Media and forced migrations: social representations of refugees in the Portuguese media in two mediatic peaks (2015 and 2019)

Dora Santos-Silva
Instituto de Comunicação da Nova (ICNOVA), Faculdade de Ciências
Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Débora Guerreiro
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

Forced migration movements marked the economic, political, and social agenda in 2015. Consequently, these events also determined the agenda of the media, which took on an essential role in the social representation of refugees. In 2019, when humanitarian ships found it hard to dock at European ports, we saw another peak in media coverage. The purpose of this article is to analyse how the Portuguese media covered the theme of forced migration during two of the most relevant moments (2015 and 2019) and thus, how they contributed to the social representation of refugees. After a content analysis, we concluded that the newspapers on which our study focused undervalued refugees as individuals with their own identity, reducing them to a homogeneous and voiceless group. This trend, already present in 2015, was further emphasised in 2019. There was a clear absence of explanatory articles, with the media output showing a predominance of western perspective and a constant reliance on news agencies as sources.

Keywords

human rights journalism; refugees; migratory crisis; forced migration; social representations

Média e migrações forçadas: representações sociais dos refugiados nos média portugueses em dois momentos mediáticos (2015 e 2019)

Resumo

Os movimentos migratórios forçados marcaram a agenda económica, política e social em 2015 e, nessa sequência, a dos média, que assumiram um papel essencial na representação social dos refugiados. Em 2019, assistimos a um novo momento mediático, motivado pelas dificuldades encontradas pelos navios humanitários em atracar nos portos europeus. O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar a forma como os média portugueses cobriram a temática das migrações forçadas em dois momentos mediaticamente relevantes, em 2015 e em 2019, e de que forma contribuíram para a representação social dos refugiados. A partir de uma análise de conteúdo, concluímos que os jornais analisados subvalorizaram os refugiados enquanto indivíduos com identidade própria, reduzindo-os a um grupo homogéneo e sem voz. Esta tendência, já presente em 2015, acentuou-se em 2019 com a ausência de artigos explicativos, com a predominância de uma visão ocidental e uma dependência das agências de notícias.

Introduction

In 2015, Europe witnessed the so-called "Mediterranean refugee crisis". In that year alone, roughly one million people reached the European coast by sea, of which 3.700 died in Mediterranean waters. This influx of refugees, considered the largest since World War II, included mainly Syrian, Afghan, Iraqi, and Eritrean citizens, amongst others, who were forcibly displaced due to armed conflicts.

According to the 2019 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, there were 25,9 million refugees, 41,3 million internally displaced people, and 3,5 million asylum seekers due to conflict and violence scenarios, all in 2018. The Syrian Arab Republic was at the top of the list, with 6,1 million displaced people, followed by Colombia (5,9 million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (3,1 million). Syria was also the country with the largest number of refugees in the world: 6,7 million.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019), more than 10.000 people have died in the Mediterranean since the beginning of this crisis (in 2013). Of those, 500 died in the first half of 2019 alone. In 2015, at the peak of the migratory crisis, more than one million people arrived on European coasts. In the first three days of 2019, 400 migrants were rescued by the Spanish Border Guard (Chaíça, 2019).

Significant changes occurred in the European social and political landscapes between 2015 and 2019: surprise and initial solidarity gave way to fear in the host countries, whilst at the same time, the strength of the anti-immigration political parties increased, and international refugee settlement agreements were signed. In June 2019, Italy, one of the three countries that received the highest number of migrants in 2018 (Spain had received the most, followed by Greece), closed all ports to humanitarian aid ships that were carrying migrants (Fernandes, 2019).

In this context, Portugal showed its availability to receive refugees since the beginning of the crisis, a fact which increases the responsibility of the Portuguese news coverage in deconstructing stereotypes related to refugees and providing clear and in-depth information.

Although this is an old issue, three aspects of society bestow new perspectives to the migratory crisis, which were listed by Abdo, Cabecinhas and Brites (2019): globalization, in which these processes "become more intense, faster and abundant" (p. 80); the role of the media, which accompanies this "speed, abundance and intensity" (p. 80); and society's thirst for spectacle, fed by the media.

