Humanization of migration through art - discursive contexts of digitization, participation and solidarity (WE ALL ARE MIGRANTS)

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ABSTRACT

The scientific study reflects the shifts in the migration media discourse since 2015 and their reflection in art. In the first wave of migration (2015) the political communication strategy of security risk and cultural threat was dominant in the international and national media context, in the second wave (2016, 2017) the discourse of migration management was promoted and in the latter period (in the third wave - since 2018) an alternative concept of "effective solidarity" has appeared in V4 countries. However, we also observe inclusive media and art strategies on the issue of migration in civic mobilization, which create a counterpoint to the discourse of exclusion and open up space for public discussion. The aim of the research study is to critically reflect the author art approaches to migration as core theme, which were presented in Slovakia in years 2015-2020. Results of a case study (qualitative discursive analysis) of art events held in the Slovak republic with the topic of migration reflecting the phenomenon through digital media: a) My Child - a virtual exhibition of art photographs with the theme of migration - MAGNA, virtual space; b) Three migrants in a boat (not to mention the

smuggler) - Petko Dourman / Art & Tech Days festival c) Transformation - multimedia installation by Francesca Marti / The Danubiana Meulenstein Art Museum d) Far away but strangely familiar – the exhibition of Filipino artists / The Danubiana Meulenstein Art Museum. They all decode important reception areas of the political attitudes presentation through art and suggest alternative discursive concepts of participation and solidarity in the topic of migration.

Keywords: Communication, Dialogue, Fine art, Migration, Technological determinism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration is in the social and human sciences commonly investigated through optics its current economic, social, political or security impacts. In this context the issue of migration is media-framed into various discourses, which have changed over time in the media and political space from the directly negative security risk and cultural threat associated with the framework of the Muslim invasion and criminality

[7] to even positive discourses such as "we are all migrants" [22].

In the 1st wave of migration in the years 2015 - 2016, the most often presented by the media was the discourse of security risk and cultural threat [17], the 2nd wave of migration (in 2016 - 2017) was typical for discourse of migration management and discourse of economic benefits of migration, in the 3rd wave of migration (since 2018) an alternative discourse of effective solidarity has appeared (it replaces the discourse of migration management) and positive discourses such as "we all are migrants" and various forms of civic participation and solidarity have become dominant [20, 21]. The media-constructed discourse has a significant impact on the issue of migration / migrants, its perception and evaluation by the media content recipients. Media discourse forms the public opinion, activates and positions the political mobilization, legal aid by providing certain interpretive perspectives, thus offering a cognitive acronym for the recipients [7]. Regarding addressed issue, currently less attention is paid to the activities of non-profit and non-governmental organizations, which by implementing various socially oriented projects and activities are able to significantly contribute reducing the negative effects of the migration crisis on society as well as to raise awareness of the general public about issue of migration in Slovakia, within the EU and at international level [2]. Socially responsible communications of non-profit and non-governmental organizations work primarily with the cognitive component of implicit attitudes of the public / citizens in relation to the researched topic (mostly working for refutation hoaxes and myths about migration), whereas art concepts representing migration / migrants address more emotional / affective art artifacts (use psychological processes of empathy, identification).

"It might seem, the country which is not directly affected by the current migration crisis, by massive arrival of migrants, is cut off from global problems. Nevertheless, the topic of migration resonates not only among male and female domestic artists. (mostly Daniela Krajčová and her common projects with immigrants placed in Slovakia in a refugee camp in Rohovce and Oto Hudec, long-term researching not only in the current state of refugee, but also its causes) but also by the organizing of

exhibitions and discussions (especially Fear of the Unknown, Kunsthalle Bratislava, 2016, curator Lenka Kukurová)" [5].

