father of press photography, is stated. According to his approach, photography is “the simultaneous recognition in a tradition of a second, of a significance of an event as well as of a precise organization forms which give an event its proper expression”(cited in Leuween and Jewitt, 2001: 65). Gisele Freund (1980: 6) proposes rather different point of view, while observing photography in the context of the society, her definition resonates well with today’s visual predominance in online world. “Photography is so implemented in our society that from constant watching we can’t really recognize it anymore”; it is being taken for granted as something given and unquestionable. Later on, she elaborates her understanding by saying how “it opens the windows of the world” and while spreading the views on the world, the world shrinks. While words tend to be abstract, the image is concrete reflection of the world that we live in (1980: 100). However, what Susan Sontag declares is “photography being a powerful instrument for depersonalizing our relation to the world. It offers habit-forming activity, both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others - allowing us to participate, while confirming alienation” (Sontag, 1977: 167).

To paraphrase Gisele Freund (1980), when the picture itself became the news, photojournalism arose as a profession. In photojournalism, the event is being reported through the array of photographs, followed by scant interpretation, often reduced only to a title or a legend. As a consequence, it developed the possibility of particular news media or newspaper to provide

different meaning of the same photographs, usually the ones that fit its political intentions. Therefore, the objectivity in the photographs doesn't exist. The text which stands by it can completely transform its meaning. The most special characteristic of news photography is its immediate emotional effect and power to involve human respond to it. When taking photographs, photojournalists have relevant task and skill of recognizing the 'decisive moment' and later selecting the right one and editing it. That is when the 'news values' come into play and determine what is considered being trustworthy or accountable representation of the event.

Documentary photography serves to inform widespread mass of audience. Then 'seeing' becomes "already exercised cultural practice and photographs create overall cultural consciousness" (Jenks, 2002). However, Sontag (1977) addresses this notion by saying how socially engaged photographers think their work expresses some sort of established meanings, that it can reveal the truth. However, part of the reason is that photography is always a subject in the context, so its meaning is constantly being dispersed. So the context is forming any immediate, especially political usage which photography may contain. In terms of social engaged photographers who are taking documentary's images of humanitarian events, one point strikes as significant, and that is credibility and accountability of media organization publishing those images. There is a sense of presenting the events as they are without distorting the reality of the captured moments. It is news agency's authority which doesn't make us question what and how is being represented.

In her essay "On photography" Sontag (1977: 20-31) stresses that photographing is essentially an act of non-intervention and experience of looking at the photographs is 'aesthetic distance'. She defines "photographs as *memento mori*", meaning as soon as they are being produced, moments when they are captured disappear and photojournalists lose their attachment to them. After being made photographs capture different points of views and are, so to say, let free to circulate in the society. When they are published, people must rely on knowledge they already possess to interpret what they see in a photograph. In the end, when pictures are poignant photojournalism stands as the agency for change, speaking in the universal language – photography.

### 3.1 The regimes of seeing

In his book 'Visual Culture', Chris Jenks (2002) explained the notion of vision and its connection to social processes. He stated that "semiotics could not be developed upon the assumption that signs mean different things to different people, whether it precisely depends on the cultural net which establishes uniformity of reactions or decoding the signs". That cultural net is our scopic regime (2002: 30). This syntagme was introduced by French film theorist Christian Metz, who coined the term "scopic regime" which stands for sense of sight which is predominant in modern society. Modern power pervades all segments of society by acting in relation to scopic regime. Observation and conscious image manipulation are double instruments of functioning in modern societies of power and control (Jenks, 2002: 31).

According to Chris Jenks (2002) we live in "oculocentricity" of western culture, where all is transmitted through different images and pictures. Visual fixation is precisely what dominates and systematically appears in our recognition. Therefore, semiotics goes beyond clustering to identify the iconic index and symbolic signifiers. Photographs as source of information are statements that can be read and that provide useful information, but like all statements they must be read in context - in context with other photographs or verbal information, and in historical context, but also all photographs to some extent are historical (Zakia, 1997: 237-248).

### 3.2 Circulation of documentary photography in social media

The rise of social media as a news source, shifted media organizations into the virtual online media landscape. Social media have profoundly transformed news-gathering, making it more polyphonic (Gemi et al, 2013: 268) and also more visually appealing. While always an important concept in conventional journalism, 'eyewitness' has become an inescapable keyword in the contemporary media landscape (Mortensen, 2011). Therefore, media turned into the favored platforms for delivering testimony. Photographs are valued because they give information and tell one what it is (Sontag, 1977: 22). Images are, on the one hand, reproductions, but they have a second meaning as well: a mental picture of something not present. Reading media imagery is an active process in which context, social location, and prior experience can lead to quite different decoding (Gamson et al., 1992: 374,375). Posting on social

media is overwhelmingly visual and has given photography an unprecedented ubiquity as part of daily life. Focus is almost entirely on what we learn from these visual postings. Today the issues of representation and communication are made more complex because of the way the photograph is regarded as a form of evidence, bringing with it further issues of reliability and truth (Miller et al, 2016: 150-157).

As Nadav Hochman (2010: 2) observes “the social media image is the new dominant cultural visual form of 2010s, which offers new experiences, conceptions and interactions”. As a specific form of Big Data, images have a depth and density that words often lack. They allow for a much richer communication beyond the short sentences of most status updates, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of this data and its social context (wef.org, 2014). Hochman (2014: 4) explains the data communities of visual organization. The first most common manual visual classifying systems are based on information annotation with keywords. This type of manual indexing has been known as tagging, and the index terms or keywords are referred to as tags. The basic principle is that users of social media services do “subject indexing” and the assigned tags are shown immediately on the Web along with the posted images. The second automatic organization of visual materials in social media platforms is based on “external” annotation of images with metadata (such as location, coordinates, a timestamp, a user name etc.). So, with both hashtags and keywords searches media outlets form, so to say, “communities of images” which refer to one thing, making it easy to track and group as visual sources.

#### 4 Media framing

In communication theory, frameworks are described as relatively stable and socially shared category systems that human beings use to classify new information (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2007: 18). In their chapter “News framing Theory and Research”, authors Tewksbury and Scheufele (2007: 19, 20) explain how each news story contains both information and frames. A frame is a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an event being reported. Power of the frames is evident when they invite people to think about an issue in particular ways. Accordingly, news frames function to suggest how audiences can interpret an issue or event, they establish meaning. Frame effects can rely upon culture-based meanings, norms and values. A framing effect occurs when a phrase, image or statement suggests a particular meaning or

interpretation of an issue. Frames link issues to particular beliefs that carry with them concepts for interpreting the origins, implications and treatment of the issue. Journalists – often subconsciously - engage in essentially the same process when they decide how to describe the political world. They choose images and words that have the power to influence how audiences interpret and evaluate issues and policies.

Frame building deals with the creation and social negotiation of frames in at least three related areas: journalistic norms, political actors and cultural contexts and it is assumed that media frames might help set the terms of the debate among citizens as part of a “frame contest” (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2007: 22.)The present stage of relations between media and its recipients, started in the early 1980s, is characterized as “social constructivism”. The description of this stage combines elements of both strong and limited effects of mass media. On the one hand, mass media have a strong impact on constructing social reality, that is “by framing images of reality...in a predictable and patterned way” (McQuail, 1994: 331). On the other hand, media effects are limited by an interaction between mass media and recipients. “Media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse” (Gamson& Modigliani, 1989, p. 2; see also McLeod et al., 1987). However, when it comes to immigration and its media framing, Threadgold (2009 in McAuliffe and Weeks, 2015: 5) explains the coinciding relations between politics and media:

“Politicians, media and academics provide the language for talking about immigration, setting the agenda and framing the stories. A certain policy focus is transmitted from government to media. The stories that the media then produce feedback into policy discourse. In addition to driving policy, ‘media panics’ also influence academic research on media coverage of migration. That in turn gives rise to further policy changes, thus feeding a cycle.”

## 5 Mediated ‘us and them’ dichotomy

If we start from the assumption that “most of people’s knowledge and beliefs about the world are shaped primarily by the plethora of news reports that they consume everyday” (Gemi et al, 2013: 267) we can agree that the media have significant role in framing the imagery of the migrants and refugees. Media portrayals influence how we think about identities in terms of

gender, race, ethnicity and nationality (Mannik, 2012: 274). They apply to the representation of people, groups and minorities in the media while depicting their main characteristics.

Based on the book 'Media and migration' (King and Wood, 2001: 1-2) the media may intervene in the migration process and in the individual and collective experience of migration in three main ways:

“First, images transmitted from the destination countries, or by the global media generally, may be an important source of information for potential migrants. Whether this information is accurate or not it can act as an important factor stimulating migrants to move. Second, host-country media constructions of migrants are critical in influencing the type of reception they are accorded and hence tend to shape migrants' eventual experience of inclusion or exclusion. Finally, third way occurs when media act as the mouthpiece of political parties or other powerful groups. Media discourses have been shown to be immensely influential in constructing migrants as 'others' and often to as 'criminals' or 'undesirables'.”

When talking about mediated representations, it is important to stress the significance in constructing the “reality” of those being portrayed and the fact that these media messages may be distorted images of real conditions. Mediation is in this case fundamental because the way in which the ‘other’ is portrayed in it - be it a close ‘other’ or a more distant ‘other’ - also influences the way we organize our reality, our experience of those realities, of those people, our values and, perhaps even our actions, proposals and practices (Silverstone in Cardoso 2011: 124). Another important, but problematic assumption that “the media opinion reflects public opinion” (Mannik, 2012: 262) is crucial when understanding suggested imagery of refugees and migrants. Therefore, how media reflect the reality, people tend to refer to it in the same way.