In this article, we start from the hypothesis, already proven by several authors (such as Blumell, Bunce, Cooper & McDowell, 2020; Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Empinotti, 2017; Gemi, Ulasiuk & Triandafyllidou, 2013; Guerreiro, 2018; McIntyre, 2013; Silvestre, 2011) that the media influence society's perception regarding the issue of migrants and refugees. Furthermore, that same media is also the main intermediary in a relationship

between the public and the *other,* which often only exists at that level. Thus, we can infer that the media play an essential role in building the collective idea that people make about refugees and the migration crisis.

This study aims to analyse how two Portuguese newspapers covered the theme of refugees during two media relevant moments: one in 2015 – when a lifeless Syrian child washed ashore on a Turkish beach – and another in 2019, marked by the difficulties encountered by humanitarian vessels whilst trying to dock at European ports. It also intends to explore in particular what the social representation of refugees is, based on the analysis of editorial characteristics of published journalistic pieces and a typology of visibility methods proposed by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017). To achieve this objective, three research questions (RQ) were outlined:

RQ1: what are the main editorial characteristics of the pieces published in two Portuguese newspapers on the theme of refugees, during the two media relevant moments of 2015 and 2019?

RQ2: what social representations are made about refugees, based on these editorial characteristics and the images used by newspapers as a visibility strategy?

RQ3: what are the main differences between the 2015 and 2019 news coverages?

To answer these questions, we used a comparative methodology based on a two-week content analysis: in 2015 (between the 2nd and the 8th of September) and 2019 (between the 30th of June and the 7th of July), from two reference online daily newspapers – *Público* and *Observador*.

Theoretical framework
Forced migration and the media's responsibility

The starting point for our reflection on the relationship between refugees and the media is the very definition of "refugee" found in the 1951 Geneva Convention, as amended by the 1967 Protocol, which has broadened its scope. In that same year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created.

Refugees are part of a broad group generally called "forced migrants", which also include other categories such as asylum seekers. The right to request asylum is enshrined in article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948). A person can request asylum or apply for refugee status, according to the applicable requirements.

Thus, the term "refugee" applies to any person who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UN, 1951)

Freedom of expression is also a human right embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which journalism takes on an important role, particularly because

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its purpose "is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and to govern themselves" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 16).

Even in the new digital ecosystem, the media determines the agenda of the world, acting as the only intermediary in various world events. Thus, the media has the power to either broaden the horizons of the public or to restrict them (Pöyhtäri, 2014). This becomes particularly important in the case of refugees, given that the host population does not know them and, therefore, builds its perception from the representations of the media.

With the increase in the anti-immigration discourse, as well as the rise of anti-immigration political parties in several European countries, the media coverage of this theme becomes more and more relevant, not least because journalism can enable audiences to develop a truly global knowledge (Hafez, 2009).

Thus, journalism has an increased responsibility in covering a topic that is mainly about human rights. Thompson (2007) suggests the existence of a responsibility to report is linked to a moral responsibility concerning human rights. This is not an isolated opinion: Rose (2013) defends the concept of a *human rights-based approach*: based on the principle that the approach to human rights must be a fundamental function in journalists' obligations, forcing them to identify possible violations and to include ways to eliminate abuse in their reporting. Furthermore, Shaw (2012) states that if the public has a greater understanding of the problems by having them correctly explained, it is more likely to empathise with people's suffering and appeal to international intervention, helping to overcome the lack of historical memory that constitutes an obstacle to understanding (The International Council Human Rights Policy, 2002).

Social representations of refugees in the media

The social representation theory entered the scientific agenda in the second half of the 20th century, developed by social psychologist Serge Moscovici (1961), who was influenced by the theoretical bases that Durkheim had presented in the 19th century. The purpose of this theory was to explain phenomena from a collective perspective. In other words, social representations correspond to beliefs or ideas that we have about a person, a community, an event, or an object, as the result of our social interaction. In addition to Moscovici, the concept of social representations was further developed by Denise Jodelet (1989), another name of reference in this field. Jodelet defined it as "a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, which has a practical objective and contributes to the common reality of a social group" (p. 36).

