(De)constructing humanitarian representations of forcibly displaced people

A mixed-methods and multidimensional research project on the public communication strategies of international refugee organizations

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2022

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UNIVERSITEIT GENT

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Doctoral dissertation submitted on 11 May 2022 to the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences of Ghent University, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor (PhD) in Communication Sciences

Academic year: 2021-2022

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Stijn Joye

Department of Communication Sciences

Printing: University Press, Wachtebeke, Belgium
Cover design by Studio Sanseveria (www.studiosanseveria.be)
This cover has been designed using images from Freepik.com

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Preface

The Multiple Faces of Representation

By [Yousif M. Qasmiyeh](#), University of Oxford and [Odile Ammann](#), University of Fribourg

The face of the Other – under all the particular forms of expression where the Other, already in a character's skin, plays a role – is just as much pure expression, an extradition without defense or cover, precisely the extreme rectitude of a facing, which in this nudity is an exposure unto death: nudity, destitution, passivity, and pure vulnerability. Such is the face as the very mortality of the other person. [1]

I

Representation is never a word. Its deceitful individuality is a precept to the repressed many.

II

Representation consists in trusting the eyes completely (but whose eyes?), privileging the face at the expense of the body – the body proper – whose dweller is never absent but absented.

III

Representation persistently leans on othering. It leans until its entire body is above the Other.

IV

To represent is to say, in the language of the absolute, loudly, so loudly, "this absence of the Other is precisely its presence as Other". [2]

V

Representation has more than one face. In German, the verb 'to represent' can be translated by *darstellen* (to display, portray, express), by *verkörpern* (to embody), or by *vertreten* (to replace, act on behalf of). [3] The third of these conveys the legal meaning of the word representation: to act on behalf of, with legally binding effects. Consequently, the many other layers of the word *vertreten* reveal the complexity and manifold connotations of this term. Such equivalents are 'to be present besides others'; 'to defend a point of view'; 'to stumble'; and, finally, 'efface' and, thereby, 'to bring into an unsightly state through stomping'.

VI

Representation lies precisely in detecting the face and presupposing its disfigurement. Without the face, the represented is not present by means of his sheer presence, but to a large extent is there(in) at the expense of his presence. These two propositions are what precipitate the finitude of the face. Indeed, the represented portrays it as a defining element that not only represents the whole, but equally nullifies it.

VII

Can a face with a body that is barely visible claim to be the face of an entity? Or is it the deferred face of a deferred body? The refugee face is both the animate and the inanimate of a face. It is the animate

in its potential to be 'such as', 'as', and 'like' a human face. It is inanimate in its association with, inherence within, and clattering against the antithesis of a human – or simply the beast.

VIII

The verb 'to represent' has the clatter of a slap; of an abrasive touch that aggravates the touched and lingers. As it always touches the face and nothing else, it abates the distance between the slap and the face. Hence, this process can reach the status of an experience.

IX

'To represent' also consists in not giving the face time with itself. The representer manipulates it in a way that asserts its disappearance from its body. Despite the suggested neutrality of the infinitive 'to represent', representation always occurs in the past; the past of the past, the farthest past, as if representation were always akin to the ritual of burial, a burial normally preceded by an insignificant death.

X

The refugee is never the representer unless in death. The refugee dies alone, and this lonely death, singular and subjective, suddenly becomes that of all.

XI

But will this death retain the face in its fullness, in its entirety?

XII

The face of the refugee is no longer part of the proper body, but the trace of a presence. Everything returns to the origin, that is, the body.

XIII

The face is the only part deemed worthy of representation, regardless of the body.

XIV

The represented exists on his own, a shadow, an attained nothing, devoid of parameters. Like a scarecrow, veiled by twigs and straw, he scares off other strangers and guards the fields of the citizen.

XV

If the skin were to speak, it would utter the language of disappearance, not the nonexistence of the self, but the suddenness of the face's image.

XVI

What if the refugee were born without a face?

***

References:

[1] Levinas, E. (1987) *Time and the Other* (Trans. R.A. Cohen). Pittsburgh: Duquense University Press. p. 107.

² Levinas, *Time and the Other*, p. 94.

³ For the manifold meanings and connotations of 'representation' in German, see 'Vertreten,' in *Duden* (online edition at http://www.duden.de/); and Spivak, G. C. (1995) "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Eds B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and A. Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 24-28.

***

Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation is often formally considered an individual activity. However, in reality, it is anything but. Although I wrote this dissertation myself, I received strong advice, feedback, insights and support from numerous people (and one dog) throughout the doctoral process. I would therefore like to sincerely and extensively thank them here.

First of all, I would like to express gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Stijn Joye. Stijn, my first memory of you dates from September 2011. I had just started my course Communication Sciences and saw you during the first lesson of Communication Science, taught by Prof. Dr. Hans Verstraeten. You were sitting alone in the front row of the UFO, taking notes. In all my youthful naivety and ignorance, I wondered if you were a diligent, somewhat antisocial student, or had another function? From the third lesson - which you gave - it became clear to me that you and Prof. Dr. Hans Verstraeten gave the course together. From that moment on, you introduced me and my fellow students to the basic theories and concepts of Communication Sciences. In the following year, you provided us with more insights into audiovisual communication, as well as into the basic principles of (critical) discourse analysis, applied through a study by Lilie Chouliaraki on distant suffering, which interested me immensely. I think that at that moment you sparked my interest in critical media research, representation, and mediated distant suffering, as witnessed by my subsequent Bachelor's and Master's theses on the news representation of aid agencies under your supervision, and my Master's thesis on the public communication of refugee organizations in the Master after Master course Conflict and Development where you acted as commissioner. As I found conducting these studies fascinating, we eventually prepared PhD applications, with the well-known positive result, and the subsequent PhD journey.

I would like to thank you for being an excellent tour guide during this incredible four and a half year PhD journey/adventure, and the above-mentioned run-up. For all the constructive, extensive, thorough advice, feedback, suggestions and trust that steered my PhD in the right direction and helped me untangle the sometimes complex tangle of academia. Without your help and advice, this dissertation would likely not exist and certainly would not be what it is today. Likewise, you were a great tour guide and companion during our joint conferences and other social activities. Although the PhD journey was memorable, as with any journey, there were also some obstacles or more challenging moments, not least the current pandemic. In that regard, I also want to thank you for being a saving angel. You have helped me several times when I had doubts or threatened to get off track or to lose pedals. I am really grateful for all the professional and social support! In the end, all things considered, and taking into account your love for superheroes, you were kind of like Superman to me and many other (PhD) students. You were always - literally both during and long after regular working hours - ready to help, answer questions, and provide clarity. Your ability to put things into perspective and pragmatic attitude are very helpful, your altruism and social commitment are inspiring. Thanks for everything, from 2011 up until now!

In addition to my tour guide, I would also like to praise my accompanying travel committee. First of all, I would like to acknowledge the contributions and efforts of the jury members - Prof. Dr. Verolien Cauberghe, Prof. Dr. Ilse Derluyn, Prof. Dr. Tom Evens, Prof. Dr. Kevin Smets, and Prof. Dr. Sarah Van Leuven. Thank you for your critical, in-depth reading, evaluation and assessment of my extensive travel diary, and for ultimately improving it through constructive dialogue. I really appreciate all the time and

energy you have put into this. In particular, I would like to express gratitude to Ilse and Kevin, as well as Prof. Dr. Bruno De Cordier, who all joined, influenced and shaped my journey from the start as members of my doctoral supervisory committee. Thanks for the critical, thorough, substantive and fascinating advice, suggestions and support, for stopping and/or delineating my drifts for exploring too extensively other interesting but less relevant paths in time and for keeping me on track! As interesting as it is to discover new, unforeseen paths and places, as with any journey you have limited time and resources, and you usually want to be able to get home eventually. Thank you for your great tour guidance! Ilse, thank you also for establishing the inspiring, ever-growing interdisciplinary CESSMIR research group. Kevin, thank you for all ECREA related and other interesting and nice collaborations. Bruno, thank you for laying the foundation for this doctoral project, by supervising my Master's thesis on the same theme in the Master after Master course Conflict and Development.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of the members of my research groups - the Center for Journalism Studies (CJS), the Center for Persuasive Communication (CEPEC), the Centre for Cinema and Media Studies (CIMS), and the Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR). My four research groups proved to be fascinating, inspiring, interdisciplinary academic homes. While I regret that I could not be more active in the last two years due to a delay in my research and the impact of the Corona crisis, I found it very interesting, inspiring and nice, both professionally and socially, to be part of four diverse research groups, and be influenced by and learning from different (internally and externally heterogeneous) perspectives and groups. Thank you all for shaping my research and myself as a researcher and human being each in your unique ways. Similarly, I would also like to acknowledge the colleagues of MICT for the pleasant conversations, collaborations in departmental working groups, and the hospitality when I worked in de Krook on hot summer days.

While I like and appreciate many colleagues, both professionally and socially, it's somewhat difficult to name them all here (particularly, as I also would like to spare some trees and ink). Nevertheless, I would like to particularly praise my travelling companions Agata, Anke, Burcu, Dila, Elke, Emma, Hanne, Jing, Joke, and Sofia for the many pleasant, interesting professional and social moments, inside and outside the office and Ghent. Thank you for your critical, reflexive mind, knowledge, wisdom, social commitment and enlightening insights about the world, society and life, and for shaping and inspiring my research. I want to especially thank you for the great humour, fun, support, trust, and friendship. You have made my doctoral journey much more interesting, enjoyable and rich in so many ways than I could have ever imagined, which I will never forget and am eternally grateful for.

I am also indebted to several other people in the department who have helped me greatly with practical and administrative issues, in particular Greet, Liesbet, Tanneke, and Taziana. Thank you for your fantastic help, advice, openness, accessibility, and kindness. You do wonderful work and provide researchers with the opportunity to give the best of themselves and shine. You are the beating heart of the department. In particular, I would like to express gratitude to Tanneke for the many hilarious and fun moments, the pleasant cat walks with Houdini, the professional and social support, and the great friendship. I would also like to praise all other (often less visible and highlighted) people who support the department and/or the faculty and their members, especially the cleaning staff and the canteen staff. Thank you for your vital work in often difficult, precarious circumstances and your kindness! You really deserve better!

Salma who later also participated as a research assistant for the intercoder reliability test, and eventually became a great colleague. Likewise, I would like to thank Sanne, another great colleague, for the assistance with the cover and the visual design of this dissertation.

I also want to express gratitude to my favorite travel companions from outside academia! Thank you for the support and interest in my research and especially for the many pleasant moments and chats, the funny humor, the relaxing walks, the thrilling sports activities and events, the cosy evenings at pubs, the fantastic and enriching travels and so much more, and more generally, the many years of great friendship, which I really highly value and appreciate. You also strongly contributed to this PhD, including by often providing welcome relaxation, distraction and perspective. Thank you Anthony, Charlotte, Chiel, Conan, Cynthia, Emanuele, Indra, Ine, Jelle, Jens, Laura, Laure, Laurence, Laurens, Levi, Lobke, Matthias, Mauro, Olivia, Robin, Rutger, Stijn and Yannick! I would like to particularly praise Anthony, who inspired me to conduct the office ethnography.

I would also like to extensively thank my family for their support during the entire doctoral journey, as well as for the run-up to it. Mum and dad, I am very grateful to you for your unwavering support, understanding and interest in my educational and career choices, and all practical, material, and socio-emotional support in general. Without your support and assistance, this PhD would not have been possible. Mum, you are one of the most altruistic, helpful, and curious people I know, and a true source of inspiration. Dad, your critical and sharp attitude and conscientiousness were similarly inspiring to me and my dissertation. Thank you both for shaping me into the person I am, and indirectly my doctoral research. Sarah, thank you for the support and the many jokes and stories. Misty, thank you for the relaxing walks and hugs, I will never forget you. Grandma and grandpa, thank you for your love, support, nice chats and hospitality. Meme, thanks for all your love; you were always in my thoughts when writing the dissertation. Aunt, uncle, Angela, Cedric and Silvia, thank you for the nice conversations and interest in my work. Angela, thanks for hosting me at the ICA congress in Washington D.C., taking me to all those great places, and all the excellent travel tips and advice.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all people who are forcibly displaced worldwide. It feels ambiguous, as part of the broader aid industry, to do four years of research, get paid and make a career indirectly based on the precarious situations and suffering of other people. Nevertheless, I hope that this research can contribute at least a tiny bit to changing and improving the public communication strategies of refugee organizations and the image and situations of forcibly displaced people, and foster broader social change.

David Ongenaert, 18 June 2022

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List of abbreviations

1. 1951 Convention: The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951.

2. 1967 Protocol: The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967.

3. ACU(s) audiovisual content unit(s) (own acronym).

4. CAR: The Central African Republic.

5. Cartagena Declaration: the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees.

6. CCCM: camp coordination and camp management.

7. CCO perspective: Communicative Constitution of Organizations perspective.

8. CDA: critical discourse analysis

9. CRediT: the Contributor Roles Taxonomy.

10. DPKO: The Department for Peacekeeping Operations.

11. DRC: Danish Refugee Council.

12. ECHO: The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations.

13. ECRE: The European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

14. EGRIS: Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics.

15. EU: The European Union.

16. FDP(s): forcibly displaced person/people (own acronym).

17. FTS: OHCA Financial Tracking Service.

18. FWO: the Research Foundation – Flandres.

19. GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation.

20. HNWIs: high-net-worth individuals.

21. HOI model: Hierarch of Influences model.

22. HREC: human research ethics committee.

23. ICR: intercoder reliability.

24. IDP(s): internally displaced person/people.

25. INGO(s): international non-governmental organization(s).

26. IOM: The International Organization for Migration.

27. IRC: international regime complexity.

28. IRB: institutional review board.

29. IRR: international refugee regime.

30. KALPHA: Krippendorff's alpha (α) coefficient.

31. Kampala Convention: the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

32. MCDA: multimodal critical discourse analysis.

33. MCU(s): media content unit(s) (own acronym).

34. New York Declaration: The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

35. NGO(s): non-governmental organization(s).

36. NRC: The Norwegian Refugee Council.

37. OAU Convention: the Organization of African Unity (OAU)'s Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

38. OCHA: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

39. OHCHR: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

40. PL: primary level (own abbreviation).

41. QCA: quantitative content analysis.

42. REC(s): research ethics committee(s).

43. SL: secondary level (own abbreviation).

44. Syria: The Syrian Arab Republic.

45. UDHR: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

46. UN: The United Nations.

47. UNDP: The UN Development Programme.

48. UNGA: The United Nations General Assembly.

49. UNHCR: The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

50. UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund.

51. UNRWA: The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

52. VCU(s): visual content unit(s) (own acronym).

53. VNCC effect: Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle effect (own concept).

54. WHO: The World Health Organization.

Introduction

1. Situating the research and its social and scientific relevance

Various sociologists perceive modern society as a '(world) risk society' (Beck, 1992, 1999; Giddens & Pierson, 1998), which is characterized by a constant threat of invisible, unpredictable and/or uncontrollable low probability-high consequence risks, often (partially) caused by human action, such as natural disasters, climate change, pandemics but also so-called displacement crises. These risks have become spatially, temporally and socially 'de-bounded': no longer bound by regional or national boundaries (Buchanan, 2018) but frequently 'global in their nature, scope, and potential impacts' (Cottle, 2009, p. 351). Further, these risks are said to occur more frequently and more intensely, and are often intertwined (Beck, 1992, 1999; Giddens & Pierson, 1998).

Throughout history, the world has often been confronted with large-scale displacement crises, caused by wars, persecutions, human rights violations, famines and/or poverty (Betts & Loescher, 2011). Moreover, while acknowledging methodological nuances on humanitarian displacement data and being critical of 'global refugee crisis' narratives (Fransen & de Haas, 2019), forced migration has become more prevalent in recent decades. At the end of 2021, an estimated 89.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced, the highest number in recent modern history and more than double the figure about a decade ago (i.e. 42,5 million people at the end of 2011) (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], n.d.-l). The largest increase occurred between 2012 and 2015 and mainly resulted from crises in the Syrian Arab Republic (hereinafter: Syria), Iraq, Afghanistan, and various Central and Eastern African countries (UNHCR, 2021b).

Although the number of forcibly displaced people and their humanitarian needs have increased, they are often confronted with restrictive asylum policies, adverse public opinions, xenophobia, and the far right's rising popularity (Freedman, 2015; Frelick, 2007; Khiabany, 2016). Since 2015, the subject has dominated divisive and intertwined public, media, and political agendas and discussions (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019). States have the basic legal responsibilities for protecting and assisting refugees and asylum-seekers and function both as asylum providers and international aid donors (Loescher, 2014). In recent decades, however, several states have tightened their asylum policies and/or have become more reluctant to cooperate with refugee organizations (Freedman, 2015; Johnson, H. L., 2011). These restrictive policies often manifest themselves in two main ways. First, although the Global Compact on Refugees emphasizes the importance of greater responsibility- and burden-sharing (United Nations [UN], 2018), the burden is not equally shared regarding hosting refugees and asylum-seekers. Contrasting common 'European refugee crisis' narratives, the vast majority of forcibly displaced people continue to stay near their countries of origin and continue to be concentrated in countries with low to medium gross domestic product levels, refuting the idea that there has been a major increase in South-North forced migration (Fransen & de Haas, 2019). At the end of 2020, high-income countries hosted just 17 per cent of people displaced across borders, while upper-middle-income countries (43%), lower-middle-income countries (18%), and low-income countries (22%) received many more people (UNHCR, 2021b). Second, despite many solidarity initiatives worldwide (Haaland and Wallevik 2019), there are large humanitarian needs (UNHCR, 2021b). Funding from donor governments,

however, rarely matches these needs. Since 2010, on average, only 60 per cent of the funding needs of the UN humanitarian response plans have been covered (OHCA Financial Tracking Service [FTS], 2022). More specifically, both UNHCR's operations and various displacement crises are also largely underfunded (UNHCR, 2021a, 2021c). In addition, there are huge differences in the amount of funding that different displacement crises receive (UNHCR, 2021c), which often has significant humanitarian consequences for the people involved in the 'neglected' or 'forgotten' crises (Hawkins, 2011). In Chapter 1, we explain these structural issues by referring to the 'North-South impasse' (Betts, 2010).

In today's turbulent political times and rapidly changing world, the intergovernmental UN refugee agency UNHCR, which is mandated to lead and coordinate international refugee protection and to seek durable solutions (i.e. voluntary repatriation, local integration in the first country of asylum, and resettlement into a third country) (Jones, 2013), as well as other refugee organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and particularly international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) thus play key roles (Betts et al., 2012; Gibney, 2010).[1] They mainly provide various forms of assistance (ibid.) but also increasingly attempt to inform, sensitize, build media, public and political agendas, and influence relevant policies through public communication (Atkin & Rice 2013; Paulmann, 2019).[2] Hence, these organizations can significantly influence how the public perceives forcibly displaced people and related displacement crises (Chouliaraki, 2012a) and consequently can have broader policy and societal consequences, both at micro and macro levels. More generally, the common and increasingly mediated perception of global crises can support and mobilize global cosmopolitan citizenship and an emerging global public sphere (Cottle, 2009). In that regard, Cottle (2009) argues that the global nature of crises and their elaboration and engagement in international communication flows in the current global media ecology require a theoretical reorientation that deliberately moves beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and 'methodological nationalism'.[3] As he (ibid., p. 351, original italics) further explains:

> 'This is not an argument therefore for simply more comparative research but the necessity to take "global issues" seriously—theoretically, methodologically, ontologically. Important

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[1] International protection refers to the 'protection that is accorded by the international community to individuals or groups who are outside their own country, who are unable to return because they would be at risk there, and whose own country is unable or unwilling to protect them', and this, among other things, because of the (often interwoven) risks of persecution, armed conflict, situations of violence, disasters, famine, and statelessness (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

[2] For now, we consider public communication a large-scale, often diversified type of communication, consisting of various media genres (e.g., press releases, news stories, photos, videos) strategically directed toward various target audiences in the public sphere (e.g., governments, media, own members, citizens, businesses, other humanitarian organizations) (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Similarly, for now, we consider refugee organizations as a type of humanitarian organization whose main aim is to provide protection, assistance and/or aid to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people and/or other people in similar situations. We explain these concepts more in-depth later on in this introduction.

[3] Methodological nationalism is 'the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 302). It is found when 'the nation-state is treated as the natural and necessary representation of modern society', and implies 'the equation between the idea of society as social theory's key conceptual reference and the historical processes of modern nation-state formation' (Chernillo, 2011, p. 99, see also Beck & Sznaider, 2006). It thus assumes that national state institutions are the main social context in which migration takes place and for which migration is relevant (Faist, 2012). Examples of this assumption are primarily found in studies on migration control and social integration of immigrants.

studies of "race" and migration, the global war on terror, environment and ecology, for example, continue to be conducted inside particular national contexts and through national prisms, but how many have sought to track and theorize these global phenomena beyond the nation state and with reference to the wider flows and formations of globalizing communications? (…) A call, then, for new research agendas deliberately setting out to study today's major global issues and crises and how these become constituted and contested within global media formations and communication flows around the world and exploring what part these may perform in *re-imagining the political* within an increasingly interconnected, inter-dependent and *threat-filled* world.'

Following Cottle (2009), we observe that only a few studies have examined how international refugee organizations attempt to influence public, media and political agendas through their international public communication and that even less research has investigated the underlying reasons behind their public communication strategies. Given that gaining news media access is usually essential to influence media, public and political agendas (Castells, 2008), most research has analysed the news-making activities of humanitarian organizations, and broader changing journalism-NGO relationships (e.g., Ongenaert & Joye, 2016; Powers, 2018; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014). However, fewer studies have specifically investigated the public communication strategies of refugee organizations (e.g., Dimitrov, 2006, 2009; Ihlen et al., 2015). Nevertheless, INGOs, including refugee organizations, are obtaining expanding agenda-building capabilities and opportunities within the evolving news and humanitarian ecologies (Castells, 2008; Dahlgren, 2005; Powers, 2018). Second, most research addresses news media's agenda-setting and representations (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021), including in the context of forced migration (e.g., Eberl et al., Van Haelter & Joye, 2020) and, to lesser extents, stakeholders' efforts to influence *about which* subjects news media, citizens or other stakeholders should think (cf. first-level agenda-building) (Kim & Kiousis, 2012; Kiousis et al. 2006). To our knowledge, only a few studies, have thoroughly explored refugee organizations' second-level agenda-building strategies which attempt to influence *how* other stakeholders perceive certain subjects (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). Further, they mainly textually focus on one organization, media genre, year, and/or crisis, lacking essential explanatory comparative, production, and/or societal perspectives. Additionally, the public communication of refugee organizations has so far hardly been conceptualized.

Acknowledging these gaps, this doctoral research aims to analyse the role of refugee organizations from a public communication perspective. In brief, we intend to critically investigate three relevant international refugee organizations' - UNHCR and INGOs Norwegian Refugee Council and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) - public communication strategies for the recent Syrian and Central African crises.[4] In the next section, we clarify this project's central research objective and sub-

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[4] In the first (explorative) empirical chapter, Chapter 6, we focus on the public communication strategies of two other INGOs – namely the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and International Rescue Committee (IRC) – for the Syrian crisis. We explain this choice when outlining the structure of the dissertation.

objectives, scholarly contributions, and central research question, and eventually, we further define its contours.[5]

2. Research objectives, research questions and delineation

a. Central research objective and sub-objectives

Taking into account the issues described in the previous section, the central research objective of this doctoral project is ***to critically investigate the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions and their interactions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies***. Recognizing interactions between discourses, production contexts, and societal contexts (Fairclough, 1992, 1995), public communications strategies are here regarded as expressions of humanitarian and organizational discourses set in particular temporal and spatial contexts. This doctoral research thus aims to examine how public communication strategies are related to the wider political, economic and socio-cultural contexts.

This overarching objective is operationalized through three more specific, interrelated sub-objectives, corresponding to three components and adopting a source-to-end product perspective. The motivation to start with the textual analysis before the production and societal analysis is theoretically informed and stems from the fact that the resulting insights in the public communication strategies are essential for the organization of the production and societal analysis.

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[5] For a further motivation of the social and scientific relevance of research on the public communication of international refugee organizations, see (conceptual) Chapter 3, as well as the introductions of the empirical chapters.
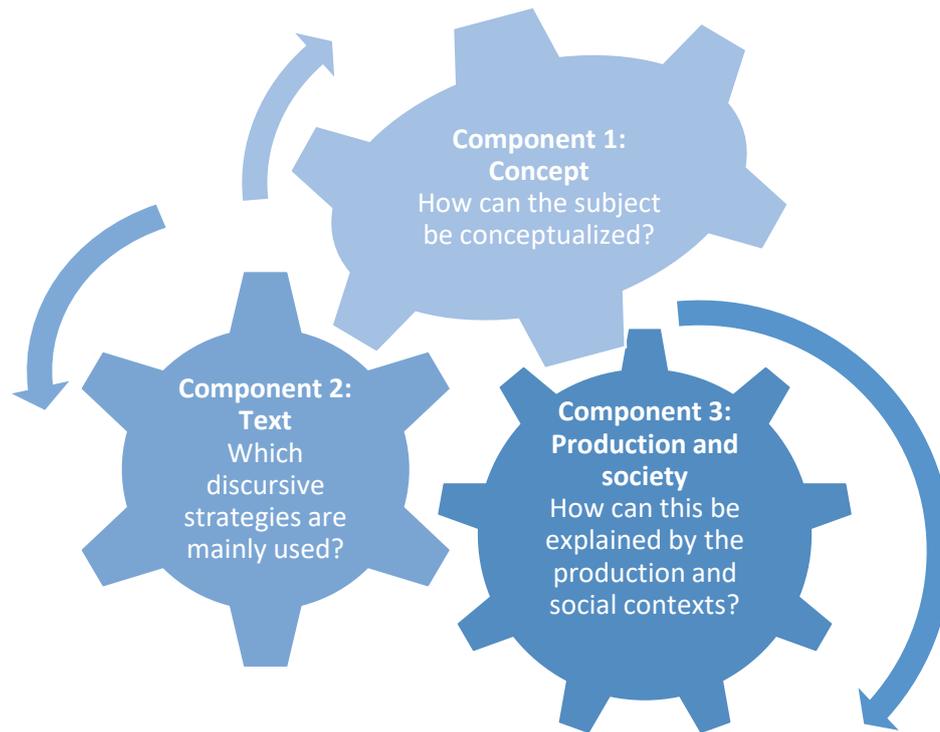
Figure 1. Interacting research objectives and components

1. First, we examine the *conceptual* dimension of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies (component 1). How can the public communication of international refugee organizations be conceptualized? This sub-objective can be further divided into four more concrete objectives.
   a. How can we define refugee organizations' public communication?
   b. What is the state of the art of research on refugee organizations' public communication from textual, production and societal perspectives?
   c. How can we situate the public communication of refugee organizations within broader research fields?
   d. What is the relevance of these research fields as research perspectives to study the public communication of refugee organizations?

2. Second, we study the *textual* dimension of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies (component 2). Which discursive strategies do international refugee organizations mainly use (cf. *how*, *who*, *what*)? Acknowledging current trends and gaps within the literature, this sub-objective can be further divided into three more specific objectives:
   a. *How* are forcibly displaced people mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication? In other words, which representation and argumentation strategies do the international refugee organizations use?
   b. *Who* is mainly (not) represented and given a voice in international refugee organizations' public communication?
   c. *What* is mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication? Which key characteristics (e.g., organizations, crises, media genres, years) and themes do international refugee organizations represent?

3. Third, we focus on the *production and societal* dimensions (<u>component 3</u>). Central to the corresponding component are the production, political, economic and socio-cultural contexts, forces and motivations behind the public communication strategies. How do the underlying production, political, economic and socio-cultural contexts, forces and motivations explain the discursive strategies of international refugee organizations (cf. *why*)? Likewise, this sub-objective can be further divided into three more specific objectives that correspond with the specific textual objectives:

   a. How can we explain *how* forcibly displaced people are mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication?

   b. How can we explain *who* is mainly (not) represented and given a voice in international refugee organizations' public communication?

   c. How can we explain *what* is mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication?

b. Intended scholarly contributions

The central research objective and the three sub-objectives are underpinned by three types of scholarly contributions; that is, they all aim to contribute theoretically, empirically and societally.

First, we would like to contribute theoretically by mapping, linking and critically discussing the existing research on the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions of the public communication of international refugee organizations, and humanitarian communication in general. As shown in Chapter 3, the public communication of refugee organizations is little conceptualized and situated within broader fields, nor well-defined. Furthermore, as Chapter 4 demonstrates, the existing literature on the public communication of international refugee organizations appears to be very limited and fragmented, and various relevant fields are commonly isolated from each other. Consequently, we want to make a significant theoretical contribution to the recent tradition of research on the public communication of refugee organizations, and humanitarian communication in general, including by making theoretical, methodological and empirical recommendations for further research.

Second, we would like to contribute empirically by presenting and critically discussing the results of the mixed-methods and longitudinal empirical research on the interactions between conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions. This intended scholarly contribution is supported by the identification of several gaps in the literature on the public communication of refugee organizations and humanitarian communication in general. We will elaborate on these concrete gaps in the next chapters. Here, it suffices to point out that we respond to (1) the dominance of text-focused research, and mainly on *how* forcibly displaced people are presented, while other relevant sub-dimensions (e.g., *who*, *what*) are largely ignored, (2) the lack of essential production and societal research (cf. *why*), and (3) Orgad's (2018) call to combine text-focused, normative and production-focused, practice-based approaches to gain better understandings of and be able to make adequate evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication. In order to achieve this objective, we make use of various complementary research methods: (multimodal) critical discourse analysis, quantitative content analysis, office ethnography, expert interviews, and document analysis, all having a

comparative research design. We apply these methods to various empirical cases which are related in different ways, including in terms of studied organizations, crises, media genres and research period, in order to adequately examine, analyse, and report on the interactions between the textual, production, and societal dimensions. In this way, we ensure the focus, and coherence of the doctoral research project. By studying the interactions between the textual, production and societal dimensions in each chapter but each time with a focus on a different (sub)dimension, we ultimately want to map multiperspectively the process from source to end product, while simultaneously addressing relevant communication science and societal issues.

Third, we would like to contribute societally by making practice-oriented recommendations, in particular to the media producers of this communication, that is the media and communication officers of refugee organizations and humanitarian organizations in general, as well as to their stakeholders and/or target groups. Given the high social and scientific relevance of the subject (see the previous section), it is essential that the practical and scientific fields of humanitarian communication continuously inform each other and exchange insights, to which this project wants to contribute.

c. Central research question and delineation

Adopting a mixed-methods research design, this doctoral research analyses international refugee organizations' public communication strategies from multiple perspectives. Following the above-mentioned sub-objectives, the central research question of this project is ***whether, how and to what extent international refugee organizations communicate about the forcibly displaced people involved in the recent Syrian and/or Central African crises (2014-2018), and why are they doing so?*** This central research question is operationalized through five more specific, interrelated research questions, corresponding to the three components (cf. supra) and five resulting article-based chapters. We thereby mainly investigated the public communication strategies of UNHCR, NRC and ECRE for the recent Syrian and Central African crises. For reasons of focus, relevance, space, clarity, and contextualization, we discuss the more concrete sub-research questions in the theoretical (i.e. Chapter 3) and empirical (i.e. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9) article-based chapters. Let us now delineate the contours of this doctoral research. Readers after all mostly only gain insights into the final narrative (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017), as researchers rarely communicate or are able to communicate about what they did not, or did but finally did not report (e.g., non-analyzed media contents, non-reported identified themes, changed or omitted research questions). However, these aspects can be relevant, particularly as our ability to determine the rigour of research depends on the provided context and details (ibid.).

There has already been a lot of research conducted on the communication of humanitarian, development and human rights organizations (Powers, 2018; Wright, 2019). Given the breadth, heterogeneity, diversity, and evolving nature of humanitarianism and the humanitarian field (Barnett, 2011, 2013; De Cordier, 2013, 2016) – if we even should not rather talk about interrelated 'humanitarian (sub)fields' or 'regimes' (e.g., emergency relief, peacebuilding, development assistance, human rights, protection of forcibly displaced people; cf. 'international regime complexity', Alter & Meunier, 2009, see Chapter 1), we focus on the public communication of a specific type of

humanitarian organization.[6] As motivated above, we focus on the important but little researched international refugee organizations. Given different focuses, structures, logics and humanitarian values (Barnett, 2011, 2013; De Cordier, 2013, 2016), which are usually also reflected in their respective public communication (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005), we opt to focus in Part I mainly on the international refugee regime, the evolving humanitarian communication landscape in interaction within broader changing institutional fields and the public communication of international refugee organizations from conceptual and empirical perspectives. This approach seems more relevant and feasible rather than tackling the difficult if not impossible task of fully grasping the entire humanitarian field, and all different forms of humanitarian communication, which would most likely have resulted in an incomplete, vague, general, unfocused, partly irrelevant literature review. As Orgad (2018, p. 76) argues:

> 'The merits of the practice-based study of humanitarian communication notwithstanding, its emphasis on specificity and situatedness in particular times and places is also one of its main limitations. Every NGO has idiosyncratic characteristics, related to its orientation (e.g. emergency- or development-focused), size, history, practices, work culture, specific individuals, finances, and so on. Making generalizations or applying findings from one NGO at a particular time to humanitarian communication in general, may be difficult if not impossible.

Although we will not discuss the different humanitarian fields, nor all different types of humanitarian communication, in Chapter 2 we discuss some identified general institutional trends in the humanitarian field, with a focus on international refugee organizations, and the interactions with their stakeholders and/or target groups, through which the public communication of international refugee organizations is further contextualized and can be partly explained. Furthermore, we do not focus on the reception dimension of the public communication of refugee organizations. Although this dimension was originally part of the focus of this research project, and is highly unexplored and very relevant, for intertwined reasons of feasibility and ethics - partly influenced by the impact of the Corona crisis - we finally decided to not investigate it. Nevertheless, this topic certainly requires further research (for relevant reception research on public attitudes towards forcibly displaced people, see De Coninck, 2020; Dempster & Hargrave, 2017; D'Haenens et al., 2018).

For reasons of relevance, focus and feasibility, we focus on the *public communication* of refugee organizations. Other, often related forms of communication, including marketing, fundraising communication (e.g., Yoo & Drumwright, 2018), private advocacy, and internal organizational communication of international refugee organizations are sometimes discussed, if relevant for

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[6] Humanitarianism is often used both to refer to a specific field or regime, and as an umbrella term for several related, interacting fields, consistent with its narrow and broad definitions. The narrow, restrictive definitions describe humanitarianism as human, impartial, neutral and independent assistance to victims of conflict and natural disasters, and thus rather focus on its principled, curative (rather than preventive) and non-political nature. Broader definitions refer to any activity intended to alleviate suffering, stop avoidable harm, save lives in danger, and improve the well-being of vulnerable populations. In these views, humanitarianism is not necessarily defined by the above-mentioned principles, can go beyond emergency relief, including a variety of other life-saving and life-enhancing activities, can treat root causes of suffering, and can be political (Barnett, 2011, 2013).

explaining public communication (cf. see especially Chapter 9) but are not part of the central research focus of this project. For similar reasons, in the empirical research, we will mainly focus on the public communication of international refugee organizations as, in line with Orgad's (2018, p. 68) terminology, *the ethical promise of representation* (i.e. the textual dimension), and *a practice, in practice* (i.e. the related production and social dimensions) (cf. infra, Chapter 3). However, as emerged from the production research, public communication does not only consist of tangible, relatively easy analysable texts (e.g., press releases, news stories, photos, videos) but also of less tangible social interaction with other actors (e.g., pitching to journalists, press conferences, official and unofficial briefings with journalists, public events with citizens, politicians, journalists and/or donors) which requires further in-depth production research (e.g., observation research).

Finally, in the empirical part, we further narrow our focus to particular organizations, media genres, crises, and years. In that regard, we should note that we have opted to examine international refugee organizations because of their relevance, scope, reach, and size, including in terms of media and communication. Nevertheless, further research on the public communication strategies of regional, national, and local refugee organizations, both in the 'Global North' and 'Global South', is also very relevant, including on the increasingly prominent refugee-led and diaspora-led organizations (e.g., Ehmer, 2017; Pimentel Walker et al., 2021). In addition, we mainly focused on press releases, various types of news stories, photos and videos. Nevertheless, research into other used media genres is also important, including new media genres such as drone footage, virtual reality, and 360-degree videos (Wright, 2019, Yoo & Drumwright, 2018). Finally, although international refugee organizations very occasionally communicate about affected people who have not and/or cannot fled (cf. forced immobility), we have opted not to analyse this communication despite its relevance. These highly vulnerable but barely visible populations are often not the target group of international refugee organizations, both in humanitarian and communication terms, which rather focus on forcibly displaced people. Nevertheless, research on the (lack of) mediated representations of these populations is essential.

3. Conceptual approach

Four essential concepts in the context of this doctoral research project are crises, 'refugee organizations', 'public communication', and 'forcibly displaced people', which are often surrounded by some conceptual unclarity or vagueness. First, we use sometimes the terms 'Syrian crisis', 'Central African crisis' and 'displacement crisis' throughout this dissertation. The use of the term **'crisis'** in the contexts of migration, capitalism, neoliberalism and/or both (e.g., 'disaster capitalism', Franck, 2018) has already been criticized extensively in migration research (e.g., Carastathis et al. , 2018; Dines et al., 2018; Sigona, 2018). While we acknowledge and underwrite these criticisms, we think the specific interpretation of and contexts in which we use the concept of 'crisis' is very important. We are also critical of the use of terms such as 'European refugee crisis' or 'global refugee crisis'. Historical research and demographic data show that these terms are factually incorrect (Fransen & de Haas, 2019; White, 2019, UNHCR, n.d.-l). The individual elements of these terms can be relatively easily deconstructed and rejected. First of all, public discourses often refer to the 'European' refugee crisis of 2014 and 2015. However, in recent years about two-thirds of all forcibly displaced people worldwide were internally displaced people or people who are fleeing inside their own country of origin, and are thus

mainly situated in the 'Global South' (cf. 'refugee' crisis is thus also incorrect and unnuanced, ibid.). Similarly, large majorities of forcibly displaced people who crossed national borders are located in neighbouring countries of the country of origin (e.g., 72 per cent of forcibly displaced people at the end of 2021) and/or in low- and middle-income countries (83 per cent at the end of 2021, UNHCR, n.d.-l). Most forcibly displaced people are thus situated in the 'Global South', while far few in Europe (Fransen & de Haas, 2019; White, 2019, UNHCR, n.d.-l). Neither is there a real 'global' migration crisis. As said, most forcibly displaced people are internally displaced or located in a neighbouring country. Moreover, a very limited number of countries of origin, or so-called 'source countries' comprise the majority of forcibly displaced people who crossed national borders worldwide. For instance, at the end of 2021, 69 per cent of all forcibly displaced people originated from just five countries (UNHCR, n.d.-l). This trend is probably related to the general decrease in the number of conflicts worldwide throughout history but the general increase in the intensity of violence of conflicts (Fransen & de Haas, 2019).

In these regards, we agree that the term 'refugee crisis' or derivations are often rather hegemonic constructed. Certain political actors represent it as a destabilization of the social norms, and a rupture in the social order that overwhelms 'Global Northern' countries to frame established legal standards, obligations and measures as no longer appropriate (Crisp, 2018). Other political and humanitarian actors use crisis and emergency narratives to emphasize a sense of urgency and to facilitate humanitarian aid and solidarity (Fransen & De Haas, 2019). In that sense, we fully endorse the value of more meta, historical, long-term paradigms (cf. Fransen & de Haas, 2019, White, 2019), rather than over-simplified crisis paradigms to analyze and name migration. Nevertheless, we think that from the above-mentioned historical, long-term paradigms we can make a case for a considered, nuanced, contextualized use of terms such as 'crisis' that take place in specific spatial and temporal contexts. From this perspective, it appears that certain countries in certain periods do find themselves in a crisis at the political, humanitarian and migration levels. In Syria, for example, over some years, more than 13 million people were forcibly displaced with major humanitarian needs, and even more people were affected by the war (cf. forced immobility). Compared to the situation before, the war in Syria has led to a big discrepancy compared to the political, humanitarian and migration situations before; situations that from a historical perspective fixed on Syria can be regarded as a destabilization of the social norms, and a rupture in the social order and thus in our view as a humanitarian crisis. The Central African situation is very different: it is rather a prolonged frozen conflict since 1960 with increases and decreases in violence, suffering and forced migration (UNHCR, n.d.-l). Nevertheless, about a quarter of the total Central African population have been forcibly displaced, and many more people are affected. In that sense, we consider it also a 'crisis', but of a fundamentally different nature from the Syrian crisis, rather a protracted, frozen conflict and crisis.