The public discussion with artists, artistic and cultural institutions and the general public through a variety of artefacts, art installations, exhibitions and discussions about migration offers alternative perspectives on migration and participates in a multi-layered reception of media and artistic artefacts. These mentioned above document research findings about the ambivalent effect of media framing - an appropriately chosen framework will portray migrants as a threat of spreading infectious diseases as well as the national security threat and its values [4], on the other hand it can serve for humanizing of migrants [18]. The framing ways of migration as the topic contribute to different ways of shaping the public's attitude towards migrants, resp. polarity of attitude towards them.

2. CASE STUDIES – ART EXHIBITIONS WITH THE PHENOMENON OF MIGRATION

2.1 Research problem

The process of media framing also closely related to (involved how recipients evaluate a problem and understand the facts) the conventionalization or standardization of the image content that is used by the media to portray a number of distant themes and problems, including the phenomenon of migration [9]. The process of conventionalization by using a limited number of visual components and compositional frameworks presents to recipients only a limited number of ideas and stories of the certain topic. Artistic concepts of representing the topic of migration presuppose a broader capturing of the issues and may bring new perspectives. If we want to capture the migration in the context of contemporary art, we cannot avoid a terminological shift of the word "exile" (exile, expulsion, associated with dissent and opposition against repressive regimes) to a group of expressions which Demos chooses three concepts of migration from: diaspora (in the meaning of a territory inhabited in abroad by members of a certain group, usually a nation, remaining strong binding to the homeland); refugees (forced displacement due to political or ethnic persecution, war or natural disasters) and nomadism with a

specific reference to “artistic nomadism” [5]. In the following selected artistic artefacts we will analyze the issue of illegal migration and its impact on the expansion of interpretive perspectives through the art.

Regarding the qualitative features of the research we have inclined to define broader research questions:

- Do artists representing the topic of migration work with references to dominant media discourses on the topic of migration presented in individual phases of the so-called migration waves?
- Do the authors' art approaches, made in the Slovak context in the years 2015-20, bring the new areas of meaning in the migration discourse?

2.2 Research methodology

Research material and methods

In the research study, we used the case study method. The case study is one of the methods of qualitative research [10]. It differs from other types of studies (biographical, phenomenological, ethnographic) in containing an intensive analysis and description of a separate unit or system bounded by time and space. According to the recommendations [6], we used the so-called a collective case study, which is in fact the case study with several cases, the aim of which is to examine the similarities and differences of several instrumental cases.

The selection of artistic artefacts that we analyzed reflected the following criteria: dealing with the topic of illegal migration / refugees, presentation of artefacts in the Slovak Republic, digital media coverage of art artefacts. For the purposes of this study, we have shortlisted the following art events: a) *My Child* - a virtual exhibition of art photographs with the theme of migration - MAGNA, virtual space; b) *Three migrants in a boat* (not to mention the smuggler) - Petko Dourman / Art & Tech Days festival c) *Transformation* - multimedia installation by

Francesca Marti / The Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum d) *Far away but strangely familiar* – the exhibition of Filipino artists / The Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 *My Child* - a virtual exhibition of art photographs with the theme of migration - MAGNA, virtual space

Many contemporary authors of fine art photography deal with the social themes, including migration. Based on the results of the qualitative study Migration as an insight in the creative marketing campaigns, it can be suggested that the authors of creative marketing campaigns focused on migration issues have been using the naturalism - authenticity, the real refugees appear in the campaigns, instead of actors who would try to act the presented facts [22]. The effectiveness of social advertising is increased by the direct involvement of "endangered" citizens in the preparation of a campaign with a social theme [12]. The involvement of real migrants is also framed by another common element, namely the story / narration. Members of the humanitarian organization MAGNA chose this form of visual art to keep the public's attention in the alarming situation of Syrian children living in makeshift out of their homeland.