The French academic pinpoints two characteristics of this form of knowledge that are crucial for thinking about the relationship between the media and the social representations of refugees: "construction" (a social representation is a construction that derives from the relationship between a subject and the object) and "expression" (an interpretation that derives from this relationship).

If we apply this to the context of this article, we can conclude that the social representation of the refugee is the result of a type of construction that derives from the

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relationship between the population and the refugee, a relationship made possible by the media. Thus, the news coverage determines the interpretation that the population has of this crisis and the refugee as the *other*. The media influence public opinion, therefore contributing to the degree of acceptance and understanding local populations build towards the refugees.

Based on this reasoning, it is essential to examine and discuss academic investigations that have already focused on the analysis of the media coverage of refugees and their social representations.

Who is the refugee in the media?

In 2003, Peter McIntyre argued that refugees were historically depersonalised by the media and represented as a group to be feared and rejected, in his work *Human rights reporting – a handbook for journalists in South-Eastern Europe*, published by the International Federation of Journalists. A study by the Communication Observatory on the media coverage of immigrants and ethnic minorities by the Portuguese media in 2001 and 2002 also concluded that these groups were mainly associated with news about crime (OberCom, 2003). Throughout the 21st century, this reality has been demonstrated by several academic studies.

Gemi, Ulasiuk and Triandafyllidou (2013) analysed the average impact of news values, sources, and the agenda on news related to migration processes in six European countries. They concluded that these have an unbalanced editorial line regarding the coverage of migration, namely the events they select (the negatives) and the sources they use, which can cause the general public to misinterpret the issue.

A study by Blumell et al. (2020), based on the UK's online media coverage, shows that there is an overvaluation of crime committed by asylum seekers, as well as a politicisation of this theme: the left-wing media focus on victimisation, while the right-wing media focus on crime. The authors point out the need for more soft news about refugees, and not just hard news, in order to provide more context, personalisation, and clarification to the topic.

In addition to the lack of voice and active participation, refugees are also visually represented as groups and not as individuals, as confirmed by semiotic-based studies. UK researchers analysed images about refugees published by media outlets in five European countries between June and December 2015 and concluded that "they fail to humanise migrants and refugees" (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017, p. 1162) and that there is an urgent need to "radically change the way we understand the media's responsibility towards vulnerable *others*" (p. 1162).

These authors proposed a typology of patterns for the visibility of the crisis, from which they reconstruct the refugees' specific visual representations. They identified five basic visual configurations: biological life, empathy, threat, hospitality, and self-reflection. The images chosen by the media are then framed in one or more of these analytical variables.

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Visibility as biological life

In this variable, the researchers include images that represent refugees as a "mass of unfortunate people" (p.1167), that is, without identity or voice, at the mercy of Western benevolence. These are images that promote social distance and do not offer any context about the suffering of refugees or the reasons behind their forced migration.

Visibility as empathy

Using visibility as empathy is associated with the humanisation of images, like a child crying or a mother holding her child. Unlike the first pattern, here we find a closer visual perspective and an attempt to individualise refugees, encouraging compassion and charity.

Visibility as a threat

Here the researchers include images of armed youths, or boats trying to dock at European ports, which normally provoke fear and a sense of security threat in the audiences. It is, therefore, a form of "vilification of those who are not like 'us'" (p.1169).

Visibility as hospitality

In this case, visibility is associated with political activism. This includes images of pro-refugee demonstrations, welcoming messages from the population, and other acts of hospitality. Although these are positive from the outset, they also subjectify refugees.

Visibility as self-reflection

This visibility method is associated with the identification of refugees as part of us and not as the "others" (for example, images of celebrities helping refugees, charts, or images of wreckage, without characters).