However, not only from this historical, meta-perspective on specific temporal and spatial contexts but also from more micro, societal and ethical perspectives, we think an argument can be made for the deliberate use of the term 'crisis'. We believe from a pacifist point of view that we should not implicitly normalize wars, conflicts and the related major humanitarian impact on large populations in specific temporal and spatial contexts. In our view, this is (partially) done by no longer speaking out against, condemning, and labelling these as a 'political crisis' or 'humanitarian crisis' and thus (implicitly) framing them as inherent, 'normal', social phenomena. After all, this can have serious political, social

and ethical implications (cf. normalization, and consequently no or only limited political, legal, social and socio-emotional recognition of the suffering and vulnerable situations of the affected people). All the more so given that, in general, throughout history, the number of conflicts worldwide has decreased, but in general, they have become more intense in terms of violence, with consequent larger physical, psychosocial and material impacts on the affected populations (supra). We are fully aware of the potential implications of extensive, oversimplified, indiscriminate communication from refugee organizations and other actors in the public sphere that reproduces and reflects emergency and crisis discourses. We also strongly criticize these throughout our empirical research (infra), pointing out the possible long-term risks (e.g., compassion fatigue). Nevertheless, the total lack of use of concepts like 'conflict' or 'crisis' seems to us, although well-intentioned, oversimplified, and not truthful and productive.

Further, relying on the broad statute of key organization UNHCR (2010), we consider **refugee organizations** as a type of humanitarian organization whose main aim is to provide and/or support, directly and/or indirectly, some type of protection and/or assistance to forcibly displaced people, including refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people and/or other people in similar situations. We opt for this rather broad definition in order not to exclude, nor ignore the diversity within the working field of refugee organizations (Walker & Maxwell, 2009) (see also Chapter 3). Further, **public communication** can for now be summarized as a comprehensive, diverse communication genre that is used to strategically target different audiences in the public sphere to achieve informational and strategic goals (Atkin & Rice, 2013, Macnamara, 2016). Humanitarian organizations generally use it to gain visibility and credibility, to inform, raise awareness, influence behaviour and shape agendas, to ultimately gain public, financial and/or political support (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). In Chapter 3, we situate and define the public communication of refugee organizations in more depth.

Additionally, in this section, we will discuss in more detail our choice to use the key concept of **'forcibly displaced people'** to refer to the people assisted and/or represented by international refugee organizations. Therefore, we first briefly introduce and elucidate the related concept of 'forced migration' and the main 'forced migration categories'. People belonging to different categories of 'forced migration' are after all the subject of assistance and public communication of international refugee organizations. In order to be able to fully understand and critically deconstruct the public communication of international refugee organizations, including their representations of forcibly displaced people, it is thus important to first discuss these essential terms, especially as forced migration categories are part of the analysis in the empirical Chapters 9 (cf. 'who') and 10 (cf. 'why' behind the 'who').

After this short introduction to the main 'forced migration groups', we briefly outline some important academic critiques and reflections on the term 'forced migration', the use of various 'forced migration' categories, and the subsequent implications. As said, in this dissertation, we examine, among other things, the representation of people in humanitarian communication from a critical perspective. However, in our view, not only the language, including the representations of (especially vulnerable

and/or voiceless) people, used in the practical field but also in academic research is politically and ethically important. As Da Silva (1999, p. 9, original italics) argues, '[h]e who speaks *for* the other controls the forms of speaking *about* the other.' Two central concepts within identity politics are thereby essential: the interrelated notions of representation as 'delegation' and representation as 'description' (cf. Julien & Mercer, 1996, p. 196; see also Da Silva, 1999). Whereas representation as delegation is about who has the right to represent whom, which is one of the basic principles of representative democracies, representation as description is about how different cultural and social groups are represented in societal discourses. Both are inevitably interlinked, as '[t]hose who are delegated to speak and act in name of an other (representation as delegation) govern, in a way, the process of presentation and description of the other (representation as description)' (Da Silva, 1999, p. 9). More generally, we can connect this issue to the broader interlinked concepts of 'politics of representation' (cf. Hall, 1997) and 'crisis of representation' (cf. Flaherty et al., 2002; Marcus & Fischer, 1999; Nöth, 2003). In sum, the 'politics of representation' refers to societal struggles over meanings of discourses (e.g., particularly about the representation of marginalized groups) in specific cultural contexts, revealing underlying societal power relations and structures, and whether particular regimes of representation can be challenged, contested and transformed (Ghosh, 2016; Hall, 1997). The 'crisis of representation' refers to the uncertainty within humanities and social sciences about adequate methods of representing social reality, as no interpretive account can directly or completely capture lived experiences (Schwandt, 2007).[7]

a. Forced migration and main categories

Although forced migration has always taken place throughout history, it is an important aspect of recent modern history. People flee worldwide for persecution, conflicts, human rights violations, famines, poverty and natural and man-made disasters. For instance, the two World Wars, the colonial independence wars, the proxy conflicts of the Cold War, internal conflicts in the Balkans, Africa and the Caucasus in the aftermath of the Cold War, occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq in the context of the 'War on Terror', state partitions and nationalist claims on territory in South Asia and the Middle East (Betts, 2009a) and, more recently, conflicts, terror and/or poverty in, amongst others, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Venezuela, Ukraine, and various Central and Eastern African countries, forced many people to flee. People thereby flee primarily within international borders and constitute *internally displaced people* (IDPs) and secondarily beyond international borders and then form *refugees*, *asylum-seekers*, *stateless people* or another group of forced migration. Whether it concerns internal displacement or external/international displacement, forced migration in general and its causes, consequences and states' responses, in particular, are inherently linked to international politics (Betts, 2009a; Betts et al., 2012). Therefore, in the following Chapter 1, we will discuss the international refugee regime. In the sections below, we briefly discuss the main categories of forced migration.

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[7] As Pillow (2010, p. 273-274) argues, 'Such [reflexive] thinking, influenced by feminism and poststructural theory, has yielded further questions about a researcher's ability to represent, to know another and questions the construction of research texts. Can we truly represent another? Should this even be a goal of research? Whose story is it – the researcher or the researched? How do I do representation knowing that I can never quite get it right? Discussion of these questions is now often a part of the qualitative research project and researchers who engage in asking these questions cite a need to foreground the politics of representation by making visible, through reflexivity, how we do the work of representation (Britzman 1995; Fine 1994; Lather 1993; 1995).'

The most visible, discussed, controversial and investigated category of forced migration concerns *refugees* (Betts, 2009a; Hynes, 2021). The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 (hereafter: the '1951 Convention'), signed on 28 July 1951 and effective as of 22 April 1954, and its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter: the '1967 Protocol'), signed on 31 January 1967 and effective as of 4 October 1967, define a refugee and his/her/their rights and obligations (Sidorenko, 2007; Loescher and Milner, 2011).[8] This UN treaty describes a refugee as someone who:

> 'owing to 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; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it' (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14).[9]

More generally, the concept of 'refugees' refers to people who meet the eligibility criteria under an applicable refugee definition, as defined in international or regional refugee instruments, under the mandate of UNHCR, or in national law (UNHCR, n.d.-s).[10] As they cross international borders during their flight from persecution and conflict, they are often regarded as 'human rights abuses made visible' (Betts, 2009a). Intertwined therewith, the number of refugees from a country is often seen as an indicator of the human rights situation in that country. At the end of 2020, there were 26.4 million refugees worldwide, comprising 20.7 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate, and 5.7 million Palestine refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (UNHCR, 2021b). Most refugees live in the 'Global South' near their country of origin. More specifically, at the end of 2020, 73 per cent of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin (UNHCR, 2021b). For example, at the end of 2020, Turkey hosted nearly 3.7 million refugees, most of whom were Syrians, forming the largest refugee population worldwide (UNHCR, 2021b).

Both within academia and policy, refugees are mostly the subject of research and discussion, which characterizes an exilic bias at the expense of other categories of forced migration (Betts, 2009a). This is partly because they are more visible and are more strongly linked to world politics than other categories. Firstly, they cross international borders and thus have implications for state sovereignty.

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[8] The 1967 Protocol removed the temporal and geographic limits found in the 1951 Convention (i.e. it applied only to refugees displaced by events within Europe before 1 January 1951). Since then, the 1951 Convention applies universally (UN General Assembly, 1967).

[9] In practice, someone can be recognized as a refugee in various ways, or not be recognized as a refugee but receive subsidiary protection. Since this falls outside the scope of this research, we refer to UNHCR (n.d.-s) for definitions of 'Convention refugees', 'Mandate refugees', 'Prima facie refugees', and 'subsidiary protection.'

[10] Notable regional refugee instruments include the Organization of African Unity (OAU)'s Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (hereafter: the 'OAU Convention') , which was adopted by various African countries in 1969, and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (hereafter: the 'Cartagena Declaration'), which was adopted by various Central American countries in 1984. Both complement the 1951 Convention and build upon its refugee definition (infra) (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

Secondly, they have symbolic power since they can legitimize or discredit governments by 'voting with their feet'. Thirdly, refugee protection forms the subject of international law. Additionally, in contrast to other categories of forced migration, there exists an international refugee regime, consisting of organizations, legislation and norms that specifically focus on refugee protection and shape states' responses to refugees (infra, cf. Chapter 1). More generally, states' engagements with refugees have usually been reflections of broader political trends during the Interbellum, the Cold War, the aftermath of the Cold War and the so-called post-9/11 era (Betts, 2009a, see also next chapter).

Several groups of forcibly displaced people are closely associated with the category of refugees. In that regard, '*asylum-seeker*' is not a legal term but a general term that refers to people who have filed an application for asylum in a country other than their own and whose claims have not yet been determined but whose asylum application entitles them to protection on the basis that they could be refugees. It can also refer to someone who has not yet applied for refugee status recognition but may nonetheless need international protection (Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics [EGRIS], 2018; UNHCR, 2016a, 2017, 2018, 2019). At the end of 2020, there were 4.1 million asylum-seekers worldwide (UNHCR, 2021b). Further, another related category is *returned refugees*. These are 'former refugees who have returned to their countries of origin, either spontaneously or in an organized fashion, but are yet to be fully integrated. Such returns normally would take place only under conditions of safety and dignity' (UNHCR, 2018, p. 63; see Art. 1C(5) and (6), 1951 Convention). At the end of 2020, there were 251.000 returned refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2021b). Thirdly, a special category is *stateless people*. Stateless people are 'those not considered as nationals by any State under the operation of its law. In other words, they do not possess the nationality of any State' (UNHCR, 2018, p. 63; see article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons). This also includes people with an undetermined nationality, or people who lack proof of possession of any nationality and who at the same time have or are perceived as having links to a state other than the one they are living in (UNHCR, 2016a, 2017, 2018, 2019). As Hannah Arendt famously observed more than 70 years ago, stateless people are the 'most symptomatic group in contemporary politics' (Arendt, 1951, p. 277) who suffer the loss of 'the right to have rights' (ibid., p. 298), exposing the internal paradox of the modern nation-state and the idea of natural rights (Nail, 2018). At the end of 2020, 4.2 million people worldwide were identified as stateless, although the actual number is likely to be much higher given the lack of information on stateless populations for most countries of the world (UNHCR, 2021b).

Finally, although internally displaced people and other categories of forced migration have not been part of world politics to the same extent as refugees, asylum-seekers and people in similar situations, they do have important political implications, both at national and international levels (Betts, 2009a). More concretely, internally displaced people are

> 'people or groups of people who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or man-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border' (UNHCR, 2018, p. 63).

It is important to mention that being an internally displaced person, in contrast to being a refugee, is not a special legal status in international law because internally displaced people are still under the jurisdiction of their government and may not claim any rights additional to those shared by their fellow citizens (OCHA, 2004; The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.). Nevertheless, in 2009, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the 'Kampala Convention') was adopted, and it entered into force on 6 December 2012. This African Union convention was the first legally binding instrument on internal displacement with a continental scope and provides a comprehensive regional framework for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons. It complements the 1951 Convention, which also looks at the root causes of internal displacement and ways to prevent it (UNHCR, n.d.-s). Although less highlighted and discussed in policy and academic circles than refugees, internally displaced populations are already for a long time the largest population group of forced migration internationally. At the end of 2020, there were 48 million internally displaced people worldwide (UNHCR, 2021b). Finally, a related group of internally displaced people are *returned internally displaced people*. These are former internally displaced people who returned to their areas of origin or habitual residence (UNHCR, 2016a, 2017, 2018, 2019). At the end of 2020, there were 3.2 million returned internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2021b). For further categories of forced migration, see EGRIS 2018; UNHCR, 2016a, 2017, 2018, 2019, and, based on these sources, our codebook.

b.   'Forced' versus 'voluntary' migration

For various reasons, we have opted to refer to the investigated people represented in the public communication of international refugee organizations with the term 'forcibly displaced people' throughout this dissertation. However, does the usage of a term like 'forcibly displaced people' not imply, directly or indirectly, that - given the involved element of 'forced' or 'coercion' - some other people migrate 'voluntarily'? Having reviewed the literature, various studies after all point out that there are various conceptual, practical and ethical issues involved in separating 'forced' migrants from 'unforced' or 'voluntary' migrants and in distinguishing various categories in the former group, as we have done above. Let us take a closer look at this discussion, and clarify our position.

Migration policies and research on forced migration tend to be based on the dichotomous division between 'forced migration' and 'voluntary migration', which is often reflected in the use of the categories 'refugees' and 'migrants'. This division is frequently used within policies to distinguish between different groups of people and the legitimacy of their claims to international protection. This 'categorical fetishism' (Apostolova, 2017) usually prioritizes the rights of those who fall under the term 'forced migration' (Abdelaaty & Hamlin, 2022; Betts, 2009a; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Where forced migration is generally assumed to have political causes, such as persecution or conflict, socio-economic reasons are usually seen as the breeding ground for voluntary migration. Hence, various scholars consider this dichotomous division problematic. In reality, a strict distinction cannot be made between 'coercion' and 'volition' and these categories rather concern the ends of a spectrum. More concretely, migration is usually, to varying degrees, driven by both elements of coercion and volition, and by both political, socioeconomic, sociocultural and/or other motives. Migrants are usually confronted with structural restrictions (e.g., political, economic), but mostly also retain, to varying degrees, some agency (e.g., agency to choose when, where and how to flee) (ibid.).

Hence, dominant conceptual and policy categories fail to capture adequately the complex relationships between political, social and economic drivers of migration or their shifting significance for individuals over time and space (Abdelaaty & Hamlin, 2022; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). For instance, people have mostly different motivations to migrate, may change categories or simultaneously belong to more than one category. Furthermore, people with different kinds of motivation frequently travel together. These are often referred to as 'mixed (migration) movements', or cross-border movements of people with different protection profiles, reasons for movement and needs, who move along the same routes and use the same means of transport or journey (UNHCR, n.d.-s). Hence, UNHCR often assists - and likely thus also communicates about - people with different profiles, as they often travel together (Barnett, 2002). However, the current migration categories are often based on binary, static and/or linear understandings of migration processes and experiences, which contrast with the complex, multi-layered and shifting lived experiences of people on the move (Becker 2014; Collyer & de Haas 2012; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Most importantly, apart from semantic issues, these categories have substantial consequences, as they entitle some to protection and rights but exclude others (Abdelaaty & Hamlin, 2022; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). In that regard, Zetter (1991) argues these labels are constructed to exclude and disempower. Hence, Bakewell (2008, p. 432) calls for policy irrelevant research that goes beyond these categories, which brings '"invisible forced migrants" into view' and 'recognize[s] the "normality" within their situation rather than privileging their position as forced migrants as the primary explanatory factor'.

Other researchers have different views. While Betts (2009a) recognizes that the forced migration-voluntary migration division is inadequate and problematic, he still finds it relevant for analytical reasons. First, Betts (2009a, p. 4) argues that 'despite the problematic nature of the dichotomy, and the challenge of knowing "where to draw the line," there are certain categories of people whose basic rights their states are unwilling or unable to provide, and who are therefore compiled to leave their homes.' Similarly, other academics (e.g., Gibney, 2014; Goodwin-Gill, 2014; Milner, 2014) argue that a refugee is substantially different from a migrant - as the former mirrors a breakdown of basic relationships between state and citizen - and that it is thus essential to recognize these differences. Second, global migration policy is often based on this dichotomous distinction and therefore the specific policy on forced migrants is generally different from other categories of human mobility (Betts, 2009a). While forced migration research has traditionally focused on refugees, it has been acknowledged over time that other categories of people may also constitute forced migrants, even though they have not crossed an international border or are fleeing for reasons other than those defined in the 1951 Convention (Betts, 2009a).

Nevertheless, several researchers opposed to the forced migration-voluntary migration division recognize that categories are inevitable, including in social science research (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). Therefore, it is important to be critically aware of the constructed nature of categories, and their potential implications, to approach them critically, not to create hierarchies of deservingness ourselves that reinforce binary logics and, most importantly, to deconstruct the political power

relations underlying the bounding process, which is the process by which categories are constructed, and related purposes and consequences (ibid.).

Concluding remark: our position

Acknowledging these useful findings, reflections and remarks, we deliberately chose to use the term '**forcibly displaced people**' in this dissertation but interpret it in a broader sense than is commonly done to signal a broad conceptualization of people who fled. Recognizing that people are usually displaced because of diverse political, socio-economic and socio-cultural elements, with varying degrees of coercion and volition, we use the term 'forcibly displaced people' to refer to people who are rather forced to migrate, for whatever reasons (e.g., both political, sociocultural, socioeconomic reasons), rather than voluntarily. We believe that the nuanced, reflexive and critical use of multi-layered forced migration-voluntary migration spectra does not constitute the problem. On the contrary, in our view, it is important to recognize and mention differences in the situations of people who are forcibly driven to migrate, rather than those who rather opt to migrate voluntarily, from relatively prosperous (e.g., political, sociocultural, socioeconomic) positions (e.g., 'Global Northern-based' academics with stable, adequate positions). We thereby draw on feminist and postcolonial research (e.g., Dean, 1996; Mohanty, 2003) which argues that it is essential to recognize rather than neglect differences - but simultaneously also to not overemphasize differences - to enable reflective solidarity.[11] More generally, the reflexive use of categories is also generally accepted for other sociodemographic variables - even when some aspects (e.g., gender, sexual orientation) are sometimes considered fluid, particularly in research that aims to facilitate social change (cf. strategic essentialism, Spivak, 1988, 1996). In that sense, we find it important to use the adverb 'forcibly'. Using homogeneous, broad terms that do not recognize differences in power and/or position (e.g., 'migrants') seems to be inadequate to us. In our view, it are rather the inadequate, unrealistic but commonly made connections between coercion and political elements, and voluntariness and socio-economic elements that need to be disconnected and rethought, both linguistically and policy-wise. As if people can only be forced to migrate for political reasons, and precarious socio-economic issues do not form urgent, valid reasons to move to somewhere else? In other words, we think it is not so much the term 'forced' as such that is problematic but the limited, non-inclusive ways it is currently used; that is, it is only used to refer to and link to political elements, while other (e.g., socio-cultural, socio-economic) elements are usually excluded and/or neglected.

Further, we prefer to use 'forcibly displaced people' as an umbrella term than, for example, 'forced migrants'. By involving the term 'people', the latter concept emphasizes the humane character of the

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[11] We follow Nikunen (2019a) who draws on postcolonial and feminist theory to expand the 'we' in political theories of solidarity and to emphasize the importance of recognizing difference in constructions of solidarity in a multicultural, globalized world. Feminist theory promotes the idea of 'common differences' as a basis for deeper solidarity through unequal power relations (Dean, 1996; Mohanty, 2003). Thus, instead of generating solidarity based on similarities, feminist theorists posit 'dissonance' as essential for reflective solidarity (Dean, 1996; Hemmings, 2012). But, rather than emphasizing difference per se, the point is to understand common interests. This can be achieved through listening, collaborating and supporting each other (Dreher, 2009, 2010).

people it refers to, which is important given the frequent dehumanization of these populations (infra, cf. Chapters 1 and 2). The concept of 'forced migrants', on the other hand, is more essentialist and reduces these people in essence to 'migrants', which is arguably only a temporary sub-aspect of their identity. Furthermore, 'forcibly displaced people' is not a legal term, and can thus be used to refer to broader population groups without creating any problems or confusion. This is not to say, however, that, when appropriate, we do not refer to specific groups (e.g., refugees, internally displaced people), reflecting the idea of recognizing differences. Finally, in Chapter 6 - the first and oldest empirical article-based chapter, we used 'displaced people'. In Chapter 3, the theoretical article-based chapter, and in the statistical analysis of the quantitative content analysis of Chapter 8, following the acronym 'IDP' commonly used in the humanitarian sector, we used the acronym 'FDP'. While being aware that acronyms may obscure, impersonalize, universalize and sometimes even dehumanize the represented people, we then used the terms for reasons of space, flow, and readability, and corresponding with Spivak's (1988, 1996) 'strategic essentialism'. Both cases show that our thinking about this topic has substantially changed throughout conducting research. Since then, we have consistently used the term 'forcibly displaced people', or at least as an umbrella term where appropriate. By using 'forcibly displaced people' in this hopefully reflexive and nuanced way, we also want to significantly contribute to and inform policy issues, to ultimately facilitate social change.

4. Structure of the dissertation

The structure of this dissertation reflects its multidimensional research objectives. Part I concerns the theoretical inquiry and consists of four chapters presenting the main literature on the public communication of refugee organizations and other related fields. First, in Chapters 1 and 2, we focus on the broader underlying political and social contexts in which international refugee organizations, including their media and communication departments and officers, function. More specifically, in Chapter 1 we discuss the evolving international refugee regime from a historical and policy perspective. In Chapter 2, we discuss the evolving humanitarian communication landscape in interaction within broader changing institutional fields. In Chapter 3, we focus on the public communication of refugee organizations from a conceptual perspective. We further discuss the social and scientific relevance of the public communication of refugee organizations, present a concise state of the art, define and situate this largely unexplored topic, and also identify some new relevant research avenues.[12] In Chapter 4, we elaborate on the already existing research on the public communication of refugee organizations from an empirical perspective, with a focus on the textual, production and societal dimensions.

Part II concerns the methodological inquiry. This consists of Chapter 5 in which we discuss the methodological and ethical approaches used during the empirical research, the positionality of the author of the dissertation, and finally the (estimated) share of efforts of each (co-)author of the article-based chapters.

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[12] The reception dimension is also discussed here for reasons of relevance and completeness, and in line with the original research objectives of this project (supra).

Then follows Part III, the empirical inquiry, containing four chapters. In chapter 6, we explore the textual, production and societal dimensions of the public communication of international refugee organizations, with a focus on 'how', 'who', and 'why'. This multi-method study includes a critical discourse analysis of the 2014 and 2015 press releases on the Syrian crisis of three international refugee organizations, namely UNHCR, and two INGOs, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and International Rescue Committee[13], and expert interviews with their press and regional officers.[14] We build on the results of this exploratory study in the three subsequent empirical studies, in which we focus more deeply and extensively on specific aspects. More specifically, applying a comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis, Chapter 7 analyzes UNHCR's public communication of 2015 regarding the Syrian and Central African crises, focusing on its main representation and argumentation strategies. In doing so, we pay primary attention to 'how' forcibly displaced people are represented and discussed and, secondarily, based on the literature, we analyze the underlying reasons (cf. 'why'). In this way, Chapter 7 is complementary to Chapter 8, which focuses on UNHCR's, NRC's and ECRE's public communication strategies for the Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018). More specifically, through a quantitative content analysis with a comparative, longitudinal, intersectional research design of the organizations' press releases and news stories, we scrutinized 'who' (voiced and represented actors) and 'what' (key characteristics and themes) are (not) represented, and secondarily 'why' (production and societal context). While Chapters 7 and 8 primarily focus on sub-aspects of the textual dimension, and secondarily on the production and social dimension, the opposite applies to the multi-method study in Chapter 9. Specifically, we conducted a three-week office ethnography at the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) main media and communication department, accompanied by expert interviews with NRC's media and communication officers, and a document analysis of key communication policy documents. By drawing on and contributing to the Hierarchy of Influences model and neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency, we attempt to explain NRC's key discursive strategies towards the recent Syrian and Central African crises. Finally, Chapter 10 in Part IV discusses and relates the main findings to arrive at general conclusions, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and practice-oriented recommendations. This is followed by references as well as summaries in English, Dutch and French and the publicly accessible appendices.

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[13] Since we introduce the concept of 'international regime complexity' in Chapter 1, which we will refer to several times in different chapters via the acronym 'IRC', we choose not to abbreviate 'International Rescue Committee' and to write it in full, in order to avoid confusion. However, in Chapter 6, we do use 'IRC' as an acronym for International Rescue Committee. This chapter is based on an empirical article that we are not allowed to change in terms of content. Nevertheless, in that chapter we do not refer to the concept of international regime complexity, so no confusion will arise.

[14] This explorative study is largely based on a master thesis research, which explains why the two analyzed international NGOs (i.e. DRC and International Rescue Committee) differ from the NGOs we mainly study in this doctoral research project (i.e. NRC and ECRE), and why we only examined their public communication strategies for the Syrian crisis. We consider these different empirical focuses as an added value for the project. On the one hand, in this way, the project has a broader and diverse empirical scope, which increases the comparability and generalizability of the results. On the other hand, the project also has a common thread with its spotlight on UNHCR, NRC and ECRE.

Table 1. Overview of the empirical article-based chapters

Chapter	Research objective	Research methods	Case study
Chapter 6	'How' (primarily), 'who', and 'why' (secondarily)	Critical discourse analysis and expert interviews	UNHCR's, DRC's and International Rescue Committee's press releases (N=122) on the Syrian crisis (2014-2015), and expert interviews with their press and regional officers (N=6).
Chapter 7	'How' (primarily), and 'why' (secondarily)	Comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis	UNHCR's (international) press releases (N=28), news stories (N=233), photos (N=462) and videos (N=50) of 2015 on the Syrian and Central African crises (2015).
Chapter 8	'What' and 'who' (primarily), and 'why' (secondarily)	Comparative, longitudinal, intersectional quantitative content analysis	UNHCR's, NRC's and ECRE's press releases and news stories (N=1244) on the Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018).
Chapter 9	'Why' (primarily), 'how', 'what' and 'who' (secondarily)	Office ethnography, expert interviews and a document analysis	Three-week observation research at the NRC's main media and communication department, expert interviews with NRC's media and communication officers (N=10), and a document analysis of its key communication policy documents (N=9)

Finally, before we delve into Part I, for reasons of reflexivity and research transparency, we want to make some remarks about the format of this dissertation. This dissertation has a research paper-based format, which implies that the empirical chapters which make up its body were initially prepared as distinct, stand-alone articles to be published in academic journals. As a result of this paper-based approach, there is inevitably some overlap between the empirical chapters and the other parts of this dissertation, as well as between the empirical chapters themselves. First, there is some overlap between the literature reviews in the empirical chapters, as well as with the introduction and theoretical chapters of this dissertation, especially given the limited and fragmented literature. Likewise, the methodological sections of the articles largely correspond with the more extensive and detailed methodological inquiry in Chapter 5. Furthermore, for reasons of clarity, consistency, coherence, and flow, we have adapted the layout (e.g., font, font size, line spacing) and the format of the articles (limitedly) to those of the dissertation. First, the first page of each article-based chapter includes the title, abstract, keywords, and reference of the research paper. Second, where appropriate, we have also added section titles such as 'Literature Review' and 'Results'. We have removed small sections at the end of the articles that are less relevant in the context of this dissertation (i.e. acknowledgements, data availability statement, declaration of conflicting interests, funding, Contributor Role Taxonomy (CRediT) statement, ORCID iD, geolocation information). Further, we have deanonymized references to our own works in chapters based on articles which are currently in review for publication in an academic journal. In Chapter 8, we inserted the figures into the manuscript,

accompanied by figure captions, and removed the insertion references (in the original manuscript, the figures were sent to the respective journal as attachments). However, no substantive, language, structural and/or other changes were made. In that regard, we have retained the references and specific citation styles (both in-text and bibliography) of the article-based chapters. Likewise, we have not modified the language of Chapter 7 - which is the only chapter written in American English. For the other chapters, however, we have always referenced according to the American Psychological Association (APA) citation style based on the 7th edition of the APA publication manual and created one bibliography at the end of the dissertation.

PART I – THEORETICAL INQUIRY

Chapter 1: The evolving international refugee regime

Acknowledging the importance of mutually shaping interactions between discourses, production contexts, and societal contexts (Fairclough, 1992, 1995), and the contextualization and historicization of research, it is essential to discuss the broader political and historical contexts of the international refugee regime (IRR) to fully understand the problem of forced displacement (Saunders, 2014) and the public communication strategies of refugee organizations. As we will argue later, the peculiar nature of the IRR has largely influenced refugee organizations' public communication strategies by (1) enabling the current dominant forced migration policy paradigms and measures, and (2) affecting the forced migration discourses of other important interacting institutions. Therefore, we first explain what the IRR and its main components entail. Next, we discuss important current trends and challenges in the IRR. Further, we briefly outline the most important forced migration policy paradigms throughout the post-World War II era to eventually focus more extensively on the current dominant paradigm.

1.1 General outline and main components

The IRR can be considered an institutionalised multilateral platform that consists of various rules, standards, norms, principles and procedures, which are created by the international community to ensure that responses to forcibly displaced people and related displacement crises can occur in a principled and predictable manner (Betts, 2010; Crisp, 2005; Loescher, 2001).[15] Its early formation originates from the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648. This peace treaty established elements of the modern state system. Among others, it firmly entrenched the concept of refugees in the territorial notion of borders (Barnett, 2002; Lee, 1996). Since then, the IRR has evolved in line with the modern state system and changes in international law, politics, economics and ideology (Barnett, 2002). It has particularly followed the predominant interests (i.e. mainly concerns about international order and justice) of the (mainly 'Northern') states that founded the IRR (Aleinikoff & Zamore, 2019; Betts, 2010; Krause, 2021), reflecting political realism (Chen, 2006; Sökefeld, 2017). In sum, in response to a history of religious and political persecutions, the League of Nations established a comprehensive refugee regime after World War I.[16] During World War II, this regime underwent significant changes to create a permanent framework to address the refugee phenomenon through UNHCR and the 1951 Convention. The Cold War had an overwhelming impact on the regime's norms and rules, and in the post-Cold War era, the regime struggled to reflect on and adapt to emerging global issues - from internally displaced people to gender and race issues (Barnett, 2002).

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[15] While the term 'regime' has been defined in various ways, this dissertation relies on (broad) interpretations found in international relations and political theory. Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986, p. 759) define a regime as 'governing arrangements constructed by states to coordinate their expectations and organize aspects of international behavior in various issue-areas. They thus comprise a normative element, state practice, and organizational roles'. Similarly, Krasner (1983, p. 2) refers to 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations', which, indicating their long-term nature, 'must be understood as something more than temporary arrangements that change with every shift in power or interests'.

[16] The League of Nations was the first global intergovernmental organization whose primary mission was to maintain world peace. In 1946, it was replaced by the UN (Henig, 2019; Pedersen, 2015).

Although the IRR thus has a long history, given the research focus of the dissertation, we mainly discuss its post-World War II history, as then both its fundamental elements were established and its current state was shaped. Most importantly, as we will argue later in more detail, this current mode of the IRR has enabled current forced migration policy paradigms, measures, and underlying factors, and has both influenced the public communication strategies of international refugee organizations (infra, cf. Chapter 4) and the forced migration discourses of their stakeholders (infra, cf. Chapter 2). Responding to the two World Wars, the regime was especially strongly transformed between the 1920s and 1970s, with the establishment of various international institutions, legal instruments, and principles and norms. Currently, UNHCR, the 1951 Convention, its 1967 Protocol, the right to seek asylum and the non-refoulement principle[17] are its key components (Betts, 2009a; Crisp, 2005). Let us take a closer look at these important elements.

First, **UNHCR** was established in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in recognition that the refugee phenomenon in the wake of World War II was not temporary. More concretely, UNHCR is a multilateral intergovernmental organization operating under the 1951 Convention and primarily mandated by its 1950 Statute to provide and supervise international protection and humanitarian assistance and to seek durable solutions for refugees[18]. These solutions concern voluntary repatriation[19], local integration in the first country of asylum[20], and resettlement into a third country[21] (Betts et al., 2012; Gibney, 2010; Jones, 2013). Further, UNHCR is also responsible for monitoring and supervising the implementation and compliance of the 1951 Convention's obligations by its signatory states. The people within its core mandate responsibilities or the 'persons of concern' are the people whose protection and assistance needs are of interest to UNHCR, and include refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless people, internally displaced people and returnees (supra, cf. Introduction) (UNHCR, 2010). Although UNHCR does not have a mandate for internally displaced people (IDPs), in specific circumstances, it can also provide them with protection and humanitarian assistance.

Second, grounded in Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, which recognizes the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries, **the 1951 Convention** forms the most widely applicable framework for refugee protection. As said, it defines who is a refugee and their rights and obligations. Developed as a response to the huge post-World War

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[17] The essential non-refoulement principle (Article 33[1] of the 1951 Convention) prohibits states from returning persons in any way, directly or indirectly, to territories where they may be at risk of persecution, torture, or other forms of serious or irreparable harm. The principle is also part of customary international law and is therefore binding on all states, whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Convention (Duffy, 2008; Zimmermann et al., 2011).

[18] This refers to the means through which the situation of forcibly displaced people can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved by ensuring national protection of their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

[19] This refers to the free and informed return of refugees to their country of origin in safety and dignity, which may be organized or spontaneous (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

[20] This involves the permanent settlement of refugees in a host country. This is a complex and gradual process, involving interrelated legal, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions, and often concludes with the naturalization of the refugee (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

[21] This refers to the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

II forced displacement (Barnett, 2002), this UN treaty originally focused on people fleeing before 1951 and within Europe. However, the 1967 Protocol removed these geographical and temporal limits and provided universal coverage (UNHCR, 2010). The 1951 Convention thus has established the key elements of the IRR – with non-refoulement as the central principle (UNHCR, 2010), and forms its sole legally binding international instrument. Nevertheless, it does not provide the right to obtain asylum, as this is a national competence (Barnett, 2002). Further, the 1951 Convention has been supplemented with regional agreements on refugee protection, such as the OAU Convention, the Cartagena Declaration (supra, cf. Introduction) and, more recently, the 2011 Qualifications Directive of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (EUR-Lex, 2020).[22] Refugee rights are also embedded in other domains of law, such as international human rights law which forms a complementary source of refugee protection (Betts, 2009b, 2010). We further discuss this in the following section. Having briefly outlined the IRR and its key components, let us now have a look at the regime's main current trends and challenges.

1.2 Main trends and challenges

As a result of increasing globalisation and interdependence, several new regimes or issue areas have emerged in the IRR, such as development, security, human rights, humanitarianism, and travel and labour migration, which overlap with and complement the 1951 Convention (Betts, 2009a, 2010). 'Some of these overlaps – such as the sources of complementary protection provided by the human rights regime – complement and reinforce the refugee regime' (Betts, 2010, p. 13). Sources of additional protection are legal resources for refugee protection outside of the field of international refugee law (Gorlick, 2000; McAdam, 2007). For instance, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (effective as of 3 September 1953) and Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (effective as of 26 June 1987) protect non-refoulement. Other overlaps, however, undermine aspects of the IRR (infra). The interaction with other regimes is also reflected at the level of actors within the IRR. UNHCR, for example, cooperates with various UN agencies and international organizations that are mainly situated in other regimes, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (humanitarianism); the UN Development Programme (UNDP) (development); the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (human rights); the World Health Organization (WHO) (health); the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) (security); and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (migration) (Betts et al., 2012; UNHCR, n.d.-q). Similarly, UNHCR also works together with various governments, NGOs, private sector actors, celebrities, sports actors, civil society organizations, refugee communities, universities, the judiciary, etcetera, located in various regimes (UNHCR, n.d.-i).

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[22] Both regional refugee instruments complement the Convention and extend its refugee definition beyond the strict persecution focus. The OAU Convention stipulates that the term 'refugee' also 'applies to those fleeing from external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of the country of origin' (Barnett, 2002). The Cartagena Declaration includes 'persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order'. While it is a non-binding treaty, it is generally endorsed by the concerned states (Fischel de Andrade, 2019; Gottwald, 2004).

In sum, the refugee regime cannot be demarcated strictly but rather is a '**refugee regime complex**' (Betts, 2010) in which different issue areas exist in parallel, interact, and consequently shape states' forced migration policies (Betts, 2009a, 2010; Betts et al., 2012). More concretely, the IRR is characterized by 'international regime complexity (IRC)' which is 'the presence of nested, partially overlapping, and parallel international regimes that are not hierarchically ordered' (Alter & Meunier, 2009, p. 13). While all regimes require to some degree shared understanding, their participants (e.g., states, international organizations, civil society organizations) have different views and expectations about how their regime should distribute benefits and burdens. Hence, regimes are not fixed but rather evolving, dynamic sites of contests (Kuyper, 2014). In that regard, we argue that the refugee regime complex has enabled several trends which all are already taking place for a long time but are increasingly merging and are especially evident within the current emerging forced migration policy paradigm (infra). In the following section, we discuss some forced migration policy trends of an increasing number of states that are shaped by the particular nature of the refugee regime complex and that substantially influence the public communication of international refugee organizations. We consequently assert that IRC has largely influenced refugee organizations' public communication strategies by (1) enabling current forced migration policy paradigms and measures, and (2) affecting other institutional forced migration narratives.

In principle, the international community has already recognised the importance of refugee protection and solutions for a long time (Crisp, 2018). In 1948, the UNGA established the UDHR, which involved the right to seek asylum, which is regarded as fundamental to international refugee protection: 'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution' (UN, 1948, Article 14[1]). In 1951, as said, the UNGA adopted the 1951 Convention. Furthermore, up to now, 149 states have signed the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR, n.d.-a), and 107 states expressed their interest in the topic of forced migration by joining the executive committee of UNHCR as members (UNHCR, 2021c). In 2016, the UNGA reaffirmed its commitment to refugees and refugee protection in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (hereafter 'the New York Declaration'), which recognizes the importance of the 'full and effective application' of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol by states 'and the values they embody' (UNGA, 2016, 12, para. 65).[23] More recently, in 2018, the New York Declaration led to the affirmation by the UNGA of the Global Compact on Refugees. This is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, acknowledging that sustainable solutions to refugee situations require international cooperation. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities receive the assistance they need and that refugees can live productive lives (UNHCR, n.d.-s). Most importantly, in reality, the international community commits itself to international refugee protection and solutions. Many states play important roles as providers of refugee protection and humanitarian assistance (Loescher, 2014; Skran, 1992).

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[23] In September 2016, the UNGA adopted a set of commitments to enhance the protection of refugees and migrants, known as the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. It outlines elements for a comprehensive response to refugee displacement based on principles of international cooperation and responsibility-sharing as well as greater inclusion of refugees into local communities (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

However, recognizing temporal and regional/national variations, **states** worldwide have frequently challenged refugee protection and asylum throughout history (Crisp, 2005). First, states – both from the 'Global North' and 'Global South', including the signatories of the legally binding 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol – have often violated refugee protection laws and norms when it was in their interest (Crisp, 2005, 2018).[24] Second and in line therewith, in recent decades, states worldwide have established more restrictive asylum legislation and policies and have become more reluctant to cooperate mutually and with refugee organizations on forced displacement (Aleinikoff & Zamore, 2019; Betts et al., 2012). For example, various governments have largely replaced structural political action on refugee issues with humanitarian assistance and/or have introduced stricter conditions for their UNHCR funding. This makes it more difficult for UNHCR to fulfil its mandate. UNHCR is, after all, highly dependent on voluntary donations from UN member states (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Walker & Maxwell, 2009). As we will demonstrate later, refugee organizations, therefore, respond to the (perceived) larger interests of states by using particular, often contextualized, argumentation strategies (infra, cf. Chapter 4). In order to explain, contextualize and historicize these policy trends and – taking into account the importance of mutually shaping interactions between discourses, production contexts, and societal contexts (Fairclough, 1992, 1995) – to understand the implications for the public communication of refugee organizations, we will now briefly discuss the various dominant forced migration policy paradigms of the IRR in the post–World War II period, and eventually, consider the current dominant paradigm more extensively.

1.3 Shifting forced migration policy paradigms

In this section, we briefly discuss, relying on the classification of Frelick (2007), three major forced migration policy paradigms in the IRR since the creation of UNHCR and the 1951 Convention in the wake of World War II: (1) *the exilic model* from approximately 1948 until the early 1990s, (2) *the source country model* from approximately the early 1990s until 2001, and (3) *the security model* from approximately 2001 up until now.[25] We opt for the classification of Frelick (2007) because it is a relevant, clear and structured classification, supported by many different studies. Moreover, we know of no other relevant classifications of the forced migration policy paradigms of the post-World War II era. To our knowledge, there are only few studies that broadly approach the historical context of the international refugee regime. Most historical studies focus on a specific spatial and/or temporal

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[24] While we recognize that the terms 'Global South' and 'Global North' have limitations and issues (e.g., descriptively inaccurate, homogenizing, geographically determinist), we use these terms (between single quote marks) for reasons of relevance, space, flow, and readability, and corresponding with Spivak's (1988, 1996) 'strategic essentialism'. More concretely, we consider both concepts not only as geographical or geopolitical markers but also as composite and plural entities. In line with Milan and Treré's (2019, p. 321, original italics) definition of 'South(s)', the 'Global South' subsumes 'the different, the underprivileged, the alternative, the resistant, the invisible, and the subversive.' For further critical discussions about this terminology, see Chant and McIlwaine (2009), Dados and Connell (2012), and Kloß (2017).

