

## FORUM

# THE MIGRATION CRISIS: REPRESENTATION OF A BORDER CONFLICT IN HUNGARIAN, GERMAN AND PAN-EUROPEAN TELEVISION NEWS COVERAGE

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**ABSTRACT** In this article we review the methods used by television news channels in their reporting of the clashes between the Hungarian police and refugees at the Serbian-Hungarian border on 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. With the help of content analysis we examine the techniques used by each editorial board to portray events differently, resulting in dissimilar effects on recipients. During the analysis we examine news coverage for one specific day as presented by Hungarian, German and pan-European broadcasters. German news programs were chosen for comparison with Hungarian ones due to the fact that most of the refugees were heading towards Germany. We conclude that there are significant differences between the information that was broadcast according to television channels; owner expectations presumably play an important role in this.

**KEYWORDS** Media, manipulation, migration, public broadcasters, commercial television

## INTRODUCTION

Our research investigates how various television reports present the same events in different ways, and, by doing so, how they create differences in the understanding of events. The event chosen for analysis is the series of clashes on the Hungarian-Serbian border of the 16th of September 2016. We examine two Hungarian, two German and one example of pan-European television coverage in our analysis. In doing this we survey the differences that occurred in the presentation of the events within the narrative, the visual methods and the logical

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structure of the reports. The reason for choosing this particular theme is that in 2015 both the media and politics paid particular attention to refugees arriving in Europe, and whose number in the given year significantly increased compared to previous years.

The Hungarian press used to be less concerned with the issue of refugees. Between the 1st of January 2005 and the 31st of December 2006 Vicsek et al. (2008) analysed the published print articles of two Hungarian daily newspapers, *Népszabadság* and *Magyar Nemzet*. These authors found that the studied newspapers only slightly dealt with the refugee issue: the majority of the content related to problems and conflicts, namely crime and “deviant” behaviour. A few reports described individuals who had successfully integrated, refugee support programs or other positive stories. They also observed that in the articles of *Magyar Nemzet* (generally considered to be pro-right wing) the refugees were shown in a somewhat bad light, and the social tension surrounding their reception was more emphasised (Vicsek et. al, 2008). However, the massive wave of immigration to Europe in 2015 turned the attention of both politicians and the public towards refugees.

Member States and politicians of the European Union were divided on the issue: Western states – primarily Germany and its leader – mainly called attention to the humanitarian situation of the refugees and the social and economic advantages that would follow their admission. In contrast to this, Central and Eastern European countries – with Hungary and its Prime Minister leading –pointed out the potential dangers of the uncontrolled immigration of large masses, and were keen to maintain the focus on securing the external borders of the EU. The present authors wanted to see whether the different approaches the television presentations took to the events at Röszke could be identified from Hungarian and German news reports, and if there were any indications that there were preconceptions during the making of these reports. According to the Hungarian TÁRKI Social Research Institute:

*“Not only society, but Hungarian media is also greatly polarised. After the transitions, the Hungarian media system, similarly to other Central and Eastern European countries, followed the Mediterranean or Polarised Pluralist Model ..., which means that the media reflects the political divisions.” (TÁRKI, 2016:122).*

Additionally, we also describe in this paper how Hungary appears in connection with the above-described events in Hungarian and international reports.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The majority of information we obtain during our lifetime is not based on our direct, personal experience, but is rather gained in an indirect way, or through some form of mass communication. Mass communication, therefore, is a determinative method in so-called informal learning which continues throughout our lifetime. However, this becomes the most dominant form of learning after mature adulthood is reached (approximately the age of 40) as formal learning declines. (Juhász, 2012). Császi considers the media to be the “electronic folklore” of today’s societies (Császi, 2002). Ahmed claims, meanwhile, that the content of television broadcasts functions as a landmark or handrail for people to navigate by (Ahmed, 2006). Gerbner states that “mass communication techniques, amongst those mainly television, “tell a tale” to their audience about things that are not to be seen directly by them” (Gerbner, 1996). Luhmann also points out that much of what we get to know about modern society and about the world we live in we learn through mass media. However, he also draws attention to the fact that media show us a constructed reality in every case. As an example, he mentions the Gulf War in 1991 when the American news channel CNN was kept up to date with the latest ‘news’ and pictures by the American army. As a result, viewers were exposed to censored, fake images about the war, cleansed of monstrosities. According to Luhmann, mass media manipulates public opinion by representing interests that are not directly communicated. Television plays a major role in this process. This medium is normally considered to be especially authentic with its live footage, real locations, and expert commentary. In addition to this, the content of both language and visual elements can be altered in countless ways. (Luhmann, 2008).

McQuail also points out that mass media has been used as a propaganda tool for opinion and behaviour shaping, as it was used by the Allies in World War II.

