

In transit: Representations of migration on the Balkan route. Discourse analysis of Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters (RTS and HRT online)

Abstract: This article investigates the representation of migration and migrants in Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters' online portals during the “migrant crisis” in 2015/2016. The study shows that there are similarities in representations in the two portals at both the macro- and micro-linguistic levels. The migrants are generally represented in positive terms congruent with the official policies of Croatia and Serbia. However, this positive representation was frequently used for positive self-evaluation in contrast to negative evaluation of others—in this case, neighboring countries.

Keywords: migrants, refugees, Balkan route, Croatia, Serbia

1. Introduction and background

Migrations¹ within and through the Balkans are not unique in modern times. However, their intensity, type, and direction vary depending on world and regional politics. In the recent past, during and after the wars of Yugoslav succession in the 1990s, there were large movements by people, mostly from Croatia and Bosnia toward Serbia, from Bosnia towards Croatia, as well as from Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia towards western countries (Penev 2011, 16).

The Balkan route has also been used by the migrants from the Middle East and Africa for some time now, becoming more accessible in 2012 after Schengen visa restrictions were relaxed (Frontex 2016). The number of migrants peaked in 2015 and turned into what is referred to as the “migrant crisis.” Even though there is a common EU migration policy (European Commission 2016), solving this migrant crisis turned out to be challenging. Some analysts differentiate among three types of political approaches that the EU and its member states apply to the migrants: exclusion, fear, and humanitarianism (Župarić-Iljić 2014, 91). The politics of exclusion is about finding ways of excluding the migrants from the territory of the EU, the politics of fear is reflected in criminalization and stigmatization of the migrants, and

¹ We use the term “migrants” to refer to all people traveling through Serbia and Croatia in 2015/2016 with the aim of reaching Germany and other western countries regardless of their legal status. We have adopted the term “the Balkan route” to refer to the geographical area that stretches from Greece, via Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia, towards Slovenia.

the politics of humanitarianism provides measures that are less restrictive, more accepting, and aimed at regulating the status of irregular migrants.²

The increase in migration through the Balkans in 2015 caused internal political crises in the region, reflected in closing and opening borders, erecting walls, and mutual accusations. This article focuses on a particular geographic segment of the Balkan route: Croatia and Serbia. We investigate the discursive constructions of the migrants on the online portals of the Serbian and Croatian public broadcasters, RTS and HRT, from August 2015 to March 2016. Croatia and Serbia are important countries on the Balkan route because their border is also the border between EU and non-EU countries, and between NATO and non-NATO countries.

The politics of Croatia and Serbia towards migrants have been partially influenced by Croatia being an EU member state and Serbia working towards becoming one, and partially by the fact that Serbia and Croatia were merely transit countries on the migration path to other EU countries, and an insignificant number of migrants decided to stay in these countries. Even though both countries have asylum laws, very few asylum seekers have been granted asylum—a fact criticized by some human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch 2016a, 2016b).

² EU documents use the term “irregular immigration” when referring to people traveling without the necessary documentation and/or using unauthorized border-crossing points (see, e.g., [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/554202/EPRS_BRI\(2015\)554202_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/554202/EPRS_BRI(2015)554202_EN.pdf)).

Political relations between Croatia and Serbia have oscillated since the end of the war in 1995. Because there are still some open questions related to the war, political relations are easily disturbed. The migrant crisis exacerbated old disputes between Croatia and Serbia, as well as among other countries in the region. Political relations worsened when the migrants started entering Croatia via Serbia, changing their route after Hungary closed its borders in September 2015. Croatia accused Serbia of redirecting the migrants to Croatia on purpose, and Serbia blamed this on Hungary closing its borders and the migrants' own wish to continue towards western Europe. The actions by Serbia (transporting the migrants near the Croatian border) were reciprocated by Croatia by blocking freight traffic from Serbia. Croatian and Serbian politicians engaged in a war of words, which was also commented on in the world media (e.g., Bilefskysept 2015). Officially, the Balkan route was closed in March 2016.

Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters followed the crisis closely. Both had journalists reporting live from the field and claimed to be independent, neutral, and free of any political influence.

This article is organized as follows. Section 2 provides remarks on the theory and methodology used, including macro- and micro-linguistic analysis within the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis (Wodak et al. 2009) and multimodal analysis (van Leeuwen 2008; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996/2006). We mainly focus on representations of the migrants,

supplementing this with an analysis of the representation of politicians influential in this particular context. The main part of our article is devoted to analyses of social actors and actions, and of the photographs accompanying the news items. These aspects are interwoven: they are separated for analytical purposes only (see Section 3). We complete our interpretation of representations of social actors and actions with some concluding remarks.

2. Methodology and theoretical framework

Methodology

We employ thematic, temporal, and comparative criteria when limiting our object of analysis. Our material is multimodal “texts” discussing the migrants and a phenomenon labeled the “migrant crisis” in Croatia and Serbia from August 2015 to March 2016. We understand “text” in a broad sense to include all available semiotic resources, such as layout and photographs. The texts we analyze are unified in terms of genre—the majority are news items—and in terms of what they represent.

Our multimodal texts are online journalistic texts that incorporate, refer to, and recontextualize discourse by politicians, humanitarian organizations,

the police, and other social actors. They also represent journalists' and editors' voice, and are thus polyvocal.

We analyze two comparable sources: the online portals of the Serbian and Croatian public broadcasters RTS (*Radio-televizija Srbije*) and HRT (*Hrvatska radiotelevizija*).³ Table 1 shows the size and structure of the material. Our analysis is qualitative. We use quantitative information to show some tendencies only.