[25] The term 'paradigm' refers to a set of shared worldviews that emerge from scientific theories and frame the way we see the world and solve problems (Kuhn 1970). We consider a policy paradigm as 'a set of shared beliefs, taxonomies, and tools within a community of policymakers that determine how they perceive, analyze and respond to a given policy problem' (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Tan, 2017, p. 31). It is 'a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing' (Hall, 1993, p. 279).

context. We complement this classification with a more extensive discussion of the current main forced migration paradigm - *the migration management paradigm* - which approximately started in the 1990s. These paradigms are not formalized positions of the international community but rather general trends, to which, of course, temporal and/or geographical variations and exceptions are possible (ibid.).

1.3.1   The exilic paradigm (1948-early 1990s)

During the Cold War period, most refugees in the 'Global North' came from communist or communist-dominated countries (e.g., the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Cuba, cf. mainly East-West movements) (Barnett, 2002; García, 2017) and countries in the Middle East. The international community perceived it as unrealistic or even unimaginable for them to quickly return to their country. Therefore, it tried to establish the rights of these people, focusing primarily on providing asylum or refuge and only secondarily on finding sustainable solutions outside the country of origin, or, if not possible, to shelter them in refugee camps, and this often for decades (Frelick, 2007). This paradigm had thus an exilic bias: exile often meant permanent exile (Chimni, 2004). While presented by policymakers as valid options, the durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration or third-country resettlement were in reality often not possible. More concretely, voluntary repatriation was mostly not realizable, given the continuing difficult conditions in the countries of origin. Similarly, local integration was difficult as the countries of first asylum were mostly reluctant to provide asylum and/or were already overburdened (Chimni, 2004; Frelick, 2007). The only sustainable practical solution was third-country resettlement but in practice, only a very small proportion of the total number of refugees worldwide could make use of it. The vast majority of refugees had to remain for protracted periods in unsanitary and overcrowded refugee camps. Around the early 2000s, when the security model emerged, millions of refugees (e.g., Afghans, Palestinians,…) still lived in refugee camps or under restrictions, and this often for several decades, because of the lasting unbearable situations in their country of origin and the refusal of the international community to look for durable solutions (Frelick, 2007).

In a few cases, however, the exilic model was successful. These cases were based on a well-thought system of burden-sharing that was intended to relieve pressure on countries of first asylum. The latter were countries that, due to their geographical location, received the most refugees from their neighbouring or nearby countries. To ensure that the principle of the right to seek asylum remained guaranteed, other, often politically more stable and prosperous countries assisted the countries of first asylum. This was done through 'burden-sharing' or 'responsibility-sharing' in the form of financial and material assistance and third-country resettlement. This served to relieve pressure on countries of first asylum, to convince the latter to keep their borders open for new refugees and provide at least temporary asylum, and to protect refugees who were still at risk in countries of first asylum and/or had no chance of voluntary repatriation or local integration (ibid.).

Finally, it is important to note that there were substantial changes within the broad period of the exilic paradigm, which thus should not be regarded as a monolithic block. More specifically, in the 1960s and 1970s, most states in the 'Global South' provided asylum, mainly because of similar anti-colonial histories, relative prosperity, relatively modest numbers of incoming refugees, and relatively generous

assistance from the 'Global North' - driven both by humanitarian and geopolitical reasons (e.g., to develop alliances in the struggle against communism) (Crisp, 2003). However, since the 1970s, there was an increased politicization of asylum across various host countries. In the 1970s, the welcoming labour immigration schemes of several European countries were abandoned, thereby cutting off a regular form of migration. The proxy wars and rising communal violence of the 1980s further created large-scale displacement across several regions in the 'Global South' (Crisp, 2003; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Tan, 2017). Likewise, in the 1980s and 1990s, the political and economic foundations of asylum increasingly eroded largely because of less common anti-colonial experiences, and less international appreciation and assistance, as refugee protection lost its strategic geopolitical relevance after the Cold War, making the host countries coping solely with the economic and environmental impact of forcibly displaced people (Crisp, 2003). Furthermore, the host countries in the 'Global South' were confronted with various political, economic and social problems (e.g., increases in population growth and unemployment, declines in development assistance, environmental issues, the imposition of structural adjustment programmes leading to public sector savings), and an increasingly negative public opinion towards refugees. Local populations with deteriorating living conditions, almost received no state assistance, while refugees obtained free food, healthcare and education from the international community (ibid.).

1.3.2 The source country model (early 1990s-2001)

The end of the Cold War led to the end of static political blocs and fixed territorial boundaries. In line with this, the international community, led by the United States (US), would also intervene more often in situations causing forced displacement (Barnett, 2002; Frelick, 2007). In the 1990s, the IRR thus shifted from the rather reactive exilic model, which mainly responded to forced displacement, to a rather proactive, source country-oriented, holistic model that mainly addressed its causes (Frelick, 2007; Gottwald, 2014). In this way, the international community wanted to prevent the migration of forcibly displaced people or to change their underlying causes rapidly to enable as quickly as possible returns of forcibly displaced people (both refugees and internally displaced people) (Frelick, 2007). In the post-Cold War period, the strategic geopolitical relevance of hosting refugees after all strongly decreased (Barnett, 2002; Crisp, 2003; Gammeltoft-Hansen & Tan, 2017). For this purpose, the international community used various forms of refugee protection and humanitarian assistance. These ad hoc experiments included short-term temporary protection regimes[26] outside the country - as opposed to permanent asylum resulting from refugee status determinations, cross-border humanitarian assistance, such as 'humanitarian corridors' in conflict areas and specially designated 'safe areas' within the countries of origin, and direct military interventions for supposedly humanitarian purposes. However, it became clear that the issues in the countries of origin of refugees were not easy to resolve and/or prevent. In these cases, the international community seemed to increasingly abandon its traditional commitment to the principle of asylum, ignoring the plight of forcibly displaced people. Within this paradigm, refugees thus could obtain in various ways temporary protection in the region but obtaining permanent asylum outside their country of origin became increasingly difficult (Frelick, 2007).

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[26] An arrangement developed by states to offer protection of a temporary nature to people arriving 'en masse' from situations of conflict or generalized violence, without prior individual status determination. Temporary protection has been mostly used in industrialized States (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

The shift to the source country model was embodied by four complex humanitarian emergencies in the 1990s: northern Iraq (1991), Haiti (1992-1994), Bosnia (1992-1995) and Rwanda (1994-1996). In most of these humanitarian emergencies, the international community, consisting of states mostly led by the US and humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR and NGOs, took various measures to control the flights of refugees or address their causes (Barnett, 2002; Frelick, 2007; Hyndman, 2000). This mostly concerned humanitarian assistance supported by military protection of assistance, and the establishment of no-fly zones and safe areas. Although the discourse and probably also the motivations of many actors of the international community were primarily humanitarian and based on the idea of addressing the causes of the flights of refugees, the primary sponsors of refugee protection and prevention in (potential) 'source countries' were mostly powerful states that out of self-interest wanted to avoid refugees. The international community and/or its members often considered not human rights abuses but refugees themselves as threats to international peace, security, order and stability. Similarly, UN peacekeeping and humanitarian aid agencies and their NGO partners focused not only on protecting internally displaced people but also on preventing their possible flight (Frelick, 2007).

1.3.3   The security model (2001-…)

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, which dominated international relations in the first decade of the 21st century, the 'security model' (Frelick, 2007), or 'deterrence paradigm' (Gammeltoft-Hansen & Tan, 2017) seems to form the dominant paradigm within the IRR. This model emerged largely due to changing, increasingly negative perceptions of refugees, which were triggered by the threat of terrorism. During the Cold War, refugees were mostly regarded as heroes and freedom advocates who had escaped tyrannies and proved the failure of communism. In the 1990s, refugees were – while sometimes considered security threats (e.g., the Iraq war) – primarily seen as victims of human rights abuses and war crimes. Strategically seen, they formed for the international community also a so-called humanitarian reason to intervene in certain areas (cf. Haiti, Kosovo,…), to challenge the sovereignty of dictators and sometimes even depose them. Since the early 2000s, however, refugees are increasingly viewed very suspiciously and strongly devalued. They have not only been feared because of their perceived (potential) overwhelming numbers and needs but also because they have been regarded as (potential) socio-economic, socio-cultural and/or security risks (infra).

In response to these developments, many states, led by the US and driven by national security concerns, introduced in the early 2000s the security model which became part of counterterrorist strategies (Frelick, 2007). This model is reflected through, among others, the closing and/or fortifying of borders, increasing tight travel restrictions and legal refugee definitions, and the rising refusal of asylum. As such, the security model has further harmed fundamental principles of refugee protection, particularly the right to seek asylum, which, although weak, were in force in the exilic and source country solution models. In that regard, the number of asylum requests in high-income states decreased significantly in the 1990s and early 2000s (UNHCR, n.d.-l). Further, there has been a decreasing interest in looking for durable solutions for refugees. The consequences of the security model for refugees, however, are largely ignored.

The security model emerged in the early 2000s but already since the 1990s, many governments had implemented **various measures in a range of domains to prevent or deter people to enter and request asylum in their territory,** including extended visa requirements, carrier sanctions, pre-boarding documentation checks at airports, readmission agreements with transit countries, mandatory detention of asylum-seekers, restrictive interpretations of the refugee definition, restriction on the freedom of movement, the withholding or withdrawal of social welfare benefits and limitations on the right to work (Crisp, 2003). While in the 1990s refugees were sometimes considered threats to international peace and security, terrorism concerns strongly reinforced the image of refugees as security threats (Frelick, 2007). In various countries, asylum became a very important issue for the broad public, with high electoral relevance. In various countries in the 'Global North', many politicians and citizens consider illegal or irregular migration as a threat to various aspects of life, and the original IRR, including asylum reception, is increasingly challenged (Crisp, 2003).

In sum, the increasingly negative image of refugees has led to a situation in which security reasons – keeping refugees out of the own country – outweighed the granting of asylum and interventions to achieve solutions in source countries (Frelick, 2007). More concretely, the choice of the international community to intervene or not to replace governments of the countries of origin of refugees was largely determined by national security concerns. The consequences for refugees, positive or negative, were thereby just a side issue. In this model, the issue area of security, as one of the issue areas that overlap with the IRR (supra), thus determines the direction of the regime and undermines its key principles.[27]

1.4 Towards migration management approaches (the 1990s-…)

1.4.1 Migration management: general outline and main components

Since the 1990s and 2000s, industrialized states have often adopted a two-track approach to forced migration. Traditionally, they have applied a range of restrictive, reactive measures that are aimed at 'burden-shirking' and 'burden-shifting' (Uçarer, 2006). In essence, they attempt to limit the number of asylum seekers entering and staying in their territory, including border security policies (Crisp, 2005). As many states are increasingly reluctant to accept, retain and provide rights to refugees on their territory, they often focus on obstructing and deterring forcibly displaced people to leave their country of origin, arrive at the states' territory (cf. border security policies with physical, naval and invisible legal or 'paper' walls, Frelick, 2007; The Migrants' Files, 2016) and exercise their rights, as well as on facilitating their expulsion (Frelick, 2007; Koser, 2001; Nanda, 2007, Zamora, 2019).

Acknowledging that the above-mentioned restrictive policies and measures do not work very effectively and given the perception of migration crises, in recent years, the IRR has come under

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[27] For further discussions of the evolutions, challenges and underlying reasons of the international refugee regime in these periods, see, amongst others, Barnett (2002), Crisp, (2000, 2003, 2005), Goodwin-Gill (1999), Joly and Nettleton (1990), Kourula (1997), Lucassen & Lucassen (1999), Meissner et al., (1993), Ruthström-Ruin (1993), Sztucki (1999), Twomey and Nicholson (1999).

significantly more pressure, which is seemingly resulting in a shift to a new forced migration policy paradigm, the '**migration management paradigm**'. This paradigm implies that migration, including forced migration, can and must be controlled and managed in a predictable, orderly and organised manner through a comprehensive, coherent, internationally harmonized policy approach (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010; Ghosh, 2000). This involves states and, more prominently than before, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, private companies and policy experts (see also UNHCR's partnerships, supra). As such, migration could be beneficial for all the actors involved, that are, the countries of origin and destination and the migrants themselves (cf. the 'triple win' objective) (Crisp, 2005; Geiger & Pécoud, 2010; Schuster, 2005).[28] More specifically, to be beneficial, there must be 'regulated openness' towards economically desirable migrants and continued restrictiveness towards unwanted migrants (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010; Kalm, 2010). As this global policy discourse considers migration - if managed adequately, as potentially positive, it contrasts representations of migration as a threat and 'zero immigration' policies and rhetoric, and inserts more pragmatic, political realist and (neo)liberal rationales into migration policies. Further, it is comprehensive and holistic as it aims to address and (re)connect migration with – enabled by IRC (supra), overlapping regimes such as development, human rights, health, security, labour market, integration, etcetera.

Both security and migration management paradigms serve state interests and are reflected in shifting emphases from rather a protection orientation (e.g., local integration, resettlement) to rather a humanitarian orientation, comprising voluntary repatriation, local protection, and prevention, including (limited) humanitarian and development support to the regions of origin and transit, and limited onward movement to the 'Global North' (Aleinikoff & Zamore 2019; Betts & Loescher 2011). Let us briefly explain the underlying political realist rationales.

Put simply, states can contribute to the protection of forcibly displaced people in two main manners. First, they can admit forcibly displaced people into their territory and accord them rights (e.g., asylum, refugee status, subsidiary protection, cf. local integration). Second, they can contribute to support forcibly displaced people who are on the territory of another state through 'burden-sharing' or 'responsibility-sharing', either financially and materially (e.g., humanitarian assistance, development assistance) or through resettlement quota (i.e. third-country resettlement) (Betts 2010; Gottwald, 2014). However, contrasting the former manner, the latter manner is characterized by a very weak legal and normative framework (Betts 2010; McEwen 2017). As the majority of forcibly displaced people come from and remain in the 'Global South' (UNHCR, n.d.-l, supra, cf. Introduction), this has major implications (Betts, 2010). Southern states that neighbour conflict-affected or human rights-violating countries are obliged to host and protect forcibly displaced people arriving in their territories, while Northern states are barely obliged to contribute to the protection of forcibly displaced people located in the 'Global South', creating incentives for Northern states to contain forcibly displaced people in their regions of origin (infra). This can be considered as a 'North-South impasse', which

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[28] According to the triple win objective, mobility of people is potentially beneficial for all parties involved: the host countries need migrant workers for labour market and demographic reasons, the countries of origin export workers in exchange for remittances, and the migrants themselves have access to better income opportunities (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010).

strongly hinders equitable North-South cooperation on the protection of forcibly displaced people (ibid.). Acknowledging temporal and/or geographic variations and exceptions, Northern states generally have little incentives to cooperate on responsibility-sharing, while Southern states usually have the least capacity to contribute to the protection of forcibly displaced people but the largest responsibilities to do so, and only little abilities to influence the 'Global North'.[29] However, this impasse severely impacts forcibly displaced people's access to protection and sustainable solutions (Betts, 2010; Crisp, 2005). More generally, as Gottwald (2014, p. 535) argues:

> 'Yet in pursuit of their self-interest to contain populations in regions of origin, states and international organizations have tended to implement systems approaches on a regional basis rather than globally. This closed system approach reflects the structural inequality that characterizes North–South relations (Chimni 2000), contradicts refugees' transnational strategies, and contributes to irregular population movements to the global North.'

1.4.2   Migration management in practice

Responding to the above-mentioned incentives, many states (e.g., Australia, Canada, the US, various EU member states) increasingly close, securitize, and/or externalize[30] their borders, focus on policies in and/or with third countries, and ignore and/or violate rights of forcibly displaced people (Aleinikoff & Zamore, 2019; Andersson, 2014; Crisp, 2005), which can lead to, amongst others, 'neo-refoulement'[31] (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008). These measures are often enabled through related issue areas, and legitimized and managed through related practices and discourses; for instance, through depoliticizing humanitarian and development discourses and practices that respond to common victimhood narratives of forcibly displaced people (Crane, 2020, for discussions on the common humanitarian victimhood narratives forcibly displaced people, see Chapter 4). Other larger state interests thus often strongly determine forced migration policies (Betts, 2010) and policy discourses, and refugee organizations' public communication strategies (infra, cf. Chapter 4).

More generally, various states have examined and, to lesser extents, implemented a series of alternative asylum and migration policy measures (e.g., development assistance, debt reduction, promotion of human rights and good policies, regular channels for labour migration, migration information campaigns). However, increasingly more states now address more radical approaches to

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[29] The protection of forcibly displaced people involves costs and, being a global public good, its benefits (e.g. upholding human rights and international security) are available to all states, whether they contribute or not, stimulating free-riding on the contributions of other states (Betts, 2009c).

[30] 'Externalization' refers to 'the extension of border and migration controls beyond the so-called "migrant receiving nations" in the 'Global North' and into neighbouring countries or sending states in the 'Global South'. It refers to a wide range of practices from controls of borders, rescue operations, to measures addressing the drivers of migration' (Stock et al., 2019, p. 1). It involves 'processes and practices whereby actors complement policies to control migration across their territorial boundaries, with initiatives manifesting such control extra-territorially and through other public or private agencies than their own' (Lemberg-Pedersen, 2019, p. 248).

[31] This refers to a geographically based strategy to avoid the possibility of asylum through a new form of forced return that differs from non-refoulement (supra), 'that is, the return of asylum seekers and other migrants to transit countries or regions of origin *before* they reach the sovereign territory in which they could make a claim' (Hyndman & Mountz, p. 250, original italics).

asylum, including extraterritorial processing, protection in the region of origin, organized refugee resettlement programs, and humanitarian visa systems (Crisp, 2005). Hence, many states increasingly

(1) close, securitize, militarize and externalize their borders; make agreements with third countries on and apply in-region asylum processing, regional protection zones, transit processing centres, interception at sea, forced or voluntary return, relocation, and arbitrary detention;

(2) increasingly demand visas and make use of 'safe third countries'[32]; and

(3) use forcibly displaced people as bargaining chips in negotiations on economic, political and military issues (Andersson, 2016a, 2016b; Crisp, 2005; Schuster, 2005).[33]

As said, this paradigm shift is reflected in the changing focus from local integration and resettlement to voluntary repatriation, local protection, and prevention (Betts & Loescher, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011). Other issue areas of the 'refugee regime complex' (supra) that intersect with the 1951 Convention often enable such measures. For instance, countries in the 'Global North' often employ travel migration restrictions - meant for the securitisation of migration - to decrease the number of incoming forcibly displaced people without explicitly breaching legal principles, such as non-refoulement. Additionally, the humanitarian protection framework for internally displaced people which involves the notion of 'internal flight alternative (IFA)' responds to local protection needs but simultaneously supports a migration control agenda. With IFA, various states in the 'Global North' legitimize asylum refusals and deportations of asylum seekers to their country of origin (Betts, 2009a).[34] Larger state interests in other domains that overlap with the refugee regime can thus strongly determine forced migration policies (Betts, 2010) as well as the public communication of refugee organizations (infra, cf. Chapter 4).

While predictable and orderly migration can be beneficial, especially for forcibly displaced people themselves, whose security and prosperity are often threatened in their search for safe reception, migration management policies can be and are often problematic in various ways. First, the fundamental human rights principles of the international refugee system must be carefully guarded. Second, as Crisp (2005, p. 52) already envisioned in 2005:

'[M]igratory movements involving refugees and asylum seekers are inherently chaotic and unpredictable (…). While the notion of migration management has a reassuringly technocratic

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[32] States use this concept in the asylum procedure to transfer responsibility for the examination of an asylum request from the host country to another country where they had found, could have found or, following a formal agreement, can find international protection (UNHCR, n.d.-s).

[33] Furthermore, asylum-seekers sometimes have no or difficult access to (proper) asylum procedures and state care, or they only obtain temporary protection. Recognized refugees also often experience problems, whether or not caused by the government, in areas such as work, identity papers, travel documents, naturalization and violence (Betts, et al., 2012; Frelick, 2007; Nanda, 2007).

[34] More specifically, IFA means that individuals fleeing persecution do not have to leave their country of origin but can obtain protection locally in a so-called 'safe' region (Betts, 2009a; O'Sullivan, 2016).

ring to it, we can be sure that the reality will prove to be considerably more complex, controversial and costly than this concept implies.'

Indeed, the above-mentioned restrictive, border security and migration management policies are generally criticized for their (lack of) effectiveness, proportionality and legitimacy, as they imply large human and financial costs, and have facilitated border security and illegal industries (Andersson, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Crisp, 2005, The Migrants' Files, 2016). The EU, for example, nowadays focuses on migration management that primarily involves border management but also consultancy on migration and asylum, and has consequently created a multisectoral migration management market (The Migrants' Files, 2016). This involves, among others, technology, arms, military, security, shipping and consultancy companies, both at local, national and EU levels. In that regard, both the EU and its member states invest nowadays heavily in different forms of:

(1) research and development programs on border security of some of the largest European technological and arms companies;

(2) software. Among others, this includes the coordinating EU border security agency Frontex, the European Border Surveillance system (EUROSUR), the European Data Protection Supervisor (Eurodac, i.e. the European fingerprint database);

(3) hardware. Among others, this involves border police, including boats, drones and off-road vehicles, building (e.g., Spain, Greece, Bulgaria] and maintaining (e.g., Ceuta, Melilla) physical walls, and arrangements with foreign states to block forcibly displaced people to come to the EU (e.g., the EU-Turkey deal, the Italy-Libya deal); and

(4) deportations, which is one of the largest but barely measured, nor transparent costs of the EU's restrictive immigration policy (Andersson, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; The Migrants' Files, 2016).

The EU's forced migration policy has consequently created a border security industry, involving some of Europe's largest technology and arms companies, and has caused very large human costs (e.g., a large number of deaths, large levels of suffering and criminalization of both forcibly displaced people and compassionate volunteers) and financial costs (e.g., the costs for the border security policies, the human smuggling costs for forcibly displaced people due to Europe's closed doors) (ibid.). In line therewith, many authors argue that these border security policies even have contradictory effects, as they contribute to human smuggling and other related illegal industries (e.g., human trafficking, arms trade, prostitution) (Andersson, 2014; Crisp, 2005, The Migrants' Files, 2016).

Furthermore, many border and migration management policies of the European Union and other states are based on the humanitarian-security nexus. Joint military-policing-humanitarian efforts thereby blur the lines between the involved military, police and humanitarian institutions and operations (Andersson, 2018). This 'uneasy alliance' (Walters, 2011, p. 145), characterized by interagency tensions and sharing practices, often 'mixes reception and rejection, care and coercion, in complex ways that reinforce the official border security model—a trend that is also (if not equally) in evidence at other borders across the globe' (Andersson, 2017, p. 66).

Many states and bodies legitimize these policies and practices by using security-humanitarian discourses, which reproduce the perceived ambivalent character of forcibly displaced people (infra) and war, emergency and rescue imaginaries (Andersson, 2018; Musarò, 2017). Within these imaginaries 'the bio-political imperative of managing lives is (…) expressed through an aesthetic of trauma, where 'war' [on migrants] is represented both as an intimate experience of sorrow and as a public act of peacemaking' (Musarò, 2017, p. 11). This humanitarian-security nexus is enabled by the increasing globalization and interdependence and interactions between various refugee-related regimes (cf. IRC, supra) that shape states' forced migration policies, and influences refugee organizations' public communication strategies (infra, cf. Chapter 4). Intertwined therewith, various researchers (Guia et al., 2011; Stumpf, 2006, 2013; Van der Woude et al., 2014, 2017) observe processes in which crime control and immigration control become increasingly interrelated, which is termed 'crimmigration'.

1.5 Underlying reasons

More generally, these policy shifts can be largely explained by various intertwined socio-cultural, economic and political aspects that create negative public opinions about forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' and, partly overlapping, conflict with state interests (Betts et al, 2012; Walker & Maxwell, 2009). Although there are significant national and socio-demographic differences (e.g., age, education, level of urbanization of the residence, the size and nature of migration), recent public opinions in Europe about refugees and immigrants from the 'Global South' seem to be often rather negative (European Commission, 2018; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014) and/or more negative than before (Lucassen, 2018; Rustenbach, 2010).

First, some argue that (forced) migration is generally accepted when it is (perceived as) small-scale, orderly, and responding to national labour market needs. Immigration, however, is currently perceived as large-scale, irregularly and involving only limited financial and/or social capital, and is thus frequently not appreciated (Crisp, 2005). More concretely, there is now a widespread (but incorrect) perception that the international community is facing an 'unprecedented global refugee crisis' (for extensive criticisms and nuance, see Fransen & de Haas, 2019; White, 2019) and that established standards and legal instruments regarding refugees are no longer suited (Crisp, 2018). Second, the recently increased social dissatisfaction with forced migration can further be explained by growing discomfort with the immigration and integration of former colonial and labour migrants, Islam, Islamist terrorism and globalization, and increases in social inequality and right-wing populism, which have recently merged in a 'perfect storm', as well as by inefficient migration policies (Crisp, 2005; Lucassen, 2018), and Islamophobic (Sayyid & Vakil, 2010), anti-Semitic (Lipstadt, 2019) and homophobic movements (Weiss & Bosia, 2013) worldwide.

Third, intertwined therewith, and acknowledging temporal and spatial differences (Sana, 2021), forcibly displaced people, especially young men (MacDonald, 2017) are often perceived and represented as economic migrants (Koser, 2001; Loescher, 2001), as threats to established patterns such as the host country's local social cohesion, culture and economy (Frelick, 2007; Ivarsflaten, 2005;

Majeed, 2019) or even as (potential) security risks (e.g., criminals, terrorists), especially since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 (Betts et al, 2012; Crisp, 2005, 2018; Kagwanja & Juma, 2008).[35] Furthermore, some news media tend to perpetuate negative public opinions by representing forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' as fundamentally ambivalent figures: they are both 'victims' of a geopolitical conflict and 'threats' to the global order (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Crisp, 2003; Pupavac, 2008).[36] Fourth, in these political and social contexts, the economic and socio-cultural contributions of forcibly displaced people to their host countries are largely neglected by politicians. Contrarily, they often marginalize and turn forcibly displaced people into scapegoats, complicating their searches to find work and contribute to the host country's economy. In this way, the notion of the 'dependent refugee', who is unable to find a job and relies on social benefits, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy (Crisp, 2003). Such climates often trigger xenophobia and increase the far right's popularity (Freedman, 2015; Frelick, 2007; Skran, 1992), potentially resulting in political 'us-them' discourses, based on stereotypes as the above-mentioned (Colombo, 2017; Klaus, 2017), and more restrictive forced migration policies, not seldomly driven by electoral reasons (Betts et al, 2012). A tangible result of these developments is the rising physical violence (Knight & Tribin, 2020; Krueger & Pischke, 1997) against and the negative psychosocial implications (Leudar et al., 2008) for forcibly displaced people. Finally, it is increasingly clear that the international refugee protection regime lacks effective enforcement mechanisms (Crisp, 2005, 2018). Governments are aware that they can neglect their obligations to refugees with impunity, with UNHCR unable to hold them accountable as it relies on states for funding (supra) and for its ability to operate in crisis areas. Hence, the organization is reluctant to publicly criticize and condemn states that breach refugee protection principles and must rely on the High Commissioner's moral authority and ability to persuade political leaders to uphold refugee rights (ibid.), as well as on its public communication strategies (infra, cf. Chapters 3 and 4).

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[35] However, various academic research indicates that, apart from legal and moral obligations, the presence of forcibly displaced people is rather ambiguous and not unequivocally beneficial or disadvantageous at various social, economic (e.g., Fiala, 2015; Jacobsen, 2002; Kreibaum, 2016; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2016), and crime levels (e.g., Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2021; Kayaoglu, 2022; Masterson & Yasenov, 2021) for host countries (both in low- and high-income countries) and, above all, context-dependent.

[36] We discuss the news representations of forcibly displaced people in more detail in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: The evolving humanitarian communication landscape in interaction with broader changing institutional fields: a multi-stakeholder analysis

Since the public communication of refugee organizations is a particular type of humanitarian communication, in this chapter we discuss humanitarian communication and important trends and evolutions within the broader humanitarian communication landscape. We thereby attempt to focus as much as possible - given the limited and fragmented literature - on and/or make links with the public communication of refugee organizations. Further, we spotlight the communicative dimension of humanitarianism or thus the contexts, actors, media genres, and discourses of humanitarian communication, rather than on the whole humanitarian sector and all its trends. However, as refugee organizations do not operate in a vacuum - including in terms of their communication efforts - but within broader political, economic and socio-cultural contexts and focus on and interact with various stakeholders and/or target groups, their public communication is inevitably be influenced by these actors and contexts. Theoretically, this idea is best reflected by the intertwined framework of agenda-setting and -building theories, which will we first discuss. This discussion is followed by a brief overview of the broader humanitarian communication landscape and its interactions with, and the forced migration discourses of the key societal institutions of media, politics and the private sector.

2.1 Agenda-setting and -building: a theoretical framework

2.1.1 Agenda-setting theory: a general outline and its main concepts

As the most important information sources for citizens about events in the outside world, including regarding distant suffering (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Van Belle, 2000; Waters & Tindall, 2011), news media have important agenda-setting roles. **Agenda-setting** is defined as 'the successful transfer of salience from the media agenda to the public agenda' (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021, p. 37), and forms 'one of the most comprehensive and international theories of journalism studies available' (Valenzuela, 2019, p. 1). Media often influence which topics audiences consider important and which aspects of those topics they focus on (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021). More generally, agenda-setting theory is a theory of media effects or mass communication effects that examines the ways news media attempt to influence the agendas of the general public and other audiences, and establish a hierarchy of news prevalence (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008; McCombs, 2014; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021).[37]

Although media messages usually contain information that is simultaneously relevant to both the first and second levels of the agenda-setting process, the nature of this influence is distinct (McCombs, 2014). More concretely, first-level agenda-setting concerns the influence of the media on the relative salience of *objects* (e.g., issues, people, institutions or other topics, for instance, forced migration) among the public. It affects which topics audiences should consider important or 'what to think *about*'

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[37] Although agenda-setting research usually focuses on and is described as the influence of news agendas on public agendas, there are also important strands of research that study the influence of news agendas on political and policy agendas (e.g., Fawzi et al., 2018; Gilardi et al., 2022; van der Pas et al., 2017; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006, 2016) and corporate agendas (e.g., Kim et al, 2015; Kiousis et al., 2007; Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006). However, the influence of news agendas on NGO agendas has hardly been studied (Guo & McCombs, 2016).

(Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics; see also McCombs, 2018; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021). First-level agenda-setting research thus examines the transfer of salience of an object from the media agenda to the public agenda (McCombs, 2018). Second-level or attribute agenda-setting implies the influence of the media on the relative salience of the *attributes* (i.e., particular characteristics or traits) of these objects among the public. It shapes which aspects of those topics the intended publics should focus on, or thus 'how' or '*what* to think' (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics; see also McCombs, 2018; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021). Second-level agenda-setting research thus examines how the salience of the attributes of an object on the news agenda influences the salience of those attributes on the public agenda. It thereby examines the salience of two dimensions of these attributes: 'a substantive dimension describing specific characteristics of the issues and topics on the media and public agendas and an affective dimension regarding the tone of these descriptions as positive, negative, or neutral' (McCombs, 2018, p. 1).

More recently, studies have identified a third level of agenda-setting (Cheng, 2016; Guo et al., 2012; Vu et al., 2014). In first-level and second-level agenda-setting research, the examined elements are discrete objects and attributes; they have been disaggregated from their wider context. However, in news coverage and the reception and behaviour of the public, these elements are bundled and are all connected to numerous other elements, forming networks. Third-level agenda-setting or the 'Network Agenda Setting Model (NAS model)' posits that the salience of these bundled relationships among objects and attributes is transferred from the news agenda to the public agenda (McCombs, 2018). It thus suggests that 'the news media can actually bundle different objects and attributes and make these bundles of elements salient in the public's mind simultaneously' (Guo et al., 2012, p. 55). The NAS model assumes that the more often news media associate objects and attributes, the more likely the public will perceive them as interconnected (Guo et al., 2012). In other words, news media can also influence 'what and how to associate' (Vu et al., 2014, p. 669). Intertwined therewith, Vu and colleagues (2019) find that the effects of agenda-setting should be evaluated in relation to the economic, political and media contexts of the country. Accordingly, individual factors such as age, education, residential area and political ideology as well as national macro variables, including economic development and media freedom, are associated with the strength of such effects. Additionally, several studies have investigated intermedia agenda-setting, examining how news media agendas are shaped by other news media agendas, or thus how media content is influenced by other media content (Danielian & Reese, 1989; Lopez-Escobar et al., 1998).[38]

Finally, we note that various research has been conducted so far on the agenda-setting role of news media in the context of forced migration, and generally has observed mixed results. Buturoiu and colleagues (2017) found that the key objects and attributes that the media used to portray recent forced migration were generally transferred to the public agenda. News media function as the main information sources for citizens regarding forced displacement, and as facilitators of people's access to social reality. Media consumption (quality versus popular news media), media trust, and the evaluation of media coverage on refugees are further important underlying explanatory factors of

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[38] Although this form of agenda-setting is rather outside the research focus of this project, for further discussions and research in various contexts, see Golan (2006), Harder and colleagues (2017), Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008), and Vonbun and colleagues (2016).

public opinion on immigration (De Coninck et al., 2018; Dunaway et al., 2010). In line therewith, various researchers found that immigration news positively impacts anti-immigrant party support (e.g., Burscher et al., 2015; Damstra et al., 2021; Sheets et al., 2016). This is not so surprising as news media often represent forcibly displaced people as sociocultural, socioeconomic, health, or even security threats (infra). However, Melek and Ulucay (2019) observed that positive news coverage of Syrian refugees positively impacted public opinion and attitudes towards refugees in Turkey.

2.1.2   Agenda-building theory: a general outline and its main concepts

Grounded in agenda-setting theory, a relatively young tradition of **agenda-building** research examines who initially shapes the agendas of news media and, directly and indirectly, of the general public.[39] Although the concepts of 'agenda-setting' and 'agenda-building' are often used interchangeably, within the context of public relations, agenda-building research has mainly investigated how various types of actors (e.g., political actors, private sector actors, [I]NGOs) aim to build an agenda and influence media coverage about themselves and/or their issues of interests (Kiousis et al., 2006; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010; Lariscy et al., 2009; Yang & Saffer, 2018). Agenda-building research received increased academic attention following Gandy's (1982, p. 7) call to 'go beyond agenda setting [sic] constructs to determine who sets the media agenda, how and for what purpose it is set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society.' Within the public sphere, diverse actors after all compete to promote their agendas and frames (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009), driven by the understanding that favourable news coverage is a precondition for public and policy influence (Baum & Potter, 2008). If agenda-building actors succeed in their attempt to 'publish their information subsidies, practitioners influence the media agenda, the public agenda and public opinion, a process known as agenda building [sic]' (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152).

Corresponding with agenda-setting, agenda-building research mainly observes the transfer of both object (i.e. first-level agenda-building) and attribute salience (i.e. second-level agenda-building) from external sources to media and public agendas (Kim & Kiousis, 2012; Kiousis et al., 2006; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010). First-level agenda-building research thus mainly investigates the transfer of salience of an object from the agenda of external sources to the media agenda, while second-level agenda-building research primarily analyses how the salience of the attributes of an object on external agendas influences the salience of those attributes on the media agenda (Kiousis et al., 2006; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010). In other words, agenda-building research mainly examines whether, how and to which degree particular actors attempt to influence which topics journalists cover and how they cover them. Similarly, attribute salience is thereby often investigated in terms of substantive and affective dimensions. Substantive attributes, such as conflict and human interest, provide structure to topics, while affective attributes include the positive, negative, or neutral tone being used (Kiousis et al., 2011).

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[39] Although traditionally the influence of agenda-building on public agendas has often been considered as indirect - that is, through the influence of media agendas - agenda-building actors also increasingly directly influence public agendas through social media (e.g., Etter & Vestergaard, 2016; Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013).

The main strategy for generating news attention and coverage via agenda-building is through the use of 'information subsidies', a term coined by Gandy (1982), and further developed by various other researchers (Berkowitz & Adams, 1990; Gandy, 1982; Turk, 1985, 1986; Turk & Franklin, 1987). Gandy (1982, p. 8) considers his influential concept as 'efforts to reduce the prices faced by others for certain information, in order to increase its consumption'. Similarly, Lieber and Golan (2011, p. 60) think of information subsidies as 'the currency of trade within the marketplace of information'. More concretely, the most important forms of information subsidies are public relations materials, spokespersons, and events (Hallahan, 2011). For instance, this concerns press releases, press conferences, interviews, speeches, and social media communication, which are provided to journalists and reduce the time and costs of the news production process. These information subsidies have proved to be successful in influencing news agendas and public opinion (Kim & Kiousis, 2012; Kiousis et al., 2006; Parmelee, 2014). Although journalists tend to have mixed feelings toward public relations practitioners who act as information sources (Len-Rios et al., 2009; Reich, 2011), public relations activities influence news coverage, mainly because of limited resources, large workloads, and/or due to the need for expert knowledge about the story subject (Len-Rios et al., 2009; Reich, 2010). Additionally, journalists distrust the information subsidies offered by NGOs less than those of politicians and companies (Reich, 2011). We elaborate on this theme further in this chapter when we discuss NGO-journalism relationships.

Overviewing the field of agenda-building research, most studies have analysed political public relations (e.g., Kim & Kiousis, 2012; Kiousis et al., 2011; Kiousis et al., 2006; Kiousis & Strömbäck, 2010), while others have investigated corporate communication (e.g., Kim et al., 2015; Kiousis et al., 2007; Ragas, 2013; Schafraad et al., 2016) or both (e.g., Lan et al., 2020). However, to our knowledge, only a few studies have been conducted on the agenda-building role of (I)NGOs, civil society organizations and/or humanitarian organizations (e.g., Van Leuven et al., 2013; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014). In particular, the agenda-building roles and efforts of refugee organizations are hardly explored. Yang and Saffer (2018) observed that refugee organizations require different agenda-building strategies depending on the targeted media (i.e. traditional media versus social media). While information subsidies can strongly influence traditional media coverage, NGOs' hyperlink network positions strongly shape their prominence in social media conversations. Finally, stakeholder-initiated engagement and organizational characteristics and resources can play important agenda-building roles in both cases (ibid.). In our empirical research, we attempt to address these gaps and further contribute to the knowledge about the agenda-building strategies of refugee organizations. To achieve this objective, we theorize and contextualize this communication as a form of humanitarian communication.

2.2 The evolving humanitarian communication landscape

Humanitarian communication is defined in different ways. Chouliaraki and Vestergaard (2021, p. 1) broadly define it as

> 'public practices of meaning-making that represent human suffering as a cause of collective emotion and action. Whether it is an online Action Aid campaign, a celebrity speaking at a UN conference, a human rights film at the movie theatre or a natural disaster tweet, these forms of speech can all be regarded as humanitarian communication insofar as they render

vulnerable others into language or image with a view to inviting audiences to act upon their vulnerability – to help alleviate their suffering or protect them from harm.'

Similarly, Chouliaraki (2010, p. 108) earlier defined humanitarian communication as 'the rhetorical practices of transnational actors that engage with universal ethical claims, such as common humanity or global civil society, to mobilize action on human suffering.' A common thread running through these definitions is that humanitarian communication performs not only informative functions but also sensitizing, persuasive, and mobilizing functions (Chouliaraki, 2010; Chouliaraki & Vestergaard, 2021; Hestad, 2020). As Chouliaraki and Vestergaard (2021, p. 2) argue: 'Rather, it also operates as a logic of sentimental pedagogy that mobilizes emotion (…) so as to catalyze communities of feeling and socialize these communities into dispositions of care towards suffering others within and outside their communities of belonging'. Hence, humanitarian communication creates political, emotional and ethical relationships between audiences and the represented suffering people, and shapes both how audiences witness the latter and the ways how they are invited to feel, think and act towards them (Chouliaraki, 2010, 2013). More specifically, news coverage and NGO communication about humanitarian, development, and/or human rights issues often call on audiences in the 'Global North' to care for and act in solidarity with distant others (Orgad & Seu, 2014a). They are mostly asked to develop 'intimacy at a distance' (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Thompson, 1995), a mediated, intimate, mostly non-reciprocal bonding with distant others (Orgad & Seu, 2014a). The focus is often on individuals, especially women and children as 'ideal victims' (Höijer, 2004; Moeller, 1999; Seu, 2015). By focusing on the personal intimate lives of these suffering people, humanitarian communication is used to facilitate identification with and care for distant sufferers among audiences (Chouliaraki, 2006; Cohen, 2001; Seu, 2015).