Photographer Martin Bandžák together with a member of the prestigious Magnum Photos photo agency, John Vink, took 80 portraits of Syrian children in May 2017 and started up the first virtual photo exhibition to the anniversary World Refugee Day. In this case, the exhibition was supplemented by marketing and communication goal, and thus via celebrities - referrers, influencers, stimulate debate and interest in why celebrities, such e.g. the former president of SR Andrej Kiska (see Fig. 1), the publicist Michal Havran or the politician Magda Vášaryová and 77 other personalities had published a black-and-white photo of the child with the description "My child" on their profile.

Fig. 1 Portrait of a Syrian child on FB of Andrej Kiska

There are elements of authenticity in the presented campaign, as photo portraits of real children were created in a real environment in Lebanon, but storytelling was absent. We recommend to add to individual photographs of children (see Fig. 2) their life story for higher interaction of audience. The recipient could just click on the photo and after that would be redirected to the story of the photographed Syrian child refugee. We could also assume a higher involvement in the charity funds due to empathic persuasion.

Fig. 2 Photographs of Syrian refugees as part of the MAGNA virtual exhibition

The results were excellent - 15,000 people visited the web site during the first day and the campaign with a zero input budget gained more than 8,000 euros for medical assistance to these children and their families. The number of contributors to the humanitarian organization MAGNA increased by 74% [26], while the original plan was to increase the average number of monthly contributors by at least + 20% compared to the period without the campaign. The campaign received for free the media space worth more than 67,000 euros [13].

2.3.2 Three migrants in a boat (not to mention the smuggler) - Petko Dourman / Art & Tech Days festival

An interactivity in a work of art means that the viewer has the opportunity to co-create the work in real time and by the interactions creates new, non-repeating situations. The interactive art has been known since we have accepted the aspect of "temporality" and at the same time is to the viewer given the opportunity to participate. Interactive and participatory art also accepts the involvement of computers and other technologies so that it is possible to manipulate an object or complete an art work at a distance, e.g. via telesignals or the

Internet [16]. Bulgarian artist Petko Dourman used just this form of presentation to embody the topic of migration during the Art & Tech Days 2019 festival in Košice, where he brought his work of international project Borderline Offensive: Laughing in the Face of Fear called Three Migrants in a Boat (not to mention a smuggler). In Petko's installation, people become part of the work of art, as they become migrants for a while, surrounded by darkness, watching the story of refugees in an inflatable boat through a night-vision device [28]. In the end, they can sit into by themselves and try it - shrouded in darkness, they listen through the headphones what migrants experience on the ship, by the author's words, many recipients can't keep their emotions under control and cry (see Fig. 3). According to the author himself, "The honestly sharing of life absurdities is a bridge between the domestic population and foreigners" [28].

Fig. 3 Interactive instalation "Three Migrants in a Boat (not to mention a smuggler)"

The mentioned fact is a proof, that providing experience is an important element in marketing, even the basis of many new forms. The target group is nowadays much focusing on these aspects. If we created a parallel between guerrilla marketing, as an alternative form of marketing, and interactive art, the providing of experience, would help to build more intimate relationship [25] with the target group, which the certain message of the campaign / idea of the artwork is addressed. Like guerrilla and ambient forms of advertising, also in this case the author deals with elements of play and real interactivity, which at the same time contain the active participation of recipients. Just the participation of recipients with the direct involvement of the recipient is an important element of effectiveness, as "in terms of the persuasive effectiveness of social campaigns aimed at changing attitudes in the desired direction, it is necessary to involve the recipient, so-called involvement of the recipient, in the theoretical level we can talk about the declaring desired attitude in the conative level" [23]. The effect on recipients is not only in the simple level of education or awareness of distant topics such as migration, but contains elements of support for direct involvement, which affects not only the cognitive component of the recipient's attitude but also the emotional component and thus strengthens the empathic psychological process.