Reporting about refugees or migrants happens to be very strictly shaped, Gemi et al. (2013: 266) refer to it as a “fixed repertoire”, because media present only controversial, negative or conflict driven events, without providing any specific social context or deeper understanding of the problem. When producing the news, media categorize migrants as being politically “weak”: they have limited or no political rights and belong to a national/ethnic/religious minority group. Consequently, immigrants are broadly represented in the news as speechless actors involved in negative acts (terWal in Gemi et al., 2013: 269-270). By following those patterns, media promote and perpetuate “racist imagery” (van Dijk, 1993, Spoonley and Butcher, 2009) so it is no wonder that migrants and refugees are constantly demonstrated through ethnocentric, nationalistic and

xenophobic rhetoric fueled with negative stereotypes and prejudice. By showing only one side of the coin, media creates ‘moral panic’ evolving around those who are considered as “bad figures” in the society. The major hysteria is often occurring when migrants get caught in morally unaccepted acts and sense of crisis spreads (Gemi et al., 2013: 272).

Another important problem that arises considering media representations is the tendency to report about migrants and refugees without sensibility. “Creation of positive in-group versus negative out-group dichotomy”, as van Dijk claims (1991 in Bennett et al., 2013: 250) often occurs as the process of “othering”. Strong differentiation between host country citizens and immigrants is promoted by the media in the sense of migrants or refugees being a threat to one nation and using those “others” as a means of destroying nations authenticity. Highlighting the cultural differences therefore sharpens the rejection or non-acceptance of immigrants. While reporting, migrants per se will not be the focus of the story but rather they would be pictured as one of the elements of a much bigger story, e.g. thousands of refugees fleeing a country because of civil unrests there. It is important to bear in mind the economic interest of the media which then frequently creates a bias pushing the migrant-related news towards sensationalism (Gemi et al., 2013: 270).

Portrayed as “enemies at the gates” who are attempting to invade western nations the media create a crisis mentality and promote dehumanization of immigrants and refugees. These kind of portrayals include depictions which suggest that immigrants spread infectious diseases, that refugee claimants are often bogus, and that terrorists may gain entry to western nations disguised as refugees. Those types of depictions and the problematization of immigration by the media more generally, may be seen as responses to collective insecurity and uncertainties about citizenship and national identity “stemming from globalization and ideological realignments associated with the rise of neoliberalism” (Esses et al., 2013: 518-521). Media coverage often refers to ‘cultural differences’ and law-breaking, refugees and migrants are frequently represented as engaging in illegal activities. They are depicted as poor, living in sheds and off handouts (Anderson, 2013: 45).

Study conducted by Gemi et al. (2013: 278) scrutinized the media news making practices among journalists in six European countries and findings showed additional factor that plays a role in shaping migration-related coverage. It is the fact that the media outlets do not cover immigration as a topic continuously. Media organizations have a tendency to flood the media space with instant coverage when something dramatic happens but then abandon topics about migrants and refugees which influences the public to think of immigration in the “problem/conflict/difficulty” framework. This encompasses the main features of the latest “refugee crisis”, since the discussion literary exploded when the images of drowned child predominated the social media. Later on, the talks about the migration problems lowered down and weren’t in the main focus of the media until the Paris attacks occurred.

## 5.1 Visual rhetoric in shaping refugees identity

News photography is almost always accompanied within the context of some particular story, which can correlate with the image but does not have to. Image usually just stands as an illustration to the text. Sonja K. Foss (2005: 149) pointed out the difference between “language as being general and abstract, while images are concrete and specific”, so the visual rhetoric is just another way of communicating. Foss (2005: 144) explained which three characteristics must be present in order to qualify an image as visual rhetoric: “the image must be symbolic, involve human intervention and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communicating”.

When it comes to the different images representing the refugees or migrants, one can agree on their impact of forming opinions and constructing the reality of those people. Throughout the history of photography, special emphasize was placed on the humanitarian, social documentary photography which occurs when human tragedies are called into question. This delicate form of photojournalism presents suffering, which is similar to war photography and may have a huge impact on politics or social consciousness. In its journalistic form, the photographic image of migrant or refugee represents and validates the complex identification vital to an embodied citizenship. In every case, that embodiment will recapitulate the tensions between the universal inclusiveness of public address and the specific embodiment of public identity (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002: 38). However, as we constitute ourselves as spectators to mediated human sufferings, and witnessing tragic events through mediated sphere with ‘de-territorialization’ of



experience, the media show the pain of distant others everyday, without giving us the option of acting on their situation (Boltanski, 1999: 17). Presenting the imagery of ‘how it is’, leaves little space for trying to intervene and change it, rather accept status quo and take those conditions for granted. That type of pictures may leave audience feeling helpless.

According to Lynda Mannik (2012: 262) “visual representations of refugees transcends national borders, providing an internationally understood and definitive visual sense of what refugee looks like – a set of universalized visual tropes”. There is a social perception that refugees are a huge global problem and a burden to all societies. The effects of media portrayals of refugees are generally regarded as dehumanizing and dehistoricising. There exists certain dualism in images and narratives that position refugees and migrants as voiceless, helpless victims or contrarily, as uncontrollable threats to state security. Typical media images of refugees insist on portraying pity, or conversely large groups huddled together.

Referring to Malkki, Wright emphasizes a “tendency to universalize ‘the refugee’ as a special ‘kind’ of person in their photographic representation”, he continues with understanding the news images in a way of not offering an unbiased impression, rather there is a sense of the picture-makers looking for images that conform to the camera operator’s preconceptions. Wright proposes that media images of refugees can be classified in two categories of “image types”. First one is a stereotype which features a couple or small group in states of degradations, isolation and nakedness, and second being people who are displaced but not necessarily destitute. They may be portrayed with a few possessions sometimes accompanied by means of transportation (Wright, 2002: 57). Such images showing the human difficulties contribute to the homogenizing imagery of world poverty that helps create sufficient distance.

Steven J. Gold (2012) in his article titled ‘Using photography in studies of international migration’ emphasizes the necessity of visual inquiries and techniques which provide understanding of social issues, identity constructions and contextualization of social movements. His focus revolves around visual sociology and anthropology with use of visual methods for gathering relevant information on different migrant communities. He suggests using existing visual information combined with creation of visual documents to interpret what is being

observed. Photographic methods and visual data can be used to contribute to the refinement of general proposition about the behavior of immigrant and ethnic groups as they adapt to new environments (2012: 535). However, important distinction must be noticed, Gold states that “the content of photographs is shaped by who took them and for what purpose” (2012: 533), whether they were taken by photojournalist, surveillance cameras, police or migrants themselves. Gold concludes that photography has the potential to contribute richness, specificity and nuance in migration studies. Visuals offer sound basis for documenting historical processes. Photographs taken by members of migrant communities can reflect their outlooks and subjectivity in a manner distinct from that reflected by social outsiders (2012: 541).

## 5.2 Iconic photographs and migratory movements

When it comes to the visual consciousness, first thing humans tend to recall when thinking about certain historical events are the iconic photographs, as Mette Mortensen (2011) puts it “icons are readily embraced by the general public as universal messages”. The widely disseminated visual image provides the public with a sense of shared experience, because all viewers see the same thing. So the daily stream of images defines the public through an act of common spectatorship (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002: 365). Those particular images stand for “powerful visual frame of reference” about certain issue (Mortensen, 2011).

So what makes a photograph iconic? By definition they are images that are widely recognized, understood to be representations of historically significant events, that activate strong emotional response, and are reproduced across a range of media, genres, or topics (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002: 366). According to authors, iconic photographs perform several important functions. They reflect social knowledge and dominant ideologies; shape understanding of specific events and periods; influence political action; and provide figural resources for subsequent communicative action (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002: 366). It is then important to understand from which context and what kind of images are being disseminated by media professionals.

Given the fact that we live in a culture where everybody is eye witnessing major events through the media, the amount of visual material follows an ascending curve. Is this reflected in the established news media, asks Mortensen (2011) later arguing that “the news media

enthusiastically took part in the self-fulfilling prophecy of declaring the material's iconic status". Taken into consideration that social networks and news websites publish numerous galleries of photographs about certain events, it makes it even more important to depict which of those images make through the iconic status.

Particular photographs become iconic if they contain different patterns of identification to which audiences can relate. They provide a public audience with sufficient means to comprehend potentially unmanageable events. Accordingly, they continue to shape public understanding and action long after the event has passed or the crisis has been resolved. To put it in a simple way, the iconic photograph provides the audience with "equipment for living" as a vital public culture (Hariman and Lucaites, 2002: 367,368).

The example of 'iconic' photograph considering migration is the one of 'Migrant mother' taken by Dorothea Lange during the Great American depression in 1930's. That image creates immediate association to humanitarian crisis and human suffering. It has become "symbolic in terms of reference and direct, unmanipulated recording of contemporary events" (Hariman and Lucaites, 2001: 37). When observing the photojournalism and visual communication tendencies in today's period of refugee and migrant crisis one can notice the same patterns being used to portray the people fleeing their homes. The visual rhetoric hasn't changed much during the past century therefore reaffirming the standards being set.

The image of drowned toddler has become the symbol of the latest 'refugee crisis'. But why was it that particular one? His brother has also drowned but his image was almost nowhere to be found. Several older children were drowning just the same as Aylan weeks ago, but their photographs were restricted from appearing on social media. Who gets to decide which one becomes symbolic? If the answer is the public then social media flow has major influence in shaping the reality of refugees and migrants. Photograph was taken by Turkish photographer Nilüfer Demir. The corpse of Alan Kurdi (also reported as Aylan Kurdi) washed ashore at a Turkish resort Bodrum, became galvanizing image whose affective power was repeatedly described as arising from his pale complexion (he could be any European refugee), his death pose (like a toddler asleep in a crib), and the new shoes he was wearing - like the shoes of any

European or American toddler (Khouri 2015; Clarke and Shoichet 2015). Even though it was launched without any specific context it started immense outcry for desperate refugees enabling them safer journeys. By the time it was spread globally it became the symbol and the iconic image of this particular humanitarian crisis. In weekly newspaper 'Novosti' author Davor Konjikušić (2015) refers to it "as just another media commodity that evokes outrage, condolence, sadness, anger and pity. At the same time in overall media spectacle it loses its potential to call for wider social reaction in Europe". As scholars promptly faced this issue, Farida Vis and Olga Goriunova (2015) published the report titled "The Iconic Image on Social Media: A Rapid Research Response to the Death of Aylan Kurdi" questioning the impact, reach and reaction of media and the public on this image. Their study referred to this image as a "symbol that represented the deaths of many by the death of one" and thus has generated effect that was used for political mobilization. Whether this tragedy was able to transform public opinion, public action and legislation to deal with the refugee crisis has not polluted any political changes.