While we acknowledge the relevance and value of the above-mentioned broad definitions, given the research focus of this dissertation, we here consider and limit humanitarian communication as a form of public communication that is produced by humanitarian organizations. More concretely, public communication can be perceived as a large-scale, often diversified type of communication, consisting of various media genres (e.g., press releases, news stories, photos, videos) about public themes (e.g., protection of forcibly displaced people) strategically directed toward various target audiences in the public sphere (e.g., governments, media, own members, citizens, businesses, other humanitarian organizations) through an organized and systematic framework of communication activities (e.g., regular communication, campaigns), channels (e.g., traditional and digital media) and interpersonal networks to meet informational and strategic objectives; either by directly reaching audiences or through news media (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Humanitarian organizations use public communication generally to gain broader visibility, inform, sensitize, influence behaviours, set agendas, differentiate themselves, and gain credibility (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Green, 2018; Hestad, 2020; Lang, 2013; Sommerfeldt, 2013). This type of communication is thereby often guided and shaped by the humanitarian organizations' key humanitarian principles, beliefs, objectives, activities and/or sociopolitical contexts (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). The final goal is to obtain public, political, financial and/or practical support (Green, 2018; Hestad, 2020; Lang, 2013). In line with and strongly influenced by our definition of the more specific public communication of refugee organizations (see Chapter 3) and the above-mentioned insights, we define humanitarian communication in this dissertation as ***the***

practice of organized and systematic symbolic social action (diversified communication disseminated through a variety of channels and activities) within the public sphere to reach set goals, co-create the humanitarian organization, perform civic relations and fulfil its mission by groups of people that pursue the (perceived) common good for humanitarian goals and issues.

Considering the sociopolitical contexts described in Chapter 1, refugee organizations and other stakeholders often interact and attempt to build agendas through public communication to obtain media, political, financial, and/or public support (Green, 2018), which potentially affects the public communication strategies of refugee organizations. These key social institutions disseminate particular 'institutional messages', which are 'collations of thoughts that take on lives independent of senders and recipients. They may have the force of rules, spread intentionally or unintentionally via multiple channels to narrow or wider audiences', and 'carry institutional logics—patterns of beliefs and rules' (Lammers, 2011, p. 154).[40]

Moreover, as said, we argue that IRC has not only enabled current forced migration policies, measures and underlying factors (supra, cf. Chapter 1) but has also subsequently influenced which actors play increasingly important roles in the IRR, and how they communicate about forcibly displaced people, particularly regarding refugee organizations' public communication strategies. Therefore, responding to calls to approach 'representational strategies on migration from a multi-stakeholder perspective' (d'Haenens & Joris, 2020, p. 437; see also Leurs et al., 2020), we now discuss the forced migration narratives of news media, political actors and private sector actors as well as their broader mutual contextualizing interactions with refugee organizations.[41] This enables us to investigate how different relevant actors reproduce or counter certain migration representations. More specifically, by investigating the representation strategies from a multi-stakeholder perspective

> 'possible distortions can be identified thanks to the "weighing" of multiple viewpoints from relevant actors. It is then the task of the researcher to bring these different, divergent or at times colliding viewpoints together in a meaningful way, making evidence-based recommendations for change' (d'Haenens & Joris, 2020, p. 438).

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[40] Following McPhersons' (2015) definition, which is inspired by Bourdieu (1983) and Thompson (2010), we can think of a particular 'logic' as the explicit and implicit rules that govern success in a particular field and thus the practices in that field. In that regard, we discuss below 'news logics' and 'media logics'.

[41] We acknowledge that refugee organizations have also various other important stakeholders and/or target groups. However, we do not these discuss these actors for reasons of focus, relevance, space and pragmatics; that is, we mainly attempt to discuss the dominant mediated institutional discourses and actors in the public sphere, which are most likely to (substantially) influence and/or explain refugee organizations' public communication strategies. For studies on mediated migration discourses of the general public (e.g., Avraamidou & Eftychiou, 2021; Bozdag & Smets, 2017; Yantseva, 2020), forcibly displaced people themselves (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2017; Rae et al., 2018; Risam, 2018), cultural actors (e.g., Menozzi, 2019; Özdemir & Özdemir, 2017; Yalouri, 2019), (pro-)refugee and/or grassroots movements (e.g., Bishop, 2019; Costanza-Chock, 2014; Georgiou, 2018; Nikunen, 2019b) and alt-right and anti-migration movements (e.g., Farkas et al., 2018; Monnier et al., 2022). For adequate overviews, see Leurs and colleagues (2020) and Nikunen (2019).

Whereas news media form important agenda-setting actors and are one of the main target audiences of the public communication efforts of international refugee organizations, governmental actors and private sector actors are important interacting and competing agenda-building actors (infra). As we will argue, they substantially influence, directly and/or indirectly, the discursive strategies of refugee organizations. In Chapter 4, we elucidate in more depth the public communication strategies of refugee organizations, including their representation strategies.

2.3 The interacting and evolving field of journalism

2.3.1 Humanitarian-journalistic interactions

Since the 1980s, the number of organizations in the humanitarian landscape has increased significantly (Franks, 2010; Gibbons, 2010). This has led to strong competition for humanitarian funding and, subsequently, media attention (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Kapoor, 2013). Several researchers (e.g., Bennett & Kottasz, 2015; Brown & Minty, 2008; Franks, 2013; Sobel Cohen et al., 2021) explain this struggle for media attention by pointing to the phenomenon that the scale of provided assistance rather corresponds with the level of media attention the humanitarian crisis received than with its magnitude. Some researchers (Sobel Cohen et al., 2021) even find a correlation between the amount of news coverage a crisis receives and the amount of humanitarian assistance. However, there is currently 'little conclusive evidence' (Eisensee & Strömberg 2007, p. 693) that news coverage influences the humanitarian policies of governments. As Eisensee and Strömberg (2007, p. 693-694) explain: 'The problem is that news coverage and policy will be correlated even if news has no effect on policy since news coverage depends on unobserved issue salience and political agendas, both of which directly affect policy'. Other researchers nuance the importance of media attention for humanitarian funding. For instance, Olsen and colleagues (2003) find that media only occasionally play a decisive role in influencing donors for providing emergency assistance. Rather, the political interests and especially security interests of donors from the 'Global North' are important, along with the presence and strength of humanitarian stakeholders, such as NGOs and international organizations that lobby donor governments. More generally, there are various theoretical perspectives on the influence of news coverage on government humanitarian assistance, including the 'CNN effect' (Gilboa, 2005; Livingston, 1997), the 'cockroach theory of bureaucracy' (van Belle et al., 2004), and 'bureaucratic mediatisation' (Scott et al., 2022). It would lead us too far to discuss all of these theoretical perspectives but we can summarize that they all share the idea that, at least to some (different) degree and in some (different) way, the level of news coverage influences the level of humanitarian assistance.[42]

Moreover, news coverage is also important for the construction and visibility of the image, identity, values and norms of the humanitarian organizations, or thus 'humanitarian branding' (Benthall, 2008; Cottle & Nolan, 2007). As a result of the rising competition in and the increasing mediatisation and marketization of the humanitarian field (infra), this form of branding is becoming increasingly important for humanitarian organizations (Chouliaraki, 2010; Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Vestergaard, 2008, 2010). More generally, news media access is crucial to achieve the aforementioned objectives of public communication, including humanitarian communication, as news coverage constitutes, as said, the

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[42] For an extensive discussion of these perspectives and related limitations and/or criticisms, see Scott and colleagues (2022).

main source of information on 'distant suffering' for the general public (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Van Belle, 2000; Waters & Tindall, 2011). In that regard, the chances of public communication being found newsworthy by journalists would increase depending on the extent to which they adhere to news media conventions (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). Simply put, these 'news logics' refer to the news rhythm, formats, values, and working conditions (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014).[43] However, (mainstream) news logics often result in simplification, polarisation, intensification, concretisation, personification and stereotyping (Altheide, 2004; Altheide & Snow, 1979). Furthermore, actors within the public sphere have varying degrees of resources (e.g., funding, know-how, experience, social relationships, reputation), which can be valued differently depending on the specific context (Ihlen, 2007). More specifically, public communication generally strengthens the authority of political (e.g., politicians, government agencies) and private sector actors, which have more extensive communication departments (Wolfsfeld, 2011) as compared to most refugee organizations.

However, given the evolving news ecology and the emergence of global public spheres as well as three broad (journalistic, political and advocacy) transformations coinciding in a 'perfect storm', INGOs - including refugee organizations - have generally obtained greater agenda-setting capabilities and opportunities (Castells 2008; Dahlgren, 2005; Powers, 2016b, 2018; Van Leuven et al., 2013; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014).

First, considering globalisation, digitalization trends, fragmented news environments, economic constraints, cost savings and associated higher workloads (Boczkowski, 2010; Lee-Wright et al., 2012; Schudson, 2011), including regarding foreign journalism (Berglez, 2013; Maxwell Hamilton & Lawrence, 2012), journalists often engage in so-called 'parachute journalism' (Fondren et al., 2019; Hamilton & Jenner, 2004; Macdonald, 2008) and rely on one or more types of assistance from NGOs, which the latter provide to obtain (positive) media coverage (Franks, 2010).[44] Although media attention is essential for humanitarian organizations (supra), humanitarian organizations thus have rather an interdependent than a dependent relationship with news media (Chouliaraki, 2010; Franks, 2008). More concretely, NGOs provide practical and financial support to news media. For example, they sometimes arrange and finance journalists' travel to and transport in crisis areas (Coward, 2010; Conrad, 2015). In addition, there is sometimes also 'beneficent embedding', in which journalists collaborate with local NGOs (Franks, 2010; Cottle & Nolan, 2007). However, this practice is not so common anymore. Many news media are hesitant to do this because of fear of external criticism. However, if the budget is not sufficient or if the journalist in the crisis area can only turn to NGOs for support, this is sometimes still the case (Franks, 2010). Further, humanitarian organizations are very

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[43] The mediatization literature usually uses the broader concept of 'media logic' (Altheide, 2004; Altheide & Snow, 1979), as the facilitator of mediatization processes (Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni, 2008). This concept, introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979), refers to the assumptions and processes - including the rhythm, grammar and format - for constructing messages within a particular medium (Altheide, 2004). However, since we focus on the assumptions and processes of news media, we use the term 'news logics'. While Thorbjornsrud and colleagues (2014) use 'news logic', we prefer 'news logics' as we want to emphasize the diversity of different news media, conventions and processes.

[44] Parachute journalism is the practice whereby news organizations send journalists to a specific region to temporarily report on an important news event. This is less expensive than permanently stationing journalists in a certain region (Fondren et al., 2019; Hamilton & Jenner, 2004; Macdonald, 2008).

useful for news media for informative purposes. They are relevant sources for journalists (Fenton, 2010; Franks 2013) and provide various forms of information subsidies, including press releases (Van Leuven & Joye, 2014) and news stories (Powers, 2016a, 2018). Journalists have usually become more open to information subsidies (Reich, 2010), particularly from NGOs. They consider the information subsidies from NGOs to be more reliable than those from political and private sector actors (Reich, 2011) but usually also supplement them with additional information and sources (Van Leuven & Joye, 2014). Hence, as said, information subsidies and stakeholder-initiated engagement form effective agenda-building strategies for refugee organizations whereby their organizational characteristics and resources form important influencing factors (supra, cf. Yang & Saffer, 2018).

Second, given increasing public scepticism towards governments, NGOs are more often accepted in official circles, viewed as reliable information sources, and included in the range of official positions (Castells, 2009; Lang, 2013; Powers, 2018). Third, resulting from increasing institutionalization, competition, professionalization, mediatization, and marketization, NGOs often adapt to and adopt 'news logics' in their communication strategies and increasingly produce professional, mainstream news logics-aligned publicity and information subsidies (Powers, 2018; Richey, 2018). Journalists are thus generally positive about the information subsidies they obtain, which is not surprising since INGOs often rely on former journalists for their press activities, who adapt to the dominant news norms (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Fenton, 2010; Moon, 2018; Powers, 2018). For humanitarian news, news values including the crisis' magnitude, proximity (cultural, psychological and geographic), economic, military and (geo)political importance of the affected area, human impact and interest, public interest, and novelty, as well as adequate working conditions (e.g., accessibility, security, press freedom) are important (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Joye, 2010). Hence, INGOs' agenda-building attempts increasingly succeed and result in more diverse but news logics-aligned news coverage (Powers, 2018). As Bunce and colleagues (2019, p. 6) state: 'the topics and frames within humanitarian journalism continue to reflect the priorities and worldview of audiences in the 'Global North'. A small number of 'high-profile' conflicts thereby obtain the vast majority of news coverage, while others are marginalized and/or remain invisible (Hawkins, 2011). However, this can have serious implications for the people involved in the 'neglected' or 'forgotten' crises, which often remain underfunded. [45] Nevertheless, some studies (e.g., Powers, 2018) also find that the effectiveness of NGOs' agenda-building strategies should not be exaggerated either. For example, INGOs are more frequently mentioned in news reporting than in the past (cf. frequency), but not more extensively (cf. space); political actors generally remain the authoritative elite source, while NGOs often only form a secondary source.

2.3.2   News representations of forcibly displaced people

Having outlined some key trends in journalism, we now discuss the main types of imagery of forcibly displaced people in mainstream news coverage. While recognizing differences among time, media outlet or genre, country or region, and type of forcibly displaced person (e.g., Jiang et al. 2021), a lot of studies have demonstrated that news media often reproduce adverse public opinions by portraying forcibly displaced people as ambivalent. First, they are mainly represented as economic, socio-cultural,

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[45] For extensive discussions of the implications of the growing presence of NGOs in news production for journalism, and studies that go beyond the polarized 'boon or bane' arguments, see Powers (2017, 2018), and Waisbord (2011).

health and/or security threats or burdens to the host country (e.g., Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Eberl et al., 2018; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Saric, 2019; Wigger et al., 2021). These images frequently reflect neoliberal and/or nationalist discourses (Lueck et al., 2015) that sometimes manifest themselves in terms such as 'asylum shopping' (Moore, 2013). These portrayals can trigger negative, stereotypical attitudes towards migration and influence voting preferences (Eberl et al., 2018). Second, forcibly displaced people are also represented as - mirroring humanitarian imageries (infra, cf. Chapter 4) - victims of war and conflict. They are thereby frequently collectivized, homogenized and anonymized, while only limitedly personalized, voiced, and/or contextualized. Hence, forcibly displaced people are often dehumanized and stereotyped, having negative consequences for their reception and societal integration (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017). These representations are often gendered, both quantitatively, as female refugees obtain relatively less attention than male refugees, and qualitatively, as female refugees are relatively more often depicted as (inoffensive, vulnerable, submissive) victims than males, who are relatively more often portrayed as threats and burdens (Amores et al., 2020; Blumell & Cooper, 2019). As such, this news imagery contributes to and reinforces the so-called 'symbolic annihilation' of women (cf. Gerbner, 1972; Tuchman, 1978). This prevents female refugees from being fully accepted as part of society and diminishes their power and control over their image and experiences (Amores et al., 2020). Further, news media, as well as social media, often spend a lot of attention on iconic images of children (e.g., Alan Kurdi, Omran Daqneesh) which function as archetypal digital witnesses, perceived as authentic and truthful and prone to virality and political co-optation (Al-Ghazzi, 2019; Imanishi, 2022; Mortensen, 2017; Mortensen & Grønlykke Mollerup, 2021).

Corresponding with these threat and/or victim frames, news coverage often reproduces crisis and emergency discourses, by representing arriving forcibly displaced people as streams, flows and waves at European borders, and/or as numbers and statistics. These cartographic and numerical representations mirror seemingly neutral management mindsets (Nikunen 2019a), which similarly shape the current dominant (forced) migration policy paradigm - that is, the migration management paradigm (supra, cf. Chapter 1) - and influence broader political and societal processes (Eberl et al., 2018). Although numbers often appear to be value-free and present unbiased facts about complex aspects of social reality (Broome & Quirck, 2015), they operate as a form of knowledge that orients our thinking about a particular issue through a particular lens (Hansen & Mühlen-Schulte, 2012). News media rely on numbers, as they mainly aim to provide clear factual information but simultaneously simplify complex issues, ignore tragic events and create distance from the suffering of others (Silverstone, 2007).

To be fair, news media do also create sympathy by using more humanizing human interest discourses and representing forcibly displaced people as heroes (Horsti, 2008; Pantti & Ojala, 2019). They are represented as 'normal citizens' who work hard to improve themselves, support their families and/or contribute to the host society (Wickramaararchchi & Burns, 2017) and the focus is thereby on their individual struggles, suffering and causes of flight (Zhang & Hellmueller, 2017). However, these more positive, humanitarian narratives can also be problematic. Benevolent humanitarian discourses tend to rely on representations of victims who are grateful, innocent, humble and explicitly vulnerable,

leaving little room for agency and voices (Ticktin, 2010) and/or implicitly exist amid the supportive work of local volunteers (Wickramaararchchi & Burns, 2017).

2.4   The interacting and evolving field of politics

Furthermore, the political environment in which refugee organizations operate has changed. As said, increasingly more countries, both from the 'Global North' and the 'Global South', have tightened their asylum policies and shifted from a protection orientation to a (limited) humanitarian orientation (Betts & Loescher, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011). Similarly, various states have become more reluctant to cooperate; that is, not only multilaterally but also with refugee organizations on forced migration issues (Betts et al., 2012). Specifically, various governments have largely replaced structural political action on forced migration issues with humanitarian assistance and/or have introduced stricter conditions for UNHCR funding. This makes it more difficult for UNHCR – which is highly dependent on voluntary donations from UN member states (supra, cf. Chapter 1) – to fulfil its mandate (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Walker & Maxwell, 2009). Underlying the current shifts in forced migration policies and attitudes is a range of socio-cultural, economic and political aspects which have resulted in predominantly negative public opinions on refugees (Ferris & Kirisci, 2016; Gerhards et al., 2016).

While rising populism seems to jeopardize solidarity and human rights, notions of citizenship and political participation have expanded, and new social movements have developed (Schudson, 2015; Nikunen, 2019a). However, influencing governments through public communication is difficult for refugee organizations, especially given states' increasing reluctance to collaborate (Betts et al., 2012), and their financial and political authority (Maxwell & Gelsdorf, 2019; Suhajda, 2008; Walker & Maxwell, 2009). Various refugee organizations rely heavily on states' voluntary, short-term responsibility-sharing contributions (e.g., funding, resettlement quotas) (Betts, 2009b). Moreover, humanitarian funding is usually earmarked according to the priority areas and interests of states (Betts, 2009c; Development Initiatives, 2021; Randel & German, 2002). These contribution mechanisms sometimes prevent too strong criticism about the erosion of key refugee rights, such as non-refoulement (Chimni, 2000). Additionally, refugee organizations must continuously balance advocacy, ranging from lobbying to public criticism, and compliance with national policies to be able to have access to some regions and provide assistance (Green, 2018; Suhajda, 2008; Walker & Maxwell, 2009). Moreover, international regime complexity has not only led to the phenomenon that larger state interests in other domains often shape forced migration policies (supra, cf. Chapter 1) but has also resulted in a situation in which UNHCR faces increased institutional competition, 'forum-shopping' and 'regime shifting'.[46] Moreover, UNHCR has gradually shifted since the 1980s from a mainly legal and non-political actor to a more politicized humanitarian actor and has lost moral authority among states (Betts, 2009c).

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[46] Forum-shopping implies that states strategically and temporarily select certain international venues or service providers within a regime, while regime shifting implies that states move more permanently from one regime to one or more alternative parallel regimes, both to address a problem. Both strategies are based on where states are best able to promote specific policy preferences (Alter & Meunier, 2009; Betts et al., 2012).

Moving to political actors' discourses about forced migration, differences according to, amongst others, country, time and political ideology need to be acknowledged (Heidenreich et al., 2019; Heidenreich et al., 2020), often involving polarized social representations of 'immigrants–migrants', leading to exclusion–inclusion policies (de Rosa et al., 2021). Nevertheless, mirroring news discourses, politicians generally portray forcibly displaced people mainly as threats and/or victims, including stereotypical us-them differentiations, while far less as people seeking a better life or as human resources, enabling a 'win-win' for themselves and the host society (Hammerstad, 2014a; Heidenreich et al., 2020; Kirkwood, 2017; Klaus, 2017; Van Leuven et al., 2018). By disseminating threat or burden frames, politicians want to instil a climate of fear and 'us'-'them' narratives, position themselves as the necessary strong leaders, and divert attention away from or blame forcibly displaced people for urgent socioeconomic issues, and 'Other' them (Crisp, 2005; de Haas et al., 2020). Such climates regularly facilitate xenophobia, the far right's popularity (Frelick, 2007), and more restrictive forced migration policies (Betts et al., 2012). However, sometimes politicians humanise forcibly displaced people, by drawing on the human qualities of both refugees and the general public to make the government and nation morally accountable for protecting refugees – although sometimes in paternalistic ways (Kirkwood, 2017). Overlapping with these portrayals of forcibly displace people, various political actors use different communication strategies and discourses to strengthen and/or legitimize their policies. For instance, politicians and governmental actors sometimes use intertwined securitarian and humanitarian discourses whereby the suffering of forcibly displaced people is highlighted through notions of care and control (Colombo, 2017; Musarò, 2017). Likewise, migration management measures and particularly externalization practices are frequently installed, managed and legitimized through depoliticizing humanitarian and development discourses and practices that respond to common victimhood narratives of forcibly displaced people (Crane, 2020, for discussions on the common humanitarian victimhood narratives, see Chapter 4). Finally, various governments have launched informational multimedia deterrence campaigns targeted at dissuading unwanted groups of asylum-seeking people, which discursively disaggregate the nature of the posed threats and omit required information about people's human right to apply for asylum, promoting strategic ignorance among their public (Bishop, 2020).

2.5   The interacting and evolving field of private sector actors and donors

Socioeconomic shifts such as industrial market reforms, privatization and globalization have undermined, marketized and/or fragmented traditional welfare state solidarity structures, including public institutions and humanitarian organizations. However, at the same time, neoliberal policies have also increased social insecurity and the demand for and interest in solidarity, which forms the paradox of media solidarity (Nikunen, 2019a). These intertwined trends often consequently manifest themselves in commercialized and individualized solidarity forms (cf. the regime of irony, infra, cf. Chapter 4). Following declining government and individual donations, growing resource demands and increasing competition within the humanitarian sector, humanitarian organizations, including refugee organizations, often form partnerships with private sector actors, mainly involving financial assistance, but also collaborations on the development, design and implementation of programs, and the exchange of key expertise (Henriksen & Richey, 2022; Stoianova, 2013). Hence, companies can, among others, fulfil their corporate social responsibilities and roles and increase the value of their brands and consumer loyalty (Richey & Ponte, 2011; Stoianova, 2013). Especially the technology industry plays an important role in global philanthropy, with the development of various new digital tools, initiatives

and practices. This 'tech philanthropy' includes the entire asylum process, from pre-departure to transit, emergency assistance, arrival and integration (Benton & Glennie, 2016; Henriksen & Richey, 2022). Among others, this involves biometric registrations of forcibly displaced people, feedback apps, and other surveillance and data extracting mechanisms that benefit stakeholders (Madianou, 2019b, 2021). Biometrics, blockchain and artificial intelligence are technologically converged into the 'biometric assemblage' which amplifies the risks associated with each constituent technology (Madianou, 2019a). Specifically, '[t]hese risks, which have direct implications for the security, privacy and dignity of refugees, reproduce asymmetries between refugees and humanitarian agencies and ultimately entrench inequalities in the north – south [sic] context' (Madianou, 2019a, p. 582). Hence, Madianou (2019, 2021) developed the concept of 'technocolonialism', which captures

> 'how the convergence of digital developments with humanitarian structures and market forces reinvigorates and reshapes colonial relationships of dependency. Technocolonialism shifts the attention to the constitutive role that data and digital innovation play in entrenching power asymmetries between refugees and aid agencies and ultimately inequalities in the global context' (Madianou, 2019, p. 1).

More generally, these non-profit-for profit partnerships embody the IRR's increasing neoliberalization, marketization, technologization, and expansion to other actors and institutional regimes (supra, cf. Chapter 1) (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010), and are part of broader global humanitarian-corporate complexes. That are networks of NGOs, multinationals, philanthropic foundations, private donors, and international governing bodies which – resulting from the erosion of welfare safety nets worldwide through neoliberal reforms – constitute the key actors in the coordination, financing and implementation of humanitarian aid (Johnson, C. G., 2011).[47]

Few studies have however analysed private sector actors' discourses about forcibly displaced people. First, contesting common victim narratives, private sector actors often strategically represent them as heroes, with a focus on their agency, determination, courage and rational decision-making (Plambech et al., 2021). The focus is thereby often on female refugees whose heroism is gendered through references to violence (e.g., rape) and bravery (e.g., mothers protecting their children). Tech companies use these hero narratives to argue that technology can empower forcibly displaced people, implicitly presenting themselves as adequate humanitarians and eliminating the need for further assistance (ibid.). Moreover, female refugees are often presented as homogeneous 'Others' who can be saved by participating in paid labour markets, which can activate their latent entrepreneurial skills, empower them and solve their problems. Such neoliberal narratives aimed at self-reliance through vocational training and entrepreneurship reproduce humanitarian saviour logics and obscure the

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[47] We consider neoliberalism here as 'a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices' (Harvey, 2007, p. 2). It is the generalization of economic logics in non-economic realms to achieve two goals (Lemke, 2001). 'First, the generalization functions as an analytical principle in that it investigates non-economic areas and forms of action in terms of economic categories (…) [and] (…) [s]econd, the economic matrix (…) enables a critical evaluation of governmental practices by means of market concepts' (ibid., p. 198).

gender division of responsibilities and the precarious nature of artisanal labour (Bergman Rosamond & Gregoratti, 2020). Likewise, within philanthrocapitalism, which is 'the integration of market motifs, motives and methods with philanthropy, especially by HNWIs [high-net-worth individuals] and their institutions' (Haydon et al., 2021, p. 15), project participants are mainly portrayed as productive entrepreneurs rather than as suffering, helpless victims. Social issues are thereby individualized and political, economic and cultural contexts are neglected. Hence, collective action is suppressed and – reflecting humanitarian deserving-undeserving dichotomies (Kyriakidou, 2021, infra, cf. Chapter 4) - those deemed 'unproductive' are excluded (Haydon et al., 2021). More generally, within the humanitarian-corporate complexes, poor people worldwide are seen as objects of elite benevolence and non-profit generosity, rather than as historical subjects with their own unique worldviews, interests and notions of progress (Johnson, C. G., 2011).

Chapter 3: Refugee organizations' public communication: a conceptual state of the art

Abstract

The world has faced a major increase in forced displacement and the theme has also become the subject of many public, media and political debates. The public communication of refugee organizations thereby increasingly impacts their operations, the public perception on forcibly displaced people and societal and policy beliefs and actions. However, little research has been conducted on the topic. Therefore, this conceptual article aims to (1) define refugee organizations' public communication, (2) situate it within broader research fields, and (3) motivate the latter's relevance as research perspectives. In order to be able to achieve these research objectives, the article first discusses the social and scientific relevance of the research subject and identifies important gaps within literature which both form an essential scientific base for developing the main arguments. Adopting a historical perspective, the article demonstrates that in recent decades the social and scientific relevance of research on strategic and non-profit communication in general and on refugee organizations' public communication in particular have increased. Nevertheless, these fields remain underdeveloped and are mostly text-focused, while the production and reception dimensions are barely explored. Remarkably, however, little or no research has been conducted from an organizational communication perspective, although this article demonstrates that the subject can be adequately embedded in and examined from the fields of strategic, non-profit and public communication. Finally, the article highlights the relevance of the holistic Communicative Constitution of Organizations perspective and argues that future research can benefit by adopting multi-perspective, practice-oriented, multi-methodological, comparative and/or interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords

Reference

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[48] This article is part of the special issue "Refugee Crises Disclosed: Intersections between Media, Communication and Forced Migration Processes", edited Vasiliki Tsagkroni (Leiden University, The Netherlands) and Amanda Alencar (Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands). Recognizing the importance of research openness (infra), this is an open-access article.

3.1   Introduction

Although so-called 'refugee crises' have always occurred throughout history, forced migration has increased significantly recently: from 42.7 million forcibly displaced people (FDPs) worldwide in 2007 to 68.5 million in 2017. The largest growth took place between 2012 and 2015, and was largely driven by conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Sub-Saharan Africa (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). Since the summer of 2015, the theme of forced migration has also been ubiquitous in (often polarized, overlapping and interacting) public, media and political debates (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019).

Within such contexts, refugee organizations often play key roles. More concretely, they provide aid, assistance and/or protection to FDPs (Betts, Loescher, & Milner, 2012), but also try to inform, raise awareness and set the agenda through public communication (e.g., press releases, news stories, photos, videos, interviews, etc.). Therefore, they provide diverse communication content to news media and increasingly communicate directly with citizens via social media and websites (Atkin & Rice, 2013). Although these organizations significantly impact how the public perceives FDPs (Chouliaraki, 2012) and as such can have broader policy and societal consequences, few studies have examined how they attempt to influence public, media and political agendas. Therefore, this conceptual article first reflects on the social and scientific relevance of refugee organizations' public communication and provides a brief overview of existing research by adopting McQuail's (2010) frequently used division of the mass communication process into text, production and reception dimensions. Based on and responding to the identified tendencies, and gaps within literature, the third section defines and situates the barely theorized notion of refugee organizations' public communication within various fields of organizational communication research, and motivates their relevance to examine the research subject. This is illustrated by a discussion of the highly relevant Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) perspective. The final section reflects on challenges and new directions for future studies. As such, the article aims to set out lines for further research.

While refugee organizations' public communication is discussed, we first briefly elucidate our notion of the barely theorized concepts of 'refugee organization' and 'forcibly displaced person (FDP)'. Based on the broad statute of key organization UNHCR (2010) and practical knowledge, we consider refugee organizations as a type of humanitarian organization whose main aim is to provide protection, assistance and/or aid to refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people, stateless people and/or other people in similar situations. We opt for this rather broad definition in order not to exclude, nor ignore the diversity within the working field of refugee organizations (Walker & Maxwell, 2009). Further, this article uses—if appropriate and feasible, and instead of the commonly used but rather narrow, essentializing and legal term 'refugee' (Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 1992), the more comprehensive, humane and correct umbrella term 'FDP'.

3.2   Literature review
Social and Scientific Relevance

Adopting a historical perspective, we observe that the relevance, opportunities and limits of refugee organizations' public communication shape and are shaped by various societal trends. We first overview various challenging social tendencies in diverse interacting institutional fields, and then discuss the evolving vital relationship between humanitarianism and journalism.

Challenging Social Trends

First, as outlined above, the problem of forced migration has expanded considerably recently and, despite many solidarity initiatives, the humanitarian needs are considerable (UNHCR, 2017). However, although there are significant national and socio-demographic differences (age, education, level of urbanization, size and nature of migration, etc.), recent public opinions in Europe about refugees and immigrants seem to be often rather negative and/or more negative than before (European Commission, 2018; Lucassen, 2018). Refugees are often regarded as threats to host countries' welfare, social cohesion, culture, public health and security, and frequently confronted with xenophobia and the populist right's increasing popularity (Frelick, 2007), regularly leading to negative psychosocial consequences (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Turner Baker, 2008). However, during the Cold War and in the 1990s refugees were often regarded respectively as freedom advocates and victims of human rights violations and wars (Frelick, 2007).

Lucassen (2018) explains this recently increased social dissatisfaction with (forced) migration by referring to some necessary and sufficient historical conditions which recently merged together: growing discomfort with the immigration and integration of former colonial and labour migrants, Islam, Islamist terrorism and globalization, and a rise of social inequality and right populism. However, the negative public opinions can also be partly explained by the influence and representations of news media. The majority of European citizens sometimes interact with immigrants and refugees—again, with national and socio-demographic variations (European Commission, 2018). However, many still have limited interpersonal contact and base their opinions strongly on news coverage (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009), mostly the main information source on distant suffering (Waters & Tindall, 2011). News media, however, nowadays often produce conflict and human-interest stories, focusing on immigrants rather than immigration (Benson, 2013). While recognizing differences between news media, FDPs are frequently stereotyped, collectivized, decontextualized, given no voice and/or represented as inherently ambivalent: they are simultaneously both a 'victim' of a conflict and a 'danger' for the (inter)national order (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). Apart from ethics, media representations can have broader societal and policy consequences:

> How we label, categorize and, in turn, differentiate between those on the move…has enormous implications on the kind of legal and moral obligations receiving states and societies feel towards them. This is perhaps even more salient nowadays in the context of the process of reform of the global governance of migration initiated with the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. (Sigona, 2018, p. 456)

Considering the policy level, states have the main legal responsibilities concerning (forced) migration and generally provide asylum and/or other forms of aid and/or assistance. However, in recent decades, various states—both in the Global North and South, and often electorally driven—have introduced

more restrictive asylum legislation, policies and practices and have become more reluctant to cooperate with refugee organizations (Betts et al., 2012). For instance, many border and migration management policies of the European Union and of other states are based on the humanitarian-security nexus. Joint military-policing-humanitarian efforts thereby blur the lines between the involved military, police and humanitarian institutions and operations (Andersson, 2018). This "uneasy alliance" (Walters, 2011, p. 145), characterized by interagency tensions and sharing practices, often "mixes reception and rejection, care and coercion, in complex ways that reinforce the official border security model—a trend that is also (if not equally) in evidence at other borders across the globe" (Andersson, 2017, p. 66).

Many states and bodies legitimize these policies and practices by using security-humanitarian discourses, which reproduce the perceived ambivalent character of FDPs (supra) and war, emergency and rescue imaginaries (Andersson, 2018; Musarò, 2017). Within these imaginaries "the bio-political imperative of managing lives is…expressed through an aesthetic of trauma, where 'war' (on migrants) is represented both as an intimate experience of sorrow and as a public act of peacemaking" (Musarò, 2017, p. 11). This humanitarian-security nexus is enabled by the increasing globalization, and interdependence and interactions between various refugee related regimes that shape states' refugee policies, and also influences refugee organizations' public communication (infra).

Drawing on the above-mentioned observations, it is essential for refugee organizations' operations to create effective public communication strategies (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005), especially because "humanitarian appeals have the potential to mitigate opposition to immigration, even in the presence of countervailing threats" (Newman, Hartman, Lown, & Feldman, 2015, p. 604). Therefore, refugee organizations promote certain narratives about issues and their causes and solutions (Entman, 1993) and by bringing into being "situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relations between people and groups of people" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258) they attempt to set media, public and political agendas and construct a social reality. Although being far from simple, at the same time critical junctures, such as the current Syrian crisis, can also provide opportunities. More concretely, it could be appropriate periods to influence governmental policies and especially to reassess the own communication policies and practices (Green, 2018). Generally, however, (international) non-governmental organizations review their own communication less than organizations from other sectors. This is largely due to the cost and the (methodological) complexity of campaigns and evaluations (O'Neil, 2013), and forms an additional reason for academics to investigate refugee organizations' public communication strategies.

Evolving Relationship with Journalism

Since the 1980s, the number of organizations in the humanitarian landscape has increased significantly. This has led to a fierce competition for donations from governments, businesses and citizens and a subsequent struggle for media attention (Cottle & Nolan, 2007), especially because the scale of the provided aid does not necessarily correspond with the scale of the humanitarian crisis, but rather with the degree of media interest (Franks, 2013). In that regard, the perceived newsworthiness of public communication by journalists would increase depending on the conformity to media

conventions (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). This 'media logic' refers to (mainstream) news media's news values, formats, organization, working conditions, norms and values (Altheide, 2004; Altheide & Snow, 1979). However, it often results in simplification, polarization, intensification, concretization, personification and stereotyping. Furthermore, individuals and organizations within the public sphere have varying degrees of resources (e.g., funding, knowhow and experience, social relationships, reputation, etc.), which can be valued differently depending on the specific context (Ihlen, 2007). In that regard, public communication generally strengthens the authority of political institutions and multinationals (Wolfsfeld, 2011).

However, given the evolving news ecology and emergence of a global public sphere, refugee organizations and particularly (international) NGOs obtain greater agenda-setting possibilities (Castells, 2008; Van Leuven, Deprez, & Raeymaeckers, 2013). Due to trends of digitalization, cost savings and the associated higher workload (Schudson, 2011), journalists use more pre-packaged information (Reich, 2010), and NGOs' public communication, often largely conforming with mainstream media conventions, has been professionalized (Waisbord, 2011). Furthermore, journalists are often more responsive to information subsidies offered by NGOs than by governments, politicians or firms (Reich, 2011). Hence, NGOs provide diverse content to obtain greater news access and coverage (Castells, 2008) wherein mostly international NGOs succeed (Van Leuven & Joye, 2014).

Regarding academic research, many scholars have studied the agenda-setting efforts of humanitarian organizations in general (Ongenaert & Joye, 2016; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014). Less have done so for refugee organizations (Dimitrov, 2006, 2009). Second, most studies examine first-level or traditional agenda-setting, which want to tell news consumers 'what to think *about*' (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics; McCombs, 2014; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Traditional agenda-setting is concerned with gaining attention for a certain topic. After obtaining news media access, however, public communication continues to influence the media agenda and public opinion in terms of '*what* to think'. This is second-level or attribute agenda-setting and it is concerned with how we should understand a topic and on which attributes of the topic we consequently should focus (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics). As the state of the art will reveal, only few studies have thoroughly examined the discursive strategies deployed by refugee organizations in the context of second-level agenda-setting (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert & Joye, 2019), and almost none have investigated their production and reception contexts. These shortcomings are remarkable as refugee organizations' public communication contributes significantly to the public perception of FDPs and displacement crises (Chouliaraki, 2012), and thus can have broader policy and societal consequences (supra). Drawing on the above-mentioned observations, refugee organizations' public communication strategies deserve a more in-depth, multidimensional academic exploration.

State of the Art

Given the limited and fragmented research on the production and reception dimensions, we refer, if relevant and possible, to studies on the humanitarian sector and humanitarian communication in general. While many studies on these dimensions often generalize findings to the entire humanitarian

sector—mostly in a theoretically sound way, future research should empirically validate these claims for specific types of humanitarian organizations, including refugee organizations.

In line with Orgad's (2018) review of research on humanitarian communication in general, two similar main approaches can be distinguished in research about the subject. The first and most common approach, 'the ethical promise of representation', is text-focused and "examines whether they deliver on their promise to advance understanding and elicit care and responsibility for others in need beyond borders" (Orgad, 2018, p. 68). The second and far less used approach, 'humanitarian communication as a practice, in practice', investigates refugee organizations' public communication as socially situated practices: "the *production* of communication within the changing conditions of NGO operations and the media environment, and its *reception* by certain audiences at certain places and times" (Orgad, 2018, p. 72, original italics).

Within the first approach, several studies investigate refugee organizations' public communication output, and do so from diverse (often interdisciplinary) perspectives and disciplines within social sciences and humanities, including communication sciences, sociology, history, linguistics, (social) anthropology, (international) political sciences and international relations and diplomacy. Discursive strategies that primarily target citizens can be distinguished from those that are mainly directed at governments. Within the first subfield, most research investigates the representation of FDPs, in terms of discursive strategies (e.g., the extent of personalization, individualization, etc.), represented characteristics (e.g., agency, capacities, roles, attitudes, norms and values, etc.) (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Rodriguez, 2016) and sociodemographic categories, 'voiced' people, types of disseminated messages and ethical implications (e.g., Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Malkki, 1996; Pupavac, 2008; Rajaram, 2002; Vasavada, 2016). Few academics, however, investigate the broader regimes of representations and underlying normative concepts that structure these representations and are used as moral justification for solidarity with FDPs (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012). Nevertheless, research on this subject is particularly relevant to deconstruct refugee organizations' public communication and examine if and to which extent it reproduces and reflects broader societal discourses.

Within the second subfield of strategies mainly directed at states, 'cross-issue persuasion' is very relevant (Betts, 2010). This communication strategy implies that refugee organizations attempt to persuade states to engage in solidarity by relating refugee protection, assistance and/or aid to western countries' self-perceived larger security, economic, humanitarian and/or development interests, but as such represent FDPs as mere objects of negotiations (e.g., on resettlement, refugee protection, etc.). This political realist argumentation strategy is, just as the humanitarian-security nexus (supra), enabled by and a strategic response to the increasing globalization, and interdependence and interactions between various refugee related regimes. For instance, UNHCR nowadays often argues that irregular migration to western states can be limited by supporting refugee protection in the Global South, partially responding to the western security agenda (Betts, 2009, 2010). However, while thus relevant, this communication strategy is rarely examined.

Considering production practices, various authors have investigated trends within the political economy of the humanitarian sector in general and humanitarian communication in particular. This involves attention for the increasing number of organizations in the humanitarian landscape and their growing size, the subsequent rising competition for donations, aid and media attention, and the development of new media and marketing strategies to adapt to these trends, including the use of branding, commodification and celebrities (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Franks, 2013). However, few studies scrutinize, especially in the context of refugee organizations, the shaping role of organizational characteristics, such as core values and principles, funding structure and relationships with states (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005), the challenges to meet the media logic (Ongenaert & Joye, 2019) or communication practices as reflections of larger technological, political, economic and/or sociocultural shifts in society (Nikunen, 2016).

Regarding audience receptions, several authors have investigated various audience related challenges for the humanitarian sector in general. Besides negative public opinions (supra), these include fragmentation and individualization of and a diversity of interpretations among audiences, compassion fatigue (Höijer, 2004; Tester, 2001), states of denial (Cohen, 2001), and a growing cynicism towards and aversion of institutional aid campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2012). However, to our knowledge, little research exists on the perception of refugee organizations' public communication. Likewise, while already various studies have been conducted on factors that increase audiences' responsiveness to humanitarian communications (for an overview, see Seu & Orgad, 2017), specific research in the context of refugee organizations' public communication or on engagement with public attitudes towards FDPs is very limited (e.g., Dempster & Hargrave, 2017).

