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Escape – A Series of Dramatic Events

Analysing the Ethics of Documentary Narratives

Documentary accounts of migration and refugees tell about people who have had to leave their home countries on account of political persecution and/or economic deprivation. As spectators we may only be able to access these stories because they have been presented by such films. To make these migration narratives comprehensible for an audience that has no personal experience of escaping such circumstances, their stories are translated and communicated by cinematic means.[1] Our engagement with these experiences cannot be immediate, but the narratives at least reference events that actually should have taken place. On that score Patricia Aufderheide understands documentaries as a way to tell a story "about real life". She notes, "They are portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose."[2] This explanation of documentary media as "using real life as raw material" raises a vital issue. The film – which can be termed the documentary's "space of representation" – always shows just one version of the events depicted. Other documentaries could present the same event differently. Yet despite the different narrations,[3] each documentary would probably claim that the events actually happened the way they are represented.

The audience might wonder if what they are seeing took place, if the depicted people do exist, or if the places shown are authentic. Ethically, there is a crucial difference between an authentic representation and "using real life as raw material". Not all documentary media are truth bear-

1 Mäder 2016, 31–35; Mäder 2020, 48–55.

2 Aufderheide 2007, 2.

3 In general, the term "narration" includes all dimensions of a filmic narrative: the story, the plot, and the style. See Bordwell 1985, 53. But narration can also be described as "The process through which the plot conveys or withholds story information. The narration can be more or less restricted to character knowledge and more or less deep in presenting characters' perceptions and thoughts." See Bordwell and Thompson, 2013, 503.

ers simply because they claim to present the facts, to portray something that actually happened rather than being staged as in fiction films. The genre itself makes a promise to the audience that the documentary has to keep. This trust between documentary media and spectator is a key element for the decoding process within what can be termed the "space of consumption". The audience wants to see images of "real life" and expects an authentic representation. The documentary promises such authenticity, which becomes the principal value of the narrative. How a film is received will also depend on how it is distributed, be it on one of the various streaming platforms, on television, or at a film festival. And even then, the reception across streaming platforms can also vary: YouTube, for example, allows commenting, but the *New York Times'* Op-Docs does not.

The "space of production" is another defining facet of documentary media, with the audience likely to consider the circumstances under which the images have been produced. Often, traces of the production context can be found in these images. For example, when filming has taken place on a boat, the camera may not be steady and the images may be blurred or shaky. Or if material was shot on a windy day, the resulting noise may make it difficult to follow the dialogue. One might say that the space of production is inscribed in the images. The actual events are present in the recorded footage, which in turn captures what happened in front of the camera, such as noises and words in a specific moment and space.

The interaction between the filmmaker and the protagonists in front of the camera is also part of documentary media's space of production. The filmmaker takes part in the events, although in each production this occurs in different ways: some directors will be strongly involved, while others form a more distant relationship with the protagonists and the events. First Vivian Sobchack and later Bill Nichols described this relationship between the camera and the filmed space in terms of different "gazes", which may be accidental, helpless, endangered, or interventional, for example.[4] These gazes describe the director's attitude during filming, the director's relationship with the events, and the values the representation communicates. Describing the dynamic involving filmmaker, camera, and the world, Nichols talks of "axiographics", which "address the question of how values, particularly an ethics of representation, comes to be known and experienced in relation to space".[5] For migration narratives, that space is often "on the road", a place with inhumane conditions that the refugees seek to leave or overcome. "Values" refers to fundamental

4 Sobchack 1984, 295–298; Nichols 1991, 76–103.

5 Nichols 1991, 77.

beliefs that guide people's actions, or we might reverse that statement to note that people's decisions, and the reasons why they act in a certain way, are based on their values.[6] In the context of documentaries, the values of the director will strongly define how a story is told, which perspectives are highlighted, and how the filmmaker behind the camera and the social actors in front of the camera relate to each other.

The following discussion of three documentary migration narratives – 4.1 MILES (Daphne Matziaraki, GR 2016, 22 minutes), MY ESCAPE (Elke Sasse, DE/AT/SY 2015, 29 minutes)[7], and STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE: EUROPE OR DIE (HBO series; Urs Jakob, US/CN/SN 2014, 25 minutes) – will consider the spaces of production, representation, distribution, and consumption.[8] The discussion explores the inscription of ethics by looking at the values that are communicated in these spaces. The three productions differ not only with regard to location but also in relation to their production context, which influences their ethical space, communicated values, and the camera's gaze. They also bear conspicuous commonalities: at less than 30 minutes, their length defines these documentaries as shorts, and they each tell a story about dramatic events that actually took place in front of a camera. But each adopts a different cinematic approach.