This mapping of public visibility methods makes refugees "objects of 'our' responsibility" (p. 1172), according to Chouliaraki and Stolic, and end up being "key spaces of moralization that produce and regulate the dispositions of the public" (p .1172) concerning refugees, either perpetuating a distance or contributing to collective accountability. The researchers conclude that this humanitarian crisis is, in essence, a crisis of responsibility awareness, to which the visual representation of refugees contributes to a large extent.

In Portugal, the media coverage of refugees has also been the subject of several studies. A master's thesis on the representations of refugees and asylum seekers in the Portuguese media (Silvestre, 2011) concluded that they are systematically disqualified as a credible source of information and their voice is silenced. Another master's thesis, which focused on Portuguese media coverage of the refugee crisis in 2015, concluded that there were flaws in the explanation and contextualization of the journalistic pieces, starting with

the correct definition of "refugee". It also concluded that there is a need for a greater commitment and specialisation of journalists concerning human rights (Guerreiro, 2018).

Another study based on images published in 2015 in the Portuguese daily newspaper *Público* shows that there are few clues about the identity of refugees, which are recurrently represented as a homogeneous group and not as individuals (Empinotti, 2017). The author highlights the fact that the representation methods repeatedly used "tend to reduce the understanding of the refugee as someone in constant displacement, often at risk or in poor conditions" (p. 114).

Portuguese literature tells us that in these meetings with refugees, arbitrated by the media, these individuals are represented like the *others*, without a voice, without identity, without context, without reflection. Moisés Lemos Martins goes further and describes this relationship with the *other*: "and if what is at stake is ignoring the *other*, or then segregating, discriminating, and dominating them, then this is really about exercising violence on them" (2019, p. 21).

Research object and methodology

On September 02, 2015, Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian child, was found drowned on a Turkish beach. The family was attempting to cross the Aegean Sea, from Turkey to Greece, by boat. His mother and brother also lost their lives. The photograph, captured by Nilüfer Demir, redefined the refugee crisis – it won the caption "humanity washed ashore" – and led to a peak in news coverage on the subject.

The first days of July 2019 highlighted the difficulties encountered by humanitarian ships trying to dock at European ports with migrants on board. On July 04, a vessel carrying migrants capsized off the coast of Tunisia, killing 82 people. The most publicised event was when the captain of the ship Sea Watch docked at Lampedusa, against orders from the Italian police.

Thus, this study aims to analyse how the Portuguese media covered the theme of refugees in two media relevant moments: in 2015 (between the 2nd and the 8th of September) and 2019 (between the 30th of June and the 7th of July). There were other equally relevant moments, but 2015 saw the first case that triggered news coverage on a global scale and the consternation of public opinion; 2019 was chosen for being the most recent at the date of this study.

The article intends to explore in particular what the social representation of refugees is, based on the analysis of editorial characteristics of published journalistic pieces and a typology of visibility methods proposed by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017). To achieve this objective, three research questions were outlined:

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RQ3: what are the main differences between the 2015 and 2019 news coverages?

To answer these questions, we used a comparative methodology based on the content analysis of the aforementioned weeks in two reference online daily newspapers – *Público* and *Observador*. As of 2015, both publications had the largest number of page views, among reference newspapers. In 2019 the *corpus* was maintained, to support the comparative analysis. It was not the purpose of this article to present an analysis of the evolution of Portuguese news coverage between 2015 and 2019 (a period during which there were several other media relevant moments), but rather to make a comparison between moments four years apart, to identify potential differences in editorial strategies.

The search of journalistic pieces was done using the keywords "refugee" and "migrant" (in 2019, there was a change in the nomenclature of refugees), reinforced with the direct survey of the pieces allocated to the topic and specific areas defined by *Público* and *Observador*. The analysis took into account several variables, such as the journalistic genre, the author, the sources, the topic, the angle of approach, the use of images, their provenance, and framing.