Formal features of the corpora			Frequencies of key terms		
	HRT	RTS		HRT	RTS
No. of words	56,031	100,860	<i>migrants</i>	593	502
No. of images	938	284	<i>refugees</i>	776	341
No. of texts	150	245	<i>asylum seekers</i>	25	38
			<i>people</i>	298	197

³ The internet portal of the Croatian public broadcaster was established in 1994 and was the most important Croatian web portal until 1998. It was somewhat neglected and less widely visited between 2001 and 2012. After a few redesigns, it started gaining in popularity in 2012. In March 2013, it was 19th in terms of its reach. See <http://obljetnica.hrt.hr/leksikon/h/hrtweb/>; http://www.hrt.hr/uploads/media/Program_restrukturiranja_HRT-a_8.7.2013.pdf. The internet portal of the Serbian public broadcaster was established in 1999. After the redesign in 2008, it started gaining popularity and it is now considered one of the leading online media in Serbia. See <http://www.rts.rs/page/rts/ci/internet+portal.html>.

			<i>children,</i>	88	47
			<i>babies,</i>		
			<i>little</i>		
			<i>ones</i>		

Table 1. Corpora structure and frequencies of key terms

Although there are obvious differences (e.g., HRT uses significantly more images and somewhat fewer words in relation to the total number of texts), the sources are comparable because they are both internet portals of public broadcasters, they reach comparable audiences, and they are similar in function, if not in their presentation form.

The ideological framework of our material is defined by official state policies represented in the sources and specific features of the genre. The genre is an online condensed version of TV news in which verbal parts are accompanied by images and video clips. HRT items start with three to five still images from the main news program, *Dnevnik*, and include one or more video clips (also from *Dnevnik*), whereas RTS includes fewer still images and one video clip per news item. The video clips start with a still image that we included in the material. However, we did not analyze the videos. The choices of semiotic resources that news portals make reflect their own norms and expectations of how the reader should relate to the migrants.

We focus on: (A) discourse participants or social actors represented in the texts as their main topic, and actions that these actors perform or do not

perform in these representations. We pay attention to backgrounded and foregrounded social actors and actions, as well as to those that are excluded. Another category of social actors (B) is those that directly or indirectly influence and/or produce representation—that is, framing of an event. These are medium-external (e.g., politicians, policymakers, any city mayors) and medium-internal (e.g., journalists and editors). Some of them are both internal and external; they not only influence and produce representations, but are also represented in it (e.g., politicians). We do not analyze the site and (technical and other) conditions of discourse production. Thus, our primary concern is the migrants (the social actors that are the main topic of the material) and we also focus on the representation of some social actors and their actions from the (B) category, if they are represented in the material, “visible” in the texts through their voice (e.g., politicians). These are considered in relation to the role they play in the representation of the migrants.

Theoretical framework

Our understanding of discourse follows van Leeuwen (2008) and Wodak et al. (2009): discourse is conceived of as a recontextualized social practice in which different semiotic means, including language, are used with the aim of representing certain aspects of the social world. According to van Leeuwen

(2008, 7), “social practices enter into texts”; however, texts are themselves also social practices.

We assume that discourse is influenced and constrained by various social factors, but it also influences them by either supporting, questioning, or deconstructing (some aspects of) these factors. Discourse is a battlefield of a number of ideological options, although it may be dominated by a single one.

In this analysis, we use the concept of “representation,” which implies using different semiotic means, for what Leeuwen terms “recontextualization.” In doing so, we follow Wodak et al. (2009): in their framework, recontextualization implies a transfer of, for instance, argumentation lines from one context to another.

Multimodal texts in our material draw on and transform certain social practices. Social practices of, for instance, taking care of the migrants, are represented by semiotic means (e.g., verbal metaphor, or photographs showing children). The choice of certain semiotic means implies that some others are consciously or unintentionally avoided. These means produce certain effects; for instance, particularization and individuation of certain social actors, or generalization and aggregation (e.g., referring to some actors by using numbers) of these actors (see van Leeuwen 2008). In our material, over-aggregation (extensive use of numbers) is a striking feature.

Using different means of personal reference (e.g., nouns, pronouns, or quantifiers to refer to individuals and groups) and attributions (e.g., positively

connoted or pejorative) contributes to certain discursive strategies (e.g., positive or negative Self- or Other-presentation; see Wodak et al. 2009, 35–42).

We also focus on the role of metaphors in representing social actors and actions (see Musolff 2011; Zinken et al. 2008). Metaphors in discourse can be used consciously or subconsciously. Deliberate or non-deliberate, they are shown to produce certain effects and their users can achieve certain communicative purposes (Musolff 2011; Šarić 2014).

A prominent feature of our material is overspatialization (we use “spatialization” to refer to the use of various types of spatial expressions; e.g., spatial adverbials); that is, spatialization is overemphasized. Spatial locations, sources, and goals are an intrinsic part of social actors’ and actions’ representation. Spatialization is reflected in numerous motion verbs.

The migration crisis as a social practice is linked to specific times and locations, and the texts analyzed are very specific about these: in many cases, the texts’ overall topics are the migrants arriving at certain locations and leaving them, or the texts represent specific events taking place at certain locations (e.g., breaking border fences). Spatial and temporal “landmarks” are thus represented in very specific terms. Compared to their degree of specificity, the representation of social actors differs greatly (see Section 3).

Representation can add evaluations to elements of social practice(s). As a rule, evaluation in texts is connected to legitimation (e.g., explanations or critique of certain actions). Van Leeuwen (2008, 21) emphasizes that

evaluation in journalistic reporting is comparably rare; however, evaluation can be direct or indirect. It is indirect, for instance, in the use of metaphors (see Section 3.2).