Bodily Presence in 4.1 MILES

The documentary 4.1 MILES follows a day in the life of Kyriakos Papadopoulos, a member of the Greek coastguard on the island of Lesbos. Before the refugee crisis, he carried out largely routine patrols of the 4.1 mile-wide strait that separates Lesbos from the Turkish mainland, but that task now has an entirely new character. The filmmaker and journalist Daphne Matziaraki accompanied Kyriakos on 28 October 2015, when a rubber dinghy packed with refugees – men, women, and children – was found floating in open waters near the island. Matziaraki finds herself in the middle of the dramatic events, helping the people who are at risk of drowning to get out of the rough sea while capturing the scene with her camera. Once ashore, the refugees are warmed with blankets and hot drinks and receive medical aid. Kyriakos records the day's events in the ship's logbook. Sitting in the captain's cabin, he observes with concern, "Everywhere we went, there

6 Kettner 2004, 221–223; Becker 2018, 507–510.

7 There is a 90 minutes version of the documentary under the same title. The discussion in this chapter refers to the short version.

8 Mäder 2020, 257–270.

1 A single life jacket as a metaphor for the lost lives of refugees. 4.1 Miles (GR 2016), 00:20:47.

2 The longshot presents the human catastrophe in light of an endless shore of orange life jackets. 4.1 Miles (GR 2016), 00:21:09.

were people in the water. The only thing I'm hoping is that there is no one missing."[9] Then he falls silent, as if nothing more could be expressed in words.

The audience sympathizes with Kyriakos' reality, which he has to digest. Viewing images of the people rescued from drowning leaves a mark and generates empathy. Superimposed on the the captain's pensive and concerned face is an intertitle on a black background with white letters: "Between 2015 and 2016, 600,000 migrants crossed the 4.1 miles water between Turkey and the Greek island of Lesbos" (00:20:33). Before the end credits appear, a single orange life jacket is seen drifting in the sea, accompanied by Greek folk music sung by a male voice (fig. 1). "Where is the person to whom the jacket belonged?", the spectator is encouraged to wonder. The end credits are then superimposed on the lost life jacket. The final image is a longshot of a shoreline full of orange items, probably life jackets, as with words fade in: "Dedicated to 7-year old Mohamadi Amir Mahdi and all the other children who have drowned crossing the Aegean Sea" (fig. 2). Only now is it made clear to the audience that not all the refugees were rescued.

9 The dialogue is in Greek; the English translation given here is taken is from the subtitles.

3 The helping hands of the cinematographer are visible in the image. 4.1 Miles (GR 2016), 00:15:29.

4 The downwards perspective and the camera angle indicate that the cinematographer is also assisting in the rescue. 4.1 Miles (GR 2016), 00:15:52.

4.1 Miles was a low-budget production whose realization required Daphne Matziaraki to assume several roles: director, producer, cinematographer, and editor. It was the director's first film and was largely received positively. The documentary premiered online as part of the *New York Times* Op-Docs series, a term that may indicate "opinion documentaries" but could also suggest "open documentaries", available on the webpage of the *New York Times*.[10] Some of the documentaries that appear as Op-Docs have also been uploaded to YouTube, Vimeo, and other streaming platforms, as is the case with 4.1 Miles.[11] Op-Docs provides independent filmmakers with a distribution platform for high quality productions, mostly documentary films. The short 4.1 Miles was nominated for an Academy Award in 2016, in the category of Best Documentary Short Subject.

The production context tells us that the filmmaker is an outsider and an observer of the events, but in fact she also participates in the dramatic rescue. This double position comes into effect in two situations during the

10 4.1 Miles (Daphne Matziaraki, GR 2016, 22 minutes), https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000004674545/41-miles.html [accessed 17 June 2020].

11 4.1 Miles (Daphne Matziaraki, GR 2016, 22 minutes), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjnj5B2GCvc [accessed 17 June 2020].

5 The shadow reveals the camera and the microphone attached to an individual's head. 4.1 Miles (GR 2016), 00:14:37.

filmic narrative. The first takes place on the ship during the first of the two rescue sequences (00:03:10–00:10:26). The camera is very close to the people who are at risk of drowning, but Matziaraki is not only present during the whole rescue but also helps the people to get out of the sea and onto the ship, as the camera angle reveals in the second rescue scene (figs. 3 and 4).