The content analysis was complemented by a more detailed study of the images used – although not intending to be a multimodal analysis – based on the visibility typology proposed by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017), to understand the role that the images have in the representation of refugees through their visual configurations. This typology has already been presented in the theoretical framework and integrates visibility as biological life, empathy, threat, acceptance/hospitality, and self-reflection.

Presentation and result analysis
Fewer articles and fewer reminders

Based on the content analysis of two online generalist daily newspapers – *Observador* and *Público* – in 2015 (between the 2nd and the 8th of September) and 2019 (between the 30th of June and the 7th of July), we identified 145 articles in 2015 (88 in *Observador* and 57 in *Público*) and 48 articles in 2019 (31 in *Observador* and 17 in *Público*).

From the outset, we can observe a significant decrease in the number of articles published during the two time periods in question (97 articles less). Although in 2015 the image of the Syrian child had wide coverage not only in the media but also on social networks, the sinking of the vessel that led to the death of 82 migrants in 2019 (which was an equally serious event with notable political and social repercussions) received less coverage. At first glance, there doesn't seem to be a rigorous explanation to justify this disparity in news coverage. However, the following analysis may contribute to explain why there was a visible decrease in the number of articles.

It is important to consider the website navigation strategies of these two newspapers. In 2015, *Observador* displayed a section called "refugee crisis", where all the articles associated with the topic of refugees could be found. It will have taken into account the specificity of the subject and its potential visibility over time, also serving as a search facilitator. However, in 2019, the articles are spread over several sections of the newspaper, catalogued under topics such as "world", "migrants", "human rights", "politics", among

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others. There were also some poorly archived articles, as well as some under the topic "refugee crisis" (which has not disappeared completely but is no longer a reliable article aggregator).

Regarding *Público*, the dispersion was already present in 2015. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, in 2019, refugees only appear as the main topic (immediately before the title) in two news articles, and eight news articles, in 2015. Even follow-ups of the same event display different topic tags, which suggests that there is still no strategy for organising the topics on either of these two newspaper websites.

Prevalence of the "event" replicated by agencies and the Portuguese context

In 2015, the most used journalistic format was the news report (89,77% in *Observador* and 84,21% in *Público)*. This demonstrates that the media focus was on the event itself, rather than explaining and contextualising the issue (which could be done in feature articles). In 2019, the predominance of the news report was even more significant: all the pieces published in *Observador* were news reports; in *Público*, they were equivalent to 65% (there was one feature article, a column, and two opinion pieces).

The focus on the news report format is also associated with authorship and the primary source of information. In 2015, 23,9% of *Observador*'s articles and 8,77% in *Público* were sourced from news agencies. However, in 2019 those numbers rose to 80,65% (Lusa) and 41% (Lusa and Reuters), respectively. Even in news articles signed by journalists, news agencies continued to be the main source of information. This replication of content from news agencies tells us that resources have not been allocated to investigate these themes more profoundly, even though we know that it is not easy to reach refugees to hear their voice. This data may also help explain the decrease in the number of news reports in 2019 compared to 2015.

In addition to the news agencies, the most used information sources in both *Público* and *Observador*, in 2015 and 2019, were institutional: the United Nations, the UNHCR, and governments of several countries. Once again, it is the "white elites" that have their voices heard, even though the aforementioned non-governmental organizations (NGO) pursue the defence of human rights and the support of refugees.

As for the protagonists of this crisis, their voice is almost always absent. In truth, it is not easy to get in contact with refugees, but even so, more was expected. In fact, in 2019, only one report published in *Público* (but signed by a Reuters journalist) features the voice of refugees. The same number in *Observador*.

It continues to be uncommon to use citizens as a source of information, as we notice in *Observador*. The most prominent voice to be heard was that of Captain Carola Rackete who, at a time when European countries refused entry to humanitarian ships full of refugees, became known as a vocal defender of rescue at sea. The same is true in *Público*. In 2015, the percentage was slightly higher: 45,61% (including refugees) in *Público* and 23,86% in *Observador*.