In the following section, we employ the main categories used by van Leeuwen (2008) in examining the representation of social actors. Van Leeuwen draws upon a socio-semantic inventory of ways of representing social actors.

3. Results and discussion: representation of social actors

3.1. Naming strategies, determination, and functionalization

Our data contain news items that provide “normative” suggestions for naming strategies and definitions of labels to be used in references to people that are in transit through the western Balkans (e.g., HRT, September 7, 2015): similar recommendations are also found in foreign media.⁴ *C/S migrant* (E ‘migrant’)⁵ is described as a general term referring to a person moving to a new area or country in order to find work or better living conditions, whereas *C/S izb(j)eglice* ‘refugees’ is described as a specific term referring to persons in

⁴ E.g., BBC <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24583286>.

⁵ The labels *C* and *S* refer to Croatian and Serbian; *E* refers to English. English glosses are regularly used after the *C/S* terms. Due to the similarity of standard Croatian and Serbian, the terms used in the material are very similar or identical in most cases, and these are labeled *C/S*.

danger that leave certain areas because of armed conflicts. This term is further related to the official status some persons can acquire in countries in which they seek asylum. The official recommendations rely on the UNHCR's definitions and international law.⁶ The root of the C/S word *izb(j)eglice* is *b(ij)eg* 'escape'. Its nominal stem already refers to the necessity of leaving, which is not the case with the C/S word *migrant*. The C/S terms *imigrant(i)* 'immigrants' and *emigrant(i)* 'emigrants' were also occasionally used: the former refers to reaching a destination country, and the later to leaving a country of origin. The route and crisis are qualified in C/S as *migrantska*, 'migrant' *migracijska* 'migration', *izb(j)eglička* 'refugee', and occasionally *imigrantska* 'immigrant'.

Reporting on a large number of people moving through Serbia and Croatia required rethinking the terminology. In some situations, by choosing particular terms, the journalists tried to provide information about the backgrounds and aims of the people passing through: accordingly, in some texts discussing people from European countries that joined Syrians, the term *migrant* was used (e.g., HRT, March 20, 2016). However, we have not generally noticed any careful differentiation between these terms. *Migranti* and *izbjeglice* were by and large used interchangeably in both Croatian and Serbian material (see Table 1). These terms often alternated in article leads, and both terms were used as parts of noun phrases with numerals or with nouns

⁶ UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/refugees.html>.
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c137.html>.
E.g., HRT, September 7, 2015 and September 18 (a), 2015; RTS, August 26, 2015 and September 2, 2015.

metaphorically implying large numbers (e.g., *oko 5.000 migranata i izbjeglica* ‘about five thousand migrants and refugees’, HRT, September 25, 2015) in contexts reporting how many people entered Serbia or Croatia. The adjectival qualifiers ‘economic’ or ‘illegal’⁷ were occasionally used with the noun corresponding to ‘migrant’. As a rule, ‘refugees’ were referred to with no adjectival qualifiers, but the term appeared infrequently with the appositions *S deca* ‘children’ and *C/S beba* ‘baby’ (*deca izbeglice*, *beba izbjeglica*; see Table 1).

RTS used the term ‘migrants’ most frequently, followed by ‘refugees’, whereas HRT used the term ‘refugees’ most frequently. The terms *azilanti* or *tražioc/tražitelji azila* ‘asylum seekers’ were rarely used, which is understandable because very few people applied for asylum in Serbia and Croatia (see Table 1).

All of these terms indicate different types of movement and different scenarios that cause it. These scenarios are either “neutral,” such as the one related to the C/S term *migrant* ‘migrant’ implying a change of location for some pragmatic reasons, or the scenario related to C/S *izb(j)eglice* ‘refugees’, implying that people must escape war or a life-threatening situation. In addition

⁷ In the Croatian material, the term *ilegalni migrant(i)* ‘illegal migrant(s)’ is used seventeen times. In addition, there are three occurrences of *nezakoniti* ‘illegal’ and *neregularni (i) migrant(i)* ‘irregular migrant(s)’. A regular pattern was labeling certain actions or locations as illegal (e.g., crossing the border: border crossings). One text (HRT, September 18/09/2015a (a), 2015) explicitly dealt with the terms and suggested that only actions can be illegal, not people. RTS used *ilegalni (i)migrant(i)* thirty-five times. A single occurrence of *ilegalne izbeglice* ‘illegal refugees’ was found in RTS.

to these terms, the generic C/S term *ljudi* ‘people, humans’ was also used (see Table 1). Although implying a highly general categorization (Leeuwen 2008, 42), this term made possible a different approach: humanizing and individuating the migrants. Compare (1), in which *ljudi* is followed by an attributive relative sentence:

- (1) . . . *ljudi koji beže od rata na Bliskom istoku i siromaštva* (RTS, November 11, 2015)
‘. . . people that are running away from the war in the Middle East and poverty.’

In terms of van Leeuwen’s (2008) classes of nomination (i.e., naming) and categorization, the social actors that are the main topic of the material analyzed are often simply categorized by the terms *migranti* and *izb(j)eglice*, which mark the identities they share with (many) others. In the great majority of the texts, they are not named. The texts typically report on large groups of people crossing borders, and transporting these groups from one spatial point to another. Migrants are named in only a few cases; for example, a newborn baby in (2):

- (2) *Dječak Abdul Rahman Al Oubeid . . . šesta je beba izbjeglica rođena u Slavonskom Brodu*

‘The boy Abdul Rahman Al Oubeid . . . is the sixth baby refugee born in Slavonski Brod’ (HRT, February 24, 2016).