To conclude discussion about iconic photographs, one point has to be stated, "when one picture is singled out, countless others are left out" (Mortensen, 2011). Iconic photographs tend present one particular story which then stands for a bigger matter. In that way, making it slightly incomplete since they are not providing coherent context of the topic. This can be the main critic as well, due to the construction of reality via images which in this case present only one side.

## 6 Twitter 'shapes the world'

Twitter is a microblogging service, which was launched in July 2006 and to date has 332 million users active. Based on Reuters report "Big Data and the media" (2014), Twitter has 32 billion searches performed per month, 40 million individual users each day and 50 million tweets per day. With this numbers, global pioneer in the world analytical insight Alexa.com, places it as ninth most used website in 2015. The question rising from this overview is whether Twitter represents just a social platform or tends to be accountable news source as well? Kwak et al. (2010) conducted the first quantitative research upon Twitter to understand whether this particular social media stands for a social network or a news medium for broadcasting

information. They examined trending topics and tweets being posted in relation to them (with data size of 1.47 billion tweets and social relations). Based on the active period tweets showed that the majority (over 85%) of topics are headlines or persistent news in nature. They concluded that Twitter is more a “source of information rather than a social networking site”. Twitter can also be used to maintain social relationships and it has user-specific content in the forms of ‘profiles’, but it is primarily an information sharing network containing non-profile specific content and news (Meyer et al., 2013).

Claire Diaz-Ortiz, head of corporate social innovation and philanthropy at Twitter Inc. quarters focuses on proving that Twitter is a tool for promoting good causes. In her book ‘Twitter for good’ she suggests that “by democratizing activism, Twitter can help us all to change the world”. As we live in a world where personal technology makes most of our lives, the way we use those tools for social change creates the power of the individual. As Diaz-Ortiz (2011: 1, 2) states “the root of Twitter’s success is in its power as an open real-time information network. Twitter allows individuals to share minute-by-minute information about what is happening. Not only does it allow one to share from anywhere, but it also allows one to share with anyone”. By doing so, people can affect others in promoting positive changes and spreading far-reaching words of crucial meaning, by retweeting news sources or becoming a relevant ‘news source’ by themselves.

How does the Twitter as a news source function? Kwak et al. (2010: 1-10) explain the basic features of Twitter usage. First, the users follow others or are followed and the relationship between followers requires no reciprocation. Being a follower on Twitter means the user receives all the tweets from those the user follows. Common practice of responding to a tweet has evolved into well-defined markup culture: RT stands for retweet, ‘@’ followed by a user identifier addresses the user, and ‘#’ followed by a word represents a hashtag that can be searched for among other tweets containing the same word. Users tweet about any topic within the 140-characters. This limit of characters per posting requires brevity in expression. Function for spreading the tweets and messages is primarily done by retweeting or quoting the tweets. The retweet mechanism empowers user to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original tweet’s followers. Twitter tracks phrases, words and hashtags that are most mentioned

and places them under the category of ‘trending topics’. A hashtag is a convention among Twitter users to create and follow a thread of discussion by prefixing a word with a ‘#’ character. At the left sidebar of homepage Twitter shows a list of trending topics at the moment. By examining the trends one can easily be up-to-date and follow the most prominent news, it is even suggested “that the Twitter hashtag has become part of everyday political discourse. It provides a way of collating multiple voices and perspectives on a particular event or topic” (Guardian, 2016). Many tweets which refer to breaking news contain hyperlinks or media images which lead to full—length newspaper articles.

Twitter is in its essence network website. Dhiraj Murthy (2010: 1064) argues how it is “event driven” more than many web sites and it gives opportunities for people and traditional media industries to tweet side-by-side. Therborn (2000: 42) refers to it as the “event society”, where discussions spark and evolve. Another significant point is the fact that Twitter gathers people who have the same interest and makes them interact with strangers, therefore creating new public domain. Jurgen Habermas defined a concept of “public sphere” long time before Twitter came to existence. He defines it as a “realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (Durham and Kellner 2009: 73). Nowadays we can easily associate that definition with the Twitter sphere where the conversations and discussions continues in the virtual space, through comments, retweets and replies to variety of tweets. Kwak et al. (2010: 6) noted that once a tweet is retweeted (regardless of the number of followers the original Twitterer has), it reaches an audience (mean) size of 1000. It is a significant factor in determining the scope of influence one tweet can gain. Following that, Murthy (2010: 1065) concludes how Twitter as the new communication technology shapes our social world.

## 7 Research methodology

### 7.1 Big data in social sciences

Recently emerging concept of Big Data stands for massive gathering of information from internet databases. The scientists are still not conciliated about defining this notion. To interpret

it in simpler way, the idea refers to data which are so large that it is not efficient to store and process using traditional techniques. Big data has been typically used to refer to born digital data. New media is the area where big data has had the greatest impact in research (Meyer, Schroder, Taylor, 2013). For Big data research, the ‘world’ of the phenomenon that is intervened in consists of digital platforms or digital traces (Schroder, 2014: 6). Kitchen (2013: 1-12) defines Big Data in detail explaining that it is huge in volume, velocity, variety and exhaustive in scope. Big data is new epistemological approach for making sense of the world; rather than testing a theory by analyzing relevant data, new data analytics seek to gain insights which are “born from the data”. Therefore, Kitchen (2014) refers to it as a “fourth paradigm” in science.

When explaining the notion of big data, it is essential to keep in mind that the amount of data in the world is growing fast, outstripping not just our machines but our imaginations. The sciences like astronomy and genomics coined the term ‘big data’, however the concept is now migrating to all areas of human endeavor, as well as to social sciences. Big data stands for the ability of society to harness information in novel ways to produce useful insights or goods and services of significant value (Mayer- Schonberger and Cukier, 2013: 2-6). The term ‘big data’ refers to things one can do at large scale that cannot be done at a smaller one, to extract new insights or create new forms of value, by doing so it changes the relationships between people and challenges the way we interact and comprehend reality. Further, the patterns and relationships contained within Big Data inherently produce meaningful and insightful knowledge about complex phenomena (Anderson, 2008 cited in Kitchen 2014).

For the purpose of this research data was collected through Social Media Tracking and Analysis System, or SMTAS. It is a suite of software applications intended to create a capacity to track and analyze a wide array of social media platforms. Design and development of the software was conducted by a group of scientists, research associates and graduate students at the Mississippi State University (MSU) Social Science Research Center (SSRC). The goal of this endeavor is to assist researchers in using social media as a source of scientific data for exploration and investigation (IDL, 2014). SMTAS is focused on the social network, Twitter, where researchers have access to approximately 500 million worldwide public tweet postings per day. Apart from the real-time access to Twitter, SMTAS also has access to historical data/tweets posted via

Twitter since 2006. The tracking/scheduling module allows researcher to track social media by word-choice and phrases, location, social media influence, complex time designs, volume of tweets and other features included in social media data. SMTAS is based on cloud servers, which work as the backbone of the entire system. SMTAS also uses a large number of web-services for data-enrichment and a wide variety of software libraries for analysis (IDL, 2014).

## 7.2 Using narrative analysis

The method used for this research is qualitative method of narrative analysis. Narratives defined by Marie Gillespie (2006: 81) are “chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space”, which are basically stories surrounding not only media landscapes but other aspects of live as well. When it comes to images as visual narratives it is necessary to examine them in order to understand its broader social, political or ideological ways of constructing the reality. Therefore, media stories using images have a particular way of combining parts to make a whole, where narratives serve as a dynamic process of communication and meaning construction and as social representation (Gillespie, 2006).

Some kinds of media narratives, produced and circulated by large multinational media corporations, can achieve unprecedented levels of exposure, prominence and power, such that they seem to be the only version of a story to tell. However, media narratives do not simply reflect the real world. They provide mental schema and templates that mold our ways of perceiving, knowing and believing (Gillespie, 2006: 82). Usually, narratives involve previous selecting, so they are not random series of events. Media narratives create events and actions and impose a certain order, a pattern of meaning even on what might be haphazard, chaotic happenings, to paraphrase Gillespie.

Narrative analysis is not only relevant for the study of disruptive life events: the methods are equally appropriate for studies of social movements, political change, and macro-level phenomena (Reissman, 2000: 3). Narratives in this case are photographs published on Twitter profiles and are supposed to be interpreted in accordance to research tasks. In this study they were analyzed in depth to recognize and prove how meanings circulate in a society. As Gillespie



(2006: 83) puts it, “media narratives are told from particular perspectives, privileging certain viewpoints and versions of events over others. Knowing what (and whose) stories get told or remain untold is crucial to understanding the exercise of power in society. Stories about events and characters, may be shaped in ways that serve the interests of powerful institutions such as government or business.”