We can conclude that a significant body of work examines the text dimension, often with normative focuses on representations, but largely ignoring organizational perspectives. However, in order to explain these communication strategies, it is important to examine the underlying production and reception contexts. As Orgad (2018, pp. 75-76) argues: "[f]or scholarship potentially to inform and influence humanitarian communication practice, it is crucial that it is grounded in an understanding of the economic, material, organizational and political conditions of NGOs' work." Therefore, the next section discusses various relevant fields that can provide complementary, holistic perspectives, and sets out lines for further research that bridges normative and organizational perspectives.

Situating Refugee Organizations' Public Communication

Responding to the observed gaps in literature, we identified various relevant and (partially) overlapping fields from which the barely theorized notion of 'public communication' of refugee organizations' (called here as such for reasons of clarity, specificity and simplicity) can be approached and defined. This concerns the fields of strategic, non-profit and public communication, which will be discussed in the following subsections. This article does not claim that these are the only or even most relevant fields from which the subject can be approached or defined. It can be argued, for example, that humanitarian communication would be a more specific and relevant starting point. However, as Orgad's (2018, p. 76) remarks:

> Every NGO has idiosyncratic characteristics, related to its orientation (e.g., emergency- or development-focused), size, history, practices, work culture, specific individuals, finances, and so on. Making generalizations or applying findings from one NGO at a particular time to humanitarian communication in general, may be difficult if not impossible.

In addition to and considering their specific orientations and operations, refugee organizations differ from (the more examined) generalist humanitarian and/or development NGOs, and cannot be situated within one of these two categories. Therefore, we opt to discuss broader but relevant fields which (1) provide enough conceptual space to fully comprise and define our subject which can be situated in their intersection; (2) from which the subject—remarkably—has not been examined yet; but (3) which can function as the basis for an innovative and conceptually sound theoretical framework.

Strategic Communication

We first briefly overview the research field of strategic communication, and then outline its relevance to examine the research subject, also by specifically discussing the CCO perspective.

Defining Strategic Communication

Strategic communication as a practice is increasingly being used as an umbrella term for various goal oriented communication activities that are being investigated within the fields of public relations, marketing communication, organizational communication, public diplomacy, etcetera (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Strategic communication, however, is also a research field that transcends and integrates (or at least is assumed to do so) the just-mentioned (formerly separated and often isolated) research domains into an interdisciplinary, unifying framework from which communication processes can be examined and new, complementary insights can be provided (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018).

Within this research field, two main approaches can be distinguished. Within the dominant organizational-centric approach, strategic communication can be defined as "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission" (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, Van Ruler, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2007, p. 3). This approach examines strategic communication's importance for organizational efficiency, management, etc. Frequently addressed subjects—which are often overlooked within research on refugee organizations' public communication, are communication management, planning, audience segmentation, message design, relationship building, campaigns, and evaluation (Heide, Simonsson, von Platen, & Falkheimer, 2017). However, since the beginning of the 20th century, a more socially oriented approach has emerged in which strategic communication is analyzed in relation to citizens' attitudes and/or behaviour, public opinion, democracy, culture, etc. Building on the idea that both approaches and the above-mentioned research fields should be combined in a more holistic perspective, Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2013, p. 74) extended Hallahan et al.'s (2007) definition. They consider strategic communication as "the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals". However, as Oliveira (2017, p. 57) remarks:

Although the pillars of the alternative paradigm are described by Holtzhausen and Zerfass as the communication at micro, meso and macro level, by focusing on the public sphere dimension, some areas, like organizational communication and the CCO principle, are excluded (2013, p. 76). [R]esearch would be more fruitful with a cross-fertilization of the three paradigms, meaning that theories, concepts and research focuses could be synthesized in a broader approach…rather than driving an exclusive definition, even if the roots are recognized.

In the section on non-profit communication we discuss Oliveira's (2017) definition.

Relevance of Strategic Communication

Strategic communication's relevance as a framework to examine organizations' communication can be explained by various factors (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 10), whereby many aspects of refugee organizations' practices and working field are reflected. First, within the 21st century postmodern global society, previously clearly distinguishable types of communication activities and genres (e.g., advertising, product placement, sponsoring) and fields (e.g., public relations, advertising, marketing, etc.) have converged, driven by new (digital) media technologies and economies. Furthermore, people's impressions about organizations are always influenced by previous impressions and experiences. Therefore, it is important to study organizations' communication from a strategic and integrative perspective (Hallahan et al., 2007).

Furthermore, while most studies underwrite a 'being-realism' ontology, and the traditional positivist managerial perspective is still dominant in the field of strategic communication, Falkheimer and Heide (2018) also identify a reflexive turn that investigate the active, subjective role of researchers during research. Additionally, Mumby (2014) identifies an interpretative and linguistic turn, which has led to a shifting (more interdisciplinary) research focus towards themes such as organizations' discourses, narratives and power. These academic turns seem to provide a relevant scientific base for reflexive, critical research on strategic communication in general and on refugee organizations' public communication in particular, which is necessary to facilitate theoretical and methodological pluralism within the field (Heide, von Platen, Simonsson, & Falkheimer, 2018).

The CCO Perspective as a New Avenue

Common within the above-mentioned turns is that communication is no longer seen as an ancillary function of organizations, but as a fundamental building block and signifier (Mumby, 2014). In that regard, it seems relevant to adopt the CCO perspective (more widely) in research on strategic communication and on refugee organizations' public communication in particular. It is important to mention that the CCO perspective, with origins in the subfield of organizational communication, is not a delineated theory. As Putnam and Nicotera (2010, p. 158) state:

> CCO is first and foremost a collection of perspectives about grounding the role of communication in the ontology of an organization. Thus, CCO is a body of work connected by a central question or an overall problem rather than a clear-cut answer.

More concretely, the CCO perspective argues that communication is not just an activity that occurs within or between organizations, but forms the constitutive process of organization. 'Organization' thereby both refers to a process or perpetual state of change, an object or entity, and an entity grounded in action—as organizations are not objective, constant, stable entities but are (re)produced by communication, and these outcomes and processes reflexively shape communication (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Heide et al. (2018, p. 456, original italics) remark:

> The CCO perspective makes it clear that communication cannot be reduced to a single profession or organizational function (irrespective of whether corporate communication, public relations or marketing is used), because communication is a process that cuts across the entire organization and is constitutive of its very existence (Kuhn & Schoeneborn, 2015). Regarded this way, communication is not a variable. Rather we understand *communication as a perspective* or lens that can help researchers to understand organizational processes and actions.

Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen and Clark (2011, pp. 1151-1154) identified six premises that are shared by most CCO schools of thought. While the latter three premises are also relevant, the first three premises seem to explicitly respond to gaps and limitations of research on refugee organizations' public communication, and could guide future studies. We briefly discuss their relevance. First:

> *CCO scholarship studies communicational events*. If the CCO perspective is to be taken seriously, it means that one should not only pay attention to language and discourse, but also to the interactional events that constitute the building blocks of organizational reality…[a]ny turn of talk, discourse, artifact, metaphor, architectural element, body, text or narrative should…be considered…[i]t means that one should examine what happens in and through communication to constitute, (re-)produce, or alter organizational forms and practices, whether these are policies, strategies, operations, values, (formal or informal) relations, or structures. (Cooren et al., 2011, original italics, p. 1151)

This premise emphasizes the importance of examining holistically the text dimension, as this will inform our understanding about the production and societal contexts of communication. Second:

> *CCO scholarship should be as inclusive as possible about what we mean by (organizational) communication*. Although we tend to naturally acknowledge that messages, as components of communication processes, take on all kinds of form (kinesthetic, facial, textual, intonational, clothes, body shape, architectural, etc.), it remains that the vast majority of the work on organizational communication and discourse tends to focus almost exclusively on the textual aspects of communication. (Cooren et al., 2011)

This premise pinpoints the relevance of looking beyond the text dimension, and simultaneously examining the production and societal dimensions of communication. Third:

> *CCO scholarship acknowledges the co-constructed or co-oriented nature of (organizational) communication.* If focusing on the performative character of (organizational) communication appears crucial to explore its constitutive nature, one should not neglect that any performance is as much the product of the agent that/who is deemed performing it as the product of the people who attend and interpret/respond to such performance—analysts included (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1152)

This premise stresses the relevance of investigating both the production and reception dimensions, and their interactions.

Bearing the lack of research on the production and reception dimensions, and their interactions with the text dimension of refugee organizations' public communication in mind, the adoption of the holistic CCO perspective thus seems very valuable: "partly because it opens up for new metatheoretical approaches, and partly because it invites one to a broadened view of what kinds of actors and communication activities could be perceived as essential to organizational strategic communication" (Heide et al., 2018, p. 455). Given the rather general nature of strategic communication, we discuss the relevance of the more specific, related and partially overlapping fields of non-profit and public communication for examining and defining refugee organizations' public communication.

Non-Profit Communication

As the visibility and (societal) relevance of non-profit communication recently have grown, scholarly interest in this subfield of strategic communication has increased (Oliveira, Melo, & Gonçalves, 2016). Non-profit communication is mainly (but not exclusively) performed by the civil society, which refers to "the organized expression of the values and interests of society" (Castells, 2008, p. 78). This form of communication is often considered as a facilitator of social transformation and progress, as it creates awareness around international social, political, economic and environmental issues, expresses particular world visions, shapes collective identities and affects corporate practices and government policies (Lewis, 2003; Wilkins, Tufte, & Obregon, 2014). According to Oliveira et al. (2016) it provides an alternative and practical response to problems where both the corporate and the institutional structures are absent or have failed, which is arguably the case in the recent so-called 'refugee crises'. Central to non-profit communication is "humanity and the relations with the fields of life in the public sphere, not mediated directly or subscribed on the first instance to the logics of an institutionalised organisation" (Oliveira et al., 2016, p. 2).

NGOs play a key role in various societies worldwide, strongly supported by their communication practices (Schwarz & Fritsch, 2015). Up to now, however, strategic communication used by NGOs has not received much attention in scientific research (Lewis, 2005; Tkalac & Pavicic, 2009). Furthermore, most studies in the field of non-profit communication have adopted a business- and profit-driven logic to develop (positivist) theories, models and case studies, largely ignoring non-profit organizations' (NPOs) social values and goals (Oliveira et al., 2016). Moreover, only few scholars have investigated non-profit communication practices' discursive and rhetorical nature (Dempsey, 2012; Lewis, 2005).

Research informed by new approaches on NPOs' public communication and adopting a multi-perspective view, for example the CCO perspective, on refugee organizations' communication, roles, operations, values, goals and strategies is thus needed. As better communication strategies facilitate appropriate conditions for social change (Melo, Balonas, Ruão, & Felício, 2016), a revision of the existing literature on refugee organizations' public communication is highly necessary. Oliveira's (2017, p. 59) definition of NGO strategic communication could guide this research, as it attempts to meet "the call for a turn towards a unified or holistic approach to communication within organizational settings, embedded in a social context of postmodernity as defined by Giddens (1991, 1997)." He considers it as: "the practice of symbolic social action (communication) to reach set goals, create the organization, perform civic relations and fulfil its mission by groups of people that pursue the common good for the interests of non-members" (Oliveira, 2017, p. 59).

Public Communication

While we recognize, in line with the CCO perspective, that the traditional borders between external and internal communication are fading (Cheney, Christensen, & Dailey, 2014), this article focuses, however, for purposes of feasibility, only on external (public) communication. Likewise, this article recognizes that organizational communication is not only performed by communication professionals, but also by the organization's other employees. However, as communication professionals have considerably more expertise in and produce more public communication (Zerfass & Huck, 2007), the article discusses their communication practices.

Public communication can be defined as a large-scale, often diversified communication genre that consists of both informational and persuasive messages which are strategically directed towards various audiences in the public sphere through an organized and systematic framework of communication activities, channels and interpersonal networks to meet some objectives (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). It occurs both in regular day-to-day communication as well as in campaigns held in specific periods. Target audiences and/or stakeholders include (inter)national governments and bodies, other relevant organizations, private sector organizations, media and/or citizens (Green, 2018; Lang, 2012).

Further, public communication is predominantly 'public' in nature. First, it usually proceeds through publications, photos, videos and other content forms disseminated through traditional mass media, interpersonal networks, public events and, increasingly, websites and social media (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Secondly, it occurs in the public sphere rather than in the private sphere and is about public themes rather than private affairs, such as refugee protection (Habermas, 1989). As such, we can differentiate communication campaigns from lobbying (Green, 2018). Generally speaking, NPOs use public communication to gain broader visibility, inform, sensitize, influence behaviours and set the agenda (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Lang, 2012). The final goal is to obtain public, political, financial and/or practical support (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005).

Refugee Organizations' Public Communication

Integrating the above-mentioned insights on strategic, non-profit and public communication and adapting them to the subject, we propose a definition for refugee organizations' public communication. Important to mention is that we do not consider the following definition as complete and immutable, especially since the subject has hardly been examined, but as a starting point and guidance for future studies.

Strongly influenced by the understandings of Oliveira (2017), Atkin and Rice (2013), and Macnamara (2016), we consider refugee organizations' public communication as the practice of organized and systematic symbolic social action (diversified communication disseminated through a variety of channels and activities) within the public sphere to reach set goals, co-create the refugee organization, perform civic relations and fulfil its mission by groups of people that pursue the (perceived) common good for forced migration.

3.3   Discussion and Conclusion

This conceptual article discussed refugee organizations' public communication, focusing on its social and scientific relevance, state of the art, and position and opportunities for new perspectives within broader literature, and based on these findings also proposed a definition.

Following the discussed definitions, refugee organizations' public communication can be considered as a particular type of strategic communication. Strategic communication, however, is also a unifying framework which is, especially given the current (postmodern) context and (limited and rather positivist) state of art, highly relevant to examine communication processes (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018; Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015). Not surprisingly, little interpretative and discursive research has been conducted on strategic and non-profit communication (Dempsey, 2012; Lewis, 2005).

However, this article demonstrated that research on refugee organizations' public communication is both highly socially and scientifically relevant. More concretely, effective public communication strategies have become crucial for refugee organizations' operations to attract and influence media attention in response to the increased humanitarian needs (UNHCR, 2017), the growing humanitarian competitiveness (Cottle & Nolan, 2007), and the rather and/or more negative public image of refugees (Lucassen, 2018).

To our knowledge, this is the first academic article which discusses the state of the art of refugee organizations' public communication and defines and situates it within broader fields of research. However, the article also revealed that current research mostly investigates the text dimension, but much less or rather indirectly (cf. research on humanitarian organizations in general) the production and reception dimensions. Future research should examine these dimensions and their interactions more in-depth and can benefit by adopting the holistic CCO perspective in order to meet the need of bridging normative and organizational views (Orgad, 2018). Multi-methodological, comparative, and

interdisciplinary approaches should be taken into account, given the above-mentioned valuable insights from and interconnectedness between disciplines such as communication sciences, sociology, history, linguistics, (social) anthropology, (international) political sciences and international relations and diplomacy.

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Chapter 4: Refugee organizations' public communication: an empirical state of the art

After elucidating the international refugee regime and broader political and social contexts and tendencies (cf. Chapter 1), the evolving humanitarian communication landscape in interaction with broader changing institutional fields (cf. Chapter 2), and the public communication of refugee organizations from a conceptual perspective (cf. Chapter 3), we now discuss the public communication of refugee organizations from an empirical perspective. In line with our central research objective and our central research question, we focus on the textual dimension (cf. subdivided into the *how, what* and *who* elements), and the production and social dimensions (cf. *why*). We will first discuss the main representation strategies and then the main argumentation strategies of refugee organisations. Reviewing the literature, refugee organizations seem to mainly use public communication to respond to the two above-mentioned (partially overlapping) main causes of restrictive forced migration policies. More concretely, refugee organizations mainly seem to use particular rather general public-oriented representation strategies, as well as some argumentation strategies to influence the (adverse) public opinions on forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' (supra, cf. Chapter 1). Likewise, they utilize particular argumentation strategies to respond strategically to the limited incentives of states in the 'Global North' to engage in the protection of forcibly displaced people from and in the 'Global South' (supra, cf. the 'North-South impasse', cf. Chapter 1).

We recognize that in reality, the practices of **representation** and **argumentation** are often difficult to distinguish: representation usually simultaneously involves and overlaps with argumentation, and vice versa.[49] However, we here distinguish representation and argumentation strategies for reasons of focus, structure, conceptual clarity, and pragmatics. More concretely, adopting a discursive approach, we consider 'representation strategies' as a range of semiotic choices available to the communicator for deciding how to represent 'social actors' (e.g., individuals and groups), 'transitivity' (i.e. how social actors are represented as acting or not acting) and other aspects which shape the way how audiences perceive actors, events and circumstances (Fairclough, 2003; Hansen & Machin, 2019; Machin & Mayr, 2012). On the other hand, we consider argumentation as

> 'a linguistic as well as a cognitive pattern of problem-solving that manifests itself in a (more or less regulated) sequence of speech acts which form a complex and more or less coherent network of statements. Argumentation serves the methodical/systematic challenging or justification of validity claims, such as truth and normative rightness (Kopperschmidt 2000: 59f.). Its purpose is to persuade recipients via convincing (sound) arguments and/or suggestive fallacies' (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 35).

In other words, we here perceive representation strategies and argumentation strategies as discursive strategies both situated at different ends of a continuum. We consider representation strategies to be

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[49] The coherence and overlap of representation strategies and argumentation strategies becomes especially clear when we broadly define 'representation' as 'using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people. (…) Representation *is* an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It *does* involves the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things' (Hall, 1997, p. 15, original italics).

primarily focused on creating particular imagery of social actors, social action and/or other aspects – advancing particular arguments is here rather a secondary, subtle, latent and/or indirect goal, while the opposite holds true for argumentation strategies.

4.1 Representation strategies

Drawing on Chouliaraki's (2012a) theoretical framework of **'regimes of representation'** (cf. Hall, 1997), we discuss *how* forcibly displaced people and *who* and *what* are mainly presented within refugee organizations' public communication, as well as the underlying reasons, with a focus on the broader production and societal contexts (cf. *why*).[50] More specifically, Chouliaraki (2012a, p. 13) identifies gradual, non-linear shifts from a 'humanitarian discourse of pity to a post-humanitarian discourse of irony'.

4.1.1 Humanitarian discourses of pity

In the regime of pity, agency-lacking and agency-focused (hereafter: 'negative' and 'positive') representation strategies attempt, each in their unique ways, to eliminate forcibly displaced people's perceived ambivalent character (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Both use humanitarian discourses that morally justify solidarity on human vulnerability by relying on a universalist common, shared humanity, across political and/or cultural differences (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2004, 2012a).

4.1.1.1 'Negative' pity-centred representation strategies

First of all, it is important to acknowledge differences in the communication strategies of different refugee organisations. These are shaped by, amongst others, various institutional contexts and ethnic identities of advocates and imagined audiences (DeTurk, 2020). Nevertheless, various scholars found that refugee organizations traditionally portray forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' 'negatively' as **homogeneous, anonymous, passive, corporeal, helpless, and/or voiceless groups of victims in need** (Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Demusz, 2000; Fass, 2011; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hyndman, 2000; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Judge, 2010; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Nyers, 2006; Pupavac, 2006, 2008; Rajaram, 2002; Vasavada, 2016; Wroe, 2018) who are reduced to 'bare life' (cf. Agamben, 1998, 2000, 2017).[51] These dominant representations of 'refugeeness' present forcibly displaced people as 'waves of humanity' (Malkki, 1996, p. 387) and/or 'bare humanity' who are stripped of their culture and identity (Malkki, 1995, p. 11-12) and consequently homogenize and

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[50] A 'regime of representation' refers to a particular historical specific form of representation; it refers to a particular specific repertoire, language and/or meaning that are used in particular spatial and temporal contexts (Hall, 1997). The regime of representation thus 'points us towards greater historical specificity – the way representational practices operate in concrete historical situations, in actual practice (Hall, 1997, p. 6).

[51] 'Bare life' refers to 'a conception of life in which the sheer biological fact of life is given priority over the way a life is lived, by which Agamben means its possibilities and potentialities' (Buchanan, 2018, para. 1). Specifically, Agamben (1998, 2000, 2017) considers refugees as 'biopolitical' subjects who are regulated and governed in a permanent 'state of exception' outside the normal legal framework, that is the refugee camp, as animals in nature without political freedom (cf. Owens, 2009). For critiques on Agamben's 'bare life', see, amongst others, Butler (2004, 2009, 2015, 2020), Butler and Spivak (2007), Owens (2009), and Polychroniou (2021).

dehumanize forcibly displaced people.[52] The focus is thereby often on 'ideal victims' (Höijer, 2004) such as vulnerable- and innocent-looking women and children, embodying 'bare humanity' (Malkki, 1995) and 'pure' victimhood and vulnerability (Malkki, 1996; Wright, 2014). They form the 'conventionalized' image of forcibly displaced people (Malkki, 1996), particularly for pragmatic reasons (cf. audience engagement, fundraising) as they are usually more effective to generate pity than other gender and/or age groups (Johnson, H. L., 2011; Moeller, 1999; Pupavac, 2008; Vasavada, 2016). Clark-Kazak (2009), on the other hand, partially refutes the assumption that most humanitarian communication focuses on children, finding that adults are depicted more than children in UNHCR images. However, children, particularly girls, are the second most portrayed group and are mentioned much more than adults in UNHCR texts, particularly concerning vulnerability, protection, education and health. In that regard, humanitarian gender- and age-sensitive discourses have reinforced discourses which portray women, children and the elderly as 'vulnerable' groups, neglecting complex power relations of gender and social age (Clark-Kazak, 2009).

Photorealistic photographs that aim to represent the harsh realities that forcibly displaced people face are characteristic of this 'negative' representation mode. However, in reality, there is a plurality of 'refugee experiences' – shaped by, among others, sociodemographic aspects such as gender and sexual orientation (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2014; Nolin, 2006), age (Bolzman, 2014; Hart, 2014), (dis)abilities (Mirza, 2014; Pisani & Grech, 2015), religion (Ager & Ager, 2016; Hollenbach, 2014), 'race', ethnicity (Achiume, 2021), and social class (Van Hear, 2004), and their broader social, temporal and spatial realities (Soguk, 1999; Turton, 2003). By reducing people's diverse, complex lived experiences and realities to one single homogenising reality of generalised helplessness and fragility, their experiences and realities are simplified and/or neglected, and the represented people are subsequently dehumanised (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Likewise, mostly only experts from the 'Global North', mainly including officers of refugee organizations, affiliated celebrities and other humanitarian actors, are allowed to testify about forcibly displaced people and/or their experiences in humanitarian communication, while the latter are largely ignored. The lack of 'own' voices silences and dehumanises forcibly displaced people and turns them into second-class citizens (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Rajaram, 2002).[53] Similarly, certain forms of humanitarian representation depoliticise refugees, as they promote rather than challenge unequal power relations that lock refugees into a position of so-called dependent 'beneficiaries' who have no political means to influence their position in a host society (Szczepanikova, 2010).[54] More generally, refugee organizations thus seem to foster saviour-saved and hierarchical deservingness discourses. These 'negative' representation strategies

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[52] We consider 'refugeeness' here as 'a social construction of what is considered to be typical for people labelled as refugees. This construction changes over time and varies in relation to different beholders and performers. Refugeeness is by no means a set of given psychological or social features. It is constantly being re-created and performed in social interactions' (Szczepanikova, 2010). The political, social and legal constructions of 'refugeeness' in the 'Global North' are strongly influenced by the refugee definition in the 1951 Convention (Malkki, 1995). For further discussions of 'refugeeness', see Kallio and colleagues (2019), Lacroix (2004), and Picozza (2017).

[53] For a further discussion of the politics of 'refugee voices', including a problematization of the existence of 'a refugee voice' and the limited willingness in policy, humanitarian, media, and academic discourses to listen to and/or include 'refugee voices', see Sigona (2014).

[54] For ethical reasons, we prefer to use 'project participants' rather than 'beneficiaries' in the dissertation where possible.

result in depoliticized, decontextualized, dehistoricized, and universalized humanitarian imagery of forcibly displaced people, independent of their specific political, social and historical contexts (Malkki, 1995, 1996; Rajaram, 2002; Pupavac, 2006, 2008). In that regard, Sigona (2014, p. 372), argues this

> 'depoliticization of refugees happens in two ways: at the micro-level, by neglecting and/or denying the importance of the political in their experience of exile (Essed, Frekrs, and Schrijvers 2004); and at the macro-level, by concealing behind the discourse of the West's humanitarianism present and past involvement in producing the causes of conflict and forced migration.'

In line therewith, humanitarian imagery and humanitarian and media organizations and institutions are part of wider ideological and power relations (Paulmann, 2019). In that regard, humanitarian images of forcibly displaced people have generally changed from heroized, politicized individuals in the Cold War – that is, as advocates of freedom and war victims who escaped authoritarian (Communist) regimes – to the above-mentioned representations, with a focus on anonymous, voiceless groups of vulnerable women and children (Frelick, 2007; Johnson, H. L., 2011). This results from four overlapping discursive transformations: the imagined forcibly displaced person's racialization, victimization, feminization, and infantilization in humanitarian communication (Johnson, H. L., 2011; Sigona, 2014). These transformations interact with the above-mentioned institutional forced migration policy shifts - from integration and resettlement to voluntary repatriation, local protection and prevention (supra, cf. Chapter 1), reflect and reproduce other institutional (media and political) discourses (supra, cf. Chapter 2) and are part of broader strategic humanitarian discourses of depoliticizing forcibly displaced people to mobilize public support and manage their perceived threat to the global order (Johnson, H. L., 2011).

More concretely, we can situate these representations within broader crisis and emergency discourses through which refugee organizations want to emphasize the severity of humanitarian situations for pragmatic reasons. This includes gaining media attention, opposing threat narratives and managing social hostility towards forcibly displaced people, and facilitating solidarity and fundraising, to eventually obtain public, media, political, donor attention and/or support (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Crisp, 1999; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Kleres, 2018; Wroe, 2018). However, these humanitarian crisis and emergency discourses, including common tropes (e.g., 'the largest refugee/displacement crisis since World War II', 'a global/European refugee crisis') are frequently simplified and need to be historically and methodologically nuanced (Fransen & de Haas, 2019; White, 2019, supra, cf. Chapter 1). More generally, as said, NGOs have particular organizational, media and financial needs and interests, and thus do not always follow their values and/or sometimes communicate misleadingly, for instance, by creating and/or exaggerating crises and focusing on what still needs to be done rather than what has already been achieved (Bob, 2005), without necessarily substantially addressing and/or improving issues (Wright, 2016).

4.1.1.2 'Positive' pity-centred representation strategies

Because of growing scepticism about such 'negative' representation strategies, increasing ethical awareness about humanitarian imagery in the humanitarian sector (Chouliaraki, 2012a), and as a pragmatic strategy to counter burden and threat narratives and foster public solidarity (Turner, 2020), refugee organizations increasingly portray forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' more 'positively' (Chouliaraki, 2012a). This trend is part of a broader shift that began in the 1980s in the humanitarian sector, with NGOs increasingly using more agency-focused, dignified, self-sufficient, active, empowered images to depict their project participants (Dogra, 2012; Wilson, 2011).[55]

Refugee organisations often represent forcibly displaced people in **individualized, personalized ways as hopeful, optimistic, self-determined, talented, resilient persons with agency who fit within the cultural and moral framework of 'Global Northern' audiences** (Cabot, 2016; Catenaccio, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012a; DeTurk, 2020; Godin & Doná, 2016; Hazou, 2009; Hedman, 2009; Kivikuru, 2015; Pupavac, 2008; Rodriguez, 2016; Sandvik, 2010; Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005), and this particularly in human interest-oriented media genres (Ihlen et al., 2015). Forcibly displaced people are thereby sometimes distinguished from 'economic migrants', while the distinction between both is usually ambiguous (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018, supra, cf. Introduction). This humanitarian imagery thus indicates trends of assimilation, the erasure of difference, and hierarchies of deservingness (infra) (DeTurk, 2020). For instance, as refugee organizations increasingly promote 'self-reliance', 'resilience', and 'innovation' among forcibly displaced people (Krause & Schmidt, 2020; Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018), within an increasingly neoliberalized, technologized IRR (supra, cf. Chapters 1 and 2), they frequently represent - corresponding with institutional private sector discourses (supra, cf. Chapter 2) - refugees as 'entrepreneurs' (Pascussi, 2019; Turner, 2020). By focusing on 'refugee entrepreneurialism', they want to empower and reframe them from 'burdens' (cf. the 'dependency syndrome') or 'threats' (supra, cf. Chapters 1 and 2) to 'opportunities', 'resources' and as closer to 'whiteness', to render them more acceptable to 'Global Northern' audiences and donors (Turner, 2020).[56]

Apart from ethical concerns, these 'self-reliance' narratives are however mainly shaped by 'Global Northern' donors' financial aims and UNHCR's goal to create cost-effective exit strategies (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). As Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018, p. 1466) argue, '[b]y framing self-reliance as a way to empower refugees and as a panacea for dependency syndrome, the international refugee regime can justify decreasing assistance to protracted refugee populations, and even completely withdrawing assistance'. This can result in unintended and undesirable consequences for

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[55] However, 'negative' images still seem to dominate (Bettini, 2013; Johnson, 2011; Vasavada, 2016, supra, cf. Chapter 3) and 'positive' representations were sometimes already earlier in history used for various political and social reasons (e.g., Holmes, 2019; Paulmann, 2019).

[56] There is a presumption among various humanitarian organizations and some academics (e.g., Boesen, 1985) that prolonged reliance on assistance fosters a 'dependency mentality' or 'dependency syndrome' among forcibly displaced people in reception sites who then would expect continued assistance. However, various studies have challenged the underlying stereotypes of this presumption (e.g., Abdi, 2005; Harvey & Lind, 2005; Kibreab, 1993; Turner, 2005). Kibreab (1993, p. 321) observes 'that within the given constraints and limited opportunities, the refugees were found to be imaginative, resourceful, and industrious. In spite of the unfavourable [sic] conditions, the refugees succeeded in maintaining their independence and cultural identity.'

forcibly displaced people's well-being, protection (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018), economic subjectivity, familial relations and broader conditions (Pascucci, 2019). Furthermore, these discourses of differential inclusion are institutionalized by neoliberal migration politics that focus on economic potential (Gürsel, 2017). In a similar neoliberal vein, we can situate the intertwined tendencies of the 'turn to the girl' and the mobilization of 'girl power' in contemporary global humanitarian and development campaigns. Girls are not only constructed as 'ideal victims' (supra) but also as 'ideal agents of change' (Koffman et al., 2015), which reflects the female refugee empowering private sector discourses (supra, cf. Chapter 2). These shifts are interrelated with 'selfie humanitarianism', in which solidarity is rather based on the entrepreneurial projects of the self (infra) than on notions of redistribution and/or justice. These trends can be explained by the simultaneous depoliticization, corporatization, and neoliberalization of both humanitarianism and girl power (Koffman et al., 2015).

More generally, these 'positive' representation strategies can also dehumanise forcibly displaced people by portraying them – given the precarious situations they usually find themselves in – with unrealistic amounts of agency (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Verdirame & Harrell-Bond, 2005). Moreover, the focus is mostly only on some, especially charming, talented, and/or middle-class forcibly displaced people who acquire voices. These voices usually only concern 'regulated' statements, used to amplify humanitarian organizational messages (Cabot, 2016; Godin & Doná, 2016; Kivikuru, 2015; Pupavac, 2008). This can lead to depoliticised, homogenised, and decollectivised 'refugee voices' (Godin & Doná, 2016). Another potential negative consequence is that '[a]sylum rights are thereby implicitly made conditional on qualifying as nice, talented, sensitive individuals' (Pupavac, 2008, p. 285, cf. 'refugeeness', supra). Likewise, some organizations defend the rights of specific sociodemographic immigrant groups, relying on model minority stereotypes (Fujiwara, 2005) and/or dominant sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., marital status, family situation, sexual orientation, profession, personality, political stance, religion, 'race') (Yukich, 2013). Hence, 'a constant dilemma remains for social movement actors to gain social change for specific groups without reifying existing conservative notions that "not all are deserving of economic support"' (ibid., p. 99). In all these cases, refugee organizations risk implicitly strengthening hierarchies of deservingness (Yukich, 2013) and indirectly undermining asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008).

In sum, migrant advocacy narratives are frequently characterized by 'expectations of assimilation and erasure of difference; victimhood and lack of agency; and hierarchies of deservingness. These frames, moreover, implicitly recenter [sic] whiteness and reinforce neoliberal values' (DeTurk, 2020, p. 92). Refugee organizations perpetuate via the 'negative' and 'positive' pity-oriented discourses the societal discourses and representations of forcibly displaced people as ambivalent figures. As such, they fail to legitimize solidarity calls to 'Global Northern' publics based on common humanity (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Pupavac, 2008).

4.1.2 Post-humanitarian discourses of irony

It is in the context of the failing regime of pity that 'we should situate the emerging shift in the representation of refugees away from "common humanity" and towards the self as the new morality of humanitarianism', Chouliaraki (2012a, p. 17) argues. In this 'regime of irony', refugee organizations

employ a post-humanitarian discourse that no longer relies on common humanity but on the contingent 'Western self' as a moral justification for solidarity with forcibly displaced people. 'Irony' thereby refers to 'a disposition of detached knowledge, a self-conscious-suspicion vis-à-vis all claims to truth, which comes from acknowledging that there is always a disjunction between what is said and what exists' (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 2). Chouliaraki (2013) argues that moral actors are nowadays increasingly sceptical of universal truth claims about global inequalities, and highly conscious of the marketing strategies of humanitarian organizations. Their social engagement for particular causes is rather shaped by individual searches for moral gratifications than by moral imperatives of global solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2013). The 'ironic spectator' thus seeks a subjective understanding of suffering through personal experience. Hence, it is 'an impure or ambivalent figure that stands, at once, as sceptical towards any moral appeal to solidary action and, yet, open to doing something about those who suffer' (Chouliaraki, 2013, p. 2).

However, it is important to note that Chouliaraki's concept of the 'ironic spectator' is mainly theoretically and moral philosophically driven, and less empirically based. Moreover, current empirical audience research (e.g., Höijer, 2004; Huiberts & Joye, 2019; Kyriakidou, 2019; Orgad & Seu, 2017) shows that audiences often respond in diverse ways to humanitarian communication, which is frequently largely shaped by their specific sociodemographic positions and national, cultural and social contexts. Hence, we follow Scott (2013) and von Engelhardt and Jansz (2014) who argue that further empirical audience research is needed to investigate whether, how, and to what extent humanitarian communication (i.e. different types of communication, causes,…) are 'ironically' consumed, perceived and/or reacted to by various audiences - which is outside the scope of this doctoral research (supra, cf. Introduction). While we recognize the value of the concept of the 'ironic spectator', at the same time we do not want to uncritically adopt it and generalize it to entire populations.[57] Accordingly, in this context, we find particularly the 'regime of irony' proposed by Chouliaraki (2012a, 2013) relevant and useful as a discursive regime to approach and classify different identified representation practices that essentially move away from representations of the 'distant other' based on common humanity and focus on the Self.

Stimulated by the increasing competition for attention and donations within the humanitarian sector (supra, cf. Chapter 2), refugee organizations increasingly attempt to remove forcibly displaced people's perceived ambivalence by displaying them through **innovative portrayals, media genres, formats, and/or technologies, by focusing on voiced figures from the 'Global North', and/or by simultaneously responding to the (needs for) self-reflection and -cultivation among 'Global Northern' audiences** (Chouliaraki, 2012a). In that regard, relatively young and limited strands of research investigate the representation of forcibly displaced people in various communication genres and media, including humanitarian artistic storytelling campaigns and films (Chouliaraki 2012a), and digital humanitarianism, including immersive technologies such as virtual reality or 360-degree videos (Irom, 2018, 2022). More concretely, some studies found that artistic storytelling campaigns create

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[57] For a further discussion of the two main types of research on the mediation of humanitarianism - that is, moral philosophically accounts, and empirical studies - and their strengths, limitations, and gaps, see Orgad and Seu (2014b).

distance from affluent lifestyles in the 'Global North', triggering emotional alienation and encouraging 'Global Northern' citizens to reflect on global issues, such as the forced migration problem (Chouliaraki, 2010, 2012a; Vestergaard, 2010). Similarly, virtual reality technology is sometimes considered as an 'empathy machine' which can reduce the distance between forcibly displaced people and the audience by creating immersive, experiential non-mediated immediacy in the reality of and identification with the 'distant other' (Garcia-Orosa & Pérez-Seijo, 2020; Irom, 2018, 2022; Schlembach & Clewer, 2021), which would increase donation intentions (Yoo & Drumwright, 2018). However, various academics criticize this humanitarian communication strategy for its focus on empathetic identification, limited political possibilities (Irom, 2018), risks to flatten real and material differences between suffers and spectators through the 'illusion of co-suffering' and to create 'improper distance' (Irom, 2022) potential depoliticizing effects, neglect of the political context, and unethical and manipulative nature, facilitating 'forced empathy' (Schlembach & Clewer, 2021).

Likewise, characteristic of the 'regime of irony' is the current form of 'celebrity humanitarianism' (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Irom, 2022).[58] In contrast to the earlier, more formal, human rights-oriented celebrity advocacy, celebrities nowadays mainly provide - as main voiced actors about forcibly displaced people - personalised, confessional testimonials. They thereby often present meetings and conversations with forcibly displaced people as contributions to their self-development and vision of the world. Consequently, the public frequently rather identifies with the humanity of the celebrity rather than with the suffering distant others. In conjunction with the 'negative' pity-based representation strategies, forcibly displaced people barely have a voice in this discursive regime, which increases the moral distance from the general public (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Hence, while this celebrity humanitarianism usually reaches broader audiences than more conventional forms of public communication, the latter usually engage and identify more with the media spectacle and celebrities than with the suffering, voiceless, morally distanced others (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Kyriakidou, 2019). Intertwined therewith, Driessens and colleagues (2012, p. 721) argue that '[c]elebrities do not bring structural solutions or long-term engagement to the table'. Similarly, 'doing good' reality television and humanitarian artistic films, coproduced by refugee organizations, frequently focus on voiced 'Global Northern' participants or figures, rather than on forcibly displaced people and their broader contexts (Nikunen, 2016, 2019a). While these are frequently effective in promoting feelings of solidarity and mobilizing donations, they lean – as part of commercialized media landscapes – on politics of emotion that centre on self-directed senses of doing good (e.g., self-improvement, individualized volunteering) rather than on politics of justice (ibid.).

The regime of irony can thus be regarded as a creative but ethical questionable response to the failing regime of pity and the increasing public aversion and cynicism in the 'Global North' to institutional

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[58] We can briefly summarize celebrity humanitarianism as the (often mediated) engagement of celebrities in humanitarian and development causes with the aim of informing and sensitizing the public about humanitarian and development issues and suffering, to eventually obtain media, public, political and/or donor attention and/or support (Kapoor, 2013; Richey, 2016). For extensive discussions about celebrity humanitarianism, including further limitations, issues and opportunities, see, amongst others, Brockington (2014), Brockington and Henson (2015), Chouliaraki (2012b, 2013), Cooper (2008), Kapoor (2013), Littler (2008), Richey (2016), Richey and Ponte (2011), and Scott (2015).

solidarity calls (Cohen, 2001; Chouliaraki, 2012a). Apart from rather negative public opinions (supra, cf. Chapter 1), audiences are often characterized by, amongst others, fragmentation, individualization, diverse interpretations, compassion fatigue (cf. Moeller, 1999; see also Höijer, 2004; Tester, 2001; for a critique, see Campbell, 2014), and/or states of denial (Cohen, 2001). Moreover, as said, their responses are usually largely shaped by their specific sociodemographic positions and broader national, cultural and social contexts (Höijer, 2004; Huiberts & Joye, 2019; Kyriakidou, 2019; Orgad & Seu, 2017). Furthermore, refugee organisations operate in an increasingly competitive humanitarian landscape, characterised by increasing struggles for media attention and commodification (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Orgad, 2013; supra). We should consider the deployment of these market-driven, post-humanitarian communication strategies and, more broadly, the shift to irony in the context of three fundamental intersecting transformations since the 1970s: (1) the instrumentalization of aid and development fields for profit-oriented motives; (2) the decline of major solidarity narratives; and (3) the 'technologization' of communication (Chouliaraki, 2013). Intertwined therewith, Chouliaraki (2012a) links the 'regime of irony' to the consumerist morality of the dominant neoliberal ideology (supra, cf. Chapter 2). Within this predominant world view, the humanitarian sector is increasingly acquiring a corporate rationality, with an increasing focus on efficacy - including at the level of public communication (departments) (Cottle & Nolan, 2007). Solidarity consequently becomes a practice of self-expression, in which private choice and self-fulfilment are central (Chouliaraki, 2012a). In that regard, this discursive regime responds to an increasing interest in ethics and 'doing good' as part of reflexive modernity with its increased focus on individuality, the 'Self' (Cronin, 2000), and needs for self-reflection and -development, and solidarity in highly individualized and commercialized societies (cf. the paradox of media solidarity, Nikunen, 2019a, supra, cf. Chapter 2). In that sense, the irony-based communication strategies reflect broader 'affective economies' which refers to economies, including the humanitarian and media industries, which increasingly generate value from various types of emotional and affective activities (Lehman et al., 2019; Nikunen, 2019a). However, these types of individualized communication strategies can have indirect detrimental effects (cf. 'cruel optimism', Berlant, 2011).[59] Although optimistic communication on local, small-scale and/or individualized solidarity forms can facilitate more positive world views, it usually fails to address deeper social inequality structures (Nikunen, 2019a).