In contrast, the actors that “manage” the migrants—for instance, high-ranking state officials—are “nominated” and “titulated” (to use van Leeuwen’s terminology). As a rule, formal titles are used (e.g., *ministar odbrane Bratislav Gašić* ‘Minister of Defense Bratislav Gašić’, RTS, August 23, 2015) at first mention; if they are mentioned more than once, similar naming is abbreviated (*ministar Gašić* ‘Minster Gašić’, or *ministar* ‘minister’ only). Lower-ranking persons are occasionally named (when individuated and, e.g., quoted); however, as a rule they are only categorized (*policija, policijski službenici* ‘police, police officers’). The same is true for volunteers and humanitarian organization members, who are most frequently categorized as such (e.g., *volonteri* ‘volunteers’), and only occasionally named (e.g., *volonterka Rafalea* ‘the volunteer Rafalea’, RTS, October 9, 2015).

In terms of functionalization and identification (classification, and relational and physical identification), various state actors are referred to in terms of their occupation or role (e.g., *službenici Odseka za strance, predstavnici ministarstva*, ‘officers of the Department for Foreigners, the representatives of the ministry’); that is, they are functionalized.

Relational identification of migrants is occasionally found (e.g., *majka iz Iraka, majke s decom*, ‘a mother from Iraq, mothers with children’). Physical

identification is rare in terms of referring to some “permanent” physical characteristics. The adjectives used in occasional physical identification of the migrants are, for instance, *iscrpljeni*, *umorni*, *povređeni*, *bolesni* ‘exhausted, tired, hurt, sick’, referring to the present temporary state of the migrants. Using van Leeuwen’s term, the social actors referred to by such terms are appraised and relate to pity and compassion.

Regarding (in)determination, as a rule migrants are represented as unspecified and anonymous. Indetermination overlaps with categorization because, by simply categorizing people as migrants, they are left anonymous. Other signals of indetermination are pronouns such as *neki* (e.g., *neki migranti kažu . . .* ‘some migrants say’). Social actors are named in some situations and/or determined by their country of origin (e.g., *Lijak Salah iz Iraka* ‘Lijak Salah from Iraq’, RTS, August 27 (a), 2015; *albanski migrant* ‘an Albanian migrant’, RTS, September 17, 2015). This is the case in the few texts discussing the situation in the refugee centers in which individuals are given a voice, or in texts reporting on incidents.

In the representation of the migrants, naming, determination, and functionalization occur together only in isolated cases (e.g., *Student tehničkih nauka Muhamed iz Sirije* ‘technical sciences student Muhamed from Syria’, RTS, September 5, 2015).

The functionalization of the migrants is rare. If the migrants are identified by classification, this is done in terms of a group membership, and

the parameters most frequently used are gender, provenance, and age (e.g., *afganistanske devojčice* ‘Afghan girls’). Classification by religion is rarely used (e.g., *migrant hrišćanske vere* ‘Christian migrants’).

The use of, for instance, proper names, functions, and relational identification all include the feature “human” and as such illustrate van Leeuwen’s personalization. The opposite category, impersonalization, implies either abstraction—that is, using abstract nouns in reference to humans (e.g., if humans are referred to as problems)—or objectification (e.g., different types of metonymic reference). Impersonalization does not play a significant role in our material. Occasional impersonalization of the migrants is related to some uses of the words *problemi* ‘problems’ and *izazovi* ‘challenges’; however, in most cases these relate to the crisis (situation) and not to persons (although the two categories are hardly separable; e.g., *problem migrantske krize*; *problem migranata* ‘problem with migrant crisis, problem with migrants’).

Metonymic reference is widely used for Croatia and Serbia (see 3):

(3) a. *Srbija jedina ozbiljno vodi evidenciju o migrantima*

‘Serbia is the only one that keeps records of the migrants’ (RTS, November 15, 2015);

b. *Hrvatska dopušta prolazak migrantima*

‘Croatia allows migrants to pass’ (HRT, September 18 (b), 2015)

Metonymic reference is vague in similar cases because the social actors responsible for certain actions cannot be easily identified. This kind of reference contributes to emphasizing collective responsibility and positioning entire countries as human or less human, as in (4):

- (4) a. *Mađarska suzavcem na migrante*
‘Hungary uses tear gas against migrants’ (RTS, August 26, 2015)
- b. *Hrvatska je u migrantskoj krizi već pokazala svoje humano lice*
‘Croatia has already shown its humane face in the migrant crisis’
(HRT, November 2, 2015)
- c. *Srbija treba da pokaže da je pristojna, dostojanstvena, humana*
‘Serbia ought to show that it is decent, dignified, and humane’ (RTS,
August 27 (b), 2015).

Representations of the “migration crisis” in our corpus are related to immigration policies in Croatia and Serbia, but also to the broader context: social practices in Europe, especially practices by neighboring countries. The crisis involved a set of social actors in each country: the migrants and politicians from various offices directly responsible for immigration and security issues (e.g., ministers of internal affairs and the police). The internal social actors are most frequently included, whereas external (world) social actors (e.g., foreign prime ministers) are less frequently included. Cases of

backgrounding (van Leeuwen 2008, 29) were noticed: the social actors responsible for an action were mentioned in the text, but not in each instance describing that action. The migrants are mainly conceptualized as groups. These groups were often implicitly or explicitly evaluated as much larger than expected. This “disproportion” initiated a prominent metaphor of moving water (see Section 3.2).

The assimilation subtype labeled “aggregation” (van Leeuwen 2008, 37) is very frequent in our material. In the majority of texts, readers were confronted with numbers: the migrants were quantified and the readers learned how many people crossed the border on a particular day, or a territory in a certain period:

(5) *Do juče je oko 260.000 ljudi prešlo preko srpske teritorije*

‘As of yesterday, approximately 260,000 people have passed through Serbian territory’ (RTS, October 22, 2015).