However, the management of the Cold War, the Gulf War and the Kosovo conflict confirmed that the mass media is an essential component of every international power struggle, in which the public play a role as well (McQuail, 2003). Nazi propaganda also achieved success in changing the attitudes of the German population, partly through the use of the mass media. The psychological background to this phenomenon is being investigated through several pieces of research (Mező, 2014). The media has a major opinion-shaping role in relation to major international events, such as immigration. This was suggested for the first time by Hartmann and Husband in the 1970s. These authors conducted research in Great Britain which involved asking youths about immigration. They came to the conclusion that the respondents had primarily acquired the dominant media definitions of the subjects under investigation (Hartmann and Husband, 1974).

Wisinger also emphasises the manipulative role the media has and claims that as the influence of television grew, it gradually evolved into a sophisticated and manipulative public opinion-forming weapon. The author claims that facts are converted by news editors who decide which events will make it to the news, and how they are interpreted. This can be quite subjective: the media can portray the same individuals as patriots, allies, enemies, terrorists, traitors, etc. based on the different interests in a given region. He mentions the Vietnam War as an example; in this case the affiliation of journalists was clearly indicated according to whether the words “patriot” or “guerrilla” were used to refer to certain people. Changes in media portrayals are also possible when interests change; a “terrorist” might later on become transformed into a patriot or a major statesman as happened in Western media with Menachem Begin and Yasser Arafat (*Wisinger, 2008*).

Bagdikian states that at the end of 1979 in revolutionary Tehran students were paid an hourly wage by American newsreel staff to demonstrate during the news broadcasts in order that TV could show them. Moreover, one crowd which was chanting anti-American slogans in English was asked by a Canadian television team to repeat the slogans in French for the benefit of Quebec station viewers – no subtitles needed (*Bagdikian, 1980*). There are also more recent examples. The German public channel ZDF, for instance, was accused by a Russian TV company of using hired extras who acted as if they were Russian soldiers in a report about Eastern Ukraine. Allegedly, ZDF wanted to prove that there were a significant number of Russians fighting alongside anti-government separatists in Kiev. One man in the footage named Igor was actually an unemployed individual called Yuri who lived in Kaliningrad and who had never joined the Ukrainian separatists. He was asked to act as if he was injured, having received 50 thousand rubles and been trained in his role by the Germans. ZDF refuted the allegations and said they only had given money to the boy because they pitied him (*Russia Today, 2015*).

Bajomi-Lázár highlights the fact that the relationship between the media and the general public is so complex that so far no single model has been able to provide a convincing description of it; the two main research streams thus far are the effect paradigm and usage paradigm. However, most of the related research has only taken into account data which supported the initial hypotheses, so the outcomes of such research are necessarily biased and often contradictory (*Bajomi-Lázár, 2006*).

As can be seen, there are many tricks that can be used by television news reports to mislead viewers. The simplest definition of manipulation is to create a distorted representation that invokes false understanding in the recipient (*Amin-Antal-Kubínyi-Vági, 2002*). The recipient believes, accepts and considers

what has been said to be true, not knowing that they have been the victim of manipulation (Árvay, 2004). Manipulation is hard to prove, as its essence is that it lies using “elements of truth” (Cazeneuve – Oulif, 1969). Thus, the existence of manipulative intent can be denied, most of the time cannot be clearly proven and intent to deceive can only be assumed (Bártházi, 2008). We can protect ourselves against manipulation, according to Chilton, by always being prepared to accept that we are being lied to and deceived (Chilton, 2002). According to Kirschner, one of the most important elements is the influence of emotions (Kirschner, 1997). In the case under examination, this relates to emotional arousal (fear or compassion) towards refugees.

## HYPOTHESES

In the course of our research the following hypotheses were created:

1. National television news channels present information about events in ways which strongly reflect the prevailing political opinions in their respective countries. As a result, we expect to find evidence of distinct, key messages in the various reports. The reason for this is that the prevailing political opinion about the refugee issue is substantially different in Hungary and Germany – as discussed in our introduction.
2. Displays of information in Hungarian and German television reports differ narratively, visually and also in terms of their logical structure. We assume that even if censorship is avoided, certain expectations about the visual and textual content of the news items which are published will be prevalent.
3. The role of Hungary will be positive in the Hungarian public service television reports and neutral in the examined Hungarian commercial television reports; however, it will be negative in German and Euronews reports. This will be partially explained by the prevailing political views in the specific countries. The remaining part of the explanation is that television stations represent economic interests that are aligned with the requirements of their owners. Accordingly, information is used for specific purposes. The state as the principal owner of public service media creates information packages that match the expectations of the government. Media in the commercial sphere try to present events in accordance with their economic and political backing in both visual and textual forms. Media regarded as neutral (i.e. that provides information that cannot be characterized in terms of particular interests) broadcasts news content that is objective, neutral, and accurately reflects reality.
4. The role of refugees will be negative in Hungarian reports and positive in German ones, as well as in pan-European Euronews coverage. The reason

for this is the differing political perceptions in Hungary and Germany about refugees.