2.3.3 Transformation through the communication – Francesca Marti / The Danubiana Meulenstein Art Museum

Migration has become an impulse for the Spanish multimedia female artist Francesca Marti, who has been reflecting the issue of migration through thematic series of various installations presented international. One of them is called Dreamers, Believers. The Dreamers were at first performed as part of the Soul project in 2006. It contains the series of sculptures made of clay, bronze and aluminum, which stand, walk or run and walk towards the unknown [14]. This sculpture complex is a part of the retrospective exhibition Transformation held in the Danubiana Art Museum / Bratislava. The exhibition took place since November 2017 to the end of March 2018. The place Bratislava is symbolic for the exhibition, because Bratislava means for Marti crossing point of migration. There has been also the historical

reflection since 1989, the fall of Communism, characterized by successive waves of German, Hungarian, Jewish and Czech migration and expulsion. Now Bratislava represents more the transit place for people moving to the western European countries or Scandinavia. Bratislava means for Marti crossing point of migration. There has been also the historical reflection since 1989, the fall of Communism, characterized by successive waves of German, Hungarian, Jewish and Czech migration and expulsion. Now Bratislava represents more the transit place for people moving to the western European countries or Scandinavia. The exhibition Transformation through the communication has had origins in Jordan 2010. Jordan like a home of many migrants and refugees has a composite and complex society. The city of Amman inspired Francesca in one certain moment of sunset, when she was wandering through the city and noticed the endless field of satellite dishes. Like she mentioned in her catalogue: „They were like sunflowers all facing in the same direction, controlling the connection of people with people, family with family, country with country. There was running an instant inter-communication.“ [15] So Amman has become for her the positive example of diversity, place of interpersonal dialogue. The means of expression of Marti's Transformation are 99 figures of silver-green color [14], installed on walls, ceilings complemented by various objects with different geometric shapes, thus Francesca Marti uses fully the potential of the installation space with an emphasis on the idea of migration. The installation depicts in this way the collective behavior of people who "run for a better life or even travel to a new destination", e.g. due to political changes (demonstrations or revolutionary forces) [14]. Jonathan Turner (2018), the advisor, and editor of her catalogue Transformation wrote: "The crowds of small Believers in perspex boxes can be seen to represent aspects of exploration and migration, people in mass movement escaping for a better life, or simply travelling to a new destination. As well as the political change (revolutionary forces and demonstrations), and collective behavior (cultural processions, religious rites, armies of people who believe in the same principles, like-minded groups of fans or followers). As populations shift, and as the masses follow different charismatic leaders,

Francesca Marti' captures a world of change, action and hope" [31].

The Transformation has emphasized the unity. United culture, religion, unity in which each person exists in close connection to each other. Francesca Marti has used her art works and created a new multi-media platform to express and reinterpret the dramatic sense of migration. Transformation emphasizes the issues of connection and merging, creating individual dreams and opportunities for collective change. These ideas unite the overall concept of a multimedia exhibition, which carries the message of self-awareness and acceptance of differences with an aspect on the topic of migration. Transformation reflects the linking or merging of knowledge and experience of the social process, which should ultimately lead to peace [19]. The exhibition Transformation through Communication included many parts regarding deep social discourse exposed to human inner needs, self-awareness, dialogue with the others, interaction with species and universe. Francesca Marti remains free approach to very different questions without any dogma or prejudices. Although many artists attempt to communicate with the audience, the appeal rarely reacts as strong and significant as in Marti's art works. Signature of Francesca Marti is clearly women's. Her art optics is focused on human's needs, feelings, emotions with foresight and a great deal of empathy. "Human expression in all creative dimensions generate culture, awakening values so ever necessary within our society." [14].

One of the examples of Marti work focused on the themes of migration and humanization of migrants by the Spanish author Francesca Marti is an installation from the series Dreamers and Believers at the Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum in Bratislava in Slovakia (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Francesca Marti's Believers sculptures with video projection at the Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum in Bratislava in Slovakia

By creation various links, ways and channels through the portrayal of characters as a mass of migrant people, the author has used media stereotyping to a certain extent humanization transformed into human fragility. Marti has proclaimed these characters "walk towards the unknown" [14]. These "raw figures have been showing my hands and fingerprints. Believers for me represent the same moment when you wake up from a dream and you are confronted with reality or our vision of reality. That inspires us to make physical, mental and emotional progress and development." [14]. „My Believers are united. They are linked together around the world, existing at the same starting point of migration, all walking in the same direction.“ [15].