4.2 Argumentation strategies

As mentioned earlier, the strength of the legal and normative frameworks on asylum and burden-sharing differ strongly (supra, cf. the 'North-South impasse', cf. Chapter 1). Hence, UNHCR focuses regarding the former mainly on providing legal advice, and the implementation and monitoring of the compliance of states with the obligations of the 1951 Convention, while regarding the latter on political facilitation (Betts, 2009c). In that regard, various studies demonstrate that refugee organizations frequently use - not surprisingly - **human rights and/or refugee rights discourses** to influence public opinions and urge states to engage in the protection of forcibly displaced people (e.g., Basok, 2009; DeTurk, 2020, 2022; Krebs & Cope, 2022). However, such rights-based communication approaches may sometimes be rather ineffective and even reinforce exclusionary attitudes among host communities (Krebs & Cope, 2022). This corresponds with the findings of Dempster and Hargrave's

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[59] A relation of cruel optimism exists when something that we desire (e.g., a fantasy of solidarity or a good life, food, love) is actually an obstacle to our flourishing or actively hinders our ability to achieve our goal (Berlant, 2011).

study (2017) that traditional approaches to public engagement, such as myth-busting, may exacerbate negativity and are unlikely to resonate beyond citizens who are already supportive, as well as that emotive and value-driven arguments may have more traction than facts and evidence. As said, influencing governments through public communication is a difficult, pragmatic task, given states' financial and political authority over refugee organisations (supra, cf. Chapter 2). Enabled by IRC, states' larger interests in other regimes often shape their forced migration policies (supra, cf. Chapter 1) but also has led to a situation in which UNHCR faces increased institutional competition, 'forum-shopping' and 'regime shifting', and has lost moral authority among states (Betts, 2009c, supra, cf. Chapter 2).

Acknowledging these trends, UNHCR and other refugee organizations increasingly use public communication (e.g., textual communication, conferences) that relate the protection of forcibly displaced people to powerful 'Global Northern' states' interests in other regimes to persuade them to voluntarily engage in international cooperation in the 'Global South' (Betts, 2009c; DeTurk, 2020; Freedman, 2011; Hammerstad 2014a, 2014b). As said, the contributions of 'Global Northern' states to the 'North-South' protection of forcibly displaced people are frequently motivated by a perceived relationship between these contributions and their broader interests in related issue areas (e.g., security, migration, human rights, economics, foreign policy, humanitarianism, development, peace-building), rather than by altruistic concerns about the protection of forcibly displaced people (Betts, 2009c, supra, cf. Chapter 1). This pragmatic communication strategy, seemingly enabled by IRC (supra, cf. Chapter 1), is called **'cross-issue persuasion'** (Betts, 2009c) and builds on issue linkage (e.g., Haas, 1980; McGinnis, 1986).[60] It appears to respond to the prevalent 'migration management' paradigm, which aims to (re)connect migration with – similarly enabled by IRC, overlapping regimes such as development, human rights, health, security, labour market, integration, etcetera (supra, cf. Chapter 1). More specifically, cross-issue persuasion refers to:

> 'the conditions under which an actor A can persuade an actor B that issue area X and issue area Y are linked as a means of inducing actor B to act in issue area X on the basis of its interest in issue area Y' (Betts, 2009c, p. 4).

Betts (2009c) argues that this argumentation strategy presupposes two crucial factors: structural conditions and agency conditions. First, the protection of forcibly displaced people has to be structurally (i.e. ideational, institutional, and/or material) connected to the other issue area(s). Second, UNHCR should either recognize and communicate effectively about these substantive relationships to states or create and change these interconnections, which can be realized through its information provision, argumentation, institutional design and/or epistemic role (ibid.). However, Caron (2017)

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[60] Issue linkage is about 'the way in which issues come to be combined during interstate negotiations. It has been identified as a means of facilitating international cooperation by including enough issues in the negotiations that all the actors can derive payoffs from cooperation' (Betts, 2009c, p. 21). For instance, issue-linkage is considered to be at the core of the EU-Turkey negotiations: the protection of forcibly displaced people was then linked to various interests in other regimes, including visa exemption, EU accession, economic integration and assistance (Koma, 2018).

questions the strategy's universal applicability and whether UNHCR's envisaged central role is always productive.

Nevertheless, various studies found out that UNHCR as well as other refugee organizations have attempted several times, with varying degrees of success, to link the protection of forcibly displaced people, both explicitly and implicitly, to human rights, humanitarianism, economics, migration and security (Betts, 2009c; DeTurk, 2020, 2022; Freedman, 2011; Hammerstad 2014a, 2014b). Already in the early 1990s, UNHCR and numerous NGOs developed a security discourse to persuade governments to address displacement issues structurally by presenting them as urgent security challenges and connecting the protection of forcibly displaced people to national security objectives (Hammerstad 2014a, 2014b). This strategy resulted in a deeper securitization of forced migration, making forcibly displaced people more politically relevant. However, following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, UNHCR withdrew from the security discourse. After the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the prevailing perception of forcibly displaced people as (possible) security threats (cf. the security model, supra, cf. Chapter 1), it even attempted to desecuritize the protection of forcibly displaced people and reconnect it with human rights and humanitarianism (Hammerstad, 2014a, 2014b). More recently, UNHCR has stated that supporting the protection of forcibly displaced people in the 'Global South' can help to reduce irregular migration to 'Northern' states (Betts, 2009b, 2010), seemingly endorsing and responding to the prevailing migration management paradigm. In another, more local instance, a French migration advocacy organization, which opposed the expulsion of school-age children of asylum seekers, presented these children as a highly vulnerable population group, emphasizing the importance of children's rights. Although this does not involve protection in the Global South (i.e. burden-sharing) or thus cross-issue persuasion in Betts' (2010) sense (supra), in this way, it linked one particular form of protection (i.e. asylum reception) to (perceived) larger interests of the French state (i.e. children protection and rights) (Freedman, 2011). Finally, we believe references to forcibly displaced people's talent and/or potential in the context of asylum reception can be understood as a discursive strategy belonging both to cross-issue persuasion and the regime of pity's agency oriented representation strategies.[61]

Although UNHCR is forced to adopt cross-issue persuasion due to the particular nature of the current IRR and the related political, legal and financial implications, the competitive humanitarian landscape, and the risk of further losing relevance (supra), this strategy is not without its risks. After all, if the use of cross-issue persuasion involves a too far-reaching involvement in other regimes, UNHCR risks undermining its core mandate, which is the basis of its legitimacy (Betts, 2009c). More generally, we can explain restrictive forced migration policies, including the dominant migration management policies, and refugee organizations' subsequent use of cross-issue persuasion from the political realistic paradigm (Lee, 2006). Political realism is based on the assumption that states are rational actors whose motivations and actions are determined by national interests (Grieco, 1999). Moral imperatives hardly play a role here, particularly if these imply actions, such as engaging in the protection of forcibly displaced people, which are perceived as conflicting with other state interests

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[61] This finding adequately demonstrates that in reality representation and argumentation strategies often overlap (supra).

(Lee, 2006). Cross-issue persuasion can thus be regarded as an argumentation strategy that strategically responds to this issue by linking the protection of forcibly displaced people with the (perceived) larger interests of states from a political realistic paradigm and with a related discourse.

In sum, having connected various commonly secluded research fields in this chapter and the earlier chapters, we identified that most studies on the public communication of refugee organizations examine *how* forcibly displaced people are represented (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Demusz, 2000; Fass, 2011; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Hyndman, 2000; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Judge, 2010; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Nyers, 2006; Pupavac, 2006, 2008; Rajaram, 2002; Vasavada, 2016; Wroe, 2018) and, to lesser extents, are discussed (Basok, 2009; Betts, 2009c; DeTurk, 2020, 2022; Freedman, 2011; Hammerstad 2014a, 2014b; Krebs & Cope, 2022). However, although being very valuable, these studies mostly analyze only one or a few discursive strategies, often neglect underlying production and/or societal contexts, and/or usually focus on only one organization, publication year, media genre and/or crisis. Second, few studies (e.g., Clark-Kazak, 2009; Höijer, 2004; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Malkki, 1995, 1996; Moeller, 1999; Pupavac, 2008; Vasavada, 2016; Wright, 2014) investigate *who* and particularly *what* are (not) represented, and/or *why*, and if so, mainly qualitatively and/or relatively limitedly. More generally, the research on refugee organizations' public communication is mainly text-focused. It barely discusses the reasons underlying these representation and argumentation strategies and if so, mostly refers to general institutional reasons (e.g., generating media, public, political, donor support and/or interest), lacking comprehensive, comparative, explanatory production and societal perspectives (cf. *why*, e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012a, Ihlen et al., 2015; Nikunen, 2019a). Nevertheless, the triangulation of text-focused, normative and communication production-focused, practice-based approaches is essential to better understand and be able to make evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication (Orgad, 2018). Especially as critical junctures, such as the Syrian crisis, may prompt refugee organizations to reassess their communication policies and practices (Green, 2018). Therefore, in our empirical research, we will examine these elements and attempt to extend and refine the literature. Let us now discuss our methodological and research ethical approach.

PART II – METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL INQUIRY

Chapter 5: Methodology and research ethics

In this chapter, we discuss the methodology and research ethics of this research. We here elucidate the research process and research design, with a focus on the underlying research choices, decisions, motivations, and reflections. First, we discuss our methodological and intertwined ethical approaches.[62] We then make some reflections on our positionality in the conducted research. Finally, we conclude with a list of the articles of the dissertation and the (estimated) share of efforts of each (co-)author. Since particular aspects in this chapter only relate to the author of this research and/or are highly reflexive, we sometimes switch from plural first-person pronouns to singular first-person pronouns.

5.1 Connecting research objectives and research methods

As mentioned (supra, cf. **Introduction)**, the central research objective of this doctoral project is ***to investigate the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions and their interactions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies.*** Therefore, our research is guided by the central research question ***whether, how and to what extent international refugee organizations communicate about the forcibly displaced people involved in the recent Syrian and/or Central African crises (2014-2018), and why are they doing so?*** This central research question is operationalized through five more specific, interrelated research questions, corresponding to the five resulting article-based chapters. For reasons of focus, relevance, space, clarity, and contextualization, we discuss the more concrete sub-research questions in the theoretical (i.e. Chapter 3) and empirical (i.e. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9) article-based chapters. As is clear, we have already examined and discussed the *conceptual* dimension of the public communication of refugee organizations in Chapter 3, and will thus not further discuss this dimension here. In this chapter, we pay particular attention to the methodological and ethical elaboration of the two empirical sub-objectives (i.e. the textual dimension, and the production and societal dimensions).

To answer these sub-objectives, this dissertation adopts a mixed-methods approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research methods. As the *how* element mainly concerns (qualitative) representation and argumentation in particular texts, we chose to examine this component by applying (multimodal) critical discourse analyses ([M]CDA) (Hansen & Machin, 2019; Machin & Mayr, 2012) on the public communication of various international refugee organizations in Chapters 6 and 7. The *who* and *what* elements, however, rather relate to the extent to which certain aspects are present in certain texts, or thus quantitative numbers. In that regard, we opted for descriptive quantitative content analysis (QCA) with a comparative, longitudinal and intersectional design (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) in Chapter 8. Finally, to obtain adequate answers to the *why* element or thus to gain insights into the underlying production and social contexts, the use of textual research methods seems,

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[62] We mainly discuss our ethical approach in relation to the conducted production research, as research ethics often plays a more prominent role in human participants-based research than in textual research, which was also experienced in this doctoral research. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that ethical issues can also arise in textual research. For example, researchers may need to anonymize the identities of the authors of the sources they analyse or use (Gaikwad et al., 2019). Furthermore, in our view, researchers' language, including their representations of (especially vulnerable and/or voiceless) people, is in each type of research politically and ethically important (cf. 'politics of representation' and 'crisis of representation', supra, cf. Introduction).

to some extent, relevant but nonetheless insufficient. Therefore, we conducted semi-structured expert interviews (Clark et al., 2021) involving reconstruction (Reich & Barnoy, 2016) and oral history methods (Ritchie, 2015), with the producers of the public communication of refugee organizations and/or people who are involved in the process and/or have substantial knowledge about it. That are, respectively, press and regional officers (cf. Chapter 6) and press and communication officers (cf. Chapter 9). Moreover, in Chapter 9, we complemented these in-depth interviews with complementary research methods that allow us to gain additional insights into particular production and societal contexts; that are, office ethnography (Hansen & Machin, 2019; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) and document analysis (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2022). We discuss in more detail the motivations for these methodological decisions below.

5.2   Adopting a qualitatively driven mixed-methods approach

As mentioned, we adopted a 'mixed-methods design' in this doctoral research. This refers to studies that mix both qualitative and quantitative types of research data (Morse, 2003, 2010; Taskakkori & Teddlie, 2010a, 2010b). More specifically, Anguera and colleagues (2018, p. 2765) consider it as 'qualitative and quantitative components that must be integrated to ensure the mixing of the information they carry. These components can be data (which is the most common situation) or results (first-level, second-level, etc.)'. This does not involve a mere accumulation or juxtaposition of separate methods but rather implies that the research is integrated to investigate the research subject from multiple perspectives (Boczkowski & Siles, 2014; Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Clark, 2017). By adopting this 'third paradigm', we thus combine the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (ibid.). In contrast to most studies (supra, cf. Chapter 4), we did not limit our research to merely the qualitative representations of forcibly displaced people (cf. *how*) but also examined *who* and *what* are mainly (not) represented, and *why*.

More concretely, we adopted a qualitatively driven mixed-methods approach (Hesse-Biber et al., 2015). First, in Chapters 6 and 9, we combined different qualitative research methods. Considering the thematic overlaps (i.e. in terms of organizations, media genres, crises and publication years) and subsequent opportunities, in certain chapters (i.e. Chapters 8 and 9) with respectively a quantitative research method (Chapter 8), and qualitative research methods (Chapter 9), we integrated the respective results with the main findings from one or more other chapters through references. Specifically, in Chapter 8 (cf. *what* and *who*), we partially explained the results of the QCA by the main findings of our production and societal research (i.e. Chapter 9, cf. *why*), whereas in Chapter 9, we used the main findings of Chapters 6 and 7 (cf. *how* and *why*) and Chapter 8 as starting points, triggers and guides during our production and societal research, both empirically (e.g., during the observation research and expert interviews) and analytically (particularly to create more focus when analyzing the large datasets).[63] Corresponding with the Grounded Theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Glazer

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[63] For reasons of relevance, space and focus, we did not make extensive interactions between the results of Chapter 7, and the results of other chapters, whereas for Chapter 6 this was not possible. This chapter is based on an empirical article that mainly (but not exclusively) relies on data that was gathered and analysed before the FWO project started. Hence, it was created much earlier than the other articles, and also differs somewhat thematically (e.g., some different refugee organizations, only a focus on the Syrian crisis and on press releases).

& Strauss, 1967), the empirical data sets of Chapters 7 up until 9 were thus in constant interaction with each other, and subsequently informed and shaped our methodological and analytical approaches. As such, we were able to facilitate, in line with our central research objective, interactions between textual and production and social dimensions. In these ways, we arguably obtained, among others, different, complementary perspectives about the subject, and more comprehensive and varied results, and we likely improved the reliability (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Clark, 2017; Morse, 2003, 2010).

Let us now discuss in more detail the conducted research processes, including research decisions, motivations and reflections, underlying the use of these research methods and the broader methodologies. As we stated earlier (cf. Introduction), readers mostly only gain insights into the final narrative (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017), as researchers rarely communicate or are able to communicate about what they did not, or did but finally did not report (e.g., non-analyzed media contents, non-reported identified themes, changed or omitted research questions). However, these aspects can be relevant, particularly as our ability to determine the rigour of research depends on the provided context and details (ibid.). For reasons of relevance, focus, thematic consistency and clarity, we cluster the discussed research processes by type of analysed element (i.e. *how*, *who*, *what*, and *why*) and type of used research method (textual versus production; qualitative versus quantitative). We successively discuss the research processes underlying the (1) the (M)CDAs (i.e. qualitative textual research methods focused on *how*), (2) the QCA (i.e. quantitative textual research method focused on *who* and *what*), and (3) the office ethnography, expert interviews, and document analysis (i.e. qualitative research methods focused on *why*).

5.3   How: (Multimodal) critical discourse analysis

In Chapters 6 and 7, we primarily investigated *how* forcibly displaced people are mainly (not) represented and discussed in the public communication of international refugee organizations.[64] In other words, which representation and argumentation strategies or thus discursive strategies do the international refugee organizations use? More specifically, in Chapter 6, we mainly analysed three international refugee organisations' discursive strategies towards the recent Syrian crisis. We applied a CDA on UNHCR's, DRC's, and International Rescue Committee's international press releases about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis and/or the Syrian crisis from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015 (N=122). In Chapter 7, we built further on these findings, by analysing UNHCR's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises. We applied a comparative-synchronic (Carvalho, 2008) MCDA on UNHCR's international press releases (N=28), news stories (N=233), photos (N=462) and videos (N=50) of 2015.

Nevertheless, it largely informed the other chapters theoretically, methodologically and/or empirically, particularly Chapters 7 and 9.

[64] In both chapters, we secondarily examine the underlying production and social contexts (cf. *why*), and in Chapter 6, we also examine the main sources of representation and the represented sociodemographic groups of forcibly displaced people (cf. *who*). As said, we will discuss this later in the appropriate sections of this chapter.

5.3.1 Motivating the (M)CDA

Before we developed these research designs, we started the research process by considering the public communication of international refugee organisations - just like any type of (mediated) communication - as a particular genre of discourses, involving specific discourses (Price, 2007; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 1) define discourse as 'a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world).' More concretely, discourses consist of a range of ideas, images and practices that are reflected in language (Machin & Jaworski, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2012) and structure our social life (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Discourses both reflect and construct a specific reality by providing meaning to reality, identities and social relations (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). They are inevitably connected to power and consequently can support or undermine the social status quo (Bloor & Bloor, 2013), and often compete with other discourses in texts in their struggle to define social reality (Richardson, 2006; Wodak, 2004). Hence, public communication can affect public opinions and attitudes (Price, 2007; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and regularly - usually unconsciously - reproduces and reflects dominant societal ideologies (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Professional practices are after all embedded in the social practice of social structures, institutions and values (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Following the social constructivist perspective that language is not neutral, nor neutrally reflects social reality (van den Berg, 2004), CDA investigates how realities are discursively constructed and acquire meaning (Hansen & Machin, 2019).[65] Specifically, CDA examines how actors use language to persuade people in following their interpretation of events (Hansen & Machin, 2019), and thereby takes into account the broader social, economic and political contexts (Catalano & Waugh 2020; Paltridge, 2013). Hence, in Chapter 6, we considered this method to be very suitable for studying the above-mentioned *how* element (and secondarily thus also the *why* element). In Chapter 7, we used MCDA, which is a specific type or interpretation of CDA (Hansen & Machin, 2019; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020; Machin & Mayr, 2012). The methodology originates from analytic traditions in critical discourse analysis, social semiotics, and (audio)visual studies, and is well suited to study international refugee organizations' discursive strategies as applied in several media genres. First, it examines how actors use discourses to influence how people interpret and perceive particular subjects, thereby taking into account broader social, economic, and political contexts. Second, by adopting a multimodal perspective, we can adequately analyse meanings in both textual (e.g., press releases and news stories), visual (e.g., photos) and audiovisual (e.g., videos) forms of communication (ibid.). As Philo (2007, p. 186) argues that '[c]ritical discourse analysis would be more powerful if it routinely included a developed account of alternatives', we also adopted a 'comparative-synchronic' perspective (Carvalho, 2008). This implies

> 'looking at various representations of an issue at the time of the writing of one specific news text (the unit of analysis). More specifically, we compare one text with other representations of the issue: texts published on the same day (or another time unit) by different authors, both in the same news outlet and in others. The comparison of different media depictions of reality involves attempting to reconstitute the original events (discursive or non-discursive)' (Carvalho, 2008, p. 171).

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[65] In this study and the broader doctoral research, we adopt a social constructivist perspective. In sum, this epistemological perspective implies that we should distinguish the world in a 'natural' and 'social' world. The social world is socially constructed: it is actively created and transformed by people and language. Social constructivism is thus anti-essentialist: knowledge is historically and culturally specific (Fairclough, 2013, see also Hall, 1997).

In more practical terms, by adopting this comparative-synchronic perspective, we were able to pinpoint media genre and crisis-related differences and commonalities in the public communication of UNHCR (ibid.). More generally, by opting for (M)CDA, we integrate our studies in Chapters 6 and 7 into strands of previous research, mainly embedded in communication science (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Vasavada, 2016), linguistic (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson, 2011; Rajaram, 2002), political science (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Johnson, 2011; Nyers, 2006; Pupavac, 2006, 2008) and history studies (e.g., Fass, 2011) on the mediated representation of forcibly displaced people in humanitarian communication. These studies also mainly opt for a particular type of discourse analysis, linguistic analysis or another type of qualitative textual analysis to investigate textual and/or (audio)visual forms of communication and representation.[66]

5.3.2 Limitations and criticisms of (M)CDA

Nevertheless, we would also like to point out some limitations inherent to (M)CDA. This analysis technique is often criticized for focusing too much on the content of texts, resulting in too little attention to the production and social contexts (Carvalho, 2008; Hansen & Machin, 2019; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). We therefore opt for Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA model, which consists of three dimensions: text, the discursive practice and the social practice. These dimensions include the elements we examine. Put simply, the text dimension refers to the discursive strategies in texts (cf. *how*), while the discursive practice includes the production context (cf. *why*) and the social practice corresponds with the broader social context (cf. *why*). Nevertheless, although CDA (Fairclough 1992) is three-dimensional, it remains difficult to examine profoundly contextual aspects related to discursive and social practices. Therefore, we attempt to explain the text findings in Chapter 6 by relying on findings from additional expert interviews (cf. triangulation, infra) and in Chapter 7 by relying on key findings from the literature review (Chapter 9). At the level of the dissertation, we will integrate, relate and explain the findings in the discussion and conclusion (infra, cf. Chapter 10).

Another criticism is that in (M)CDA the boundary between social research and political engagement is often relatively vague and thin (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). For instance, researchers would sometimes select texts that are known in advance to confirm their conclusion (Machin & Mayr, 2012). These criticisms are related to the fact that (M)CDA is rather a critical state of mind with various interpretations instead of an explicit, systematic, reproducible research method (van Dijk, 2013). In order to anticipate such criticisms and to simultaneously improve the reliability and validity of our results, we attempt to discuss transparently and reflexively our made choices, decisions and underlying motivations in the research process, and used in both chapters extensive sets of discursive criteria (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Joye & Maeseele, 2022; Mortelmans, 2020), while in Chapter 6 also triangulation (infra, cf. the expert interviews). Both sets are deductively informed by various key works (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Hansen & Machin, 2019; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and the literature review's findings on representation and argumentation strategies, and correspond with our research foci. Specifically, we mainly adopted discursive criteria that analyze representation

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[66] At the same time, however, we also largely deviate from these studies with our QCA (see also Clark-Kazak, 2009), which additionally has a longitudinal, comparative and intersectional research design (infra).

strategies, particularly the representation of social actors and social action (i.e. transitivity) (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Hansen & Machin, 2019; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020), and validity claims of truth and normative rightness (i.e. argumentations strategies) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). For the analysis of Chapter 7, we adopted both discursive criteria that are medium-specific (i.e. only relevant for textual, visual or audiovisual communication) to be able to obtain medium-specific rich data, as well as discursive criteria that can be applied to various or all media genres, to ensure broader comparative-synchronic perspectives (i.e. media genre differences and commonalities). However, given the limited and fragmented research on refugee organizations' public communication, both studies are also explorative and investigate the data with open, inductive looks. Hence, our CDA and MCDA both combine deductive and inductive elements. In sum, in the above-mentioned ways, we attempted to respond to and meet common criticisms that CDA lacks comparative analyses and large datasets (cf. Chapter 7), spends little attention to (non-journalistic) social actors' discursive strategies, is too text-focused, neglecting the underlying production processes, and is biased (Carvalho, 2008; Hansen & Machin, 2019; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

5.3.3   Discussing and motivating the empirical case studies

As said, in Chapter 6, we examined the public communication of international refugee organizations about the Syrian crisis. This crisis started in 2011, became in 2014 the largest forced displacement crisis worldwide, involved 11.7 million forcibly displaced people at the end of 2015, and is currently still the largest forced displacement crisis worldwide (UNHCR, n.d.-l). We scrutinized the international press releases of UNHCR and INGOs DRC and the International Rescue Committee. These three refugee organizations were - and still are - largely involved in the Syrian crisis. More specifically, during the investigated research period, DRC and International Rescue Committee collaborated with UNHCR, the key and main coordinating actor in the IRR (supra, cf. Chapter 1), regarding the Syrian crisis on various themes, ranging from providing financial assistance to child protection (UNHCR, 2016b). Most importantly, they all communicated extensively about the Syrian crisis, which is - obviously - essential for our research.

More specifically, we analysed these organizations' press releases from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015. We opted for this topical and socially relevant research period because the crisis greatly expanded at that time (UNHCR, 2018). Syria became the top country of origin for refugees and forcibly displaced people in general worldwide in 2014 – and has been every year since then to this day (UNHCR, n.d.-l). In 2015, an estimated 11.7 million Syrians – or 17.9% of the total number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide – sought protection in Syria or abroad. More concretely, at the end of 2015, there were 4.9 million refugees, 6.6 million internally displaced people, and almost 250.000 asylum seekers with Syria as their country of origin (UNHCR, 2016a).

In Chapter 7, we chose to focus in-depth, for reasons of relevance, focus, clarity, time and space, on UNHCR's press releases, news stories, and related photos and videos on the Syrian and Central African crises of 2015. Press releases provide formal, concise and easily accessible information about a specific subject. News stories provide more than factual information: they are mostly somewhat more engaged and/or personalized, focus beyond a specific event and/or subject, and are usually more time-less and

longer, usually including (more) photos and/or videos (Fitch, 2012; Gitlin, 2003; Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2018; Winston & Loeffler, 2013). These are nowadays some of the main forms of public communication and are directed through different, increasingly important digital channels (Einspänner 2010; Fleisher, 2012), to various target audiences (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). We believe it is essential to first thoroughly examine these important communication genres, especially since they have been barely or not explored until now in the context of the public communication of refugee organizations. Subsequently, social media communication and the broader distribution and reception contexts should be examined. Further, our production research indicates that news stories, photos, and videos (which are often first published on the website) often form the core of this social media communication. Social media communication is in many cases a discursive strategy to facilitate traffic from Facebook and other social media platforms to the organizational website (e.g., to a news story with photos and videos). Therefore, it is essential to first examine these basic genres of public communication.

Where appropriate, we refer to both press releases and news stories with the umbrella term 'media content unit' (MCU). Further, the Central African Republic, affected by recurring conflicts since its independence in 1960, constituted with 0.99 million forcibly displaced people, or almost one-fourth of its total population, at the end of 2015 the 14th largest crisis worldwide (UNHCR, 2016a). These crises remain large-scale as respectively the largest and fifteenth largest forced displacement crises worldwide at end of 2021 (UNHCR n.d.-l).

Our choice to focus on 2015 in both chapters is further informed by the fact that since then the subject has dominated divisive and intertwined public, media, and political agendas and discussions (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019). Moreover, in 2015, both the number of forcibly displaced people, particularly those involved in the Syrian crisis, the humanitarian needs (UNHCR, 2016a) and levels of mediatization increased substantially (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). Moreover, 2015 comprised various 'critical discourse moments', or periods involving socially relevant events in the historical course of the crises, 'which may challenge the "established" discursive positions' (Carvalho, 2008, p. 166, see e.g., BBC, 2018, 1 August; Spindler, 2015, 8 December).[67] Furthermore, media and political discourses on forcibly displaced people temporally shifted in 2015 from initial humanitarian, moralistic and empathetic framing (e.g., 'deserving migrants') towards securitization, threat and suspicious framing ('undeserving' or economic migrants) (Consterdine, 2018; Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017), raising the question whether, how and to which degree this affected refugee organizations' discursive strategies. Furthermore, the samples of Chapters 6 and 7 constitute both relatively temporally limited and logical entities, enabling us to make relevant statements about contextual dimensions. Additionally, the different and complementary nature of both the organizations (e.g., background, structure, mission and values, financial affiliation) (cf. Chapter 6) and the crises (e.g., scale, geographical, political, economic and sociocultural context, implications and mediatization, Hawkins, 2014; Bunce et al., 2017) (cf. Chapter 7), potentially allowed us to investigate if, how and to which degree these organizational

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[67] For further discussions on the relatively little conceptualized and little studied concept of critical discourse moments, see Birkland (1998), Chilton (1987, 1988), Gamson (1992), Gamson and Stuart (1992), Lankester and colleagues (2015), and Maeseele (2015).

and crisis-specific societal factors affect refugee organizations' public communication strategies as means of second-level agenda-building.

5.3.4   Data selection and analysis processes

In Chapter 6, I analysed, supported by Microsoft Office software, the aforementioned organizations' press releases, as they form an important genre of public communication that is mainly directed at news media, and thus indirectly can also reach and influence political actors, the general public, and donors (Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2012; Winston & Loeffler, 2013). We gathered the press releases through the online archives of the organizations by using the keyword 'Syr*' (some DRC press releases of 2014 were obtained via email). To preserve the focus of our empirical research, we only analysed press releases which explicitly mention Syrian displaced people and/or the related crisis. Press releases about forced displaced worldwide, or other crises, which do not or only implicitly mention Syrian displaced people or the related crisis were thus outside the focus of this research. Hence, we obtained a final sample of 122 relevant press releases (UNHCR: 78, DRC: 27, and International Rescue Committee: 17).

Likewise, in Chapter 7, we started the aselect data selection of the press releases, news stories, and related photos and videos by applying crisis category-specific search formulas in particular communication archives of UNHCR's main website. It is important to mention that the Boolean operators (apart from 'AND') do not function adequately within the search filters of UNHCR's website. Therefore, we used respectively 'Syr*' (for identifying MCUs about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis), '"Central African"' (for identifying MCUs about forcibly displaced people involved in the Central African crisis), and 'Syr* AND "Central African"' (for identifying MCUs about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian and Central African crises) in the respective sections 'Press releases and news comments', and 'Stories' of UNHCR's website. Based on their media genre and content, we then identified and listed all relevant MCUs, both primarily or secondarily mentioning the investigated people. I then applied, again supported by Microsoft Office software, a comparative-synchronic (Carvalho, 2008) MCDA (Hansen & Machin, 2019; Ledin & Machin, 2018, 2020; Machin & Mayr, 2012) on UNHCR's international press releases (N=28), news stories (N=233), and related photos (N=462) and videos (N=50), which represent forcibly displaced people involved in the above-mentioned crises.[68]

In sum, in the explorative Chapter 6, we adopted a broad comparative perspective at the level of analysed organizations and analyse two years of publication. We thereby focused on one media genre (i.e. press releases) about one crisis (i.e. the Syrian crisis). In Chapter 7, we opted for an opposite, complementary approach. In contrast to the previous chapter, we focused here on one organization and one publication year. In this chapter, however, we adopted a broad(er) comparative perspective at the level of analysed media genres (i.e. four media genres, including textual, visual and audio-visual media genres), and analysed crises (i.e. two crises). We opted for these complementary approaches for reasons of relevance, focus, space, and time and by combining them, we were ultimately able to

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[68] For more information about the analysis and analysis scheme of the CDA, see Appendix 1. Regarding the MCDA, for more information about the analysis and analysis scheme (cf. Appendix 6), and the data selection and analysis process, and subsequent relevant data (cf. Appendices 7, 8 and 9).

obtain depth and rich data at all the analysed levels (i.e. organization, crisis, media genre, and publication year).

5.4   Who and what: Descriptive quantitative content analysis

Let us now discuss the research process underlying the quantitative content analysis used in Chapter 8. We applied this quantitative textual research method to examine to which degree 'what' (cf. key characteristics and themes) and 'who' (cf. voiced and represented actors) are represented and interact in international refugee organizations' public communication. Specifically, we investigated the public communication of UNHCR, and two INGOs, NRC and ECRE. They are leading organizations and are, to varying extents, involved in and communicate about the forcibly displaced people involved in the examined crises. Furthermore, they differ in terms of (political and socio-cultural) background, structure, mission and values, and financial affiliation, which allows us to examine if and how these organizational factors potentially affect their communication strategies. Further, we focus on these organizations' public communication about the recent crises of Syria, the Central African Republic or both, which are, to varying extents, protracted and large-scale (supra). As was the case for the comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis (supra), the complementary nature of the crises in Syria and the Central African Republic - in terms of scale, context, implications and mediatization (Bunce et al., 2017) - allows us here to examine if and how these crisis-specific societal factors possibly affect the organizations' communication strategies.

In line with our research objectives (supra), we opted for a descriptive QCA (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) with a comparative, longitudinal and intersectional research design (infra). Within this approach – which can be distinguished from inferential, psychometric, and predictive approaches, the analyses and conclusions are usually very clear, sparse and purely based on the content of the messages (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017). Researchers within this approach are usually rather reluctant to make statements about aspects that are external to the studied content. Nevertheless, they can be driven by the desire to gain, from an integrated research framework in combination with other research methods, more insights into the research, including about the production dimension of the message (cf. Chapter 9). Furthermore, descriptive content analysis will not only describe the (univariate) results of one variable but also try to uncover significant (bivariate) relationships between two variables (ibid.). Specifically, we applied this descriptive QCA to the organizations' (international) press releases and news stories which represent forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis, the Central African crisis, or both crises (2015-2018). In line with our research objectives, the codebook and registration form focus on (1) general coder information (section 1), key characteristics (e.g., organization, media genre, publication year, crisis) and themes of the MCUs (section 2, cf. *what*), the source categories of representation (section 3, cf. *who*), and sociodemographic variables of the represented, individualized forcibly displaced people (sections 4 and 5, cf. *who*). For reasons of theory, feasibility and focus, the visual (e.g., photos, images) and audiovisual content units (e.g., videos) of the examined press releases and news stories are largely excluded from this analysis; only their degree of occurrence was investigated.

5.4.1 Data selection, codebook construction and coder training

First, just as for the (M)CDAs, we developed and applied crisis category- and website-specific search formulas in the communication archives of the organizations' main websites. For NRC, we used respectively (1) "Syria" OR "Syrian" OR "Syrians" NOT "Central African", (2) "Central African" NOT "Syria" NOT "Syrian" NOT "Syrians", and (3) "Central African" AND "Syria" OR "Syrian" OR "Syrians". For ECRE, we used respectively (1) Syr, (2) "Central African", and (3) Syr AND "Central African". For UNHCR, we used respectively (1) Syr*, (2) "Central African", and (3) Syr* AND "Central African". Hence, we retrieved 1967 results in total. Second, we manually excluded irrelevant MCUs regarding media genre, crisis category, content and/or doubles, and manually added relevant MCUs. Hence, our aselect data selection resulted in a total sample of 1244 relevant MCUs.[69]

Further, an extensive codebook and Qualtrics registration form were, based on insights from the literature review (e.g., APA, 2020, Koetsenruijter & Van Hout, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017; Nothias, 2018; Powers, 2018; Riffe et al., 2019; Vanlee, 2018; Vertoont, 2017), empirical pretesting and coder training, cyclically constructed, tested and adapted (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017).[70] Specifically, the codebook was developed before, during and after a methodological bachelor course, including the assistance of six third Bachelor's students as coders. The coders were trained adequately throughout various theoretical, methodological and empirical sessions and test codings. During all stages of coder training, some general rules and principles were applied (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017). First, coding decisions could only be made by relying on the information available in the coded messages (e.g., not on own knowledge, experiences, presumptions, or opinions). Second, coders were allowed and even encouraged to reread the messages to be coded as often as necessary to extract maximum information. The samples of the pilot intercoder reliability (ICR) tests (infra) were also always analysed individually and independently by each coder. Discussion and collaboration were limited to and stimulated in the previous stages of coder training, and comments, suggestions and questions that led to more consensus were included in the codebook to ensure higher reliability. Finally, the coding was to some extent blind. The coders were of course well informed about the variables and their measurements but not or only to a limited extent aware of the (general) purpose, research questions and hypotheses of the study. Blind coding can avoid that the coders are influenced in their coding, in the sense that they frequently want to 'give' the main researcher what the latter is looking for, or at least what they perceive as such. Hence, this formed a good check on the coding of the informed main researcher (ibid.).

5.4.2 Intercoder reliability and intercoder reliability tests

Additionally, we conducted two pilot ICR tests on two aselect subsamples of the total sample before we applied the further or post ICR test data analysis (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017). ICR, sometimes referred to as interobserver, interrater or interjudge reliability (Cho, 2008; Tinsley & Weiss, 2000), concerns the level of reliability of coding a set of analysis units or more concretely, the extent to which two or more independent researchers agree on the coded values of a variable after applying the same coding

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[69] For overviews of the data selection processes and the (ir)relevant data, see Appendices 14 up until 20.
[70] For more in-depth information and reflections about the final codebook, including about the data selection and analysis processes, see Appendix 11; for the final registration form, see Appendix 12.

scheme on the content of interest (Cho, 2008; Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017). ICR coefficients usually range from 0 (complete disagreement) to 1 (complete agreement) (Cho, 2008). In general, in most research, ICR coefficients of 0.90 or greater, 0.80 or greater, and less than 0.80 are respectively considered very reliable and acceptable in all cases, reliable and acceptable in most cases, and debatable or unreliable (Cho, 2008; Neuendorf, 2002). As a standard of research quality, (a sufficiently high) ICR is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to develop and finally demonstrate the validity, reliability and usefulness of the coding scheme.[71] In this way, the coding scheme can be used by more than one person as a measuring instrument – and consequently, more texts can be examined, and it can be shown that the obtained results do not arise from a purely subjective assessment of the coder (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017).

While there seems to be a consensus that (a sufficient high) ICR is critical when applying a quantitative content analysis, there is no common standard on how to conduct and report on ICR testing (De Swert, 2012). In that regard, there are various so-called reliability coefficients or statistical measures to calculate the ICR (e.g., percent agreement, Holsti's CR, Scott's pi [π], Cohen's kappa [κ], Spearman's rho [ρ] and Pearson's r), which all have their own strengths and weaknesses and are suitable for specific types of research, contexts and aims (Cho, 2008; De Swert, 2012; for a further overview and discussion, see Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2002, 2017).[72] In general, the selection of the appropriate reliability coefficient depends on the different coding levels, and the respective numbers of coded categories, coders and coded units (Cho, 2008). In this research, we opted for Krippendorff's alpha (α) coefficient (hereafter: KALPHA) (cf. Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2018). KALPHA is usually more mathematically demanding but a relative flexible measure. More concretely, it 'can account for chance agreement, different levels of coding (i.e., nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio), multiple coding categories, different sample sizes, and missing data' (Cho, 2008, p. 344) and the number of observers (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Some scholars (e.g., Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2018) consequently regard it as the most standard reliability measure. We therefore consider it as an appropriate statistical measure to calculate the ICR scores for the variables of this research. Relying on De Swert's (2012) practical and highly accessible manual, we applied the freely available macro of Hayes and Krippendorff (2007) in the statistical software program IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to calculate KALPHA scores in the two pilot ICR tests and consequently limited the mathematically demanding and time-consuming nature of KALPHA.

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[71] Validity refers to the degree to which an item adequately measures and reflects the shared social meaning of a concept (Babbie, 2015). Validity thus concerns the extent to which a measurement procedure only represents the intended concept, and thus examines to what extent we actually measure what we want to measure. External validity thereby refers to generalizability, and concerns the extent to which the results of a measurement can be extrapolated to other contexts, times, etcetera. Internal validity is the degree to which the conceptual and operational definitions of a term correspond to each other (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017).

[72] We need to distinguish these intercoder reliablity coefficients from internal consistency coefficients, such as Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman-Brown formula. These examine how well a set of variables fit together and whether they can consequently be put in a scale or index. However, the reliability coefficients do not examine internal consistency, but 'agreement', 'agreement beyond chance' and/or 'covariation' (Neuendorf, 2002, 2017).