5. The way that events are presented in pan-European Euronews coverage will be similar to that presented by German news channels. This hypothesis is based on the fact that Germany has much greater political and economic influence in the European Union than Hungary; we predict that this will be identifiable in the editorial principles of Euronews.

## METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND DESIGN

Scholarly content analysis was used during our research. Content analysis is defined as a research method that allows raw text data to be used to draw conclusions that are not openly stated in publications but can be read from their text structure, the co-occurrence of elements and inevitably recurring characteristics. There exist two basic methods: quantitative and qualitative content analysis, although at present these methods are being integrated by the international scientific community. In our analysis we combined these two approaches. According to Krippendorff (one of the proponents of the quantitative technique), content analysis is a valid research technique; with its help repeatable and valid conclusions can be made by employing data related to their context (*Krippendorff, 1995:22*). This author considers content analysis to be of practical use in exploring symbolic meanings.

Pietila states that content analysis can be used to describe what a media document is about, what is affected by it, in what ways the media present certain events and what their content structure looks like. One of the methods used in content analysis is comparison. Using this approach we took the following into account during our research efforts: asset-based comparisons; audience-based comparisons; comparing content with standards or ideals, and comparing content with real events. (*Pietila, 1979*)

According to McQuail, the most interesting components of media content are not the open messages that are transmitted, but the large amounts of mostly hidden and indefinite information within the media text content. Thus when examining the media content we took the following dominant motifs into consideration: a description and comparison of the nature of the media; a comparison of the media with social reality; the nature of the media as a reflection of social and cultural beliefs; a performance evaluation of the media, and organizational prejudice-distortion-analysis (*McQuail, 2003*).

With the help of content analysis key topics can be revealed in information that is mediated. Conclusions can be drawn about the source of communication

(statements) based on a relative comparison of the occurrence of words, figures of speech and concepts and their links. Content which is identified and uncovered may be obvious or deep-seated, potential, not included in the main report, or latent.

We used cluster sampling in the research and considered groups of intermediary elements as sampling units. The design of the cluster model is a simple, practical answer to the difficulty of individually summarizing certain elements within a media channel by identifying the key features that occur in these channels. Using a cluster sample assumes that a larger data set can be divided into subgroups according to some criteria. Due to the characteristics of the media content (motion picture coverage) there was no need to use visual content analysis software which is typically used for processing written information and articles, and speeding up the search for identical words or words with similar meaning. The first part of our work involved coding. During this phase, parts of the information conveyed by the media were classified according to pre-established categories. In the case of qualitative content analysis, coding is not performed by using predetermined categories; these develop during the analytical process. The meaning of words and sentences can be coded only if they actually appear in the text. The second phase was the analytical phase, during which the content coded in the first session was further developed and investigated. We examined the incidence of certain code categories and the concomitance of two or more codes. At this point, missing concepts emerged, such as visual definitions. As each code symbolizes a different meaning, two or three codes which appear at the same time create a surplus of meaning that is not included in the original text and may represent an important indicator when plot elements are systematically missing. At the third stage of the analysis, we interpreted the data we had received. Co-occurrence trends within the media material led us to the conclusion that broader principles were becoming interpretable. The materials did not include the text or visual content we had expected, but we were able to reveal hidden, latent content that was potentially determinative.

Our research involved the content analysis of news programs published by five television channels about the riots that took place at Rösztke. From these, we examined the Hungarian and German public broadcasters (Hungarian M1 and ARD) and the prime-time news programs for the same evening of two commercial television channels (Hungarian ATV, German RTL), as well as a report made by another international news channel, Euronews. The German news programs were chosen for comparison as most of the refugees were heading towards Germany, and we considered it interesting to look at how events were being presented to the general public by German reporters. A total of five television reports were included in the sample and were analyzed using quantitative and qualitative con-

tent analyses with a focus on several topics; namely, to what extent did specific television channels report on events, what were the key messages of the reports, which visual elements dominated the presentations, what attributive structure was used in connection with the refugees/migrants, what roles were awarded the participants of the events, and what headcount was identified.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT – MULTIPLE SOURCES**

In order to be able to analyse the television news reports, we need to become familiar with the events. With the help of the below listed official websites we briefly review what actually happened on the 16th of September 2015. The sources of information are as follows: [www.orientpress.hu](http://www.orientpress.hu); [www.police.hu](http://www.police.hu); [www.nol.hu](http://www.nol.hu); [www.atv.hu](http://www.atv.hu); [www.vasarhely24.hu](http://www.vasarhely24.hu); [szegedma.hu](http://szegedma.hu); and [www.delmagyar.hu](http://www.delmagyar.hu).