Francesca likes to cooperate with great range of professionals worldwide. She often enriches her art message with collaboration with different kinds of performers, musicians, dancers, technicians etc. One of them was an Icelandic performer known as Gulla, Gunnlaug Thorvaldsdottir. They had met together in 2015 in Stockholm and started discussion about collaborative video project. The core theme was nomadism which Francesca has dealt with in previous years. They found out they have shared plenty of common ideas, feelings and emotions about misery of displaced migrants nowadays. The concept bases on the idea being torn between two places and to be fulfill with deep inner angst. "For the setting of the performance, I have painted two canvases in a strong and vibrant purple color. The two canvases represent home, with two holes cut into them, one as a door, one as a window", proclaimed Francesca about her project. „The Migrant Angel is about migration today, the attraction that brings people to big cities, massive rivers of travelers, sometimes the result of religion, war, and poverty. Cities are made of people. A city can fall when it becomes empty and deserted, but it can also fall when it is full of people, due to war or other reasons" [15].

Fig. 5 Francesca Martí, Migrant Angel 2016, video projection on painted and torn canvas

Source: catalogue Francesca Martí, Transformation

Gulla, the performer, symbolizes a new type of nomad. She represents a contemporary traveler overloaded with connectivity and information. The project is placed in an illusion space of an international airport. An airport is an artificial border, a space of nowhere, but it also a meeting point, where a lot of paths continually cross. The story of the Migrant Angel has been constructed on expressions and movements. It becomes a part of bustling reality, part of the moving landscape in flux. Traveling has been conceived physically, but also virtually. Those who use internet follow different paths. Gulla like a Migrant Angel has been put in the video projection. But she has become the part of video just when the presentation has started. Passengers' silhouettes passing through the arrival halls in Seoul Airport pass during the presentation across Gulla's body. She reacts to her mobile phone takes her notebook out of luggage. It symbolizes the response what the internet connectivity brings. The private conversation, schedule changes, reports, duties. Performer expresses variety of strong emotions: sadness, surprise, anger, happiness or anxiety by her voice without specific words or language. Francesca Martí offers again the participation of the audience. She only puts the task of question: Is the person waiting for someone? Looking for refuge? Is she the one who travels? On the screen of her laptop is performed a video with masses of people in movement. This certain video – film was made by Francesca Martí in Burma 2014 when a boatload of migrants was arriving at border post. That is just the one from the series of others made in airports, seaports, railways, underground stations. The authenticity of the image of migration reflects

reality. In a certain sense, Francesca Martí frames the reality of migration, but she also offers the space for recipient's own interpretations and reflections about this topic. It's important to mention that project Migrant Angel comes up from wide-reaching reflection regarding forced or voluntary migration within the context of global society.

The author by the inclusive art strategy of humanization in the issue of migration and the emphasizing personal migration has used the discourse of civic mobilization, which is the opposite of the discourse of exclusion. In this way, Martí influences the recipients' emotions, opens a public discussion and in a central way affects on the attitudes of recipients. Her art work contributes to relieving negative effects of the migration crisis in Slovakia and also on the international level.

2.3.4 Exhibition „Far away but strangely familiar“ - the exhibition of Filipino artists / The Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum

In September 2019 was in The Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum held the similar topic exhibition Far away but strangely familiar which has brought together 23 artists from Philippines. They focused on social problems overpopulation, corruption, poverty, drug war and explained the idea of escape but coming back. The artists represented their world and variety which reflects even their work with different kinds of media. By the words of curator Tony Godfrey: Many go abroad to make a living, religiously sending back money their family [8]. The artists are versatile too. Though most of these artists make paintings, they also make installations or sculptures or collages. Some of them focus exclusively on drawing, some on photography or video, or on maps and fabric works, one is even a dancer. There was presented the contrast between poverty and new technological trends by the installation of plasma screens under the simple old-clothing tents.

