

## **Description for the general public**

“The collide of old and new media”, about which Henry Jenkins wrote, is currently the basis for developing narratives on the “clash of civilizations”, and its disastrous consequences, taken from the geopolitical diagnosis of Samuel Huntington (though its related controversy and simplifications). Issues of identity and cultural diversity, intercultural strategy and relationship to the Other, debated for decades in the field of cultural research, are now discussed at the center of social debate and have started to function massively in political messages, media coverage, as well as in private conversations both oral and technically mediated. Media coverage and public opinion on the issue of refugees are clearly divided into two opposing discourses: on ethical responsibility and security.

Social debate on refugees is full of simplifications, distortions, stereotypes, and invalid generalizations, strongly emotional messages, as well as the examples of the instrumentalisation of the very issue. These kinds of unbelievable messages can cause social anxiety and mobilization only when they are included within the broader narratives which come out from governments or large, well-organized political forces, connected with mainstream media agendas. Hence, we use the assumption of non-simultaneous and asymmetrical convergence; that is, we accept that the broadcast of the top-down media is related to access to the privileged centers of broadcasting that still remain in power of hegemony, the creation of socially dominant ideas and views, which are then the basis of the bottom-up types of messages. Rank-and-file media transfers will be treated as largely derivative responses to the superior type, according to the designation of how phenomena are recognized and evaluated.

The subject of refugees creates a wide range of disproportion between the scale of imaginations and the level of emotions they entail, from one side, and the results of research, reports and statistics from the other. Poland is a relatively monocultural and monoethnic country. Images of refugees in Polish public discourse may be only slightly based on direct observations and may lack verification. Therefore, society depends on various forms of mediation. That’s why a reliable scientific analysis and a critical reflection on the communicational channels in convergent media system, as well as on the content that circulates in it, becomes a matter of high social and epistemic urgency. And this is a main objective of our research project on which we are going to analyze, by using a qualitative methods (critical discourse analysis, critical interpretation of visual materials, methods of virtual ethnography), the messages concerning refugees taken from both top-down and bottom-up flows of the public discourse.

A mechanism to create an image of refugees includes, among many other things: the vocabulary used (refugee, immigrant, economical immigrant, the “so-called refugee”) to suggest specific connotation (we are dealing with a cultural struggle for the meaning of the word); formulating distinctions between these categories; creating visual models of what refugees “should look like”, referring primarily to the economic determinants, gender and age; use of certain figures and labels, often – in the case of anti-refugee discourse – supporting denouncing rhetoric; articulations of cultural differences (schemas labeled “we” and “they”) and visions of intercultural strategy (isolationism, majority, assimilation, integration, multiculturalism). Every one from the mentioned aspects functions on diversified scope of messages (the main distinction here is top-down and grassroots medias, which both are able to interweave and mutual influences on the convergent communicative model). Moreover, a whole mechanism has to be interpreted as a process which has its own course and takes place also “here and now”. Our study will therefore refer not only to the descriptions of the past discourse, but will aim to provide diagnoses with specific targets for their application, to foster a fair and responsible dialogue on how the community is antagonized in an era of mass human migration and of media convergence.

Research on the discourses that arouse around the problem of refugees will identify people’s sources of awareness of the issue, what information is best absorbed with these forms of communications, the ways they have of articulating their beliefs and how they discuss the values they hold as well as their interpretations. Public statements on the refugees, understood as a culture-based texts, represent and on the same time have a power to create the wider outlines of thinking, regarding and evaluating of the specific phenomena or social groups. So they are both a derivative and a source of public opinions and attitudes. Growing social hostility toward the refugees – which appears not only in declarations but also in increasing acts of race and ethnic violence – is a consequence of a specific formulation of media messages, rhetorical strategies, and representation in the public discourse of what is called a “migration crisis”. Hence, a scientific analysis of mechanisms that govern this discourse, including possibility of a critical intervention on its present configuration, becomes a matter of humanities’ responsibility, since cultural studies should be sensitive to every symptoms of revilement, stigmatization, exclusion and injustice present in public domain.