High-ranking national actors or elites (ministers, prime ministers, etc.) are individualized, as are some lower-ranking officials. Individualization of the migrants (i.e., focus on individuals) is much less frequent, and seems more frequent in RTS than HRT. This relates to the size of the corpora. The number of words in the HRT material is much smaller, but HRT contains many more images. Voices of various named individuals can occasionally be heard

(especially at the beginning of the crisis); for example, the voice of a girl, Aja, who is celebrating her birthday (a culturally important happening, usually connected with parents holding a party for the child) and learning Serbian. Both elements in the story appeal for empathy:

(6) *Aja će svoj 14. rođendan možda proslaviti u Srbiji. Pre mesec dana je stigla iz Sirije i njen dom je trenutno u jednom Centru za izbeglice. “Ovde mi pomažu da učim srpski. Ako naučim, možda ću ići ovde u školu”, kaže Aja. (RTS, August 18, 2015).*

‘Aja may celebrate her fourteenth birthday in Serbia. She arrived a month ago from Syria and her home at the moment is in a center for refugees. “Here they are helping me learn Serbian. If I learn it, maybe I’ll go to school here,” says Aja.’

Both HRT and RTS present the migrants primarily in positive terms and as victims (of wars), explicitly claiming empathy. In both corpora, references are present to previous personal experiences of Serbs and Croats as refugees in the wars of Yugoslav succession. The migrants are often presented as people in need of protection, and they are sometimes individualized: their occupations and ethnic backgrounds are specified, and personal stories told. In a typical example, a named person, Muhamed (indexing a Muslim faith) is given a voice. He is a journalist that had to escape because it was forbidden to publish true

stories. He is traveling with part of his family because some members are missing.

(7) *Muhamed je u Siriji radio na televiziji i u novinskoj agenciji. Nije uspevaao da prenese, kaže, prave informacije. "Zato što svako ko kaže istinu ubiju ga, svi oni, ili režim ili oni drugi", kaže Muhamed. Muhamed putuje sa porodicom, neke članove familije traže. Razdvojili su se. (RTS, October 6, 2015)*

‘Muhamed worked on TV and for a news agency in Syria. He was not able to convey, he says, the right information. “Because everybody who tells the truth is killed, by all of them, either regime or the others,” says Muhamed. Muhamed is traveling with his family; they are looking for some of their family members. They have been separated.’

Similar passages resemble mini-“human interest stories” that are embedded in a larger text. In both corpora, special emphasis is placed on children and their wellbeing (see Table 1).

As the discussion above shows, both sources analyzed present the migrants primarily in positive terms, as victims. In most cases, the migrants were categorized by the general terms corresponding to *migrants* and *refugees*, which imply the identities shared with many others. Although as a rule they

were represented as unspecified and anonymous (in contrast to influential state actors), identification, naming, categorization, determination, and functionalization were also occasionally present.

The migrants were regularly conceptualized as groups much larger than expected. This is related to the moving water metaphors that are examined in the following section.

3.2 *(Moving) water metaphors*

The *migrant crisis* in our corpora is conceptualized as a flood. The movements of people are relatively often conceptualized as rivers and waves. All of these conceptualizations can be seen as instances of a broader WATER metaphor.

(8) *slijevale su se rijeke izbjeglica u vojarnu*

‘rivers of refugees flowed into the military barracks’ (HRT, September 17, 2015).

The source domain of a flood imposes its structure on the target domain, migrants’ movement in space. Metaphors that people use are potentially linked to the way they think, and they can influence the way the hearers approach the target domain (the migrants’ movement). MOVING WATER and FLOOD metaphors in the corpus are reflected in expressions such as *talas migranata /*

migrantski talas ‘migrant wave’ (five occurrences in RTS), *val migranata* ‘migrant wave’ and similar expressions with *val* ‘wave’ (sixty-six in HRT) *bujica migranata/ljudi* (two in RTS), *rijeka migranata* ‘river of migrants’ (five in HRT), and *priliv migranata, priljev migranata* ‘migrant flow’ (sixty-eight occurrences in RTS, sixty-five in HRT). These are often modified by the C/S adjectives *velik, najveći, ogroman, nekontrolisan, pojačan*, ‘big, the biggest, enormous, uncontrolled, increased’ and are related to the representation of certain actions (see Section 4). The metaphor of MOVING WATER implies a series of mappings, among which are: receiving countries are containers, movement of people is dangerous water, and liquids are not easily stopped nor are movements of people.

A flood is a natural disaster that implies danger and damage, usually depriving people of their homes and property. One would expect that the FLOOD metaphor was used to negatively represent the situation and warn the readers of imminent danger. However, it seems that the metaphor was primarily used for other purposes (see KhosraviNik 2009, 486), in our case indicating logistical problems that both Serbia and Croatia faced and accordingly led to demanding more help from the EU. The contextual framing of the migrants in transit made the effect of the flood metaphor less negative than it could have been.

Flood, waves, influx, and so on in current discussions of migration and migrants worldwide (see, e.g., Neagu and Colipca-Ciobanu 2014) reveal views

that are so “normalized” that they do not seem dangerous at all. However, this is precisely why such language and metaphors, and the views they relate to, can be dangerous.⁸ Researchers and activists emphasize a need to deconstruct and bring to awareness “the wealth of water metaphors in media discourses on migration” (Kainz 2016). As research emphasizes (e.g., Santa Ana 1997, 221; Schrover and Schinkel 2015), the WATER metaphor is not a necessity, and other representation options also exist.⁹

Both sources have employed moving water metaphors in the context discussing logistical challenges that both Serbia and Croatia struggled with. These challenges are related to a few social actions represented in our material. The following section focuses on mediated representations of actions and reactions by the migrants and the political elites in Croatia and Serbia.