### 7.3 Victim narratives

Another interesting point considering narratives is the concept of victim narratives, introduced by Donileen R. Loseke (2014). Starting from the approach that humans interpret world based on narratives which surround them, inherently they are responsible for creating representation of identities at all levels of human social life. Loseke (2014: 661-667) explained the complexed understanding of identity narratives dividing them as cultural, institutional, organizational and personal narratives. The focus of this study is on cultural narrative identity as a social classification or collective representation of disembodied types of actors. According to her study, stories which are producing cultural identities occur at the macro-level. The imagined characteristics of disembodied types of people simplify a complex world and construct symbolic boundaries. Symbolic codes surround narratives of identities because they contain images of the rights, responsibilities and normative expectations of people in the world. Those symbolic codes in the Western world typically construct one identity in contrast to another. They are often the opposites such as; deserving poor/understanding poor, victim/agent, victim/victimizer, citizen/enemy etc. Widely circulating narratives of cultural identity can become codes that organize information and construct symbolic boundaries around types of social actors.

### 7.4 Semiotics as a tool for decoding photographs

The way to analyze photographs and communicate their meaning is through semiotics. Semiotics or semiology is knowledge of signs. It can also be described as the study and application of signs, signs being anything and everything that conveys meaning. Photographs are signs, signs that can convey both information and emotion (Zakina, 1997: 237).

Charles Pierce and Ferdinand de Saussure were early pioneers in this field, and both have addressed the notion of signs. Saussure, Swiss linguist coined the term “semiology”, a sign consisting of material signifier and an immaterial signified. The signifier is a concrete entity, which we link to or associate with some idea or notion, which is signified. Those associative connections are established in accordance with a ‘code’. A code is a convention, or ‘agreement’ established by users in a certain community (Gillespie, 2006: 13). In short, Saussure, referred to signs as signifiers and the information or emotion conveyed as that which is signified.

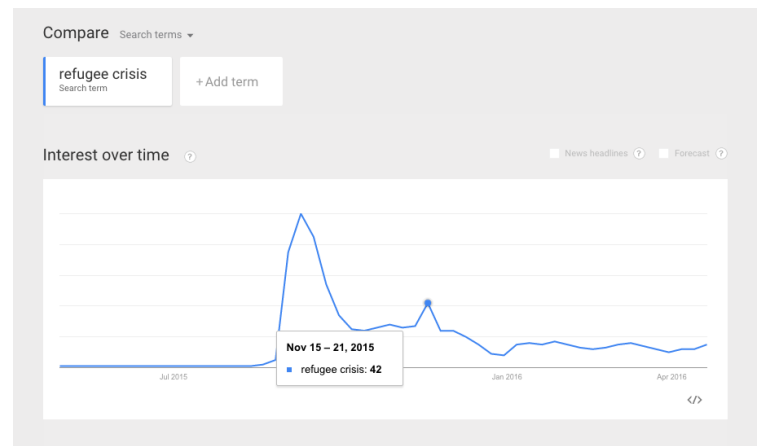
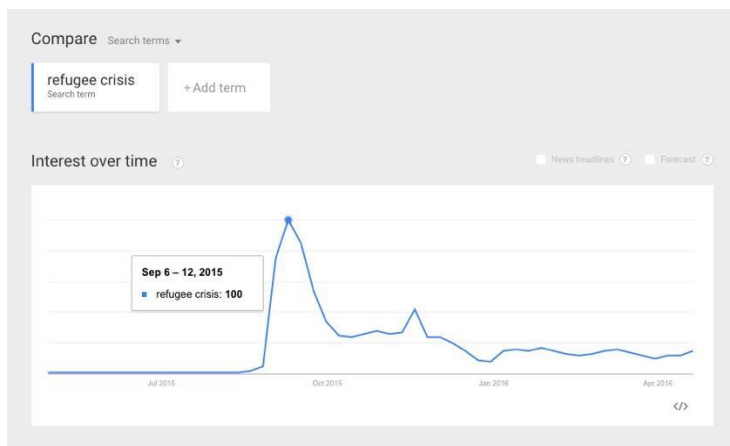
Pierce described a sign as a relationship between object or idea, how it is represented, and how the object or idea is communicated. Based on his concept, a photograph is a representament or sign. In Pierce’s triad, the object or idea is what is signified and the signifier is the representamen. On the other side, there is the interpretant, which stands for the process of interpreting the representamen. According to this, there are three ways to represent something: iconically, indexically and symbolically. In an iconic representation the representation looks like the object, while the indexical representation have indirect reference. There are index to something else and usually are more interesting than iconic ones, because they are more involving. Symbolic representations are culturally agreed upon things, for example words or flags. Those three methods are not mutually exclusive (Zakia, 1997: 238, 239).

In a way of perceiving the meaning of signification, we address two steps, those of denotation and connotation. First being immediate and direct, while the second has indirect meaning. Roland Barthes showed how the distinction between denotation and connotation was central in all kind of media texts, from films to newspaper advertisements. Crucially, it was him who began to apply the semiological approach to the analysis of visual images. In language the meaning is general, while in visual sign the meaning is more specific (Gillespie, 2006: 14-16).

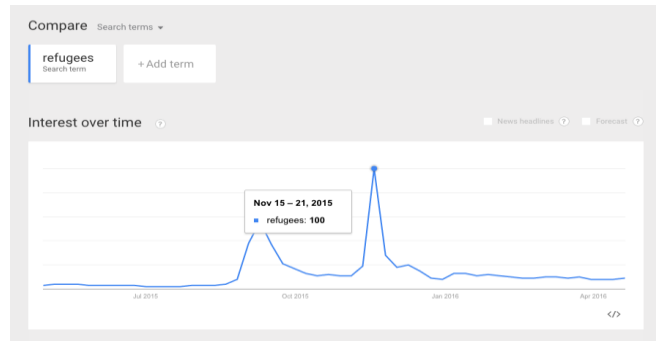
## 8 Designing the research

The unprecedented influx of refugees in Europe was one of the most pressing issues in the media last year. Two major events, first one of publishing the iconic photograph of drowned toddler Aylan Kurdi, second being Paris attacks, had tremendous impact in shaping the discussion about the refugee crisis. Focus of the media and public seemed to grow around those two incidents, while revealing the behavior of each state towards resolving occurring crisis. This research provides insights of the mass media treatment, reports about refugees and their life in transit, through analyzing photographs presented on the social network Twitter. By examining visual imagery on Twitter the purpose of this analysis is to understand whether the representations of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants changed between two periods of public discussion.

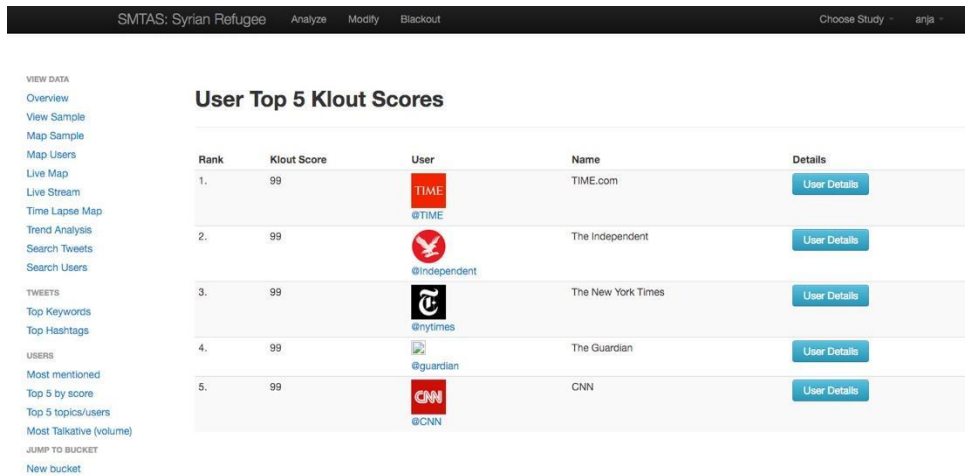
Preliminary research on media and public discussion about refugee crisis helped determine the time period for data collection. Google trends search indicated valuable pointers in terms of defining two crucial periods for conducting the analysis. The keyword “refugee crisis” was searched within range of 12 months. As it can be seen, the first peak appeared to be between 6th and 12th of September, right after the image of drowned toddler was published on 2nd of September. Second peak occurred between 15th and 21st of November, after terrorist attacks in Paris took place on 15th of November.



Interesting comparison is to be made with the keyword “refugees”, which presents rather different peak. It scored higher after Paris attacks, meaning the discussions escalated due to the negative cause.



These insights were used to narrow the search keywords and dates in data collection made with Social Media Tracking Analysis System (SMTAS). Chosen time period was 6 weeks, divided in 3 weeks for each case. The first case is set from 24th of August to 13th of September and it revolves around the date when the image of drowned toddler was published (2nd of September). The second case starts from 2nd of November to 22nd of November, revolving around the date of Paris attacks (15th of November). Collected data consists of tweets containing keywords “Syrian refugees”, “Refugee crisis” and “Refugees”, accompanied with media image. Tweets without media image were not collected. In total, 249186 tweets were collected. Through SMTAS software they were analyzed in terms of ‘klout score reach’ which measures influence in social media and represents a function of the number of followers, friends, re-tweets and frequency of tweets (IDL, 2014). This was done in order to narrow down the sample and detect the most prominent tweets and media organizations which published them.



Both European and United States media organizations had the highest influence and those are: Time Magazine, The Independent, The New York Times, The Guardian and CNN. Their tweets were analyzed and filtered through reach score. Finally, 30 units of analysis (tweets), 15 for each case period were extracted and used as a research sample.

## 8.1 The goal of the research

Research's goal is to understand what kind of visual narratives dominated social media landscape in-between two cases which shaped discussion about refugee crisis. By examining the content of media images published in tweets, the purpose is to explain visual framing of refugee crisis on social media platforms of European and United States media organizations. Starting from the assumption that after the picture of drowned toddler was published, reporting and discussion was predominantly framed in the 'humanitarian' context, whereas when Paris attacks occurred visual framing shifted to 'security' context, with emphasis on national and border protection. That resulted in publishing more negative imagery of refugees and migrants.