The angle in the shot and the position of the hands and feet of the person assisting indicate that the individual holding the camera is helping pull people to safety. Another take shows the shadow of the cinematographer, with the camera and microphone attached to the cinematographer's head (fig. 5). We see that the person who is filming is assisting in the rescue, although it could be that a member of the ship's crew is equipped with the camera.

We cannot know with certainty that the helping hands belong to the filmmaker, but it seems very likely to be the case. When she was interviewed, Matziaraki mentioned she was concerned "to stay out of the way of the Captain and his crew".[12] The audience may well wish to believe that Matziaraki assisted in the rescue with both hands, and certainly the person filming with a camera attached to his or her head was actively engaged in the rescue. Both the first and second rescue scenes were filmed by a camera that was close to what was transpiring, which draws the spectators into the drama even though they are unable to do anything, neither support the crew nor prevent the people from drowning. The audience has only two options: endure the pain of the situation or stop watching.

The spectator's helplessness is evident again in another scene, in which a man holds a rescued but unconscious young girl by the ankles, with her limp body hanging in the air. A woman and some other helpers strike her

12 Salboudis 2017.

6 The limp body of a rescued girl is exposed in the middle of a group of helpers who are all speaking anxiously at the same time. 4.1 MILES (GR 2016), 00:14:37.

back to make her spit out the salt water she has swallowed. When one man says she is good, they put the girl down on a blanket. Another man requests that the woman hold the girl's head while she lies on her back. A doctor is taking care of her and asking for oxygen when, in the next take, a motionless child in a thermal blanket is carried away. As during the rescue sequence on the open water, most of the time the camera is at a safe and respectful distance, filming from a medium longshot (fig. 6). The dramatic events are observed until the daylight is gone and evening turns into night.

As the audience we might ask: What happened to the girl? Did she survive? What about the other refugees? Are they safe now? The unabashed presentation of a human catastrophe, which brings awareness that these events actually happened, affects the viewer deeply. Willingly or unwillingly, the audience witness the brutal reality for refugees on the island of Lesbos. The girl's limp body is seared into the spectator's memory, just as if that spectator had been present on location. The audience has bear to watch the painful scenes that ensue when people are forced to leave their homes. The girl's seemingly lifeless body epitomizes the injustice to which the audience is exposed. The filmmaker acts as mediator between refugees, helpers, the captain and his crew from Lesbos, and the spectators. The values of humanity, empathy, and compassion are communicated by the relationship between all the social actors, including the filmmaker. Without Matziaraki's work, the events would have been known only to the people involved, through their personal experience. The space of production in 4.1 MILES is present in the space of representation via the bodily presence of the filmmaker and the social actors, a presence caught by the camera, be it in the form of a shadow or the image of the naked body of a refugee child.

Combining Temporal and Spatial Perspectives in MY ESCAPE

MY ESCAPE shows how the filmic perspectives of refugees and professional filmmakers can be combined. The documentary relates three stories, those of two brothers from Syria, an Afghan girl, and a young man and his nephew, who are also from Afghanistan. For all of them, "escape" ends in Germany. The documentary edits cell phone footage taken by the refugees during their journey. The footage is combined with interviews with the refugees that were recorded subsequently. The production was directed by Elke Sasse, a German author, journalist, and director of television reports and documentaries, with the backing of the German television station WDR, Deutsche Welle, and Berlin Producers. The documentary is available on various webpages in both a longer version (90 minutes)[13] and a shorter version (29 minutes).[14] The discussion in this chapter focuses on the shorter version. Again, the questions are: How do the space of production and representation interact? How does this interaction influence the space of reception? and What values are communicated in these spaces of communication?

The two perspectives, the refugees' and the film production's, are audio-visually combined so that the production spaces of the refugees' experiences and the part played by the filmmaker partially overlap. For example, during the filmmaker's interview of a refugee after his arrival in Germany, the refugee shows footage of his journey on his cell phone. This audio-visual strategy results in the remarkably strong presence of the filmmaker, who has edited the material in order to gain a coherent story. The footage can be interpreted according to its spaces of production – to where and under what circumstances the film material was produced. But these production spaces are inscribed in the space of representation, as we shall now explore.

Four aesthetic strategies are applied in MY ESCAPE. The first and most striking involves the cell phone footage. It contains the refugees' mediated experiences during their escape (fig. 7).