Based on the news from these editorial offices, the events happened in the following way: in the spring of 2015 the refugee flow from Africa and the Middle-East heading towards eastern and northern Western Europe intensified, with one section of the route crossing through Hungary. Individuals arriving from Serbia across the green border attempted to illegally cross the Hungarian border. To ensure the legality of the border-crossing process, the Hungarian government technically locked down the border so that from the 15th of September 2015 the only way to cross the border from Serbia legally was via the designated border crossing points. On the 15th of September the Hungarian police temporarily suspended the operation of the Serbian-Hungarian border at Röszke. By the 16th of September the number of migrants on the Serbian side had grown to a few thousand, and demands were being made for the border to be opened. The Hungarian riot police, backed by anti-terrorist units, had no luck trying to calm down the mass, even when messages were communicated in Arabic. At around 3 pm the migrants stuck on the Serbian side of the border broke through the Hungarian border led by a number of aggressive commanders and were met by Hungarian riot police firing tear gas. In return, the assailants started throwing stones and pieces of cement taken from construction debris, as well as sticks and plastic water bottles they had been given by relief organizations. The Hungarian riot police deployed tear gas and water cannons while the offenders – many of whom were covering their faces – burnt car tires and threw stones at them from the roofs of nearby buildings. The Serbian police did not take any action at all. The protesters used children and women as shields by holding them in front of them; they even threw two children over the fence. At around 6 pm in the evening, the refugees re-attacked and began to flow onto Hungarian territory. The Hungarian riot police, along with special anti-terrorist units, eventually managed to suppress them.

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At about 6:15-6:30pm, roughly 100 Serbian policemen arrived, directed the migrants back into Serbia and put them on buses heading to the Croatian border. Twenty Hungarian policemen were injured in the clashes – two of them seriously – along with 300 migrants, including two children.

## **INTERPRETATION OF THE EVENTS ON TELEVISION NEWS**

### ***THE NARRATIVE AND VISUAL CONTENT OF CERTAIN REPORTS***

#### **Euronews**

*Length of report.* 1 minute 30 seconds

*Text content.* There was no announcement before the coverage, which showed the events in a chronological order. The factual findings were stated; the reportage included mention of the losses caused to both the Hungarian policemen and refugees. The expression “migrant” was used three times in the report, and the words “illegal immigrant” and “besieger” once each. The chronological account closed with a mention of the injured, and a statement that the Hungarian Minister of Internal Affairs had asked for mediation by Serbian authorities.

*Visual display.* The clashes are shown throughout the report with a specific focus on the young male migrants, particularly those that were violent, covering their faces and throwing stones and burning tires. Women and children are captured in the footage once, shown as they suffer from the effects of tear gas. Images recorded on the Serbian side of the border dominate.

#### **Hungarian M1**

First news

*Length of report.* 2 minutes

*Text content.* The reportage starts with an announcement that the Hungarian police are being attacked by immigrants at the Serbian border. The aggressive crowd broke through the gate, twenty Hungarian police officers were injured, and the Serbians did not interfere. Chronological coverage follows from then on, showing the clashes. The inaction of the Serbian police is mentioned three times.

In contrast to the reports about the number of injured Hungarian policemen, no mention is made of how many migrants were injured (only that some of the more aggressive ones were taken away in an ambulance). The expression “refugee” is not used at all. On the contrary, “migrant” and “aggressive migrant” are used five times. The word “immigrant” is used twice and the combination “aggressive crowd” is used once (see, e.g. *Bernáth-Messing, 2015*). Coverage of the Hungarian and Serbian police is prevalent through the report which closes with a statement that the Serbians are not interfering.

*Visual display.* This concerns the clashes throughout, as well as the aggressive assailants and the police trying to defend themselves against them, mainly filmed from the Serbian side of the border. There is one section of footage about a male migrant washing his eyes, suffering from the effects of tear gas, while in the background we can see a child getting water from a woman to wash his eyes.