When conducting visual narrative analysis these questions are taken into consideration.

Do the photos explain the context and provide authentic or distorted view of the situation? Furthermore, the research questions are: are the migrants and refugees portrayed as victims or as a threat? What is not shown in the photographs, what is missing? Where is the line between aesthetics and content? Are the pictures of refugees presented as sensational and negative? Do narrative messages contribute to raising awareness of the problem and encourage solidarity? How is the public responding to proposed media imagery and does it influence their attitudes?

## 8.2 Structure for analyzing the photographs

Prominent photographs are analyzed according to their contextual framing, technical conditions, thematic content and expressed commentary following the tweet. According to Theo van Leeuwen (2001: 92-100), there are two approaches to visual analysis. First being visual semiotics, developed by Roland Barthes and second being iconography. Both of them ask the same questions, the one of the representation (what and how do images represent) and another question of the 'hidden meaning' of images (what ideas and values represented in images stand for). Visual semiotics studies only the image itself and sees cultural meanings as inherent to the image, shared by everyone and it can be activated by the content of the image. Iconography, on the other hand, pays attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated. Both semiotics and iconography deal with individual bits and pieces within images, those being: people, places and things (van Leeuwen, 2001: 92).

Based on Barthes visual semiotics, the key idea is the layering of meaning. The first layer of denotation, answers the question of ‘what or who is depicted on the image’. The second layer is connotation, which refers to ‘what ideas and values are expressed through what is represented’ (van Leeuwen, 2001: 94). Visual denotation is focused on what is seen and thus includes several descriptions which are used in analyzing presented photographs of refugee crisis. First is categorization which focuses of different representations of people. They can be visually represented as a specific individual or as a social type. Typification in this sense, emerges through the use of visual stereotypes, which can be cultural attributes (dress, hairstyle) or physiognomic attributes. When these stereotypes overshadow person’s individual features, the more that person becomes a type. Another description is the group or individual representation, van Leeuwen (2001: 96) explains how depicting people in groups creates sense of generality, especially if similarity is enhanced by the same poses or actions. That reinforces the “they are all the same effect” which constitutes generalization. When it comes to description of distancing, the same typification occurs. Showing people from a distance (long shot) decreases their individuality, because from a distance we are not able to see each person’s features. The important description is also the one of surrounding text, which provides some pointers. Captions can give the name or describe type of people represented. But, words and images can also contradict themselves and that happens when for example, the picture of a named individual illustrates a generalizing text (van Leeuwen, 2001: 96).

The starting point here is that the denotative meaning is already established and on this established layer of recognition and interpretation of images, comes second meaning, which is then superimposed and refers to broader concepts. That layer is connotation and it leads to deciphering for which ideas and values the represented people, places and things ‘stand for’ or are ‘signs of’. That comes through the cultural associations which cling to represented people, places and things or through specific ‘connotators’, specific aspects or the ways in which they are represented, for example by using specific photographic techniques. There are two elements in the imagery content which are singled out as frequent carriers of connotation and those are poses and objects (van Leeuwen, 2001: 97,98). Connotation can also emerge from various photographic techniques such as “framing, distance, lighting, focus, speed”. These connotative

meanings Barthes called “myths” – very broad and diffuse concepts which condense everything associated with the represented people, places and things into a single entity. They also carry ideological meaning, which serves to legitimate the status quo and the interests of those whose power is in it (van Leeuwen, 2001: 97). For Barthes and other researchers photographs are good instruments for understanding those meanings because they ‘naturalize’ them. As Barthes stated, “perceiving photographs is closely analogous to perceiving reality, they provide a point-by-point correspondence to what was in front of the camera, despite the fact they reduce and flatten the reality” (quoted in van Leeuwen, 2001: 94).

Those terms create visual meaning and next step is to define and explain social semiotics of visual communication. That involves description of semiotic resources, of what can be said and done with images and how the things people say and do can be interpreted. One of the ‘resource’ in social semiotics which is being used is the ‘point of view’ (Kress and von Leeuwen, 1996: 135-153). Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 135) explained meanings derived from different point of views, which create certain kinds of symbolic relations between image producers and viewers. They can be equality, created with eye-level angle, engagement, derived from frontality of the presented subject and detachment which comes from profile point of view.

Technical terms of each photograph are identified based on Ante Peterlić’s definitions of frames, shot perspectives and angles of shooting. Peterlić defines a frame as “one bounded space and time continuum of disclosed material” (2001: 55) which tells the story and creates the knowledge of the presented topic. Shot is the distance of the camera from the object and there are countless number of various shots. Each shift of the camera or the subject, forms a new distance and thus different shot. Standard shots are detail (something that cannot be shared), extreme close-up (display of the face), close-up (display of the face and the busts), medium shot (the whole person), long shot (perspective showing the area to the extent that is suspicious of its size in general) and extreme long shot (the whole area) (Peterlić, 2001: 68-70). Particular importance has the close-up shot because, according to Peterlić (2001: 70,71) “it potentially radiates importance, introduces the viewer with the subject and with his peculiarities”. Close-up creates a sense of intimacy. Extreme long shot, in addition to bringing the highest informative value, carries a specific psychological function, claims Peterlić (2001: 76,77) “the man takes up less

space, is shown smaller and is thus identified as being inferior”. The camera angles are eye-level angle, which can be interpreted as point of view or neutral shot. Then high-angle shot, which displays the object in a subordinate, inferior and lower status can be called bird’s eye view. The low-angle shot or worm’s eye view is producing opposite effect, creating a sense of the presented object as being superior (Peterlić, 2001: 82,83).

After defining the frame and shot perspectives, emphasize is placed on composition as a “primary factor in successful photography” which deserves serious consideration when deciphering centers of interest (Burian and Caputo, 2003: 24). Attention is placed on analysis of the rule-of-thirds for off-centering the subject placement in order to create well-balanced picture. What is taken in consideration is the fact that “the center of any picture is not a satisfying resting place for the eye and a central composition is static, not dynamic” (Burian and Caputo, 2003: 26). Focus is on determining rhythm of the image based on the objects presented and which meaning can be derived from it. Furthermore, colors are examined as they “serve as signifiers and are culture-context dependent”, they carry various meanings and symbolism which “influence our emotions with various connotations” (Zakia, 1997: 89).

In terms of thematic content, photographs were scrutinized based on captured subjects and objects. Presented visual narratives were examined through two main elements, emotions and symbols.

Emotions are defined as complex reactions that consist of at least three elements which constitute them. That are physical reactions (heart beating), expressive reactions (crying or laughing) and subjective experience that people feel (sadness, fear or joy) (Bratko, 2005: 88). There are two types of emotions: basic and complex. Bratko explains that basic emotions are common among all people and can form quickly, without thinking and usually last for short amount of time. They include happiness, surprise, fear, sadness, anger and disgust. All the other emotions belong to the group of complex emotions which are love, pride, guilt etc. Also, another division of emotions is the one that characterizes them as positive or negative. Emotions are highly subjective phenomenon and they are not experienced in the same way. They do not arise by themselves, but are caused by some stimulus. It can, but doesn’t have to be direct event which causes their



appearance. Emotions are associated with cognitive processes, precisely thoughts which create them (Bratko, 2005: 94). Emotions mobilize people, encourage them to react between each other, or towards different situations. People rely on emotions to create social bonds and build a complex socio-cultural structure (Turner and Stets, 2011). Emotions have strong impact, not only they can hold things together in terms of constituting the social structure and systems of cultural symbols keeping them as sustainable as possible, but they can also destroy the same and call into question the cultural forms and traditions (Turner and Stets, 2011: 21).

Symbols, in this sense are connected to previous mentioned iconography of the images. A symbol can be anything – like an object or an event – that signifies something more or something else than itself because of customary association (Fuhr, trustcommunity.eu, 2016). Defined by Oxford Dictionary (2016) symbol is especially a material object representing something abstract. Iconography distinguishes iconographical symbolism and iconological symbolism, which will be briefly described. In terms of iconographical symbolism, two categories exist, the abstract symbol (abstract shapes with symbolic values, e.g. cross) and figurative symbol (represented people, places or things with symbolic value) (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 100-107). What defines them are motifs, commonly used symbols, which Barthes describes as “accepted inducer of ideas” (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 108). Iconological symbolism stands for interpretation, on deeper level. It draws attention to surrounding context, answers the questions of *why?* based on political, sociological and economic interests as well as relations in cultural, emotional and other spheres (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 116).

### 8.3 Categories of representation

In analyzing the images, focus is set on determining what kind of photographs were preferred in two cases. Documentary and journalistic photographs are not only mere evidence of the reality and facts, but they reflect a narrative about what it means to be a refugee, migrant and asylum seeker. Commonly, three groups or types of images are dominant. First most common imagery is representation of desperate individuals, mainly women and children, which are used to gain emotional effect on viewers. That kind of representation tends to be more mitigating if the images show positive situations in the transition period (e.g. smiling faces of the children).

Second type of photographs represents large groups of people walking down the roads or being held at the state borders, in huge collectives they may be perceived as intruders. Third type of photographs which was dominant is when the certain situations are presented and they include, interactions with other subjects (e.g. clashes with officials), symbols of fences, motifs are dangerous elements which include violence, breaking fences, clashes with the police, anger and despair. Those three different messages tend to shape attitudes towards refugees and migrants. The collected photographs are divided in those three categories. Individual representations include one to three persons being photographed and singled out. Group representations constitute of medium, large groups or masses of people captured. Situational representations are the images which present certain activity and include other subjects, such as reporters, police, volunteers. Also, their content includes means of transportation, various symbols, strong emotional expressions and relations with others and provides more connotative references than just denotative meaning. As all the images were published on Twitter platforms of media organizations, no other context explaining who are the people and places was provided in the tweet caption, except the title of the article. Mainly, the captions (title) of tweets were not connected to the photograph itself, thus photographs served only as illustrations to support the text, or provoke the viewers/readers reaction. However, underneath each image comments suggested the viewers paid attention to the presented imagery. Images are coded based on the media organization which published them; Time magazine (TIM), Guardian (GUA), New York Times (NYT), CNN (CNN), The Independent (IND); date of publishing (to place them in the first case or second case, FC or SC), category of representation individual (I), group (G) and situational (S); and ordinal number (1 - 9).