3.3. Representing social actions: non-agency and conditional agency

Mediation of social actions in our material occurs on several levels: journalists represent themselves as active social actors interviewing other social actors (migrants, politicians, and “ordinary people”). Furthermore, the

⁸ See also: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/08/we-need-change-very-language-we-use-talk-about-immigrants>.

⁹ Metaphors found in other European discourses, such as MIGRANTS ARE INSECTS (see, e.g., <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/10/migration-debate-metaphors-swarms-floods-marauders-migrants>) were not found due to the specific nature of our corpus and genre.

journalists mediate actions by the politicians and migrants to their readers and viewers. Politicians, in their own right, represent themselves and their own actions.

The migrants' actions and reactions are represented differently depending on the context of the news stories. This varies from the migrants not having agency when they are represented as numbers or objects of actions to the migrants having conditional agency when they are active in a limited way, such as when traveling (see Chouliaraki 2006, 119).

When the migrants are represented as objects, they are often goals of transporting and placing processes (e.g., *C/S prevesti, sm(j)estiti* 'transport, place'). Transport and placement verbs are often used in the passive. The frequent use of these verbs has a dehumanizing effect because typical objects of transport are goods, not humans.

The migrants are at the receiving end of social actions performed by politicians, the police, humanitarian agencies, and ordinary people. The Croatian and Serbian governments engaged in activities related to helping the migrants continue their journey, such as registering them and offering food and medical help, but they also divided the migrants into groups and stopped some of them from continuing their journey. In the representation of such actions, the main social actors are very often active and named as representatives of some institutions, or are referred to as the Croatian or Serbian government. In such representations, the migrants, on the other hand, are passive receivers of help

treated in a humane way (e.g., they are given medical assistance, food and water; they are lodged in tents; see RTS, November 24, 2015).

In situations in which the police or customs officers were exercising control (e.g., detaining people, sending them back across borders, letting them come in, and preventing them from entering the country), their actions were often represented euphemistically. Thus, illegal migrants are *C/S privedeni* ‘detained’, not arrested, and the migrants are *C/S pod policijskom pažnjom* ‘under police care’, and not in police custody. Such descriptions possibly expressed the journalists’ or other social actors’ evaluation that these people should not be treated badly.

Humanitarian organizations, volunteers, and drivers perform practical tasks and are engaged in verbal and material processes: national elites are primarily engaged in verbal processes (announcing, commenting, and emphasizing), whereas police and volunteers are mostly engaged in material processes (e.g., stopping, driving, preventing entry, following, helping, and bringing food).

When active, the migrants perform a social action of purposefully moving from their own countries via the Balkan route toward the explicit goal: Germany or other western countries. However, agency is not a clear-cut category: it often implies acting within certain restrictions on people’s conduct (Chouliaraki 2006, 125). Thus, the migrants act as free individuals while moving, but only in the space and time defined by others.

The migrants' movements are represented by a set of verbs of motion: *C/S hodati, prelaziti, prolaziti, dolaziti, ulaziti, nastavljati put, putovati, stizati, pristizati, skretati, okrenuti se ka* 'walk, pass over, pass through, arrive, enter, continue journey, keep on arriving, travel, turn (towards)'. Which verbs of motion are used depends on the deictic position of the reporter (whether the reporter is on the receiving or departing side of a border, or whether the reporter is traveling with the migrants). Almost all verbs are accompanied by adverbials: the geographical points where the migrants are headed. These points range from general ones, such as 'western Europe', to more specific ones such as 'the Hungarian/Croatian/Serbian border', and names of locations such as Preševo.

Continuity of movement is usually emphasized by the present tense, signaling that actions are taking place at the moment of speaking, and giving the situation a sense of urgency. The sense of urgency is additionally conveyed by the use of verbs such as *C/S žuriti* 'hurry': the migrants are represented as hurrying in order to reach their destination and to avoid possible difficulties.

Material actions are actions that can have a material purpose or effect, whereas semiotic actions are actions that do not have such an effect. All the actions of moving could be categorized as material actions because they have a material purpose or effect (van Leeuwen 2008, 59). On the other hand, examples such as "migrants say that they will not return" illustrate semiotic actions that do not necessarily have a material purpose. Semiotic actions are usually signaled by indirect quoting. We noticed several instances in which

journalists quote migrants both directly and indirectly. The migrants explain their feelings and intentions, and they provide evaluations of countries they travel through and their wishes and demands. When the migrants perform the semiotic social action of talking to journalists, that action is realized in the present tense of the verbs: *C/S poručuju, navode, kažu, tvrde* ‘saying, claiming, giving a message, citing’. This possibly signals to the audience that their opinions matter.

The migrants are represented as subjects waiting for borders to open. This action of waiting could be understood as a type of conditioned agency: it is usually caused by somebody other than people waiting and because there is an absence of immediate action in the nature of the verb *waiting*. However, waiting is described as a strenuous activity because it lasts for an unreasonably long time and because it involves vulnerable actors such as (pregnant) women and children.

The constant waiting at various borders and constant changes in policies towards the migrants often serve as a background for representations of the migrants’ aggressive actions and reactions. In this way, the aggressive reactions are justified, and are more understandable and acceptable. The actions and reactions by the migrants that are stopped in their journey are represented dynamically or activated (van Leuween 2008, 63), and the verbs are frequently in the present tense. There are several patterns in reactions: from less aggressive ones such as peaceful *S protestvuju, C/S viču, legli su na put* ‘protest, yell, lie

down on the road’ to more aggressive ones such as *S seku ogradu, kamenuju voz, C/S sukobili se sa drugim migrantima* ‘cut fences, stone trains, fight with other migrants’.