## Hungarian ATV

First news

*Length of report.* 2 minutes

*Text content.* In the announcement of the events it was reported that the migrants got fed up with being stuck at the Serbian-Hungarian border. As a result, they broke the fence and threw stones, pieces of cement, sticks and bottles at the policemen. Many of them stormed the fence; accordingly, the riot police deployed both tear gas and water cannon. Riot police, special anti-terrorist units and tanks arrived at the premises and a police helicopter circled overhead. The report is chronological, but the first three quarters (one and a half minutes) only concerns the status of events before the riots. It shows the attempts of peacefully chanting migrants to get the gate opened, while the Hungarian riot police and the special anti-terrorist units gather and prepare their water cannon. It is then mentioned that a smaller group of migrants “tried to break” the fence, so that police deployed tear gas against them. The reporters note that the migrants were covering their faces because of the tear gas. Finally, it is reported that, according to the latest news, there were many injured. The expression “immigrant” is not used in this report at all, while the word “refugee” is used five times, and “migrant” twice.

*Visual display.* A peaceful crowd, women and children amongst them, as well as the menacingly gathering Hungarian policemen. We are shown migrants breaking through the gate for 11 seconds. Apart from this, there are no other violent sequences. No migrants cover their faces; neither those throwing stones and bottles, nor those setting objects on fire can be seen. Neither the deployment of tear gas nor people washing it out of their eyes are shown. There are some images

of water cannon being fired, but these can only be seen from the rear, behind the backs of the Hungarian policemen.

## **RTL Aktuell**

First news

*Length of report.* 1 minute 30 seconds, plus live coverage

*Text content.* In the announcement, it is mentioned that more than 100 people were trying to break through the Hungarian-Serbian border that had previously been closed by Hungary. The authorities fired tear gas and water cannon. As a result, the refugees were forced to look for an alternate route. The report shows the event in a non-chronological order and is launched with a claim that Hungarian riot police attacked the refugees with “full force” and deployed tear gas and water cannon. For 18 seconds the focus on the riots and the violent action of the Hungarian riot police. After this, the footage switches to refugees being forced to march through Croatia where they are at least accepted. This is followed by a statement by the Croatian Prime Minister who declares they are ready to welcome and let these individuals cross through their country, regardless of their religion and skin colour. This suggests that Hungary is acting in a discriminatory way because of the skin color and religion of the immigrants. The path through Croatia is dangerous as there are tens of thousands of land mines still remaining from the Balkan wars in Croatia. This report is closed by a repeat mention of how rigid Hungary is being. This report is then followed by live coverage. The reporter mentions here for the first time that the refugees were throwing stones at the Hungarian officers, and says that many children were crying and shouting throughout the clashes. They also explain how extremely painful the effects of tear gas actually are, and claim that many children had to have it washed out from their eyes with water. The expression “immigrant” is not used in the report, or during the live coverage. “Refugee” is used throughout.

*Visual display.* The report launches with a statement that the refugees kicked the fence a few times and then the Hungarian riot police reacted immediately by firing tear gas at them. Aggressive refugees are shown only for a few seconds. Then the rest of the images tend to concentrate on showing the attack carried out by the Hungarian riot police and the migrants who are suffering from the effects of tear gas. After this, we see refugees marching next to fields and there is a close-up of a child, and a father carrying a child on his back.

An animated picture then appears, in which the Hungarian razor-wire fences are marked with a bold, black “X”, and the Croatian route and hidden minefields are marked with a red arrow. This is followed by pictures of exploding land

mines and the statement of the Croatian Prime Minister. Finally, images of water cannon firing are shown once again as the visual close to the news report.

## ARD 1 – Die Tagesschau

### First News

*Length of report.* 1 minute 40 seconds, plus live coverage

*Text content.* The announcement concerns how difficult it has become for refugees to get into Europe after Hungary closed off its borders. It is reported that the refugees are trying to make their way towards Croatia where they would be allowed to enter. Clashes also erupted at the Hungarian border. The non-chronological report starts with the listing of weapons deployed by the Hungarian authorities against the refugees. Hundreds demonstrated so that they could cross the border and threw “objects” at the Hungarian policemen. As a result, they had no choice but to find a new route. Then there comes the same statement by the Croatian Prime Minister as was included in the German RTL news report. The reportage also mentions the landmines left over from the Balkan wars. Referring to this risk, Croatian authorities gather and transport the refugees in an organized way. Then, in closing, Hungary is mentioned again: the Court of Appeal in Szeged has published its first verdict against a refugee who climbed over the fence. Finally, the reporter talks about the plans of the Hungarian government to introduce new restrictions on the refugees. In the live coverage it is noted that many were injured in the clashes in the afternoon, after which the situation returned to normal thanks to the Serbian policemen who – unlike the Hungarians ones – respected the refugees and therefore listened to them. After this, brief news follows about the UN Secretary-General being shocked by the way the Hungarians treated the refugees and also, a statement according to the President of the European Council that attention must be paid to observing the fundamental rights of the refugees. The expression “immigrant” is not mentioned in the report or during the live coverage; only the term “refugee” is used.