Sometimes the refugees commented on the cell phone footage in the original soundtrack as they were recording it; some, for example, mention that they are seeking to film their journey. The cell phone images make a strong impression as they record events that actually happened. During the interviews, the refugees often hold their cell phones in their hands, pointing to the images (fig. 8). In doing so they are staying: "I was there!" "Here is proof of what took place."

13 MY ESCAPE (WRD; ARD Mediathek, 2016, 90 minutes), https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/video/sendungen/wdr-dok/video-my-escape--meine-flucht-100.html [accessed 18 June 2020].

14 MY ESCAPE (Elke Sasse, DE/AT/SY 2015, 29 minutes).

7 The footage captures how traffickers holding sticks jam the refugees onto the rubber dinghies. My Escape (DE/AT/SY 2015), 00:18:53.

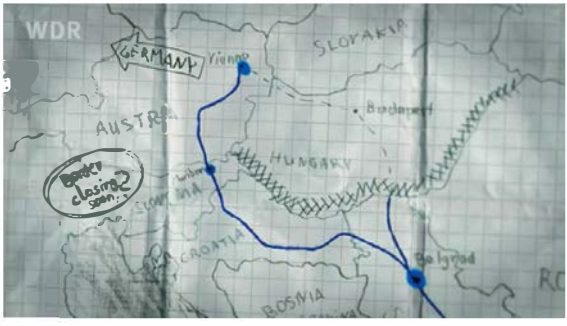
8 The cell phone with the footage serves as evidence for the audience and the director that the events the refugees are talking about actually happened. My Escape (DE/AT/SY 2015), 00:24:12.

9 Additional contextual information is faded-in on the blurred footage. My Escape (DE/AT/SY 2015), 00:19:43.

Secondly, titles are faded-in on the cell phone footage letter-by-letter, in short-message style with hashtags. The text provides context for the events depicted or comments from the filmmaker. The additional information draws the bigger picture of the migration crisis. The following example refers to another occurrence that became emblematic of the migration crisis: "On 2 September 2015 #Aylan drowns between the Turkish coast and the Greek Islands. In 2015, a total of 272 refugees were lost here. For the whole Mediterranean, the number is 3,771" (fig. 9).[15]

15 Translation by the authors. For a more substantial discussion of the story of Aylan see the contribution "Uncertain Destinies and Destinations", 11–28 in this volume.

10 The director asks the refugees to recount their journey and draw their experiences. My Escape (DE/AT/SY 2015), 00:20:18.



11 The animated, self-drawn map shows the route the refugee has had to travel. My Escape (DE/AT/SY 2015), 00:24:01.

The third aesthetic element comprises the interviews with the refugees. These are strongly guided by the filmmaker: Elke Sasse asks the questions and the cinematographers choose the frame and the distance from the protagonists who are being invited to tell their story (fig. 10).

As fourth aesthetic element the refugees also provide maps depicting their journey through various countries, which are inserted and animated (fig. 11). It is not clear whether the drawings were made before, during, or after their journey.

The spaces of production, representation, and consumption overlap in My Escape. The director is at the same time a spectator of the refugees' own footage, adding further information to the images in post-production. At such moments Elke Sasse intervenes in the narrative of the journey with her own comments and questions. She is a consumer of these images, but she also shapes their stories' dramaturgy and aesthetics. At the same time, the refugees themselves are not only testimony to the escape but also film producers, and via the screens on their phones, they become consumers of their own story. In their case, the spaces of production, representation, and consumption practically merge.[16]

16 Scholar of communication Roger Odin has highlighted the particular challenges of engagement with mobile phone images. See Odin 2012, 155–169.

The world to which the audience has access in a meta-reading process[17] thanks to the refugees' efforts to film their escape is memorable and sometimes even overwhelming. This experience is repeatedly interrupted by the filmmaker Elke Sasse's cinematic intervention with editing, fading-in of texts, and interviews. The possibly incomplete and incoherent short films saved on the phones might not have provided such a comprehensive story without these interventions. The "happy ending" of arrival in Germany is crafted when the refugees themselves look into their future and let the audience know what they wish for. It is possibly that without these aesthetic adaptions MY ESCAPE would not have been distributed so prominently by the German television channel WDR. Unconventionally produced footage may need to be combined with conventional footage that follows specific rules in its editing if it is to become part of the audio-visual migration story collection of a television channel. This aesthetic strategy communicates values that highlight participation and the inclusion of the refugees as an important feature of a migration narrative, but at the same time, the film submits to the narrative norms of a conventionally told story. Adaption is itself a value for the aesthetic and moral approach. Not only the refugees but also the narrative have to adapt unconditionally to a new culture.