After choosing the most prominent photographs they are analyzed through qualitative method of narrative analysis. The aim is to describe what messages are transmitted when it comes to portraying children, women and men, are there any differences, is the general impression more of an emotional/humanitarian effect or threat/security effect. Visuals which show human tragedies presumably create awakening of the public in realm of taking responsibility for those in need. On the other hand, negative representations tend to form animosity and resentment in accepting displaced people which encourages national politicians to prevent influx of refugees.

8.3.1 Individual representations



Figure 1. TIMFCI1 Source: Time Twitter 26th Aug 2015



Figure 2. CNNFCI2 Source: CNN Twitter 9th Sep 2015



Figure 3. INDFCI3 Source: The Independent Twitter 6th Sep 2015



Figure 4. CNNSCI1 Source: CNN Twitter 17th Nov 2015



Figure 5. CNNSCI2 Source: CNN Twitter 16th Nov 2015



Figure 6. CNNSCI3 Source: CNN Twitter 19th Nov 2015





Figure 7. GUASCI4 Source: Guardian Twitter 18th Nov 2015



Figure 8. GUASCI5 Source: Guardian Twitter 17th Nov 2015



Figure 9. INDSCI6 Source: The Independent Twitter 22nd Nov 2015



Figure 10. CNNSCI7 Source: CNN Twitter 5th Nov 2015

Presented photographs depict individuals, couples or small groups of children and family. They are mainly taken as a medium shot, from an eye-level angle, neutral point of view, thus expressing equality with the subjects captured. The exception is the image INDFCI3, taken from bird's eye view, therefore creating a sense of inferiority of the child and the feel of viewer's power over the girl. That is also the only image where the emotions of happiness are visible, the girl is being entertained by someone standing aside of the photographer, which evokes the idea of careless childhood despite the hard conditions of her journey. Predominant are the images of women holding their children (5), then images of only children (3) and the least represented are the images representing men (2). Photographs of mothers holding their children share the similarity and iconography of the iconic photograph of 'Migrant mother' taken by Dorothea Lange in 1936 during American Great depression, which stands as symbol of immigration. The images of men (GUASCI4, CNNSCI7) are presented through strong emotional expressions, thus not creating difference between genders, women and men are presented in equal emotional states. They are also holding their children expressing emotions of sadness, pain, sorrow and despair. Subjects are not looking directly into the camera, their gazes are reaching towards sides of the frames, as they are observing some other situations which are happening around them, suggesting the viewer how indifferent they are to the presence of the photographer. Hoijer (2004 in Bleiker et al., 2013: 406) speaks of how ideal victims – the woman, children and elderly who stare helplessly up into cameras – are central to soliciting an audience's compassion. In case where subjects are looking directly at the photographer (GUASCI5, TIMFCI, CNNSCI1,

CNNFCI2) strong emotional expressions of despair and fear can be detected. The pictures which show people who from inside the frame look directly at the viewer, “make contact” with them establish an imaginary relation with them. Such images are called ‘demand’ pictures because the people in the picture symbolically demand something from the viewer (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 145), in this case urge and call for help. They are portrayed as harmless victims, not as enemies rather as passive individuals who are suffering while seeking secure residences. Photographs are taken outside, during the journeys or when waiting for the next travel. Two images (TIMFCI1, GUASCI5) are taken in the indoor interiors of private spaces. Those images were staged by the photographer, e.g. Not taken as direct reportage photojournalism, rather carefully arranged to present living conditions of asylum seekers. In both pictures, subject are directly looking at the viewer. Symbols which represent asylum journeys emerging from those photographs are fence (INDFCI3) symbolizing border between “us and them”, vehicles such as cars and boats (CNNSCI1, GUASCI4, CNNSCI17, CNNSCI3) and train rails (INDSCI6) which represent difficult conditions of travelling, warm blankets (CNNSCI1) and life vests (CNNSCI7). They stand for jeopardized human lives and suggest fear of life loss. What is noticed is the lack of single individual victim portraits taken as a close-up shot, which scholars of visual politics and humanitarianism point out “as having a crucial role in the symbolic representation of crises and the manner in which viewers respond” (Bleiker et al., 2013: 406). Even though these images suggest compassionate and emotional approach from the observers, comments which were predominant in this category were written in national security and threat context:

*The eu terror alert and molenbeek is a moving reminder that. Eu leaders first priority should be their own citizens, not mgrnts. (INDSCI6, galambosv, 2015)*

*2 in a 100 are terrorists. We have at least a million of them together in Europe. #nowwhat? (INDSCI6, All\_Journalists, 2015)*

*20 year from those children will forget that and become the next terrorists. (INDFCI3, Alanwalker17, 2015)*

*In the weeks ahead, all this will turn to violent demonstrations and protests against the influx of this invasion. (INDFCI3, rdeqc, 2015)*

*Those "refugees" will be the death of Europe and the world. (INDFCI3, Gray\_Area, 2015)*

However, few humanitarian responses were found, mainly underneath the images of women with children:



*It is time Europe and the us stood up and started helping these people (simonn291, 2015)*

*I want to help! Can we start a fund for these families? (dunkelberger\_8, 2015)*

*These poor young girls, and ladies who are having babies I'm sure out of not consent. So sad! So cruel!*  
(branchcoun, 2015)

### 8.3.2 Group representations



Figure 11. CNNFCG1 Source: CNN Twitter 3rd Sep 2015



Figure 1. INDFCG2 Source: The Independent Twitter 1st Sep 2015





Figure 13. GUAFCG3 Source: The Guardian Twitter 6th Sep 2015



Figure 14. INDFCG4 Source: The Independent Twitter 2nd Sep 2015



Figure 15. INDFCG5 Source: The Independent Twitter 3rd Sep 2015



Figure 16. TIMSCG1 Source: Time Twitter 16th Nov 2015



Figure 17. CNNSCG2 Source: CNN Twitter 10th Nov 2015



Figure 18. NYTSCG3 Source: The New York Times Twitter 12th Nov 2015



Figure 19. TIMSCG4 Source: Time Twitter 16th Nov 2015

Presented photographs depict medium to large groups and masses of asylum seekers. They are taken in medium, long and extreme long shots, from the eye-level angle, neutral point of view. Two images (TIMSCG4, INDFCG5) are taken from bird's eye view in order to present cramped masses and the density of massive movements. The exception is the CNNSCG2 image which is taken from low-angle shot. In this category mainly men are in focus (NYTSCG3, TIMSCG1, INDFCG4, INDFCG2, CNNFCG1), children can be seen in two images (CNNFCG1, GUAFCG3) and not so many women are shown, except in GUAFCG3. The element of emotional expression is not present and it dramatically changes from other groups of photographs, as crowds and masses of people are represented. When viewing people from a distance is to see them in the way we would normally see strangers, people whose lives are not important to us. We see them impersonally as certain social types - immigrants (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001: 146). Those images are less likely to suggest victimhood and to pollute compassion, unless an individual from the group is in the centre of the composition (CNNFCG1, NYTSCG3, TIMSCG1). What is visible from the presented imagery is framing the refugees through prism of a problem, not through prism of humanitarian crisis which requires public and political compassion and urges for solving their problems. They are rather represented "as a potential threat that sets in place mechanisms of security and border control" (Bleiker et al., 2013: 399). These patterns are clearly visible in two images (INDFCG2, INDFCG5) which present large masses and protests at Hungarian train station Keleti. The image INDFCG2 creates sense of people being trapped, the doors of the station are closed and people are standing in front, facing it while waiting for something to happen. They are eager to enter the doors and come inside. Symbolical meaning derived from this image is European border, as "Fortress



Europe”. In the case of the image INDFCG5 the sense of threat can be detected. That medium shot photograph depicts loud crowd of men, while conducting an activity of protesting, as they keep their hands up in the air for protesting against officials. Composition is slightly distorted, leaning towards the side in which men are raising their hands, creating uncomfortable impression. Taken without the context and seen separately from the journalistic text, this documentary image can be taken as proof of refugees being ‘invaders’ since they are shot from a diagonal high angle, to emphasize their struggle and strong intention to continue their journey. At the same time, it is image of collectivism and solidarity spread among asylum seekers, they are united in their attempts against the ‘other’. Symbolical photograph which presents asylum seekers as insignificant is shown in image CNNSCG2. Its main features are extreme long shot taken from the low-angle. Subjects are walking towards the right side of the frame in large group. While observing the image connotative meaning derived from it is the inferiority of the asylum seekers, as they are made very small through this lowered composition and far distance of photographer. Through this kind of visual reporting the effects of compassion and sadness towards victims are diluted, as Bleiker et al. (2013: 406) explain “a crowd of people in danger is faceless” and results are numbing the viewers. They are just anonymous masses, abstract and dehumanized political problem. Portraying influx of asylum seekers (TIMSCG1, TIMSCG4) presents visual dehumanization of refugees, presenting them as a threat. If those visual patterns of masses prevail, they reinforce ‘politics of fear’ as they present invasion of ‘invaders’ therefore cultivating the culture of fear (Bleiker et al., 2013: 411). That becomes clear through the commentaries which appear underneath those images. In the case of every image they are written in the context of national security and threat:

*Many are terrorists posing as immigrants.* (CNNSCG2, WarWithLiberals, 2015)

*Syria has no need to come here. I would turn their lil happy asses back around and ship them right back.*

*Sneaky ass mfers.* (TIMSCG1, ChristineSoland, 2015)