*Visual display.* The starting image shows a Hungarian water cannon in use. Bystanders can be seen burning tires, then again the water cannon is shown and people running away from it. The next image is of peacefully chanting refugees asking for the border to be opened (an image recorded prior to the clashes, but this was not indicated). Then we see refugees marching past cornfields and the statement of the Croatian Prime Minister. At the end of the report, the Hungarian Court of Appeal is seen from the outside and refugees sitting on the ground holding their heads, with Hungarian riot police officers standing in front of them at the fence. Finally, pictures of the razor-wire fence at Szeged prison are shown.

## KEY NARRATIVE MESSAGES

### *KEY MESSAGES FROM THE COVERAGE*

**Euronews:** The migrants, who were throwing stones and burning tires, stormed the border. The Hungarian police used force in self-defence, deploying tear gas and a water cannon.

*Attributive structure used during coverage (number of occurrences):* refugee (1), immigrant (1), migrant (3), illegal besieger (1)

*Number of people attacking the border:* Around 100 people

**Hungarian M1:** The aggressive migrants stormed the border, smashing and breaking things. The Hungarian police used force in self-defence. The Serbian police officers stood idly by.

*Attributive structure used during coverage (number of occurrences):* refugee (0), immigrant (2), migrant (5), aggressive migrant (1), aggressive crowd (1)

*Number of people attacking the border:* A crowd of 200 people

**ARD Tagesschau:** Hungary closed off its borders. The Hungarian police acted offensively against peaceful refugees. The Serbian police tried to control the violence. Because of Hungary, the refugees were forced to take a new, dangerous route. Unlike the Hungarians, Croatians welcome them and let them pass through. Hungary has already delivered a court order against the refugees and is planning to introduce new aggravating measures.

*Attributive structure used during coverage (number of occurrences):* refugee (11), immigrant (0)

*Number of people attacking the border:* Not highlighted

**Hungarian ATV:** Refugees stuck at the border got fed up with having to wait. They peacefully chanted for hours while the Hungarian police prepared to use excessive force against them. Some were injured trying to break through the fence. The minor clash allegedly resulted in many people getting injured.

*Attributive structure used during coverage (number of occurrences):* refugee (5), immigrant (0), migrant (2)

*Number of people attacking the border:* A smaller group

**RTL Aktuell:** Hungary rigidly closed off its borders to the peaceful refugees. Tear gas and water cannon were deployed against them, not sparing women and children. Refugees were therefore forced to take a new, dangerous route. There are minefields left in Croatia after the Balkan wars. Unlike the Hungarians, Croatians welcome the refugees and let them pass through.

*Attributive structure used during coverage (number of occurrences):* refugee (9), immigrant (0)

*Number of people attacking the border:* Many hundreds of refugees

As we can see from the above, significant differences can be found in the examined coverage based on the key messages that were transmitted. According to the reports by Euronews and Hungarian M1, the migrants attacked the Hungarian border and the Hungarian authorities responded using force in justifiable self-defence. Both channels reported that there were serious clashes. In contrast, Hungarian ATV made the conflict look as if it was no big deal. Three quarters of the report concerned the refugees who were peacefully chanting, and against whom the Hungarian police used excessive force, as if trying to provoke a confrontation. The two German reports emphasized that the aggressive Hungarian riot police, armed and using excessive force, turned against the peaceful refugees so they were forced to look for a new route through parts of Croatia, full of minefields. However, they would at least be welcome there and left in peace. The Serbian police officers also handled them with patience, unlike the Hungarian authorities. In addition, new forms of aggravation are expected. Differences can also be identified in terms of the attributive structure used in the report. Hungarian state television represents one extreme by exclusively calling the incomers “immigrants” and “migrants”. In many cases, they also paired these words with the adjectives “aggressive” and “violent”. The expression “refugee” was not used. Euronews represents the intermediate situation and uses both “refugee” and “immigrant”, taking a neutral stance in the matter. However, the word “besieger” is also featured. Hungarian ATV only used the expression “refugee” and “migrant”, while the term “immigrant” was not used at all. Nor was it used in the reports of the two German television channels in which the only expression used was “refugee”.