5.4.3 Data coding, interpretation, and reporting

The ICR scores of the first pilot coding of important variables (e.g., 2.11, 2.12, 3.1., 3.2) were insufficiently high because of various reasons. First, the coders had to select the MCUs that they perceived to be relevant. Only MCUs of which one of the crisis categories formed the main subject could be selected. However, this was poorly described at the time and led to significant differences in data selection and subsequently also in the ICR scores. Additionally, the variables and their values were also insufficiently described and/or delineated. After the methodological course, various aspects were further transformed by the principal researcher to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Among others, I adopted a broader focus on all MCUs that include at least one explicit representation of a forcibly displaced person involved in the Syrian and/or Central African crisis, delineated and/or described particular variables and their values more adequately, removed particular existing variables, and included new variables. Finally, one of the former Bachelor's students assisted in the ICR test in the capacity of a research assistant. This implied reading and understanding the new codebook, providing feedback and discussing disagreements, conducting different test codings (based on the respective results, the main researcher further reformed the codebook and registration form), and finally coding a subset of the total sample of the relevant data for the second ICR test. Specifically, for the second ICR test, the new coder and I both analysed the first 150 relevant MCUs of the total sample or an appropriate 12,05% (cf. Neuendorf, 2002, 2017; Krippendorff, 2018).

Overall, the KALPHA scores of the variables were relatively satisfactory, although some were too low (see Table 1 in Chapter 8). First, as the macro cannot (properly) calculate KALPHA scores for binary and/or skewed variables (cf. variables 2.3, 4.11, 4.16, 5.10 and 5.15), we calculated percent agreements. These all indicate high and acceptable degrees of intercoder agreement (i.e. the agreement between coders), meeting the acceptable standard of 80 per cent. Further, we reported reflexively and cautiously about these variables. Second, for the latent and/or interpretive variables with insufficiently high KALPHA scores (cf. variables 2.11, 2.12, 3.1, 3.2, 4.10, 5.4, 5.9 and 5.14), we decided, after considering various possible recodings and/or merges and for theoretical, methodological and empirical reasons, to maintain them but to approach, interpret, analyze and report about them in rather qualitative, reflexive and cautious ways. Among others, we did not conduct extensive statistical analyses on these variables that aim to identify significant associations but mainly tried to demonstrate whether, how and to what extent their values are present. Further, we do not discuss concrete percentages and if we show them in tables and/or figures, this is merely to provide indications of the orders of magnitude and to be transparent. Hence, these shown percentages should not be interpreted as concrete numbers. Finally, for theoretical and empirical reasons, we also recoded some (ordinal) variables (cf. 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 4.4, and 5.3) to the ratio level. After the full data analysis, we performed data cleaning and management (including recoding of variables) and eventually relevant statistical analyses in SPSS.[73]

It is important to mention that we precautiously and reflexively coded the sociodemographic variables: characteristics should be explicitly stated and/or be contextually derived with absolute certainty,

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[73] For the full dataset, see Appendix 10; for the data cleaning and management, see Appendix 13. For the conducted statistical analyses (cf. Appendix 21), and all information related to the ICR test (cf. Appendix 22).

otherwise 'unable to determine' should be indicated. This approach provided less sociodemographic data, forming an important nuance to the results but facilitated a more consistent, unprejudiced, reliable, feasible coding of often interpretive, latent sociodemographic information. Moreover, it was relevant to examine which sociodemographics the refugee organizations (do not) communicate explicitly. In that regard, some sociodemographics are not applicable or relevant for some forcibly displaced people, and thus less explicitly mentioned (e.g., marital status, sexual orientation, current and former profession, for [very] young, deceased, and/or generically presented people). Hence, in that regard, we did not study (audio)visual content units. It was relatively unfeasible to analyse the sociodemographic aspects of visual and audiovisual content units, as these are often not visible (e.g, current and former profession, religion, sexual orientation, family status, marital status, even gender and age are difficult), and could lead to a very prejudiced, non-reflexive coding, which we wanted to avoid, especially given the sensitive theme and involved populations.

Finally, QCA is commonly criticized for categorizing, fragmenting and/or decontextualizing data (e.g., Hansen et al., 1998; Kracauer, 1952; Riffe et al., 2019, see also strategic essentialism, infra). We therefore responded to the suggestion to combine (complementary) quantitative and qualitative research (cf. Hansen et al., 1998; Neuendorf, 2017; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). First, the QCA's findings are partly clarified with qualitative insights about the analysed data and themes, including key findings from the explanatory production and societal research conducted in Chapter 9. Second, our QCA contextualizes the 'who' element through examining interactions with the 'what' element (supra), and its variables and values are both theoretically and empirically informed. Specifically, we tried to address this issue by not only focusing on our main topic, that is, the sociodemographic categories of represented forcibly displaced people (cf. sections 4 and 5) but also on the broader context (cf. section 2) and the source categories of representations (cf. section 3). Furthermore, we have also informed our QCA's codebook and registration form by the specific examined empirical reality. Particularly, the values and associated explanations of variables 2.11 and 2.12 are clusters shaped by empirical pretesting, the policies of the examined organizations, and their substantive coherence and common grounds.[74]

5.4.4 Intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical framework

As said, we will conduct an extensive longitudinal (cf. focus on 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018), and comparative (cf. focus on four different publication years, three different organizations, two different media genres and two different crises) QCA on the public communication of refugee organizations. Although very relevant to gain insights into if, how, and to which degree certain differences can be identified according to publication year, organization, media genre, and/or crisis, such or similar approaches are hardly or not adopted in research on the public communication of refugee organizations (e.g., Clark-Kazak, 2009) and, more broadly, humanitarian communication. Furthermore, our QCA is also guided by intersectionality (e.g., Atewologun, 2018; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016;

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[74] For NRC and UNHCR, this concerns their respective mission statements, activities and/or objectives regarding the two examined crises (NRC, n.d.-e, n.d.-f; UNHCR, n.d.-c, n.d.-d, n.d.-p, 2020b), and those in general (NRC, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-d, n.d.-g, n.d.-h, n.d.-i, 2017; UNHCR, n.d.-b, n.d.-c, n.d.-d, n.d.-e, n.d.-f, n.d.-g, n.d.-h, n.d.-j, n.d.-k, n.d.-m, n.d.-n, n.d.-o, n.d.-r, 2008, 2020). For ECRE, we only looked to its general objectives and activities (ECRE, n.d.-a, n.d.-b), as this organization is not active 'on the ground' regarding specific crises.

Maegaard et al., 2019; Nash, 2008) as the theoretical and analytical framework to examine the public communication of refugee organizations, and the representations of individualized, personalized forcibly displaced people in particular (cf. sections 4 and 5). In this section, we briefly discuss what intersectionality entails, its relevance, and the translations of these aspects into our research.

In sum, intersectionality is a very influential multidisciplinary concept, theoretical framework, methodology, analytical tool and paradigm in primarily feminist and critical race theory (Atewologun, 2018; Nash, 2008; Van Schuylenbergh et al., 2018), and increasingly also in media studies (Maegaard et al., 2019), critical organization studies (Atewologun, 2018), sociology, political sciences, history (Collins & Bilge, 2020), international human rights law (Treloar, 2014) and other fields and disciplines relevant to this research. It provides a 'mindset and language for examining interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems' (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1), particularly (but not exclusively) for theorizing (marginalized) subjects' multidimensional experiences of identity and oppression (Nash, 2008; Van Schuylenbergh et al., 2018). The term was first coined by critical legal race scholar Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to respond to the shortcomings of the dominant tendency in contemporary anti-discrimination law, feminist theory and anti-racist theory to treat 'race'[75] and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis. As such, they reproduced a 'single-axis framework' (Crenshaw, 1989) and were inadequate to examine the overlapping, multidimensional, simultaneous systems of oppression and discrimination (e.g., racism and sexism) experienced by people belonging to different minority groups and multiply-burdened (e.g., black women) (Cooper, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989; Van Schuylenbergh et al., 2018). In sum, Else-Quest and Hyde (2016, p. 155) synthesized diverse definitions of intersectionality and identified three common underlying assumptions:

> '(1) There is a recognition that all people are characterized simultaneously by multiple social categories and that these categories are interconnected or intertwined. (2) Embedded within each of these categories is a dimension of inequality or power. (3) These categories are properties of the individual as well as characteristics of the social context inhabited by those individuals; as such, categories and their significance may be fluid and dynamic.'

Scrutinizing intersectionality, an intersectional approach seems to correspond with and be relevant to the research objectives of our research project, and broader feminist and anti-racist scholarship (Nash, 2008), in various theoretical, socio-political, methodological and epistemological ways. First, intersectionality problematizes 'race'-gender binaries to examine and theorize identity in a more complex and adequate way, which is especially important as mostly various sociodemographic variables simultaneously play a role. In line therewith, intersectionality seeks to provide a vocabulary

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[75] We are somewhat reluctant to use the concept of 'race' as a sociodemographic variable, given particular historical and political connotations. After all, there is only one human race. Nevertheless, it is often used in social sciences, especially as a social construct and analytical classification criterion to 'divide humanity into categories that share distinctive biological traits, most notably visible physical characteristics or genetic traits, regardless of their visibility' (Lee Shiao, 2015, p. 1). To emphasize this nuance, we enclose the concept in single quotation marks. It is also relevant to indicate the difference with the related concept and social construct 'ethnicity' that 'seeks to create categories that share distinctive cultural ties such as a common history, language, religion, national/geographic origins, or traditions' (ibid.).

to respond to criticisms on identity politics (e.g., according to critics, it would not be able to transcend intergroup differences, and would obscure intragroup differences). Intersectionality, however, exposes intragroup differences (e.g., racial variations within gender and gendered variations within 'race') and subsequently mediates tensions between claims about multiple identities and the need for group politics (Nash, 2008). Regarding our specific research topic, we will thus pay attention, to the extent possible, to differences and commonalities according to both various sociodemographic variables and intersections, especially as it '(…) enhances insight into issues of social justice and inequality in organizations and other institutions, thus maximizing the chance of social change' (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1).

Second, intersectionality provides a theoretical framework to respond to gaps in feminist and anti-racist scholarship, which is characterized by a history of essentialism and exclusion of multiple marginalized people, and its implications on theory and practice. More concretely, intersectionality mainly focuses on the experiences of discriminated and marginalized people whose voices are ignored (Nash, 2008). This is in line with our research focus. First, forcibly displaced people form (often multiple) discriminated, marginalized and voiceless people (supra). Second, in this textual research, by adopting an intersectional approach, we focus on the representations of these people in the public communication of refugee organizations, including their (mediated) experiences.

Third, this approach is grounded in the epistemic belief that the perspectives of these people are unique and valuable and that researchers should take them into account, if not adopt them when developing a normative vision of a fair society (Nash, 2008). The methodology that relies on the viewpoints of marginalized persons is described, among others, as '"looking to the bottom" (Matsuda, 1987), exploring "iterative energy" (Wing, 1990: 182), and drawing on black women's "multiple consciousness" (Harris, 1989: 584) or "outsider scholars" status (Matsuda, 1992)' (Nash, 2008, p. 3). In line therewith and regarding social goals, 'intersectionality is explicitly oriented towards transformation, building coalitions among different groups, and working towards social justice' (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 3). More concretely, highlighting the interplay of human agency and social structures (supra), intersectionality enables social change and critiques 'scholarship that overemphasizes the powerlessness of women and only represents women as victims, exploited, and dependent on men' (Pelak, 2007, p. 3). We also endorse these theoretical and social perspectives. While our text and production research reflects them in arguably more subtle and latent ways (e.g., the theoretical and empirical research foci and operationalisations, the used discourse) – we envisaged translating them more explicitly into reception research on the valuable and unique perceptions and opinions of forcibly displaced people about the public communication strategies of refugee organizations. Unfortunately, due to various practical (cf. limited time and feasibility, especially in the current corona context), theoretical (cf. the scientific limitations and loss of quality due to the corona crisis), and moral reasons (cf. the aggravated situation of vulnerable people, and especially forcibly displaced people), we had to postpone this reception research (supra) but hope to still conduct it in the future.

Fourth, discussing the use of an intersectional approach to studying media discourses, Maegaard and colleagues (2019, p. 2) argue: '[w]hen studying processes of mediatization the concept of intersectionality is particularly relevant for a number of aspects: i.e. representation, reception, production, and accessibility.' This is in line with our central research objectives, as throughout all empirical chapters we particularly pay attention to representation, either from a textual representation perspective and/or production and societal perspectives. We thereby essentially attempt to answer central questions, similar to those of Maegaard and colleagues (2019, p. 2): 'Who is made visible in the media? What aspects of their identity are made salient in a given representation? And which historical scripts are drawn on when the media 'make sense' of people?.' While the QCA thus mainly focused on *who* and *what* (supra), the (M)CDAs primarily examined the *how* of representations: 'how is the 'Other' represented, on whose premises, and through which gaze?' (ibid., p. 3).

Fifth, epistemologically seen, intersectionality is grounded in (Treloar, 2014) and even best aligned with our adopted epistemology, social constructivism (as well as with feminist standpoint epistemologies) (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). More concretely, '[a]s a critical theory, intersectionality conceptualizes knowledge as situated, contextual, relational, and reflective of political and economic power' (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1), focuses on the role of power in knowledge production and the socially constructed nature of social categories (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016) and considers the 'self' as inseparable from the social (Hankivsky et al., 2011).

Sixth, methodologically seen, '[i]ntersectionality tends to be associated with qualitative research methods due to the central role of giving voice, elicited through focus groups, narrative interviews, action research, and observations' (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1) and is often also adopted as a reflexive mindset (supra). Nevertheless, intersectionality can and is also increasingly used by quantitative and statistical methods, which can mutually reinforce each other (Atewologun, 2018; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Quantitative methods can 'contribute to intersectionality by helping us understand and interpret the individual, combined (...) effects of various categories (privileged and disadvantaged) in a given context' (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1), while intersectionality can provide inspiration to reframe old research questions, construct new research questions and challenge conventional research methods, and subsequently can result in deeper and extensive insights (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016).

Despite all the above-mentioned theoretical, socio-political, epistemological and methodological relevance, intersectionality is, thematically seen, hardly or not used in research on public communication of refugee organizations, and broader humanitarian communication, and if so, mostly not very in-depth and/or extensive (e.g., Moeller, 1999; Pupavac, 2008; Johnson, 2011; Vasavada, 2016), or only focusing on a limited number of sociodemographic variables (e.g., Clark-Kazak, 2009). However, as we will further discuss in Chapter 8, it is very relevant to gain insights into if, how, and to what extent certain sociodemographic categories of forcibly displaced people (cf. *who*) are represented. By applying the above-mentioned methodology and research design, we attempted to respond to Nash's (2008) call to use clear, rigorous intersectional methodologies, go beyond binary racial-gender thinking, and examine how privilege and oppression intersect and how

(sociodemographic) subaspects of identity are strategically (not) presented. For a further, more extensive discussion of intersectionality as theoretical and analytical framework, including a larger conceptualization, contextualization, focus on its limitations and criticisms, and further reflections on its relationship with our research, see Appendix 11 (cf. Codebook).

5.4.5 Strategic essentialism as an epistemological framework

5.4.5.1 Language use and key ideas of strategic essentialism

As mentioned, where appropriate, we use the concept of 'forcibly displaced people' as an umbrella term in this dissertation. We are aware that the use of this term - just as other broad, homogenizing umbrella terms - may, to varying extents, impersonalize, universalize and even maybe dehumanize the represented people. Likewise, other terms involved in our QCA (e.g., 'Elderly person', which we link to the age group of 60+) can be considered inadequate and/or inappropriate, especially by the concerned persons themselves. Accordingly, we want to emphasize that we obviously do not intend these effects with this language use. On the contrary, we use these terms, among others, for reasons of limited space, flow and readability. Furthermore, our use of these terms and the broader aim of this QCA, which codes and classifies refugee organizations' public communication, including representations of forcibly displaced people, in predetermined categories, is in line with Spivak's (1988, 1996) concept 'strategic essentialism'. We do not consider the used variables and their different values as rigid categories between which there is no overlap, interaction and/or exchange but as necessary divisions to conduct relevant, meaningful research that can help to better understand complex social reality and to facilitate societal and scientific progress (Spivak, 1988, 1996). In line therewith, we consider most variables and associated values as 'an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences, without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure' (Butler, 1990, p. 16; see also Brennan, 2003). In that regard, acknowledging that texts are multi-layered and multi-interpretable, our QCA has social constructivist origins (Krippendorff, 2013, 2018).

Let us here briefly explain and discuss the concept of 'strategic essentialism' that underpins as epistemological principle our QCA. First, we can situate it in the fields of postcolonial, subaltern, feminist and queer studies, and specifically in subfields regarding the representation of minorities (Chandler & Munday, 2020; Eide, 2016). We consider it as:

> 'a deconstructive strategy of representation that involves taking the risk of adopting an essentialist position with respect to identity categories, or as Spivak (1993, 3) calls them, "masterwords" (such as woman, worker, nation, or the subaltern), in order to mobilize a collective consciousness for achieving a set of chosen political ends' (Pande, 2017, p. 1).

Strategic essentialism is thus a political tactic that implies 'a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest' (Spivak, 1996, p. 205, original italics). The (own) group identity is thereby temporarily essentialized, in-group differences are temporarily deemphasized and unity is emphasized, to achieve certain political goals and emancipation.[76] As such, (often internally highly

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[76] This often also involves 'strategic silences' in which in-group differences, inequalities and/or struggles (e.g., gender discrimination, marginalization,…) are covered (Hodgson, 2011, p. 14).

diverse) minority groups (e.g., regarding certain sociodemographic variables) can obtain a stronger voice and/or position in debates and/or social conflicts (e.g., about representation, obtaining equal or special rights,…) in the public sphere (Chandler & Munday, 2020; Eide, 2010, 2016; Pande, 2017).

For strategic reasons, strategic essentialism neglects the fact that, from a post-structuralist perspective, the idea of 'essences' is, both epistemologically and ontologically, indefensible (Buchanan, 2018). Within post-structuralism, it is considered impossible to attribute some definable essential characteristics to certain sociodemographic groups (e.g., based on a specific gender, class, 'race', ethnicity, sexual orientation,…) as they are very heterogeneous internally. However, such a profound deconstruction leaves few common grounds and/or common causes as the basis for political action. Strategic essentialism therefore 'simultaneously recognizes the impossibility of any essentialism and the necessity of some kind of essentialism for the sake of political action' (Buchanan, 2018, entry 'strategic essentialism'). It 'utilizes the idea of essence with a recognition of and critique of the essentialist nature of the essence itself' and 'is a means of using group identity as a basis of struggle while also debating issues related to group identity within the group' (Wolff, 2007, p. 1). In sum, essentialism is used strategically, while, paradoxically, difference is simultaneously recognized as starting point.

5.4.5.2   *Limitations, criticisms and our approach*

Although this pragmatic strategy is thus to some extent useful, strategic essentialism is a disputed concept and a potentially harmful practice, as it essentializes, standardizes and simplifies the identity of (minority) groups. While 'an increasing public awareness of the risks and strategies involved may help to minimize the risk and maximize the results' (Eide, 2010, p. 76), it can nonetheless lead to fixed identities and deeper differences (Eide, 2016), benefit more powerful population groups (e.g., politicians, academics, journalists) and/or become a requirement as part of media conventions and routines (cf. news logics, supra, Chapter 2) – instead of an own conscious, nuanced choice that takes both risks and opportunities into account (Eide, 2010). Further, critics doubt whether the concept can capture the complexities of sociodemographic variables (e.g., gender, 'race' and class) in specific political, geographic and historical contexts and whether this technique is always used strategically, as this implies a certain level of consciousness (Wolff, 2007). Even Spivak finds that it is increasingly being (mis)used as a universal theory promoting essentialism – while it is theoretically unviable, rather than as a technique for deconstructing essentialist beliefs and exploring the complexity and fluidity of subject-object positions of identity and power (Phillips, 2010; Wolff, 2007).

Acknowledging these limitations and risks, we agree with Eide (2016) who emphasizes the importance of countering categorizing, narrowing theories and discourses and subsequently the importance of the temporary nature of strategic essentialism:

> 'Strategic essentialism may help bringing down oppressive structures and diminish suffering, but should not be allowed to affect world views and encourage reductive views against the human dignity (…) Essentialism may be used to subjugate or liberate, but strategic essentialism

ought to be seen as a temporary political strategy and not as a universalizing theory or as a universal way of conducting political struggle' (Eide, 2016, p. 2).

In line therewith, Wolff (2007, p. 1) argues: 'The fundamental nature of this concept is that it deliberately suits a particular situation and does not serve as an overarching theory'. However, Lloyd (2005) warns that while temporary interventions to essentialism can be successful, in the long-term they can also legitimize essentialist forms of identity and give them a structural nature. Performative identities can after all always be undermined, shifted or transformed. Political movements (e.g., feminism) must therefore constantly reflect on their used strategies and engage in (self-)critique (ibid.).

Trying to be reflexive about our use of strategic essentialism in our academic research (and for reasons of relevance especially regarding the QCA), we try to put Eide's (2016), Wolff's (2007) and Lloyd's (2005) advice into practice. More specifically, we are aware that in our research, we categorize, essentialize and universalize people who fled to varying degrees. However, this seems, at least temporarily, necessary, for practical reasons (readability and limited word count) and theoretical reasons, to realize our broader goal of developing, conducting and reporting critical and relevant research that can facilitate social and scientific progress.

In that regard, we follow Macpherson (2011) who argues that there are tensions between on the one hand the intellectual need to demonstrate the complexity of social reality and deconstruct identity categories, and on the other hand the need to communicate research findings clearly to broader audiences (policy makers, research subjects, students, citizens,...) to have a social impact, and not alienate ourselves from social reality (and create an ivory tower conception about academia). Rather than attempting to resolve such agonistic relationships, she states that researchers must accept them and respond to them appropriately, for example by using a continuum of science communication styles. This can range from trying to represent the complex, irreducible nature of social reality to using 'strategic essentialism' and 'well placed concreteness' to communicate important messages clearly, without reinforcing the stereotypes that they seek to undermine. We would like to emphasize, however, that academic language inevitably also categorizes and reduces social reality and thus can strive but will never be able to grasp the latter's full complexity. Further, while these different communication styles may entail theoretical and conceptual inconsistencies, this seems, to some extent, justified for adequate science communication (ibid.).

Bearing in mind the importance of academic language use – especially regarding the representation of people (cf. the crisis of representation, supra, cf. Introduction), we have reflexively thought about, used and suggested new adequate terms throughout our research, including 'forcibly displaced people' and other human-oriented, person-first terms (APA, 2020, supra, cf. Introduction), or at least think we have done this, are doing and will continue to do so. Nevertheless, we also doubt: are our new alternatives on the one hand both practical and substantively correct and on the other hand less essentializing and dehumanizing than commonly used terms? Or even (re)humanizing? Further, both

theoretically and empirically, we are also aware and assume that other, less essentializing terms may exist. Consequently, our position is thus one of simultaneously both relative confidence and relative uncertainty and doubt. Nevertheless, in line with the fact that '[t]he social is a realm of indeterminacy and uncertainty' (Lloyd, 2005, p. 67), we believe that such a position is an adequate, and maybe even a necessary starting point for conducting new, relevant research.[77]

5.5   Why: Office ethnography, expert interviews and document analysis

In Chapter 9 and, secondarily, in Chapter 6, we investigate the underlying production and social contexts of the public communication strategies of international refugee organizations. In Chapter 9, we observe multimethodologically the production and social contexts of the public communication strategies of INGO NRC towards the Syrian and Central African crises. Therefore, I conducted a three-week office ethnography at the Oslo-based main press and communication department of NRC, 10 audio-recorded semi-structured expert interviews with press and communication officers at NRC, and a document analysis on 9 confidentially obtained internal key communication policy documents. We focused on NRC, as it is a leading INGO, which extensively operates in and communicates about the current large-scale, protracted Syrian and Central African crises (NRC, n.d.-e, n.d.-f). Additionally, NRC argues to have an open information policy (NRC, 2019, 20 October) which increased the feasibility and relevance of conducting an office ethnography in its press and communication department. Informed by the literature, including earlier findings on NRC's public communication strategies as concrete starting points (cf. Chapter 8), we examined the underlying reasons (cf. *why*) for NRC's main (1) representation and argumentation strategies (cf. *how*), (2) crisis foci (cf. *what*), and (3) represented groups of forcibly displaced people (cf. *who*). In order to improve the reliability and validity of the results, we reported transparently and reflexively about the research decisions and used triangulation (Clark et al., 2021). In Chapter 6, as said, we conducted a CDA on the international press releases (N=122) of UNHCR, DRC and International Rescue Committee on the Syrian crisis (2014-2015).[78] Using Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA model, we wanted to analyse primarily the representation and argumentation strategies (cf. *how*), and secondarily the underlying production and social contexts (cf. *why*). Nevertheless, although Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA model is three-dimensional (i.e. text, discursive practice, social practice), it remains difficult to examine profoundly contextual aspects related to discursive and social practices (supra). Therefore, in Chapter 6 we also conducted 6 audio-recorded semi-structured expert interviews with press and regional officers of the above-mentioned organizations (i.e. two interviewees per organization).

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[77] Given that further discussions about the concept of strategic essentialism are outside the scope of this research and also unfeasible given the limited space, we refer for further information to the above-mentioned and following key works: Colebrook (2001), Danius and colleagues (1993), and Fuss (1990, 1994). For further extensive methodological discussions about the QCA, including about the data selection, data coding, the various applied variables and values and their descriptions, construction and underlying rationale, intersectionality, strategic essentialism, the construction of the codebook, ICR, ICR tests and coder training, see the codebook (cf. Appendix 11).

[78] For a motivation of the investigated organizations, crisis, and research period, see section 5.3.

5.5.1 Motivating the office ethnography

I conducted a three-week office ethnography at the Oslo-based main press and communication department of NRC in March and April 2019. We opted for office ethnography as it enables us, corresponding with our central research objective and central research question, to examine how media output is influenced by the ideas, values and identities of media professionals that shape their motivations, understandings and practices, production processes and practices, the organizational and institutional cultures and practices, and the broader societal contexts (Hansen & Machin, 2019; Ong, 2019). We thereby can potentially observe daily practices that might be too self-evident or too sensitive (e.g., organizationally, societally, politically) for the practitioners to disclose in an interview (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). By presenting the perspectives of actors with different relationships to organizational goals and activities, ethnographic research on NGOs can respond to, complicate and/or nuance critiques of hegemonic humanitarian discourses (Markowitz, 2001). Despite its high relevance, to our knowledge, this method has barely been used in examining refugee organizations' public communication (e.g., Cabot, 2016; Demusz, 2000; Hedman, 2009; Ihlen et al., 2015; Malkki, 1995, 1996) and even broader humanitarian communication (Ong, 2019). More specifically, these few studies on the public communication of refugee organizations mostly conducted long-term ethnographic research, frequently in combination with in-depth interviews with various relevant actors and/or textual analyses of different textual and/or (audio)visual forms of public communication. At the same time, our research differentiates itself from and complements this (limited) line of research. These studies mainly examine the representations of forcibly displaced people and the ethical and societal implications but hardly or not at all the broader production and/or social contexts, and if so, rather in generic ways. Further, these studies are usually conducted from anthropological perspectives. Moreover, this ethnographic research usually takes place in areas where there are many forcibly displaced people, for example in refugee camps in regional reception countries (e.g., Malkki, 1995, 1996), in humanitarian projects in crisis areas (e.g., Demusz, 2000), in refugee communities and at public events (e.g., Hedman, 2009). However, only a few studies have examined refugee organizations from the inside (e.g., Cabot, 2016). Hence, this study responds to Ong's (2019, p. 494) call for ethnographical research on the production of humanitarian communication, as 'production ethnographies can better unpack organizational politics between aid agencies and technology organizations to uncover the misguided motivations or incentives that end up directing harm and exploitation to afflicted people.'

5.5.2 The setup of the research process

First, before starting the empirical research processes, I committed myself to 'procedural ethics'. In sum, procedural ethics or categorical ethics refer to basic or macro-ethical rules of research, which generally transcend disciplines, types of research and research methods (Mortelmans, 2020; Tracy, 2010). The following three interrelated macro-ethical principles are central to procedural ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) - and usually form the main subjects of research on ethics (Mortelmans, 2020; Lazaraton, 2013): (1) obtain informed consent, (2) protect confidentiality, anonymity and privacy, and (3) do no harm (Allmark et al., 2009; Lazaraton, 2013; Wiles, 2013).[79] First, the principle

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[79] Some authors (Mortelmans, 2020) consider 'avoiding deception' as a fourth central principle, but in line with others (Lazaraton, 2013; Wiles, 2013) we will consider it as part of the principle of 'obtaining informed consent'. Additionally, procedural ethics involves 'the importance of accuracy and avoiding fabrication, fraud, omission, and contrivance' (Tracy, 2010, p. 847).

of informed consent involves 'providing participants with clear information about what participating in a research project will involve and giving them the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to participate' (Wiles, 2013, p. 6).[80] Three elements are central to the principle of informed consent: (1) the person who grants permission must be able to do so (cf. 'capacity' or 'competence'); (2) they must be sufficiently informed about the research; (3) they should provide consent voluntarily (Mortelmans, 2020). Second, the issues of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy are central principles of ethical research. In sum, participants should remain anonymous outside the context of the research (Mortelmans, 2020; Wiles, 2013). In this way, the privacy of participants can be guaranteed. Further, the duty of confidentiality means that 'identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed. Additionally, the duty of confidentiality may mean that specific information provided in the process of research will not be used at all if the participant requests this' (Wiles, 2013, p. 6-7). Third, the 'do no harm' principle implies ensuring the safety and well-being of research participants (Mortelmans, 2020; Wiles, 2013). Although much qualitative research may only entail limited risks for participants, it is important to not ignore them, especially when examining sensitive topics, to which we also consider the underlying production and social contexts of the public communication of refugee organisations. We discuss and reflect on the translation of these ethical research principles into our research in the following sections.

Apart from ethical reasons, researchers usually have also to formally take into account this set of ethical rules. They usually form the bureaucratic standards of ethical review procedures of research ethics committees (RECs)[81] and are often considered universal and necessary to protect, among others, (potential) research participants against potential issues following research participation (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Although RECs can differ greatly in their specific assessment procedures and conclusions (Edwards et al., 2004; Israel, 2004), the above-mentioned principles play almost always a central role in their formal approval procedures (Wiles, 2013). These procedures must be completed before the research can be started (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Wiles, 2013). In that regard, like every doctoral researcher at Ghent University, I developed an ethical advice request at the start of his doctoral trajectory. This ethical advice request discussed all dimensions of the doctoral research project, including the production and societal dimensions. After having submitted the request to the REC of my faculty (i.e. the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences), some additional minor questions were asked (i.e. mainly around data documentation and metadata). Hence, a new application was submitted with clarifications on the requested aspects, and the application was ultimately given positive advice.

Concerning this particular study, I made an elaborate request for an office ethnography, including expert interviews, to the head of the press and communications department of NRC. This request explained the research focus, research goal, my concrete role, and the mutual benefits, and was

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[80] This principle was, just as most other central principles of procedural ethics, established after the Nuremberg processes in the aftermath of the Second World War. It was part of stricter regulations on scientific experiments, with the Nuremberg Code as milestone, which were developed in response to the excesses of medical practices in the concentration camps (Mortelmans, 2020).

[81] The terms to label research ethics committees often vary according to country. For instance, the following terms are used: 'institutional review board (IRB)' (United States), 'human research ethics committee (HREC)' (Australia), and 'research ethics committees (REC)' (Great Britain) (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). For reasons of clarity and simplicity, we use the term 'research ethics committee (REC)' to refer to all bodies (and thus not only the British ones) that review applications for ethical approval.

answered positively. In this way, after further email conversations, we obtained institutional informed consent for the office ethnography. This included agreeing to not constantly interrupt the NRC press and communication officers' work – taking into account their hard working conditions and to not disclose confidential information and/or individual cases. Although we initially assumed a role in line with observant participation, before the start of the office ethnography and in mutual consultation, we eventually opted for participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Mortelmans, 2020), for ethical, scientific, and practical reasons. First, participating in the production process of NRC's public communication would rather conflict with my critical research role regarding NRC's public communication. I would have found myself in a rather uncomfortable relationship where I would have had to compromise between being both an insider who produces communication (or at least assists with it) and being an outsider who critically studies (similar) communication of NRC, and its underlying production practices, routines, and context. Second, participation could have led to a more immersive view of certain aspects of production but also could have implied that there would have been less time for observation of the wider production process. By not participating in the production process, I have of course gained fewer insights into the production practices and routines. On the other hand, I was able to partly compensate for this because I consequently had more time for the observation of participants and the broader press and communication department, reflections on these observations, and the preparation and execution of expert interviews and talks with participants. Finally, given the (relatively) limited duration of the office ethnography (i.e. three weeks), it would probably have been too time-consuming for both me and NRC to first introduce and train me to adopt and adapt to NRC's production routines.

Finally, in addition to procedural ethics, another ethical dimension can be distinguished: research ethics as expressed in professional ethical codes or rules of conduct, or what we call 'regulatory ethics'. While most professions and organizations have such codes and often form essential components, their relevance to ethical research practices may be questioned (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). More concretely, these organizational and professional codes are often not very useful for addressing specific ethical issues in the research process, and can only serve as general guidelines. This is in line with our experience throughout this doctoral research. Although I am aware of most professional and organizational ethical guidelines and codes (e.g., from Ghent University, the Research Foundation - Flandres [FWO], ...) and most relevant legislation (e.g., General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR]), these regulations played rather a latent role throughout my empirical research process. Professional and organizational ethical guidelines and codes, regulations and legislation played thus a role, albeit small. Their relevance to the ethical decision process seems quite unexplored throughout literature. Conducting ethical research, however, goes beyond procedural ethics and regulatory ethics that are inevitably incomplete and may conflict internally. For example, the protocols of research ethics committees can never address all the ethical dilemmas that arise during the research process, especially in field research involving human participants (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Therefore, the requirements and process of the RECs should be respectively interpreted as the minimum ethical standard and ethical training for conducting research (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2008).

5.5.3 Conducting the office ethnography

During the three-week office ethnography, I observed and took field notes about the daily operations of NRC's press and communication department in the open-plan office. I attended all daily, weekly and

monthly media meetings, a social media team meeting, various seminars, daily lunches, and two social events. As part of the informed consent principle (supra), I informed all NRC press and communication officers about my research focus and purposes. While I had previously received institutional informed consent for the office ethnography (supra), all officers also seemed to agree with the research - or at least made no explicit problem of it. Nevertheless, I follow Mortelmans (2020) who argues that a challenge inherent to ethnographic research is that it is often difficult to provide (full) information to and obtain consent from each person involved in the research project.

My research approach towards positioning myself in the field during the observation research - and to some extent, also during the expert interviews - was two-fold. On the one hand, after an initial reluctance, by being open, honest, friendly, and being sensitive to the working context (e.g., high workload, confidential aspects) as part of a broader relational ethical approach (Ellis, 2007; Tracy, 2010), trust relationships were gradually developed, many informal on-the-scene conversations were held and confidential communication policy documents were obtained. These all arguably increased the quality of the research, including the expert interviews (Mortelmans, 2020; Wiles, 2013). More generally, relational ethics refers to the researchers' relationships with their participants and assumes an ethical self-consciousness and reflexivity among researchers whereby they are reflexive about their role and positionality (e.g., character, identity, actions) and the subsequent impact and implications of their research upon research participants and the broader research context (Tracy, 2010; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Relational ethics 'requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for actions and their consequences' (Ellis, 2007, p. 3). It 'recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work' (ibid., p. 4).[82]

Specifically, I tried to make a human connection with the press and communication officers, mainly by participating in normal day-to-day aspects of working life such as talking (e.g., about professional and private life, everyday life topics,…), laughing, and eating during lunch together with them. This both served pragmatic, scientific purposes and human, ethical purposes – which I both have as being a researcher who attempts to conduct ethnographic research in a social-ethical way. Regarding these scientific purposes, I wanted to gain the trust of the participants, as this is essential for having open fruitful conversations and in-depth interviews, resulting in more in-depth data and findings. Apart from these pragmatic goals, it is, in my opinion, only normal and human to make, to some extent at least, a social connection with people with whom you sit in the office together for a longer period. In line therewith, I would not have found it ethically correct towards NRC and its participants (to be allowed) to conduct observation research and interviews but to rather isolate myself from social interactions and/or react remotely. In addition to being unproductive in scientific terms, this would also have come

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[82] Relational ethics is closely linked to an ethics of care, feminist ethics, and feminist communitarian ethics (Ellis, 2007). Relational ethical researchers engage in reciprocity with participants and do not conduct research to just obtain a 'great story' (Tracy, 2010). This approach thus stimulates researchers to 'treat participants with dignity, acknowledging them as people with values, voices, and beliefs, rather than merely as subjects of observation' (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, p. 9). Interdependence between the researcher and research participants is thereby emphasized. This includes, among other things, allowing research participants to help the researcher in understanding the specific context and related norms and values, defining the rules of research, and in understanding the consequences of certain research practices (González, 2000).

across as unfriendly and ungrateful. Especially as presumably one or more participants would not be aware of the necessary distance that you should keep as a researcher. Moreover, I believe that a too forced distant attitude, based on the assumption that this is necessary to conduct neutral, objective and unbiased research, is actually counterproductive. The adoption of such an artificial position will, in my opinion, lead to a more biased, less objective and nuanced view, whereby the focus is on immediate normative beliefs, rather than first trying to understand and explain phenomena, whereby providing criticism is based on thorough evaluation and reflection.

On the other hand, particularly given the critical research subject and focus, I simultaneously attempted to be critically reflexive to avoid common ethical issues, including a 'tightening humanitarian embrace' (Brankamp, 2021) and 'going native' (e.g., through writing field and reflexive notes and a field diary).[83] When conducting observation for an extended period the researcher risks being more sympathetic toward the agenda of the observed actors or internalizing their perspective and terminology (Malinowski, 1922, Mortelmans 2020). Furthermore, I tried to be sensitive to 'ethically important moments', which are the 'difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research', and try to respond adequately to ethical dilemmas (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 262). This relates to 'ethics in practice' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) or, more commonly nowadays, 'situational and culturally specific ethics' (Tracy, 2010). It refers to researchers' ethical approach towards the everyday ethical issues that arise in the process of doing research. These issues are usually not addressed in the ethics committee applications, nor anticipated when applying for approval.[84] There is a wide variety of ethically important moments, ranging from participants who feel uncomfortable with an answer, show vulnerability, or do not want to have a pseudonym but their real name in the research, to the researcher's decision about how far to ask a participant about difficult and/or distressing experiences (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). We therefore used, among others, various sensitive interview techniques (infra).

From the start of the observation study, I have tried to observe and interview with a healthy critical but sensitive attitude that is necessary for thorough critical ethical research. Therefore, in my opinion, a healthy critical attitude is not a certain mode that you 'create' or 'apply' at a certain moment - otherwise, this leads to artificial, non-objective, judgmental reflections. It is rather a gradually

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[83] Recently, there have been increasing calls to bridge the gap between the worlds of policy-makers, humanitarian practitioners, and social scientists. This has resulted in a growing number of partnerships between academics, aid organizations, governments, and businesses to help those in need. Brankamp (2021, p. 46) is critical of these trends and states that 'the humanitarian arena, despite its heterogeneity, is by no means a level playing field in which the meanings, power structures, and practices of aid are ever truly "open" for negotiation. Bridging divides has often served as a way of consolidating the institutional and epistemic hegemony of humanitarian actors and inadvertently delegitimized critical scholarship seeking more structural change. Scholars in refugee and forced migration studies have hereby been engulfed in a tightening "humanitarian embrace."'

[84] Important to mention is that these issues are not always 'dilemmas', as it is sometimes clear which responses are ethically preferable above others, and may be perceived by researchers as unimportant because of their everyday nature. Nevertheless, these aspects do not with make these situations ethically trivial, as 'the moment of response is an ethically important moment for there is the possibility that a wrong could be done' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 265). There is a wide variety of ethically important moments, ranging from participants who feel uncomfortable with an answer, show vulnerability, or do not want to have a pseudonym but their real name in the research, to the researcher's decision about how far to ask a participant about difficult and/or distressing experiences (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

developing, ever-changing and reflexive natural process inherent to being a researcher and human being. Although I have tried not to adopt a forced critical attitude, I feel that through various socialization processes (e.g., academic training, reading of literature, conversations with colleagues, accumulated research experiences and knowledge) I started the observation research with an inevitably increased and sharpened critical and reflective awareness. So although I have tried to create a human connection, I was also aware of the points of attention for observation research. For example, I mainly observed from 'the second row', tried to not create a too personal bond with participants and to not influence the operations of the INGO. As such, I hope I have not adopted their agenda, perspectives and/or terminology, and was still able to observe, analyse, evaluate and report from a critical position.

Corresponding therewith and considering both positions as poles of a continuum, I mainly functioned following the principles of participant observation rather than of observant participation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). For instance, I did not participate in particular professional or social activities, nor provided suggestions, or my personal opinion in cases of debate that would have blurred the line between the roles of participating observer and the observing participant. Adopting the role of a participating observer implied a more mobile field positioning (e.g., observing various people, teams, places), an outward analytic gaze (i.e. rather directed to the participants than inwards to the self), and, subsequently, a more inscription- than incarnation-oriented data assembly (i.e. taking field notes and elaborating on them when being temporally and spatially further away from the 'action' rather than conducting these actions) (Seim, 2021). Over time, I gradually triangulated descriptive observations with focused observations and selective observations (Spradley, 1980).