*WELCOME TO ISLAMIC INVASION OF #EU. SELF DETERMINATION NOW #FREEBIAFRA*  
(INDFCG4, okwutechiukwu, 2015)

*It's an islamic political movement time to send them back to islamic land. before it's to late. protect ur children future.* (CNNFCG1, IMInfidel01, 2015)

*Called into question the safety of the citizens of Europe.* (INDFCG2, \_bzdashkek, 2015)

*How many Isis soldiers can you count in this picture?* (GUAFCG3, thearne2, 2015)

### 8.3.3 Situational representations



Figure 20. NYTFCS1 Source: The New York Times Twitter 25th Aug 2015



Figure 21. CNNFCS2 Source: CNN Twitter 7th Sep 2015



Figure 22. NYTFCS3 Source: The New York Times Twitter 7th Sep 2015



Figure 23. INDFCS4 Source: The Independent Twitter 10th Sep 2015



Figure 24. GGUAFCSS5 Source: The Guardian Twitter 3rd Sep 2015



Figure 25. INDFCS6 Source: The Independent Twitter 9th Sep 2015





Figure 26. INDFCS7 Source: The Independent Twitter 12th Sep 2015



Figure 27. INDFCS1 Source: The Independent Twitter 20th Nov 2015



Figure 28. NYTSCS2 Source: The New York Times Twitter 22nd Nov 2015



Figure 29. NYTSCS3 Source: The New York Times Twitter 18th Nov 2015



Figure 30. INDSCS4 Source: The Independent Twitter 18th Nov 2015

Presented group of photographs are taken in medium, long or extreme long shots and what characterizes all of them is some kind of situation happening among refugees' journeys. The most repetitive elements of narrative in this group are symbols and emotions. In two images (NYTSCS3, NYTSCS2) asylum seekers are presented as 'boat people'. In research about representation of refugee crisis Peter Gale (2004: 329) concluded how "boat people tend to be interpreted as a 'threat' to the national interest" and that arrival of refugees by boat is constructed as a 'crisis' because they are represented as 'illegal' arrivals or 'queue jumpers' or possible terrorists entering the country. What is interesting in this group is the presence of one black and white photograph (NYTSCS2) published by UNICEF, which is not typical way of representing the reality, since it diminishes the truth and moves the image towards more aesthetical type of documentary photography. However, humanitarian reportage photojournalist Paolo



Pellegrin states how “the abstraction of black and white allows photography to speak in more symbolic terms – colour, sometimes, is all too real” (Another Magazine, 2015). That image presents overcrowded vessel and evokes notions of ‘refugees flood’. The second image presenting vessel (NYTSCS3) evokes rather different meaning, solidarity and compassion since the volunteers are helping people to get out from it. Connotation of solidarity can be seen in image CNNFCS2, where men are helping to board the train in Hungary.

Symbolical meaning of borders is seen in images INDFCS1 and NYTFCS3 evokes the feeling of longing for security in another nation. Both subjects on those images gaze across the fences as they are walking in long columns to cross the border territory. Gale (2004: 331) mentions Hall’s concept of ‘impassable symbolic boundaries’ constructed between what is seen as divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’, which is seen in those images. This invisible division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ can be interpreted from the image NYTFCS1, the photograph is arranged to present the family underneath the police in lower perspective suggesting inferior position, whilst the police are above, superior to them. Strong emotional effect is gained with the image GUAFC5, where we see two asylum seekers and one official. They are aroused by the play between the boy and official. The image represents all three generations of men which typify stages of human life and can symbolize time in terms of past, present and future. Also, image evokes sense of solidarity, equality and humanity among people. Also this is the photograph that was shared the most in this whole sample. On the contrary, the image INDFCS6 is a clear example of violation of human rights. It is taken in speed and distorted composition creates uncomfortable feeling while observing. Another image (INDFCS4) calls human rights into question. The couple with a baby is refusing the help from the official, since their attempt is to put them in camp. The expression on the man face evokes feeling of torment and harassment. This photograph was awarded with Pulitzer prize for covering refugee crisis, it was taken at a railway station in the town of Bicske, Hungary on September 3, 2015. Its description is: “Hungarian policemen stand over a family of immigrants who threw themselves onto the track before they were detained”. The images INDFCS4 and INDFCS7 present regular citizen journeys and lives of migrants and asylum seekers, they travel with planes and carry their phones, as valuable items which create sense of communication and private moments in public places and waiting areas. However, the image is composed in front of blue fence, which evokes the fence/border division. Symbols of refugees journeys are well seen in the contrast of transportation vehicles (INDFCS4, CNNFCS2). We see

the privilege class of migrants exiting the airplane and on the other the sufferings of lower classes which have to fight to enter the train. What is seen in this group of photographs is the variety of conditions, conflicts, help and despair of the insecure journeys.

Commentary under tweets with this images was predominantly written in humanitarian context, often accusing media for usage of the images which shows violation of human rights:

*History will show that fences don't fix problems! Compassion and humanitarian policy will help these people, not fences!!* (NYTFCS1, JMR Rowling, 2015)

*That man actually threw his wife and baby on the track. They tried to get her to safety. Why would you want to use that image?* (INDFCS4, kayotickitchen, 2015)

*STOP using a photo of a "refugee" who threw his wife and BABY on the tracks!!!What is wrong with you?* (INDFCS4, SimoneLaurey, 2015)

*This picture make me proud! It shows how we are! But we don't have the space, we make it for this people! UK should be ashamed!* (GUAFC5, CarinaSchaetzle, 2015)

*Are people trying to minimise this? A despicable, tawdry act of inhumanity towards suffering people.* (INDFCS6, droopserscot, 2015)

*Why do people assume you have to be poor to be escaping war? Because it conflicts with our mental image of refugees?* (INDFCS7, smalldeadfrog, 2015)

*It is just phone, and they are not sicking better economic life, they are looking for save place to be in. Is it big deal?* (INDFCS7, ajy368, 2015)

*They forgot that these phones helped us to show the world what happening in Syria while their journalists in 5\* hotels.* (INDFCS7, chamsyria, 2015)

## 8.4 Interpretation of the results

This photojournalistic overview of humanitarian reportage presents trends in covering the refugee crisis in-between two crucial cases which shaped the discussion about refugees. Special attention was placed to the thematic content of images and comments arising after images were published. The used categories of opposite abstract concepts, as humanitarian/solidarity or security/threat were widely used through the analysis. Several conclusions can be drawn from this narrative analysis. What is crucial is that the narratives did not change, they are continuous throughout the two periods and there was no discrepancy between first and second case. Visual narratives of refugee crisis are unique and uninterrupted, following the common representation patterns. Therefore the starting assumption was disapproved. Based on three categorizations of individual, group and situational representations, the results will be interpreted. Later on, the

differences and specifications between chosen media organizations will be explained in order to compare their approach in covering the refugee crisis.

Analyzing the individual representations, the focus is mainly on facial expressions and emotions. The subjects are predominantly women and children, most commonly woman holding her child. The importance of family is emphasized. Their faces reveal fear, hopelessness and struggle, thus are represented as innocent victims. Humanitarian connotations are prevailing when observing those images. When it comes to group representations, the focus is not placed on expressions or emotions, they are presented as neutral, or cannot be detected because of the photographer's distance. Those images are taken with long shots and focus is on masses, crowds and conditions of migrants and refugee's journeys. The subjects are mainly men walking in columns. The emphasis is placed on photographic composition in creating the rhythm of the photographs. Usually those images are taken from high-angle perspective thus suggesting their inferiority. In the category of situational representations several themes and elements were detected. Focus is both on women and men and on different situations which are occurring during their journeys, most common being interactions with officials, volunteers and reporters. Various symbols and objects which are typical in representations of migration; border symbols such as fences, means of transportation such as vessels, trains and boats, communication symbols, as mobile phones were dominant in those images. What is visible from the imagery are dynamics and activities from which the meaning of those images can be derived; dominant connotation of solidarity is expressed between subjects and on the other hand violation of human rights. Even though each category stands and represents different denotative and connotative meanings, they do overlap in some elements, most commonly in symbols and emotions. Mainly children are in the focus, usually shot from eye-level perspective. Strong expressions are dominating every photograph which is presenting individuals, children or both. Another important focus is placed on activities, movements and masses. When depicting individuals, most frequently women and children are presented as passive, innocent victims. However, the men who are presented with children are also showing their emotions. Photographs of the children are dominant, as seen from the sample. They are used to illustrate negative articles and texts in order to gain emotional reaction and alert the public. In supporting the articles photographs of individuals are commonly used to evoke

greater sympathy. Neutral, establishing images of refugees in masses are usually chosen to illustrate articles about facts or just for covering updates about the crisis.

What was noticed is clear absence of black and white photographs which was predominant in iconic photographs of past migratory movements. As it is more expressive and draws out more symbolic conclusions, photojournalists and agencies stick with the color photography in order to present the 'true' reality. Except one essay published on New York Times Twitter, all the images are in color, taken with professional equipment although few of the images are taken with less quality or mobile phone devices. It indicates the moments when journalists do not have other options but to take snapshots due to the unprecedented conditions. They are taking the pictures based on the development of the situation, many times not worrying about the composition or other photographic values.

Media organizations from United States are careful with signing the photographs, while most European media do not sign photographer's names when publishing the photos. Predominately the aesthetic features and composition rules are present, although few distorted images were detected. There is not as many photo-essays as singled out photographs, which do not reflect the whole situation, rather the fragmented moments of crisis. The arranged photos are not so common, documentary snapshots are predominant; however two staged photos were published. The most usual motifs are fences, borders, train rails, blankets and tents. They are lying around or are used as the necessities. Refugees are not looking directly in the camera, except if the photographer doesn't ask them to. The relations with photographers can be detected under careful scrutiny of the presented imagery.