According to the definition provided by the United Nations, an international long-term immigrant/long-term emigrant is:

*“a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.” (UNHCR, 2010).* On the other hand, refugees are *“persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution.” (UNSD).*

Bernáth and Messing analysed the government campaign that started at the beginning of 2015 and the political debates that followed in connection with the refugees arriving in Hungary. They came to the conclusion that the Hungarian government consistently referred to these people as “immigrants”, while the law and the profession instead called them “refugees”. The authors also pointed out that the word “refugee” triggered solidarity, sympathy and a desire to help on the side of the hosts, but the terms “immigrant” and “migrant” did not bring out any feelings of fellowship; in fact, they have the opposite effect. They also observed that in those media that are close to the Hungarian government the matter was

greatly emphasized, suggesting that there was a big problem. Migrants/refugees were portrayed as criminals in one-fifth of the images that were analysed (faces blurred out, handcuffed, lying on the ground). This is significant as the technique may be used to generate feelings of estrangement and prevent identification with others (*Bernáth – Messing, 2015*). TÁRKI Social Research Institute also reported similar findings about the coverage of online media sites that are close to the government. The organization analyzed online media news about the Hungarian refugee issue between 1<sup>st</sup> of June and 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2015 (*TÁRKI, 2016*).

## VISUAL INTERPRETATION AND STRUCTURE

### *VISUAL INTERPRETATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF ANALYSED REPORTS*

**Euronews:** Clashes shown throughout, images taken from the Serbian side of the border. Violent young men covering their faces while throwing stones, burning tires; to be considered attackers.

*Structure of the report:* Chronological - proportionate

*Statement included:* None

**Hungarian M1:** Clashes shown throughout, images taken from the Serbian side of the border. Violent young men covering their faces while throwing stones, burning tires; to be considered attackers.

*Structure of the report:* Chronological - proportionate

*Statement included:* None

**ARD Tagesschau:** Images of Hungarian water cannon, refugees running away from it, refugees burning tires shown from the Serbian side of the border. Peaceful refugees chanting for the gate to be opened. Families marching past cornfields in Croatia. The high court building in Szeged. Refugees sitting on the floor holding their heads as the Hungarian riot police stand in front of them. Finally, pictures of the razor-wire fence at the prison in Szeged.

*Structure of the report:* Not chronological

*Statement included:* Croatian Prime Minister

**Hungarian ATV:** Images of the refugees sitting peacefully in front of the fence, chanting slogans, amongst them women and children, taken from the Serbian side of the border. Hungarian riot police menacingly gathering. Water cannon being used, images taken from a distance, from the rear, from the Hungarian side of the border, not showing the clashes.

*Structure of the report:* Chronological - disproportionate

*Statement included:* None

**RTL Aktuell:** Images of the Hungarian riot police firing tear gas at the refugees who were demanding that the gate be opened. Individuals suffering from the effects of tear gas. Families marching past cornfields in Croatia. A map with the closed Hungarian border indicated, along with the general locations of the land mines left over from the Balkan wars. Images of exploding land mines. Finally, again, the refugees suffering from the effects of tear gas.

*Structure of the report:* Not chronological

*Statement included:* Croatian Prime Minister

The visual interpretation and construction of reports in each case confirms the key message. As indicated above, the reports by Euronews and Hungarian M1 are chronological and show the clashes visually throughout, mainly focusing on aggressive, young refugees. Although the coverage by ATV is chronological, it is disproportionate as the first three quarters of it shows peaceful refugees trying to find a way across the border. No clashes are seen in the next 30 seconds either. Refugees throwing stones and burning tires are only mentioned in the text, especially during the announcement about the events. The two German television channels made reports which supported the key message visually and logically using a pre-defined concept, but not in chronological order. In both cases, the frame was the Hungarian authorities behaving offensively: both reports were launched with images of water cannons and tear gas being fired. The RTL report closes with these scenes, whereas ARD shows the razor-wire fence at the prison in Szeged, as this is what awaits arrivals, in an effort to have these images and information strongly remain in the viewer's mind. Primate Law – used in advertising psychology – as well as reference law teaches that it is the first and the last statements in an interaction that remain with the audience the longest (Sas, 2005). In between, footage primarily showed peaceful refugees and the Croatian Prime Minister as well – the only person whose speech was included in the analysed reports, and also only shown on German television. He creates a peaceful counterpoint against the offensive Hungarian authorities, from whom no-one was asked for their version of events. In the other reports, no statements by anyone were included; therefore, this was not considered relevant. Objective and balanced reporting would require the journalist to allow both parties to provide a statement, not just one.

## ROLE OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE EVENTS

In Table 1. we summarize what roles certain participants have, as suggested by the television reports. Differences are clearly visible, and act to enhance the key message. Accordingly, the role of Hungary in the German news reports is unequivocally negative and offensive: this is verified by the live coverage they broadcast.