3.4 Representing countries’ actions and views: protecting one’s own interests versus competing to be the most humane country

Both Croatian and Serbian leading politicians presented themselves as being the best in treating the migrants by describing their positive actions in dealing with the crisis. The public broadcasters contributed to that presentation by giving much space to these politicians and their own views. There is a sense of competition about which country is the most humane; see (4). The countries compared to Serbia and Croatia are primarily neighboring countries, and then other Balkan and east European countries.

(9) *"Mi smo najorganizovanija država na putu tih migranata", istakao je Vulin, . . . (RTS, August 25, 2015)*

“‘We are the most organized country on those migrants’ way,” emphasized Vulin . . .’

Croatia and Serbia distanced themselves from countries such as Hungary, Slovenia, and Macedonia, which were portrayed as less humane and more

violent. They also distanced themselves from each other when the other was represented as inefficient. Violent actions by the country's own police are justified as necessary security measures, and overall reporting seems to downplay the police measures by presenting them in very general terms or euphemistically, as in (10), where the police are presented as calming the situation down and even saving lives by using pepper spray.

- (10) *Ministar unutarnjih poslova Ranko Ostojić ističe da je policija ispravno postupila kada je naguravanje izbjeglica riješila koristeći "papreni sprej". Štoviše, spasili su život toj djeci u naguravanju* (HRT, September 23, 2015)

‘Minister of Internal Affairs Ranko Ostojić stresses that the police acted correctly when it dispersed the pushing crowds by using “pepper spray.” Moreover, they saved the lives of those children from the pushing crowds’

Representing humane and efficient actions by Croatia and Serbia towards the migrants was constantly followed by addressing one's own interests. Both countries' politicians stressed that they would allow neither their countries to become hotspots nor the migrants to stay. They stressed other countries' responsibility, thus legitimizing migration control.

3.5 Visual presentation of social actors and social actions

The photographs (see Table 2) that accompany various news stories mostly use perceptual realism as a mode of presentation—the photographs show still shots of the migrants performing various activities (e.g., resting or being given food) at the time the crisis was unfolding.

The visual and verbal correspondence in most of the photographs analyzed is tight; the photographs and texts complement one another. This indexical meaning gives readers the impression that they are present out there, following the unfolding tragedy, and it contributes to a sense of objectivity of the news.

We have identified several types of photographs with regard to the social actors represented: (1) photographs of migrants in groups, (2) photographs of children (and their mothers or families), and photographs in which individuals are the focus, (3) photographs of politicians, and (4) photographs with no apparent/visible social actors.

Photographs		
	HRT	RTS
No. of photographs	938	284
Photographs showing migrants in groups	25%	44%

Photographs emphasizing individuals (adults)	36%*	7%
Photographs showing children	15%	17%**
Photographs showing politicians	13%	26%
Photographs with no social actors visible	11%	6%

Table 2. Photographs: thematic categorization and percentage

* Within this category, some photographs also show groups, but the emphasis is clearly put on individuals.

** Some of these photographs show groups of migrants, but children are clearly in focus.

1. Photographs of migrants in groups

The largest group of photographs (RTS) or a significant number (HRT) show people in groups, not looking at the camera. People are represented as active (walking through fields, alongside roads, or waiting in lines in order to board buses and trains) and passive (sleeping or sitting in tents covered from the rain). In many of these photographs, long shots are used. In some, the viewers see the migrants from a bird's eye view; they are "below" the viewer. Photographs of groups convey the idea of assimilation often expressed through verbal means, as well. In a subgroup of photographs, a medium shot is used, but the viewers cannot see the faces clearly and the people are not angled toward the viewer. In addition, many photographs show groups of people with their backs to the

viewer, either standing or walking away. The social actors are clearly separated from the viewers; they do not face them and there is no possibility of interaction with the viewers. The large distance in space communicates a lack of interpersonal relationships and social distance (van Leeuwen 2008, 138). If people are depicted from a considerable distance, one cannot perceive their individual characteristics. In the photographs in which the people do not look at the viewers, no social interaction is realized and the people are simply “offered” to the readers’ gaze (van Leeuwen 2008, 140).

Photographs of large groups of people convey the same information as texts regularly mentioning large numbers: if headlines and/or leads use phrases such as “rivers of migrants,” a photograph using a long shot and showing large groups of individuals can be expected. The representation strategy in similar images is distancing and objectification. The migrants are not close and are objects for scrutiny. At the same time, large groups of people emphasize the scale of the help needed.

2. Photographs of children (and their mothers or families), and photographs in which single individuals are in focus

These are very often photographs of people that are described in corresponding news items as vulnerable and dependent (children and mothers with small children and babies). Many photographs in which either a medium shot or close-up is used show children (see Table 2) and force individualization. In

some photographs with medium shots or close-ups, children do not look at the camera; these are “offer” photographs (in the terminology of van Leeuwen 2008, 140) because the children do not interact with the viewer. However, children (smiling or waving) establish eye contact with the reader in many others. Photographs with children convey the idea of the migrants in need of help. In the majority of photographs, mothers have headscarves, passively sitting, whereas men, if portrayed together with women, are standing. There is an interesting exception: in some photographs men are presented as the sole caregivers, carrying and holding children.

Both sources regularly employ images showing individualized adults: they are either alone, or focused on, “singled out” from the group they are part of.