Audio-visual Control of Infotainment in Storming Spain's Razor-Wire Fence: Europe or Die

The last migration narrative to be considered follows the rules of infotainment and at the same time successfully refers to the real world. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE is the first part of the quadripartite HBO series EUROPE OR DIE (Urs Jakob, US/CN/SN 2014) produced by Vice Media, a New York-based production company.[18] Its narration adopts a representation strategy that is different from that of the first two examples: infotainment style is intended to thrill, deploying filmic means such as sound, images, editing, and voice-over to entertain and captivate the audience and keep them in front of their screen.

The infotainment mode of STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE is introduced right at the beginning of the show. A drumbeat accompanies images

17 See Odin 2012, 163.

18 The television-format *Vice News*, in which the series appeared, is available via its homepage (https://www.vice.com/en/section/news) and YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/vicenews).

12 Black-and-white footage from a surveillance camera shows people climbing over a border fence. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:01.

13 Filmed again by a surveillance camera, refugees are seen from above running through the wasteland at a border. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:03.

14 The footage, now in color, again shows individuals climbing a border fence by night. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:04.

from surveillance cameras. They show streams of people climbing over enormously high fences (fig. 12), running through the border wasteland (fig. 13), and then again climbing fences – but this time in color (fig. 14). The next take shows refugees being struck by the border police (fig. 15). The blurred images of people being beaten continue (fig. 16) and after the next cut a baby wrapped in blankets is handed over by a uniformed official helper to somebody else, probably to medical stuff (fig. 17). A female voice explains: "More than fifty million are displaced around the world ..." During the voice-over a final take from the introduction shows mostly men, some holding babies in their arms, but also a few women behind a tall fence (fig. 18). In the following take the moderator is shown in a medium

15 The footage shows border guards, presumably Spanish, hitting refugees who have managed at last to climb over the fence. Storming Spain's Razor-Wire Fence (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:05.

16 More people are mistreated in front of the camera, while others watch. One man protects his head with his hand. Storming Spain's Razor-Wire Fence (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:08.

17 A more hopeful image, with hands helping the refugees rather than striking them, as a baby is handed on; the moment coincides with the first words by the commentator. Storming Spain's Razor-Wire Fence (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:09.

close-up (fig. 19) finishing her comment: "... because of conflict, poverty, persecution, and climate change" (00:00:08–00:00:14).

Painful images of the risks refugees take are shown: stock footage of dead bodies squeezed in cars, killed when they became unable to breathe due to the lack of oxygen in vehicles that were to smuggle them over the border; border guards open a box below the trunk of a car where the young men who are now only dead bodies had hidden; a group from Africa in a rubber dinghy that is too small to hold all of them safely are detected and blinded by a floodlight. A refugee has a chance to speak and explains in French that they came because economic hardship had left them unable to support their families. The stomping beat of the drum is still defining the

18 Mostly young boys and men, some with babies in their arms, and a few women stand behind a fence, perhaps at a refugee camp. They look towards the camera to attract attention. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:10.

19 The female commentator in a benign and peaceful image. STORMING SPAIN'S RAZOR-WIRE FENCE (US/CN/SN 2014), 00:00:11.

pace of the narrative. In a voice-over the moderator informs the audience that the refugees are arriving in the western, central, and eastern Mediterranean. Additional footage of crowds of refugees climbing fences and sitting in rubber dinghies is shown. These images are contrasted with a longshot of an endless barbed-wire fence that divides a dry landscape and a bird's eye view of an airstrip, highlighting the technological and financial opportunities seemingly proffered by the destinations the refugees hope to reach.

Again, footage of streams of refugees climbing a high border fence is shown, this time in fast motion. The men look like ants making their way along a trail. During these takes the moderator comments in the voice-over: "Three of the biggest gateways for migrants and refugees into Europe are through the western, central, and eastern Mediterranean. To tackle the unprecedented numbers of people risking their lives to enter its borders, Europe is spending hundreds of millions of Euros to fortify its frontiers" (00:00:17–00:00:37). Then the drumbeats end and the next take presents a calm image of heaps of dry earth. The change of pace is accompanied by the sound of elegiac string music. These heaps are evidently refugee graves. The moderator walks on the dusty wasteland and notes that nobody knows how many people are buried here.