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In 2015, the news articles about the Portuguese context in the refugee crisis corresponded to 29,55% in *Observador* and 40,35% in *Público*, respectively. At that point, Portugal showed its readiness to receive refugees and a public debate ensued among political and civil entities, regarding the best way to relocate them. However, in 2019 the percentage of news reports on the subject decreased. In the case of *Observador,* it decreased by 9,68%. At the time, news agencies were focused on events that occurred outside of Portugal and thus did not have much impact on national decision-makers. Since most of *Observador*'s news reports on the subject were sourced from news agencies, this can help explain why the number of articles decreased. Conversely, *Público*, which sources fewer news articles from news agencies than *Observador*, published 41,18% news features about the Portuguese context regarding the crisis. Unlike *Observador*, which focused solely on the rescue of refugees by the Portuguese Maritime Police in Greece, *Público* also addressed the situation of the Portuguese activist Miguel Duarte, charged in Italy with aiding illegal immigration.

Who is the refugee in the media?

To answer this question, we used not just a content analysis, but also a more detailed look at the images published in the two newspapers according to the type of visibility proposed by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017): biological life, empathy, threat, acceptance/hospitality, and self-reflection.

Firstly, to understand the *other*, we must know who the *other* is. Knowing who the refugee is, based on its definition, allows us to combat some prejudices and stereotypes related to this group.

However, the definition of "refugee" as a person who is in "fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country", as stated in the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), was seldom included in the pieces – one in 88 times in *Observador* and one in 57 times in *Público*, in 2015. In a theme marked by great divergences of concepts (at the time, more specifically, between who was a refugee and who was an economic migrant), the definition was considered the starting point for understanding the refugee crisis.

In 2019, no news report in either *Público* or *Observador* contained the definition of refugee or an approximation to its identification. Also, this lack of knowledge about the refugee is compounded by the random use of the word "migrant". In *Observador*, during the week in analysis, the word "refugees" was only used twice; the remaining news reports, even on the same subject, were indexed with the topic "migrants" or used that word in the text. Perhaps this happened because the term "migrants" includes several realities, but this can also lead to unnecessary mistakes in the readers' perception of the issue (this did not happen in *Público*).

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Indeed, the people fleeing armed conflicts and who were trying to disembark in 2019 from the various humanitarian ships or clandestine boats did not yet have refugee status (which is obtained in the host country after several conditions have been met). However, they cannot be compared to migrants who leave their countries for economic reasons. The use of the term "forced migrant" instead of just "migrant" could prevent any misinformation related to the refugees' own identity.

The angle of approach used by journalists on news articles contributes to the lack of knowledge about refugees. In 2015, a predominance of the western perspective was present in *Observador* (90,91%) and *Público* (87,72%); in other words, western sources (official and unofficial) that refer to the issue as belonging to the *other*. Conversely, there was a loss of the intercultural perspective, since the point of view present in the coverage was far more aligned with western concerns than with the concerns of the "protagonists" of the crisis, of a multicultural nature.

In 2019, the western approach angle is even more striking. The news articles portray the captains of humanitarian ships and the countries that welcomed refugees as heroes. However, the refugee who managed to flee his or her country is never the hero nor the victim.

This underrepresentation of refugees in the articles, where they are often reduced to numbers or portrayed as a homogeneous group, is further aggravated by the images chosen by the newspapers, presenting a negative evolution from 2015 to 2019. In 2019, 96,77% of *Observador*'s news reports on the theme displayed only one image, without any access to an image gallery, which can be considered very poor in terms of visual logic. As for *Público*, the newspaper only used an image gallery in two out of 17 news reports that year.

Furthermore, very few images published in newspapers portray refugees as individuals with their own voice and identity. In *Público*, only four out of 17 show refugees as leading participants in the issue. All other images show western politicians, NGO heads of mission, or captains of humanitarian ships. As for *Observador*, more images of refugees were used, however: 29,03% of the images used were outdated (the data indicates that they were not from 2019 but previous years instead), 12,90% were standardised (displaying refugees in an undifferentiated, massified way), 22,58% were out of context (with no direct correspondence with the news reports) and 6,45% were repeated. *Público*, on the other hand, showed more care regarding the use of images of refugees: images displayed a caption that confirmed their relevance and topicality.