3. Photographs of politicians

A significant number of photographs (see Table 2) show national and international politicians talking either to the press or to each other and visiting migrants (e.g., at reception centers). A close-up is used in almost all of these photographs, focusing on politicians’ personalities and functions. The politicians are looking at the viewers and demanding “goods and services” (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) from them. The most frequently photographed politicians in RTS are Minister of Labor, Employment, and Veteran and Social Policy Vulin, Minister of Internal Affairs Stefanović, and Minister of Foreign

Affairs Dačić, and in HRT Minister of Internal Affairs Ostojić and Prime Minister Milanović.

4. Photographs with no apparent/visible social actors

A prominent type of photograph in HRT (see Table 2) does not show people, but meadows, plains, or railroads, sometimes with garbage. The contrast of the photographs showing empty spaces through which the migrants have just passed and the photographs of large groups of people has a powerful effect: The only trace left after so many people have gone through is the garbage on the ground. The problem of large amounts of garbage was discussed in several articles in both sources, and was presented as a logistical challenge.

There is a sense of artistic tension and melancholy in some of these photographs. In addition, the photographs of nature (meadows, woods, and rivers near the borders) suggest the irregularity of the migrants' movements. The artistic tension possibly emphasizes the lack of state control over the borders and/or the desperation of people that are prepared to go towards their destination at any price.

Important artifacts in many photographs are fences. Fences make control possible and are connected to notions of sorting those that can enter the country from those that cannot. Fences are stable when they are made of concrete and wire (e.g., at the border between Serbia and Hungary) or movable if made of metal or lighter materials and used for creating lines for waiting. As

clear symbols of power and control, fences often include barbed wire and razor wire. In some photographs one can see people through the wires at a distance, and in others the razor wire is the element that is foregrounded. Depending on the accompanying text, the photographs with fences could be interpreted either as a plea for humanitarianism or support for the politics of exclusion. Both in Croatian and Serbian official discourse, the plea for humanitarianism is foregrounded during the entire period analyzed.

As mentioned, many of the photographs in both sources show large groups of people, supporting the over-aggregation and over-spatialization expressed by other means. However, individualization through showing children and adults is also present in both sources (see Table 2). Emphasis on adult individuals is more frequent in HRT, and formally indicates a greater individuation. However, the frequency can be related to the presentation format. HRT news items are “more visual”: they regularly start (and occasionally finish) with a small “gallery” of several images and, in such a gallery, individualization offers more diversity in presentation. Table 2 indicates that the percentage of photos showing politicians is higher in the Serbian material, whereas the percentage of photos showing no visible social actors is higher in the Croatian material. These differences necessitate further analyses of a broader sample.

4. Concluding remarks

The macrostructural context of transit migration through Serbia and Croatia influenced how the migrants were constructed discursively in RTS and HRT online. There are no significant differences in the representation of the migrants in the online material from Croatian and Serbian public broadcasters. The migrants were represented in positive terms as people that need help, either because they fled war or because they want a better life. The focus was often on children, mothers, and educated people, in line with what Chouliaraki (2006) terms “the mediation of suffering.” As in other European countries, there was a meta-discussion about the appropriate terms in referring to people passing through (e.g., refugees, migrants, or asylum seekers).

The two prominent features of the material analyzed are over-aggregation (extensive use of numbers) and over-spatialization. The first feature relates to a dominant topic of the material—Croatia and Serbia having to host large numbers of people—and logistical challenges that state elites and humanitarian organizations faced in that context. Over-spatialization relates to another frequent topic represented in our material: physical movement of migrants.

The migrants were often given space in the media to speak for themselves, and their suffering was mediated daily by journalists. Even though they were represented as active, the range of the migrants’ activity was

nevertheless restricted. They were actors first and foremost in scenarios involving physical movement: the most frequent actions and corresponding verbs were 'enter', 'cross over', 'pass through', and 'walk'. The migrants were also active actors in fewer actions such as protesting, breaking fences, pushing, and beating. However, in almost all of the cases the reactions by migrants were justified by their right to move towards their desired destination.

The photographs analyzed follow the verbal semiotic resources in that they usually present the migrants as groups. When the photographs showed individuals, they were not represented as specific people, but as general categories defined by age, gender, or family relations: "child refugees," "adult migrants," or "mothers with children." Large groups of unnamed people, "the others" that one reads about or sees on TV moving, are ascribed less humanity (Chouliaraki 2006, 125) than an individual that one either reads about or sees in a close-up scene, and who looks at the reader and explains his or her situation. In many cases, although the visuals suggested certain individualization, the verbal parts did not.

We claim that the focus on positive representations of the migrants in both sources relates to political elites' positive positioning; that is, strengthening one's positive self-presentation (e.g., conveying an image of Serbia or Croatia as humane/serious/responsible because they help migrants) in contrast to negative positioning and evaluations of other countries (e.g., Hungary for erecting a wall, Serbia or Croatia for not cooperating in logistics,

etc.). This positive representation aligned Serbia and Croatia with the EU: Croatia as a member and Serbia as an aspiring member. The portals mediated politicians' non-aggressive language use when referring to the migrants. However, aggressive language use by the same politicians was present in references to neighboring countries in connection with solving logistics problems. The intensive war of words between Croatia and Serbia in September 2015 revived the atmosphere of the conflicts of the 1990s and resulted in material actions, such as closing borders and causing many travelers to lose time and money. An elaboration of this issue necessitates more extensive corpora from various sources and is beyond the scope of this analysis.

The main focus of media attention in both sources shifted constantly between the plight of the migrants and the political decisions about their fate. Both transit countries were afraid of becoming hotspots and having to host large numbers of people. Whenever this topic was in focus, the politicians were represented in the media justifying the need for border controls and blaming big powers for causing the crisis.

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