As for the media organization, CNN published most photographs with children with a mission of sensitizing the viewers, even more in the second case, after terrorist attacks in Paris. Time magazine and New York Times had most aesthetic and photo-essay imagery, Guardian published lot of images with connotations to solidarity and pleasant moments of the journeys, while The Independent was the organization which covered the crisis at the most. Almost half of the images from the sample were detected from its Twitter profile. Representations of refugees by the

mainstream media on Twitter is framed in humanitarian dimension. Photographs are emphasizing refugee's passivity, victimization, struggle and overall sufferings.

As for the commentary, several characteristics were noticed during the observation. Users comments do not resonate with selected images, they are based on previous knowledge and attitudes towards the refugees or refer only to the tweets caption. Even though the images did not alert security or threat dimension, comments were in accordance to these categories. On European media accounts lots of comments about accountability of the photographs appeared as well as discussions about gender equality representations. On the contrary, media organization in United States polluted intense commentary connected to restrictive policy towards refugees, predominantly set in negative, xenophobic tone. The much spread topic on nationalism and border security remained dominant in both areas. However, significant change in the commentary is detected in the group of situational representations, where users tended to write in humanitarian and compassionate way. All in all, the disruption in overall narratives (terrorist attack in Paris) did not change the way the mainstream media represented migrants and refugees.

## 9 Concluding remarks

Migratory movements are almost always observed through the media eye. Based on the given representations the public is witnessing the struggles refugees and migrants are facing in their long journeys. However, it is not the refugees and migrants themselves who are presenting their daily lives to wider audience, but the journalists, so to say, outside observers. The biggest influx of refugees through the past year prompted research question of how and in which ways are they being portrayed; what kind of images is the public receiving about deprived group of minority? As news reports about refugees and migrants continue to dominate media and public lives, it becomes even more necessary to understand what kind of content is being represented.

Photojournalism is often characterized as an “agent for change”, which is most common phrase being used in explaining its goals and purpose. It has significant role in shaping the reality of the photographed subjects while presenting their surroundings and occurring conditions. When the

images are disseminated throughout public spheres they create certain stories. They can raise awareness, influence or change previous knowledge about certain topic. Images are part of, as du Gay (1977) states, “the circuit of culture”. They are socially produced, distributed and consumed. In that cycle processes of transformation and struggle occur and influence their meaning and the way they are used (van Leuween and Jewitt, 2001: 64). Through big data approach the most prominent photographs in the *Twittersphere* were collected and analyzed without separation from their social process, they were not seen as fixed things, rather as content which can provide certain associations and meanings.

This study presents one angle of media role in reporting about humanitarian and socially sensitive topic. With the usage of contemporary methods, it thrives to shed a light on one aspect of social media role in presenting refugees and migrants. As Clarie Diaz-Ortiz (2011) advocates for Twitter being the tool for making good causes changing the world and making humanitarian social changes, this brief analysis confirms that idea, since the largest and most prominent media organizations use it for expressing the humanitarian approach with a goal to sensitize public.

Conducted study confirmed the dominance of United States and European media organizations on social media platforms as most influential and widely spread. Media discourse of CNN, Time Magazine, The Independent, Guardian and New York Times suggested liberal, philanthropic, compassionate and even pitiful approach in reporting about migrants and refugees. Their reports about migrants and refugees showed unique continuous visual narrative – since the imagery of the first case has not changed in the second case. Also, it was detected how images did not correlate with tweet captions, rather served as mere illustrations. Two photographs from the sample won the Pulitzer prize for photography, which makes them iconic in a sense of representing refugees. The most viral and shared photograph was posted on Guardian Twitter profile, presenting the child, police officer and older man portrayed as equal humans despite the status. This image confirms the idea about solidarity and Twitter being a tool for good causes. Through categories of photographic representation (individual, group and situational) various patterns of reporting were detected and accordingly analyzed, confirming previously established standards of covering migrants and refugees’ identities. The emphasize in all three categories of representations is mainly on conditions, human interaction and relations, fueled by strong

emotional expressions. However, the individual portraits of strictly one person were found to be missing. The representations of refugees and migrants as general threat to society was also absent. Opposing the altruistic media coverage, the following commentary on the published tweets presented another side of the coin. Expressed polarization in various attitudes prevailed on the side of refugees and migrants being perceived as threat to society. Only exclusion was found in situational representations where public tends to share compassion towards jeopardized human lives. It is clear from the sample how comments are influenced by previous knowledge on migration topic.

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## 11 Abstract

Two crucial events shaped the discussion about refugee crisis in 2015. Media and public interest in refugee crisis escalated after the image of drowned toddler was published. It immensely sparked the discussion and spread awareness on refugees' plight through hashtags and images on social media. On the contrary, Paris attacks influenced rather negative response and attitude towards refugees and migrants fleeing Syria. This study depicts and compares visual communication revolving around those two cases on Twitter, using the latest method of Big Data sampling through Social Media Tracking Analysis System, software that collect and analyses social media traffic.

The research examines visual framing of refugees and migrants in media photographs shared on Twitter. Units of analysis are tweets containing image of most prominent media: Time magazine, Independent, New York Times, Guardian and CNN. The focus is on analyzing photographs which had the biggest reach score and impact on audiences in representation of asylum seekers among their journeys. Three categories of photographs are detected as most repetitive: (1) individual representations, (2) group representations and (3) situational representations. The central question is do the media present them as victims or threat, through humanitarian or security framing. Through the prism of visual narrative analysis, imagery of refugees and migrants was deconstructed revealing how photojournalistic tendencies of refugee crisis did not change or influenced public comments.

**Keywords:** refugees, migrants, media portrayals, narrative analysis, visual analysis, big data, Twitter

## Sažetak

Europskoj migracijskoj krizi koja je započela 2015. Godine i još uvijek traje svjedočimo uglavnom putem medija. Upravo iz tog razloga važno je obratiti pažnju na razumijevanje medijske uloge i utjecaja na oblikovanje prikaza “stvarnosti” koja se odnosi na izbjeglice i migranate. Javni interes za migracijsku krizu eskalirao je nakon što je u medijima objavljena slika trogodišnjeg dječaka Aylana. To je izazvalo veliku tugu i suosjećanje s izbjeglicama i migrantima izrazi čega su se nezaustavljivo širili preko društvenih mreža. Suprotno ovom primjeru, teroristički napadi u Parizu rezultirali su prilično negativnom reakcijom javnosti o izbjeglicama i migrantima koji bježe iz Sirije. Zadaća je ovog rada prikazati i usporediti vizualnu komunikaciju na društvenim mrežama vezanu za ova dva događaja, koristeći najnovije metode uzorkovanja iz velikih baza podataka (Big Data) uz pomoć programa SMTAS (Social Media Tracking Analysis System).

Cilj je pružiti dublji uvid u medijsko portretiranje izbjegličke krize kroz analizu fotografija podijeljenih na Twitteru. Središnje istraživačko pitanje je na koji su način mediji izvještavali o izbjeglicama i migrantima kroz vizualni narativ, prikazujući ih kao žrtve ili kao prijetnju, kroz humanitarni ili sigurnosni medijski okvir (engl. framing). U ovom istraživanju jedinica analize je objava na Twitteru i fotografija najistaknutijih medija izabranih na temelju dosega publike. To su Time magazine, Independent, New York Times, Guardian i CNN. Zastupljene su tri kategorije fotografija koje se najčešće ponavljaju: (1) individualna reprezentacija, (2) gupna reprezentacija i (3) situacijska reprezentacija. Kroz prizmu analize vizualnih narativa ovo istraživanje dekonstruira fotoreporterske tendencije u medijskom praćenju izbjegličke krize, otkrivajući kako nisu utjecale na formiranje javnog mijenja i promjenu stavova.

### **Ključne riječi:**

izbjeglice, migranti, medijsko portretiranje, vizualni narativi, analiza narativa, big data, Twitter

## APPENDIX 1.

### LIST OF TWITTER POSTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- Figure 1. TIMFCI1 <https://twitter.com/TIME/status/636608562123378688/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 2. CNNFCI2 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/641561264574099456/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 3. INDFCI3 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/640603403329110016/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 4. CNNSCI1 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/666583048440455168>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 5. CNNSCI2 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/666151218658598913>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 6. CNNSCI3 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/667248448563974144>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 7. GUASCI4 <https://twitter.com/guardian/status/666910746421428224>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 8. GUASCI5 <https://twitter.com/guardian/status/666684250201137153>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 9. INDSCI6 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/668392245939204096>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 10. CNNSCI7 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/662246737474637824>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 11. CNNFCG1 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/639445775068479488/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 12. INDFCG2 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/638736758717460480/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 13. GUAFCG3 <https://twitter.com/guardian/status/640468549341941760/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 14. INDFCG4 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/639152569701429248/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 15. INDFCG5 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/639319922581991428/photo/1>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 16. TIMSCG1 <https://twitter.com/TIME/status/666280834903752704>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 17. CNNSCG2 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/664151163428839424>  
(accessed on 25th April, 2016)
- Figure 18. NYTSCG3 <https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/664763603719974912>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 19. TIMSCG4 <https://twitter.com/TIME/status/666212895684960257>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 20. NYTFCS1 <https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/636086366665895936>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 21. CNNFCS2 <https://twitter.com/CNN/status/640930298876702724>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 22. NYTFCS3 <https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/640713627708825601/photo/1>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 23. INDFCS4 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/641871657603350528>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 24. GUAFCS5 <https://twitter.com/guardian/status/639351077717049344/photo/1>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 25. INDFCS6 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/641530240603283457>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 26. INDFCS7 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/642584686556917761>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 27. INDSCS1 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/667810923654967297>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 28. NYTSCS2 <https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/668531339281473536>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 29. NYTSCS3 <https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/667046104429699072>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)

Figure 30. INDSCS4 <https://twitter.com/Independent/status/666886064083046400>

(accessed on 25th April, 2016)