The pace of this deliberately shocking series set on the borders of the European mainland is established by the music score and enhanced by the fast editing. In the presentation of these brutal events the rhythm emphasizes the tense atmosphere and applies a sensational mode, "which may tell the audience that what they are seeing is extraordinary and therefore worth observing, and also filming."[19] The infotainment style emotionalizes the narrative[20] and at the same time provides information about border policies and incidents on the border between the African continent and Europe, with a focus on Spain. The production company Vice News controls the representation's impact on the audience by effective and professional audio-visual means. The female commentator guides the audience through the narrative almost like a savior who controls the pace and restores calm to the events. She tells the audience how they should feel about the explicit, inhumane, and unsparing footage. The combination of fast editing, rhythmic sound, and memorable footage in the opening sequence drives home the narrative. The main goal of the aesthetic strategy is to communicate the entertainment and sensational values to which the information value is exposed. Vice News is the unchallenged storyteller who distributes the sensational information in its own television format with its logo permanently present in the upper right corner of the screen. It manipulates the audience's response, wanting them to be shocked, but neither the audience nor any social actor, the people in front of the camera, other than the moderator is included in the narrative. The space of consumption is empty; no active participation is required. The commentator, the music score, and the editing are completely in charge of the representation that tells the audience how to receive the sensational and repeated footage. From a more reflective distance, an attentive and critical spectator can recognize that the narrative is not principally disseminating information but rather distributing and deploying sensational images of migration to satisfy a thirst for distraction amongst the audience.

A Mediated Series of Dramatic Events

Comparison of the three documentary formats reveals that even as documentary media show what happened at a specific time and place, they also customize the depiction according to the targeted audience. The narratives include and disseminate their own values and as a result their insight

19 Mäder 2020, 346.

20 See Mäder 2020, 345-348.

into the migration experiences differs. The representations pose ethical questions related to the values they transmit.

Viewers may seek out values with which they agree. They may wonder if the values of humanity, empathy, and compassion represented in 4.1 Miles are appropriate. Or they may wonder if the participation and inclusiveness, and also the medial and cultural adaption, transmitted by My Escape is suitable for migration narratives. Are the values of entertainment and sensation found in Storming Spain's Razor-Wire Fence ethically justifiable? All these questions can be debated.

The analysis of the three productions highlights that the creation of documentary media is always a balancing act. What must be portrayed? How is it to be shown, using what means? Can a documentary show human distress and fear without being voyeuristic or simply satisfying a cheap sensationalism? What events and actors must be included if a story is to be recounted in a specific way? How would the audience's reception experience be different if, for example, the production used diegetic music or the camera were placed differently? The filmmakers play a crucial role not only for the representation of such events, but also in establishing the viewpoint(s) the films offer. In seeking to emphasize particular elements, they have already reduced the range of possible viewpoints, although the interpretation of the completed product lies in the end in the hands of its audience, who will perceive and categorize it accordingly to their own experience and understanding of the world, their own hermeneutic horizon. And it is the receivers who participate in public discourse using knowledge transmitted by such media.

Today we live in a mediatized world,[21] in which audio-visual and virtual media have a significant role to play in determining how we understand the world and the events that take place within it. It is therefore crucial for the producers of documentaries to be aware of their responsibilities. They must interrogate the ethical impact and professional standards – verifiability or the obligation to be fair, for example – of their product. That responsibility is concerned not only with the representation of events and the people involved in them but also with the audience. And the audience in turn has certain responsibilities in relation to the quality of the media it consumes and the values and norms that are transmitted by specific

21 Mediatization is a fluid concept that describes a macro-social process experienced by the relationship between media, culture, and societies over recent decades. Media have become a crucial vehicle for social practices. Media influence not only the individual but also society as a complex system. See, for example, Hjarvard 2013.

media formats. The ethical demands on media communication resemble the principles of interpersonal communication in terms of consistency, truthfulness, and fairness.[22] Media communication involves the complex transmission not only of a specific representation of events but also of norms and values that are to be decoded by the audience. The responsibility of the producers and distributors is located in how they report on events, whereas the responsibility of the audience is located in how it consumes and reacts to the representations.

Public discourse on migration, a highly charged issue with huge socio-political impact for a range of societies and individuals, requires that particular attention is paid by the media to how they report on events. The media's perspective influences how audiences react and accordingly contributes to political debates and social strategies surrounding migration.

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22 See, for example, Brosda/Schicha 2010, 9–21.

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