Fig. 6 Art works of exhibition *Far away but strangely familiar 2019*, Marino Ching, *Midnight run*

A temporary shelter made of textile fabrics pieces presents a certain degree of stereotyping, which refers to the issue of migration, respectively on the social conditions of migrants and their difficult situation in moving towards the vision of better future. By technological platforms and installations of plasma screens, there has been presented the contrast between the old and the new, the old-fashioned and the modern. It could be proclaimed that information about the migration of global significance, what is for the most of population a far away topic, receive the recipients via national and international media, what is the base for creating and forming the opinions and ideas about the mentioned issues [18]. The ideas and opinions of society about the topic of migration are formed by the media. Similar in DINA GADIA, or in other Filipino artists, the visual style is made up of familiar characters, cultural codes containing a collaged reality and languages used in popular prints [24]. The crossfading of artistic and media discourse is significant in Filipino artists and it also forms one of the characteristic features of their art work.

Fig. 7 Art works of exhibition *Far away but strangely familiar 2019* Leslie de Chavez, *Dilim mutyang dilim II*

Performances and whole art activity of Filipino artists are greatly influenced by the economic instability and as a result the long-lasting migration situation in the country. Deeply rooted culture of migration in Philippines caused, that moving to foreign countries has become acceptable, even literally desirable in the vision of a better life [1]. According to authors Spitzer a Piper since the global economic crisis in 2008, immigrants have faced increasingly to problems with finding a job, lower salary, reduced working hours and fake employment contracts, what leads to significant indebtedness, financial and social insecurity of certain group of workers or individuals [27]. The situation and conditions of migrants represent therefore a constant stimulus for Filipino artists, who via movement, gestures, dance, contrasts and other means of expression describe the situation in the country.

Filipino artists work more or less with affective components of the attitudes of the recipients, with an appeal to the anxiety and insecurity expressed by installed objects. Expositions considering to existence have shown the tension between intimacy and anonymity at the same time [30]. Together, they depict migration from a different perspective as the dominant negative presentation of migration which is broadcasted in media [29], however the

artists' work closely with media content and even use modern technologies in their installations. Thus multimedia exhibitions of Filipino artists are an important part of cultural and art institutions, which with the implicit change and formation of public attitudes to migration offer new perspectives of interpretation the researched topic.

3. CONCLUSION

We have analyzed the issue of illegal migration and its impact on spreading of interpretive perspectives through art in several selected artistic artefacts. The results indicated similarity in the identification of effective dominant elements, that artistic and social campaigns operate with [22], to the most significant belong the authenticity and storytelling, although the insight of artefact / campaigns about migration / migrants is based on similar backgrounds, namely from difficult life paths with a difficult destiny, the processing subjects to the model of empathic persuasion, in the center of the narration there is a personalized approach

compared to the mediated approach, which is often used in information campaigns (mediation by experts, influencers). To the first research question: "Do artists representing the topic of migration work with references to dominant media discourses on the topic of migration presented in individual phases of the so-called migration waves?" We answer negatively. The artists reflect the topic without a direct connection with certain negative discourses spreading by the media about migration, and there is no direct connection between the time perspective (the so-called migration waves). To the second research question, "Do the authors' art approaches made in the Slovak context in the years 2015-20 bring new areas of meaning in the migration discourse?" We do agree. All analyzed artefacts elucidated the issues of forced refugee through the participation of spectators, through the personal experience of a distant topic by an original approach. We can suggest the artistic approaches to the topic of illegal migration expand interpretive perspectives and enrich even the media space with emphasizing otherness, tolerance and solidarity.

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