**Table 1.** *Role of participants in the events, as suggested by television reports*

	Euronews	Hungarian M1	ARD Tagesschau	Hungarian ATV	RTL Aktuell
Role of Hungary	neutral, defensive	positive, defensive	negative, offensive	negative, offensive	negative, offensive
Role of Serbia	neutral	negative	positive	neutral	positive
Role of Croatia	not highlighted	not highlighted	positive	not highlighted	positive
Role of refugees	negative/neutral, offensive	negative, offensive	positive, victim	positive/neutral, victim	positive, victim

Source: authors' own categorization

ARD also reviewed international declarations according to which Hungary had been condemned. The role of Hungary was judged by news channel ATV to be rather negative and offensive, while according to Euronews it was neutral but defensive. Hungarian M1 definitely considered Hungary to have acted positively and defensively. It is worth mentioning here that Croatia was only mentioned in German reports in a clearly positive light as being a counterpoint to Hungary. Even if land mines still remain from the Balkan wars, the refugees were forced to go through Croatia due to Hungary's closing of the border. The positive role of the Serbian police was emphasised by the ARD correspondent who stated that they had put an end to the dash across the border, then transported the refugees towards Croatia using buses. In contrast to this, Hungarian M1 news claimed that the Serbian police did not interfere during the clashes three times. The role of the refugees changes according to the above information in the reports. One interesting fact in connection with the refugees is that Euronews mentions only that the "besiegers" hid their faces behind t-shirts and scarves, while Hungarian ATV reported that they did so in order to escape from the effects of the tear gas.

## SUMMARY

Our first hypothesis, which suggests that certain national television news channels present events in different ways so as to reflect the prevailing political opinion, was confirmed as we identified different key messages in the various programs. One potential reason for this is that the differing prevailing political opinions in the examined countries may have significantly influenced the presentation of the events in the media. Our second hypothesis was confirmed as well, since the display of information, both narratively and visually and in its logical structure, differed between the Hungarian and German television programs. In fact, we found that there was a significant difference between the two Hungarian news programs as well, which may be explained by the fact that the Hungarian public service television is state-funded while the other Hungarian channel, ATV, is a commercial channel which has a different political and economic background. Our third hypothesis was partially confirmed. The role of Hungary was indeed positive on Hungarian public service television; however, it was not neutral but negative in the examined Hungarian commercial television channel. It was also clearly negative in the German reports, but more neutral in the Euronews coverage. We can explain this by looking at the different prevailing political opinions in the certain countries, as well as the expectations of the owners of the television channels. As a result, commercial Hungarian ATV presented the role of the Hungarian state in a different way to the state-funded Hungarian public service television channel. No such differences were identified between the German public and commercial media news reports; they uniformly showed the role of Hungary in a bad light. The report by Euronews can be considered neutral.

Our fourth hypothesis was only partially verified. The role of the refugees was negative only in one of the Hungarian news coverage broadcasts (the public television channel), while it was positive in the Hungarian ATV news report. The German news reports also made it seem positive, but –unexpectedly – Euronews showed the refugees in a bad light. The reason for this may be the political and economic background, as detailed in the previous section. Our fifth hypothesis was not verified: the report by the Pan-European Euronews channel did not present events in a similar way to the German channels, but instead included content similar to that which the Hungarian public channels presented. The reason for this might be that Euronews – similar to the Hungarian public television channel – exclusively focused on presenting details about the altercation.

It is clear from the analysis above that the very same event can be interpreted in many ways depending on what sort of framing is employed during the creation of the reports. The visual and logical creation of reports can be examined by looking at who the channels picked to make statements, what logical processes

they go through during the making of the report, what kinds of information they publish – or deliberately leave out – and what language is used, etc. Our content analysis findings suggest that there are significant differences between the interpretations. In summary, we can distinguish three groups of reports. First, Hungarian ATV (we consider this commercial channel to be ideologically opposed to the government) with its report stating that there was no particular debacle at the closed border. Second, Euronews (considered neutral) and the reports by Hungarian M1 television (a state channel close to the government) that reported that there were serious clashes, portraying the refugees as attackers against whom Hungary was forced to use self-defence. In our third group we may locate the reports by the two German channels (both state ARD and commercial RTL) that represented Hungary as acting offensively against the peaceful refugees, and as an unwelcoming country. In terms of visual content they were keen to show the aggressive Hungarian riot police and refugee families being intimidated, as well as highlight the dangers that lay in front of them. It can be clearly seen that editorial boards of certain audio-visual media use real images of actual events to create material that is suitable for meeting pre-defined expectations, and therefore, manipulating public opinion.

Our research suggests that editorial boards ‘create’ the news; they produce material that satisfies the needs of their targeted audience and meets the expectations of their backers. We can also suppose that editorial boards fine-tune information for their target audiences and clearly have some influence on opinion-forming. We hypothesize that the main reason for the observed differences may be found in the ownership structure of the media. Whether these opinion-shaping goals are met, or whether they simply satisfy editors who seek to fulfil expectations, is another question.

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