When we apply the visibility methods proposed by Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017) to images of refugees, we can note a clear predominance of visual configurations related to biological life; that is to say, most are images of undifferentiated people – or a "mass of unfortunate people" (p.1167) on the boats, as described by the aforementioned authors. In the case of *Observador*, where visual representations of refugees constitute 35,48% of the total, 12,90% display situations of homogenisation/generalisation (for example, photos of undifferentiated groups), while 9,68% represents a depersonalised human

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mass, much like the "classic" images of boats full with clusters of people. Images such as these took on a preponderant role in the media coverage of the 2015 crisis. These images also created patterns in the public's interpretation of the issue, and continue to be featured along the same lines, sometimes even outdated, according to the data previously presented. We can also see these same images in *Público*, showing undifferentiated refugees, in boats or situations of destruction. This visibility method encourages the readers to feel distant, as well as the absence of collective responsibility since there is neither a "face" nor a story.

The second most used type of visibility is the threat, with the constant use of images of boats with refugees desperately trying to leave. As Chouliaraki and Stolic (2017) explain, this visibility method promotes fear and a feeling of insecurity. If we combine this with the first category – which promotes ignorance – then the perceived threat of "the unknown" and the *other* takes on even more significant proportions. These visual configurations confirm what the researchers point out: the humanitarian crisis turns out to be a crisis of a lack of awareness of responsibility.

The third most used type of visibility is empathy, where refugees are portrayed as victims who deserve concern, and that also expose human rights violations. However, they represent less than 10% of the images used.

Conclusion

The refugee crisis is ongoing, albeit recently at a slower and more contained pace. Further away from the media lenses than in 2015, but ubiquitous in anti-immigration political trends and in governmental decisions that mandate the closure of Mediterranean ports. At the same time, journalism, as a mediating and communicating force, has restricted its role as it reduced investigation.

In 2019, in both *Público* and *Observador*, the refugee is portrayed as an entity with no voice and no identity. They are not valued as a source of news reports because they are not even heard. When they are represented, refugees are normally described without any individualising features, a standard image (like the "human mass" on boats) and it has been thus since 2015.

The definition of "refugee" (the very essence of their situation) is ignored, without the proper contextualisation of this issue that would allow for a greater understanding by the reader. This definition is absent from all the news reports of 2019, which tells us that the news coverage still does not take into account the explanation of the concepts, in particular this cornerstone concept. This, despite the time that elapsed between the beginning of the crisis, in 2015, until the most recent analysis, in 2019.

The refugee also has no fixed place in the media, as the news reports about them are increasingly dispersed in the various sections of the newspapers, losing autonomy and becoming more difficult to find. This leads to the public's distancing from the topic.

Finally, in 2019, the refugee was not a major concern of the media, as most news reports were simple duplications of news agencies' content. In the predominant journalistic genre, the news report, the western perspective has become even more accentuated, simply attributing to the refugee the role of the *other* – one who, without a voice, without identity, without context or memory, does not deserve to be highlighted in the media agenda.

Translation: José Manuel Santos

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Biographical notes

Dora Santos-Silva is Assistant Professor in the Nova Institute of Communication, where she completed a degree in Communication Sciences, a Master in Contemporary Culture and New Technologies, and a PhD in Digital Media (UT Austin Portugal program).
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1611-8858
Email: dorasantossilva@fcsh.unl.pt
Address: NOVA FCSH, Avenida de Berna, 26-C, 1069-061 Lisboa

Débora Guerreiro has a degree in Law from the University of Lisbon School of Law and Masters in Journalism from the Nova School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

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ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1708-4047
Email: debora.santos.guerreiro@gmail.com
Address: NOVA FCSH, Avenida de Berna, 26-C, 1069-061 Lisboa