Finally, as part of 'exiting ethics' or ethics beyond the data collection phase (Tracy, 2010), I sought to be careful and thoughtful about leaving the research scene. Among others, I was open about the research period and further procedures and provided chocolates to thank the participants for their participation. Similarly, I tried to be reflexive when completing and publishing the research. In that regard, I asked – and received – permission for the quotes used in the analysis by the interviewees and attempted to be reflexive about the inclusion and representation of particular topics, including organizationally, politically and/or societally sensitive aspects. This included reflections about, among others, (potential) confidentiality, anonymity and copyright issues, the do no harm principle, etcetera (Tracy, 2010; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017; Wiles, 2013). Researchers after all never have complete control over how their work will be read, understood and used but they should think about how to present it and how others potentially can conceive it, to avoid incorrect and/or unintended consequences. Voyeuristic scandal stories can after all have a large negative impact on research participants (Tracy, 2010; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Researchers must therefore reflect on how they represent research cases that may be interpreted negatively (Fine et al., 2000). While not being intended by the researcher, research or specific cases (e.g., about poor, stigmatized, abused or otherwise marginalized people) can reinforce stereotypes and/or be manipulated for political gain against a group of people or entity. Researchers must therefore reflect on their own position, as they co-produce narratives during data collection, and anticipate how this data can be interpreted, and possibly misread and distorted by the general public and policymakers (ibid.). Hence, given the involved vulnerable population groups, the research subject's high-risk, sensitive nature, and the often critical, qualitative,

and interpretative nature of the research data and related documents as well as practical reasons (e.g., the length and the nature of some files), we opted to not include the appendices in the dissertation. However, they have been made available digitally to the members of the jury and are available to other readers upon reasonable request.[85]

5.5.4 Conducting expert interviews and document analysis

Besides the office ethnography, in Chapter 9, I also conducted ten audio-recorded semi-structured expert interviews with press and communication officers of NRC, involving reconstruction (Reich & Barnoy, 2016) and oral history methods (Ritchie, 2015). We consider oral history 'the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction' (Grele, 1996, p. 63). Their memories and perceptions of these events are to be preserved as an aural record for future generations. Oral history strives to obtain information from different perspectives and most of these cannot be found in written sources (Ritchie, 2015). For these reasons, we opted for oral history. First, there was a substantial time difference between the period of the NRC production interviews (March and April 2019), and the specific study period (2015-2018). The interviewees observed and participated in the production and societal contexts of public communication about the investigated crises in these research periods and often before and/or after them. In addition, we also had different types of interviewees and perspectives, and their perspectives on public communication are often not covered in research and other sources. Specifically, we asked questions about their personal visions, attitudes, experiences and ideas about public communication about the investigated crises in the specific study period, and in particular about the broader underlying production and social contexts. In that regard, in the context of this dissertation, we consider oral history an interview method or approach that can be applied to expert interviews - much like the reconstruction method, rather than a separate research method.

Similarly, in Chapter 6, I conducted six semi-structured expert interviews with press and regional officers of UNHCR, DRC, and the International Rescue Committee (two interviews per organization). These semi-structured expert interviews enabled us to gain more insights in profound and flexible ways into the media producers' perspectives on the production practices, routines and contexts, and broader social trends and contexts (Clark et al., 2021, Morris, 2015). For the study in Chapter 9, the interviewees were selected in mutual consultation with the head of the media section according to function and availability. The English-spoken interviews with NRC officers took place in March 2019 and April 2019 for practical and logistical reasons (i.e. the period of the office ethnography). They were conducted either face-to-face or remotely, and lasted between 55 and 98 minutes. For the study in Chapter 6, the interviewees were selected according to organisation, function, and availability. The English-spoken interviews with UNHCR, DRC and International Rescue Committee officers were conducted between July 2016 and August 2016 through Skype and lasted between 25 and 54 minutes. All interviewees read and signed an informed consent letter (one NRC participant read the letter and agreed verbally and through email).

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[85] For the NRC office ethnography field and reflexive notes (cf. Appendix 28).

Although semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility and depth, due to a lack of structure, the interviewer can lose control over the content of the interview (Mortelmans, 2020). Therefore, for both studies, we developed interview guides that were used in flexible manners. These were adapted to the participant's specific function and/or organization, and newly acquired insights. We thereby used sensitive interview techniques. Among others, we repeated the main aim and ethical aspects (e.g., on a fully voluntary basis with the option to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, use of pseudonyms, asking permission for interview quotes) of the research before the start of the interview) to give full agency to the interviewees and reassure them. During the interviews, we posed open, exploratory questions about their functions and the used media genres, before touching on more sensitive topics (e.g., the production and societal contexts and motivations of the used representation and argumentation strategies). If we saw that the interviewees found it difficult to express themselves on certain sensitive topics, we also explicitly stated that they were certainly not obliged to answer the question. In the case of off-the-record information, we only used it as (unreported) background information. More generally, although we discussed our ethical approach in the office ethnography section (supra), the same basic principles were applied during the expert interviews. Further, the NRC expert interviews were transcribed by two research assistants. I checked and corrected the transcripts. The expert interviews with officers from the other investigated organizations were transcribed and checked by myself. As said, for privacy and security reasons, pseudonyms are used and no identity-deriving or other sensitive information is mentioned. Finally, I conducted a document analysis (Asdal & Reinertsen, 2022) on nine confidentially obtained key NRC communication policy documents (e.g., global communication strategy, branding, style). I thereby mainly focused on the production and social aspects that are line with the general research foci (cf. *how*, *who*, *what*, *why*). Although this was only a small-scale study, it provided relevant additional empirical research material which mainly confirmed the findings of the office ethnography and expert interviews.[86]

Finally, our multi-method approach is theoretically informed, but - given the limited, fragmented research - also inductive and explorative. Both our production studies are informed by theoretical findings on refugee organizations' discursive strategies, production and social contexts. However, they are also explorative, given the limited and fragmented research on these subjects, and investigate the data from an open, inductive standpoint. All interview transcripts and field notes were analysed following the method of thematic coding (Jensen, 2021) at three levels in cyclical ways: open; axial; and selective (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). First, the data were broken down, examined, compared and assigned to one or more codes. These open codes served to condense the mass of textual data into manageable categories. During axial coding, these codes were connected and integrated into broader, abstract concepts that captured their essence. Finally, during selective coding, the axial codes were related and consolidated to develop a theoretical framework (Clark et al., 2021; Morris, 2015).

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[86] Regarding the UNHCR, IRC and DRC expert interviews, for the interview guide (cf. Appendix 2), the meta document of the interviewees (cf. Appendix 3), the interview transcriptions (cf. Appendix 4), and the audio files (cf. Appendix 5). Considering the NRC expert interviews, for the interview guide (cf. Appendix 23), the meta document of the interviewees (cf. Appendix 24), the analyses (cf. Appendix 25), the interview transcriptions (cf. Appendix 26), and the audio files (cf. Appendix 27). For the relevant NRC communication policy documents (cf. Appendix 30).

5.6 Positionality: some final reflections

Acknowledging the importance of researchers' multiple identities, it is relevant to discuss my position – as rather an 'insider' or an 'outsider' – regarding the examined fields and participants. While an insider is usually considered a member and/or someone who has a priori knowledge of the examined actors, the opposite holds true for the outsider (Fleming, 2018). However, both roles are rather the ends of a multidimensional continuum than a dichotomy and even form themselves continuums (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Mercer, 2007). Further, the position of researchers on the continuum can change throughout the research process, as they become more familiar with and/or part of the examined population, examine different aspects and/or perform different roles (Berger, 2015; Hellawell, 2006). Finally, both insiders and outsiders have to deal with methodological issues of identity and situated knowledge associated with their position (Chavez, 2008).

I believe that I was rather an outsider to the examined field of production research, consisting of press and communication staff from international refugee organizations. While I share, to varying degrees, various sociodemographic characteristics with these (mainly 'Global Northern') participants, I differ regarding the important variable 'job profession', as I am - obviously - a PhD researcher and not a press officer, communication officer or regional officer of an international refugee organization or a similar organization. Relevant to note, however, is that before starting my PhD project, I had volunteered for a Flemish refugee organization (i.e. Flemish Refugee Action, also known as 'Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen) as a communication officer and worked as a journalist – mainly as a trainee – for various Belgian news media (i.e. MO* Magazine, De Standaard, DeWereldMorgen.be, StampMedia, Spaargids.be), including on the topic of forced migration. In this way, I gained relevant insights into various aspects of the production contexts of the public communication departments of refugee organizations and news media. In that regard, my access to the field for the office ethnography was maybe also eased through the letters of support from some of these organizations. However, this previous temporary insider perspective was both in terms of time, organizational diversity, and familiarity and interactions with the field relatively limited. As such, I felt to be - and to be perceived by the participants as - rather an outsider throughout this empirical research.

Being rather an outsider to the studied research context has both advantages and disadvantages compared to being rather an insider. A first important advantage was that I probably could observe, analyse and interpret the research context in a more unbiased, open-minded and innovative manner. Intertwined therewith, I attempted to clarify what is observed, analysed, interpreted and/or assumed, and to discover new relevant matters that an insider would likely not note or perceive differently because of their familiarity with the research context and its everyday practices and routines (e.g., less chance that researchers impose own values, beliefs and perceptions, project own biases and experiences, take some aspects for granted and/or overlook them, and that participants withhold information because of assumed familiarity) (Berger, 2015; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Kacen & Chaitlin, 2006). Other experienced advantages were that I had no professional and/or personal obligations to the research context and participants (except research obligations, including ethical obligations of course, supra), and thus had more time to observe, analyse and interpret. Further, as an outsider

researcher, I was less likely to experience role conflicts and ethical issues (e.g., blurring boundaries between being a researcher and a group member, less chance to develop a biased view or to go 'native' [supra], fewer dilemmas about revealing own personal experiences) (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Berger, 2015; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Moreover, as an outsider researcher, I was more likely to be perceived as an objective, impartial observer – rather than as a subjective advocate. In that regard, I maybe could sometimes more easily obtain sensitive information (cf. the communication policy documents, supra), also given the temporary and non-competitive nature of my presence (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002).

However, there are also several drawbacks to the outsider role. First of all, the researcher may experience a culture shock that may hinder and/or delay the research (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002), whereas own experiences in cultural contexts can assist in understanding these or similar contexts (Berger, 2015). In line therewith, it usually takes more time and effort to understand the topic, develop a socially and scientifically relevant research focus, prepare the study, gain access to the field, build a relationship of trust and cooperation with the participants, obtain in-depth data, and understand the participants and their culture (e.g., customs, symbols,…), language (e.g., jargon), conditions, context and sensitivities (e.g., language sensitivity) in a nuanced, multi-layered way (e.g., hearing the unsaid, probing more effectively, identifying subtle clues,…) (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Berger, 2015; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). In that regard, I found it useful to have, while limited, some practical experience with the production context of refugee organizations' public communication and news media (supra). Nevertheless, some academics even argue that without having had similar personal experiences, researchers can never fully understand 'others'' situation, which can lead to biased views, overemphasization of some aspects and neglect of others. Further, it can hinder researchers' ability to accurately reflect the participants' voices and necessitates reflexivity (Berger, 2015). In that regard, I fully recognize that having more professional experience in the professional working field of humanitarian organizations and particularly refugee organizations and/or the adoption of more long-term ethnographic research and/or a more immersive observing participant role could have been beneficial. Related to that, being perceived as 'strangers', outsider researchers are also more likely to alter the flow of social interaction unnaturally in the field, obtain socially desirable answers and/or not gain access to every situation, activity or all information (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Berger, 2015; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). In that regard, I gradually tried to normalize or 'merge' my presence in the research scene by participating in social interactions but simultaneously staying in the background (cf. 'second-row' observations, supra). Furthermore, I also tried to reflect on whether particular answers were indeed rather socially desirable or not, including by comparing them with other insights and data (cf. triangulation).

In connection therewith, cultural and/or linguistic distance can make the researcher less sensitive or even insensitive to the needs and meanings of the group and is more likely to lead to the construction of stereotypes. First, I did not really experience this regarding the interviewees; apart from the fact that some NRC officers sometimes spoke in Norwegian towards each other. However, I could and maybe even should have worked with relevant researchers from Syria and the Central African Republic, and engaged more with academic work produced by 'Global Southern' scholars, and this for both theoretical, empirical, methodological and ethical reasons. By investigating this topic related to the 'Global South' as a researcher from Belgium, Europe, and the 'Global North' only in collaboration with

my 'Global Northern' (situated) supervisors and other researchers, I reproduce to a certain extent an academic colonial gaze. Academics from the 'Global North' thereby examine topics related to the 'Global South' through mainly Western, outsider, sometimes framed as 'expert' perspectives and/or collaborations which often results in stereotypical findings and representations and colonial hierarchies (Yancy, 2008). My research subject concerns the international public communication of international refugee organizations, whose head offices - where the most important decisions regarding the production of public communication are taken - are mainly based in the 'Global North'. Nevertheless, it goes without saying that the content and the production of the public communication are largely about and/or situated in the 'Global South' (cf. the focus on the representation of forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian and/or Central African crises and the broader national and regional production and social contexts). If I had collaborated with researchers from these countries or neighbouring or nearby countries, I likely would have obtained new, more nuanced theoretical, methodological and empirical insights, including more insider perspectives in the local contexts. More generally, I could have contributed, to some extent, to the creation of more balanced academic knowledge production and power relations. While being aware of these issues, for reasons of feasibility (cf. time, inexperience and language limitations) and other research focuses and collaborations I, unfortunately, have not succeeded in meeting them. Further research should take such issues into account and adopt more appropriate, balanced perspectives and frameworks, including reflexive and, as far as possible, balanced and equal 'Global North'-'Global South' academic collaborations, which move away from academic colonialism and result in further decolonized research.

5.7 List of articles of the dissertation and (estimated) share of efforts of the (co-)authors

For reasons of reflexivity and transparency, we have listed below in chronological order (starting with the most recent publications) the articles where the (theoretical) Chapter 3, as well as the empirical Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, are based on, and the involved (estimated) share of efforts of the respective (co-)authors. More concretely, we have presented the authors' efforts as accurately as possible, both quantitatively (via percentages) and qualitatively (via the Contributor Roles Taxonomy [CRediT] statement). The CRediT is a standard identifier that more and more academic journals today require and include in their articles. It may enhance the credibility of research practices and simultaneously assist in revealing patterns of subtle inequality in academia, particularly authorship issues related to academic hierarchies that mainly affect early career researchers (Freese & King, 2018; McNutt et al., 2018). For descriptions of the various contributor roles mentioned below, see CASRAI (n.d.).

We want to emphasize that we have never experienced any authorship issues ourselves throughout this doctoral research project. On the contrary, the doctoral researcher always felt strongly supported by his supervisor and other co-authors, and the latter were in full agreement with the proposed (estimated) share of efforts. Nevertheless, we have tried to include this CRediT statement in the articles we submitted to journals, to support this practice for greater transparency and reflexivity. We are aware that not all transparency measures introduced are effective, productive and/or feasible, especially when they do not take into account disciplinary- and epistemological-specific contexts, sensitivities and differences, especially in the case of high-risk, sensitive, qualitative and/or critical

research, including this doctoral research. Moreover, presenting the qualitative and quantitative (estimated) share of efforts, including the CRediT statement, is certainly not a sufficient solution to authorship issues and broader structural academic problems. Nevertheless, we do think that when this practice becomes widely adopted it would form a very tiny step toward a more open, egalitarian, fair and just academia.

1. Ongenaert, D., Joye, S. & Ihlen, Ø. (in review). Behind the discursive scenes. Explaining Norwegian Refugee Council's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises. *Media, Culture & Society.* [SSCI IF: 3.272 – Communication: 26/95 for 2020; Sociology: 30/149 for 2020]
    a. **(Estimated) share of efforts** of each author (percentages and Contributor Role Taxonomy [CRediT] statement):
        i. **David Ongenaert** (about 85% of the work): Conceptualization (lead), Methodology (lead), Formal analysis (lead), Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Funding acquisition (equal).
        ii. **Stijn Joye** (about 10% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing (lead), Supervision (lead), Project administration, Funding acquisition (equal).
        iii. **Øyvind Ihlen** (about 5% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing (supporting), Supervision (supporting).
2. Ongenaert, D. & Joye, S. (in review). (Un)seen, (un)heard, (un)known? A quantitative content analysis of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African displacement crises (2015-2018). *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.* [SSCI IF: 5.34 – Demography: 1/29 for 2020; Ethnic Studies: 1/20 for 2020]
    a. **(Estimated) share of efforts** of each author (percentages and Contributor Role Taxonomy [CRediT] statement):
        i. **David Ongenaert** (about 85% of the work): Conceptualization (lead), Methodology (lead), Formal analysis (lead), Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Funding acquisition (equal).
        ii. **Stijn Joye** (about 15% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition (equal).
3. Ongenaert, D., Joye, S., & Machin, D. (2022: ahead of print). Beyond the humanitarian savior logics? UNHCR's public communication strategies for the Syrian and Central African crises. *The International Journal of Press/Politics.* [SSCI IF: 6.592 – Communication: 7/95 for 2020; Political Science: 9/183 for 2020]
    a. **(Estimated) share of efforts** of each author (percentages and Contributor Role Taxonomy [CRediT] statement):
        i. **David Ongenaert** (about 85% of the work): Conceptualization (lead), Methodology (lead), Formal analysis (lead), Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Funding acquisition (equal).

ii. **Stijn Joye** (about 10% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing (lead), Supervision (lead), Project administration, Funding acquisition (equal).

iii. **David Machin** (about 5% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing (supporting), Supervision (supporting).

4. Ongenaert, D. (2019). Refugee organizations' public communication. Conceptualising and exploring new avenues for a relevant but underdeveloped research subject. *Media and Communication, 7*(2), 195-206. [SSCI IF: 1.400 – Communication: 54/92 for 2019][87]

5. Ongenaert, D**.** & Joye, S. (2019). Selling displaced people? A multi-method study of the public communication strategies of international refugee organisations. *Disasters, 43*(3), 478–508. [SSCI IF: 1.937 – Environmental Studies: 77/123 for 2019; Social Sciences, Interdisciplinary: 28/108 for 2019]

a. **(Estimated) share of efforts** of each author (percentages and Contributor Role Taxonomy [CRediT] statement):

i. **David Ongenaert** (about 85% of the work): Conceptualization (lead), Methodology (lead), Formal analysis (lead), Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Funding acquisition (equal).

ii. **Stijn Joye** (about 15% of the work): Conceptualization (supporting), Methodology (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Writing – review and editing, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition (equal).

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[87] Since this is a single-authored paper, we have - logically - not included any share or efforts. Nevertheless, we would like to emphasize that the supervisor, Prof. dr. Stijn Joye, has made a relevant contribution by providing valuable feedback and advice.

PART III – EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

Chapter 6: Selling displaced people? A multi-method study of the public communication strategies of international refugee organisations

Abstract

The world has seen a major increase in forced displacement since 2011. As a growing number of states implement restrictive refugee policies, public communication has become essential for refugee organisations. This study analysed, therefore, three international refugee organisations' discursive strategies towards the recent Syrian crisis, as well as their production and the social context. A critical discourse analysis of international press releases (N=122) and six semi-structured interviews with press and regional officers revealed that the observed actors largely dehumanise displaced people and subordinate them to the 'Western self' and state interests; displaced people hardly ever acquire their own voice. The study found that the medium characteristics of press releases and the importance of media attention result in a depersonalising humanitarian discourse. In addition, there were indications of a post-humanitarian discourse that reproduced the humanitarian sector's 'marketisation'. Finally, the examined organisations use the political realist cross-issue persuasion strategy, displaying displaced people as resettlement objects.

Keywords

Reference

6.1   Introduction

War, persecution, famine, and/or poverty have fuelled forced migration throughout history (Betts and Loescher, 2011). The problem has expanded significantly in recent years, with some 68.5 million people being forcibly displaced by the end of 2017 (UNHCR, 2018). Yet, several countries have implemented more restrictive refugee policies in the past few decades (Betts, Loescher, and Milner, 2012). Consequently, public communication is crucial for refugee organisations' operations (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005), as a tool with which to inform, sensitise, and set the agenda (Atkin and Rice, 2013). A number of scholars have focused, therefore, on the news-making efforts of humanitarian organisations in general (Van Leuven, Deprez, and Raeymaeckers, 2013; Van Leuven and Joye, 2014; Ongenaert and Joye, 2016; Powers, 2016a, 2016b) and of refugee organisations in particular (Dimitrov, 2006, 2009), to tell consumers 'what to think *about*' (first-level agenda-setting) (Sallot and Johnson, 2006, p. 152).

Only a few studies, however, appear to have examined thoroughly the discursive strategies as employed by refugee organisations to influence '*what* to think' (second-level agenda-setting). Nevertheless, their public communication activities contribute considerably to the public's perception of displaced people and related crises (Chouliaraki, 2012). Moreover, the agenda-setting capabilities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have expanded within the changing news ecology (Dahlgren, 2005; Castells, 2008).

Acknowledging these developments, this paper assesses refugee organisations' dis- cursive strategies towards the recent Syrian crisis, focusing on the production and broader social context via a multi-method research design. First, Fairclough's (1995) model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) is applied to international press releases (N=122) about the Syrian crisis issued by three international refugee organisations (see Annexe 1 for a list of those cited in this paper). Semi-structured expert inter- views with press and regional officers at these organisations yielded additional empirical material.

The following literature review first contextualises the research subject by discussing- ing briefly (i) the evolving refugee regime, (ii) the complex relationship between states and refugee protection, and (iii) public communication in relation to news media, before exploring in more depth the discursive strategies and underlying motivations of refugee organisations. After this literature review, the study's methodology, main empirical findings, and final reflections and suggestions are presented.

6.2   Literature review

The evolving refugee regime

The international refugee regime can be envisaged as an institutionalised multilateral platform, comprising various regulations, principles, and procedures, which must shape states' responses to displacement crises (Loescher, 2001; Betts, 2010). The main component of the refugee regime is the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter the '1951 Convention'), signed on 28 July 1951 and effective as of 22 April 1954, which defines a refugee and his/her rights and obligations (Sidorenko, 2007; Loescher and Milner, 2011). This United Nations (UN) treaty describes a refugee as someone who:

> *owing to 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*

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nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14).

Several new issue areas have emerged as a result of globalisation and interdependence, such as development and security, human rights, humanitarianism, and travel and labour migration, overlapping with and complementing the 1951 Convention (Betts, 2009a, 2010). 'Some of these overlaps – such as the sources of complementary protection provided by the human rights regime – complement and reinforce the refugee regime' (Betts, 2010, p. 13). Sources of additional protection are legal resources for refugee protection outside of the field of international refugee law (Gorlick, 2000; McAdam, 2007). For instance, Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (effective as of 3 September 1953) and Article 3 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (effective as of 26 June 1987) protect non-refoulement.[1] Other overlaps, however, undermine aspects of the refugee system (infra). In sum, the refugee regime cannot be demarcated strictly, but rather, is a 'refugee regime complex' within which different systems exist in parallel, interact, and hence shape states' refugee policies (Betts, 2009a, 2010).

The next section looks at some tendencies within the refugee policies of a growing number of states that are shaped by the refugee regime complex's peculiar nature and influence significantly the public communication of refugee organisations.

States and refugee protection: a complex relationship

Within this refugee regime complex, states play a dominant role as they have the main legal refugee protection responsibilities and function both as asylum providers and international aid donors (Skran, 1992; Loescher, 2014). In recent decades, several states have become more reluctant to cooperate with refugee organisations on displacement issues (Loescher, 1996; Betts, Loescher, and Milner, 2012). Furthermore, a mounting number of countries, from the Global North and the Global South, have tightened their asylum policies, with the focus shifting from resettlement and local integration to voluntary repatriation and local protection (Betts and Loescher, 2011; Johnson, 2011).

This change can be explained by various economic, political, and socio-cultural factors, creating negative public opinion about displaced people and, partly in overlap, conflicting with state interests (Walker and Maxwell, 2009; Betts, Loescher, and Milner, 2012). Displaced people often are perceived as economic migrants (Loescher, 2001; Koser, 2001), as threats to established patterns, such as the culture and economy of the host country and local social cohesion (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Frelick, 2007), or even as (potential) security risks (Kagwanja and Juma, 2008; Betts, Loescher, and Milner, 2012). News media frequently perpetuate negative public opinion by representing displaced people as fundamentally ambivalent figures: they are both the 'victims' of a geopolitical conflict as well as 'threats' to the global order (Pupavac, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012). The current climate regularly triggers xenophobia and increases the popularity of the far right (Skran, 1992; Frelick, 2007), potentially

resulting in political 'us–them' discourses, based on stereotypes as the aforementioned (Klaus, 2017; Colombo, 2018), and more restrictive refugee policies (Betts, Loescher, and Milner, 2012).

Various policy measures, such as the increasing demand for visas, the use of 'safe third countries', and strengthening borders, thus attempt to obstruct the arrival of displaced people and/or the exercise of their rights, in order to reduce the number of asylum applications (Koser, 2001; Frelick, 2007; Nanda, 2007). Other institutions that intersect with the 1951 Convention often enable such measures. For instance, Western countries employ travel migration restrictions, meant for the securitization of migration, to decrease the number of incoming displaced people without explicitly breaching legal principles, such as non-refoulement (Betts, 2010).

Public communication and news media

Public communication assumes a central role in the refugee regime complex. One can define it as a large-scale, frequently diversified communication genre that is directed at various audiences through an organised set of communication activities and channels (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005; Atkin and Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Potential target audiences include members of the complex, other relevant organisations, politicians, private sector actors, media outlets, and citizens (Lang, 2012).

Public communication is predominantly 'public' in nature. Usually it proceeds through publications, advertising, and other content forms disseminated at public events and via traditional mass media and, increasingly, websites and social media (Atkin and Rice, 2013; Macnamara, 2016). Furthermore, it occurs in the public sphere and concerns public themes, such as refugee protection (Habermas, 1989, 2006; Downey and Fenton, 2003). Generally speaking, non-profit organisations use public communication to gain broader visibility, inform, sensitise, and set the agenda (Lang, 2012; Atkin and Rice, 2013; Sommerfeldt, 2013). The goal is to attract public, political, financial, and/or practical support (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005). To do so, news media coverage is crucial for refugee organisations, as this is the general public's main source of information on distant suffering (Van Belle, 2000; Waters and Tindall, 2011).

Public communication, however, strengthens the authority of politicians, government institutions, and multinational corporations, which have extensive communication departments (Cottle, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2011) as compared to most refugee organisations. Nevertheless, within the evolving news ecology, and given the emergence of a global public sphere, refugee organisations and particularly (international) NGOs have more agenda-setting possibilities (Dahlgren, 2005; Castells, 2008; Van Leuven, Deprez, and Raeymaeckers, 2013). Owing to digitalisation trends, cost savings, and associated higher workloads (Boczkowski, 2010; Schudson, 2011; Lee-Wright, Phillips, and Witschge, 2012), journalists also use more pre-packaged information, such as press releases (Reich, 2010). They distrust the information offered by NGOs less than that of the aforementioned actors (Reich, 2011). Consequently, NGOs provide ample and diversified content for greater news access and coverage

(Castells, 2008; Davies, 2008); mostly international NGOs succeed in this endeavor (Van Leuven and Joye, 2014; Powers, 2016b).

Discursive strategies and causes

Existing research principally explores how refugee organisations use public communication to respond to the two previously identified (partially overlapping) causes of restrictive refugee policies:

- the negative opinions of the public of displaced people; and

- the perception that refugee protection collides with greater state interests.

Strategies (mainly) directed at the general public

Several studies have investigated how refugee organisations represent displaced people in their public communication. Chouliaraki (2012, p. 13) identifies a gradual shift from a 'humanitarian discourse of pity to a post-humanitarian discourse of irony'.

From a regime of pity . . .

In the regime of pity narrative, agency-lacking (hereafter: 'negative') and agency-focused (hereafter: 'positive') representation strategies attempt, each in different ways, to eliminate displaced people's perceived ambivalent character. Both use a humanitarian discourse, relying on common humanity, across political and/or cultural divides, as moral justification for solidarity in the face of human vulnerability (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2004, 2012).

Refugee organisations primarily portray displaced people from the Global South in a traditionally 'negative' manner, as anonymous, corporeal, displaced, helpless, and/or speechless masses (Demusz, 2000; Fass, 2011; Bettini, 2013). In addition, the focus often is on needy and innocent-looking women and children (Moeller, 1999; Pupavac, 2008; Johnson, 2011; Vasavada, 2016). Clark-Kazak (2009) partly contests this claim, though, as she found that adults are portrayed more than children in the photographs of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Nevertheless, children appearing vulnerable, as ideal victims, constitute the second most photographed group. Characteristic are photorealistic images that attempt to reflect the harsh reality confronting displaced people. However, these pictures dehumanise people by reducing their various complex realities to a single one of generalised helplessness and vulnerability (Chouliaraki, 2012). Furthermore, the testimonies of displaced people's experiences are reserved for Western experts. This lack of an 'own' voice reduces displaced people to inferior citizens and likewise dehumanises them (Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 2007; Chouliaraki, 2012). Overall, these 'negative' representation practices result in depoliticised, dehistoricised, and universalised images of displaced people, regardless of their specific historical, political, and social contexts (Malkki, 1995, 1996; Rajaram, 2002; Pupavac, 2006).

Owing to increasing scepticism about such 'negative' representation strategies, more 'positive' portrayals of displaced people from the Global South have emerged (Chouliaraki, 2012), although 'negative' images still seem to dominate nowadays (Johnson, 2011; Bettini, 2013; Vasavada, 2016; Ongenaert, 2019). Specifically, refugee organisations depict displaced people sometimes as hopeful, self-determined, talented persons—frequently in a personalised way—who fit within 'our' cultural and moral framework and must be distinguished from economic migrants (Hedman, 2009; Sandvik, 2010; Catenaccio, 2015; Rodriguez, 2016). Even this representation strategy, though, can dehumanise displaced people. Optimistic photorealistic images, for instance, regularly accord displaced people an unrealistic amount of agency (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, 2005; Chouliaraki, 2012). What is more, often only some (especially charming, talented, and/or middle-class) displaced people acquire a voice, and usually this only pertains to 'regulated' statements that humanitarian organisations use to strengthen their own messages (Pupavac, 2008; Kivikuru, 2015; Cabot, 2016). This can result in depoliticised, homogenised, decollectivised voices of displaced people (Godin and Doná, 2016). Equally problematic is that '[a]sylum rights are thereby implicitly made conditional on qualifying as nice, talented, sensitive individuals' (Pupavac, 2008, p. 285). Hence, refugee organisations risk indirectly contributing to the undermining of these rights.

In sum, the regime of pity's discourse perpetuates—via the aforementioned 'negative' and 'positive' strategies—the public discourse's representation of displaced people as ambivalent figures. As a consequence, refugee organisations fail to justify solidarity calls to Western audiences based on common humanity (Pupavac, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012).

. . . to a regime of irony

Chouliaraki (2012, p. 17) describes 'the emerging shift in the representation of refugees away from "common humanity" and towards the self as the new morality of humanitarianism'. In the regime of irony narrative, refugee organisations use a post-humanitarian discourse that no longer relies on common humanity, but on the contingent 'Western self ' as moral justification for solidarity with displaced people. They attempt to remove displaced people's perceived ambivalence by displaying them in innovative ways and simultaneously responding to the self-reflection and -cultivation of Western audiences (Chouliaraki, 2012). Artistic storytelling campaigns, for instance, create distance from Western (prosperous) lifestyles, and hence trigger emotional alienation and urge Western citizens to reflect on global issues such as displacement crises (Chouliaraki, 2010, 2012; Vestergaard, 2010).

Equally characteristic is celebrity advocacy. In contrast to earlier, more formal communication, it principally involves personalised testimonies. Encounters with displaced people are thus represented as only a contribution to self-cultivation (Chouliaraki, 2012). Consequently, the audience identifies more with the celebrities than with the suffering others, who have no voice and therefore become morally distanced.

The regime of irony can be considered as a creative but less ethical response to the failing regime of pity and the related general Western aversion to institutional solidarity calls (Cohen, 2001; Chouliaraki, 2012). Regardless of negative public opinion, Western audiences are often portrayed as experiencing compassion fatigue: excessive exposure to human suffering that results in declining public concern (Tester, 2001; Höijer, 2004). Moreover, refugee organisations operate in an increasingly competitive humanitarian landscape, characterised by increasing commodification and a struggle for media attention (Cottle and Nolan, 2007; Orgad, 2013). The employment of the aforementioned market-driven, post-humanitarian strategies must be considered in this context. Chouliaraki (2012) further relates the regime of irony to neoliberalism's consumerist morality, as the humanitarian sector increasingly acquires a business rationality, with a mounting focus on efficiency—also within public communication departments (Cottle and Nolan, 2007). Solidarity subsequently becomes a practice of self-expression, whereby private choice and self-cultivation are essential (Chouliaraki, 2012).

Strategies (mainly) directed at states

Refugee organisations also attempt to influence governments using public communication, which is a complex, pragmatic task, given states' political and financial authority over refugee organisations (Suhajda, 2008; Walker and Maxwell, 2009). Larger state interests in refugee-related domains frequently strongly determine refugee policies (*supra*). Hence, several scholars have examined how refugee organisations, by means of public communication, seek to relate refugee protection to the interests of Western countries. This strategy, enabled by the refugee regime complex's great inter-dependence, is called cross-issue persuasion (Betts, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). Important to its realisation is a structural (conceptual, institutional, and/or material) link between the specific regimes and the presence of refugee organisations with sufficient negotiating capacity. For instance, UNHCR has tried several times, with varying degrees of success, to relate issues concerning migration, security, development, and Western states' commercial interests to refugee protection (Betts, 2009b, 2010).

UNHCR, as well as several NGOs, used a security discourse in the early 1990s. It tried to convince governments to address displacement issues structurally by framing displacement as an urgent safety problem and then to relate refugee protection to national security interests (Hammerstad, 2014a, 2014b). This strategy stimulated a further securitisation of forced migration through which displaced people became more politically relevant. Nevertheless, UNHCR distanced itself from the security discourse after the Rwandan genocide in 1994, and even sought to desecuritise refugee protection and associate it again with human rights and humanitarianism after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 (and the emerging dominant perception of displaced people as (potential) security risks) (Hammerstad, 2014a, 2014b). More recently, UNHCR has argued that irregular migration to Western states can be limited by supporting refugee protection locally in the Global South (Betts, 2009b, 2010). Such a pragmatic argumentation strategy responds to national state interests and can be viewed as a reflection and reproduction of political realism (Grieco, 1999). With regard to asylum reception, references to displaced people's talent and/or potential can be seen as a technique that belongs both to cross-issue persuasion and to the regime of pity's 'positive' representation strategies.

6.3   Methodology

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) define a discourse as the way in which one understands the world and talks about it. It is composed of a set of ideas, images, and practices, resonating in language (Machin and Mayr, 2012) and structuring social life (Wodak and Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, discourses are inextricably linked to power and thus can support or undermine the social status quo (Bloor and Bloor, 2013). Mediated communication, such as public communication, is an important discourse genre, because it affects public opinions and attitudes (Price, 2007; Reisigl and Wodak, 2016) and regularly (often unconsciously) reproduces and reflects society's dominant ideologies (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). After all, professional practices are embedded in the social practices of social structures, institutions, and values (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). From the social constructivist viewpoint that language is not neutral, CDA investigates how realities are discursively constructed and acquire meaning (Hansen and Machin, 2013). Given that CDA examines how actors use language to persuade people to follow their interpretation of events (Hansen and Machin, 2013), and simultaneously scrutinises the wider socio-political context (Paltridge, 2013), this method is very suitable for this study.

The CDA model of Fairclough (1995), used here, focuses on three dimensions: text; discursive practices; and social practice. CDA is, however, rather a critical state of mind with various interpretations instead of an explicit, systematic, reproducible research method (van Dijk, 2013). Thus, with regard to the reliability and validity of the results of this study, the analysis reflects transparently on research decisions and utilises an extensive set of discursive criteria (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002; Mortelmans, 2013). This set is informed by two fundamental scholarly works (Machin and Mayr, 2012; Reisigl and Wodak, 2016) and is in line with the findings of the literature review on representation and argumentation strategies. However, this study is also explorative in nature, given the limited and fragmented research on public communication of refugee organisations, and investigates the data from an open, inductive standpoint. Hence, the CDA combines deductive and inductive elements.

The case study assesses public communication on the Syrian crisis, which started in 2011 and has resulted in the largest number of forcibly displaced people currently worldwide (UNHCR, 2018). It scrutinises the press releases of UNHCR and of two international NGOs, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). These three refugee organisations are largely involved in the Syrian crisis and communicate extensively about it. The first author, David Ongenaert, analysed, supported by Microsoft Office software, their press releases— an important genre of public communication directed at the general public and governments (Pasquier and Villeneuve, 2012; Winston and Loeffler, 2013)—from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2015. This topical and socially relevant research period was selected because the crisis greatly expanded at that time (UNHCR, 2018). The sample constitutes a limited and logical entity, enabling relevant statements about contextual dimensions. The press releases were gathered from the organisations' online archives using the keyword 'Syr*'—some DRC press releases from 2014 were obtained via e-mail. To preserve the focus of the empirical research, only press releases explicitly mentioning Syrian displaced people or the related crisis were analysed. As such, a final sample of 122 relevant press releases (UNHCR: 78; DRC: 27; IRC: 17) was acquired.

Table 1. Overview of the respondents

Respondents[2]	Organisation	Interview date	Interview setting	Interview duration
Mr Bergkamp	IRC	22 July 2016	Skype	50 minutes
Ms Campbell	IRC	4 August 2016	Skype	25 minutes
Mr Vieira	UNHCR	30 July 2016	Skype	42 minutes
Mr Henry	UNHCR	10 August 2016	Phone	54 minutes
Ms Lehman	DRC	4 August 2016	Skype	38 minutes
Mr Ljungberg	DRC	10 August 2016	Skype	11 minutes[3]
		12 August 2016		20 minutes

Source: authors.

Although the CDA (Fairclough, 1995) is three-dimensional, it remains difficult to examine profoundly contextual aspects related to discursive and social practices. Therefore, David Ongenaert conducted six audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with press and regional officers at the three organisations between July and August 2016, to gain more information on the production and social context. The respondents were selected according to organisation, function, and availability (see Table 1). An interview guide was used, adapted in the light of new insights acquired during the interview period. The transcripts were analysed following the method of thematic coding (Jensen, 2012) at three levels: open; axial; and selective (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). First, the most relevant data were selected and labelled with one or more codes. These open codes served to condense the mass of textual data into manageable categories. During axial coding, these codes were reduced and integrated into broader, abstract concepts that captured their essence. Finally, during selective coding, the axial codes were related and consolidated to develop a theoretical framework (Mortelmans, 2013; Bryman, 2015; Morris, 2015).

6.4   Results

Textual analysis

To contextualise the CDA, the results section starts with a short quantitative data exploration to generate more knowledge of the relationships between the various actors in terms of space in the press releases. Informed by the literature, the study first investigated to what extent various actors represent displaced people, apropos of the number of sentences and press releases. Next, it examined on which displaced people (according to various variables (infra)) the focus was situated, with respect to number of references (nouns and personal names) and press releases.

Sources of representation

Displaced people barely have a voice in the realm of public communication. The press releases' authors, logically, portray them the most, both in terms of number of covering sentences and press releases (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). UNHCR, IRC, and DRC press officers pay attention to displaced people

in 63.6, 74.4, and 67.7 per cent, respectively, of their relevant phrases, spread across 87.2, 88.2, and 96.3 per cent of their relevant press releases. In addition, the authors generally quote and/or paraphrase sources who also represent displaced people, that is, high-ranking employees, affiliated celebrities (except for the DRC), other humanitarian organisations, and, to a lesser extent, state actors. Displaced people, however, hardly get a say. In relation to UNHCR, only 1.4 per cent of the relevant phrases, spread across 1.3 per cent of the press releases, come from displaced people. As for the IRC and the DRC, 'their' voices cover 3.0 and 3.8 per cent, respectively, of the sentences in 5.9 and 7.4 per cent of the press releases. This absence of displaced people's 'own' voices is an initial indication of the use of 'negative' representation strategies within the regime of pity (*supra*).

Table 2. Relevant UNHCR press releases (2014–15): sources of representation (N=78)

Actors	Number of sentences	Percentage of sentences	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Organisation itself	459	63.6	68	87.2
Specific employees	191	26.5	36	47.4
Celebrities	33	4.6	8	10.3
Other humanitarian actors	27	3.7	4	5.7
Displaced people	10	1.4	1	1.3
State actors	2	0.3	2	2.6
Total	**722**	**100.1***	**–**	**–**

Note: * The total is greater than 100 per cent owing to rounding.
Source: authors.

Table 3. Relevant IRC press releases (2014–15): sources of representation (N=17)

Actors	Number of sentences	Percentage of sentences	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Organisation itself	99	74.4	15	88.2
Specific employees	27	20.3	5	29.4
Celebrities	1	0.8	1	5.9
Other humanitarian actors	2	1.5	1	5.9
Displaced people	4	3.0	1	5.9
State actors	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	**133**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**

Source: authors.

Table 4. Relevant DRC press releases (2014–15): sources of representation (N=27)

Actors	Number of sentences	Percentage of sentences	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Organisation itself	176	67.7	26	96.3
Specific employees	53	20.4	17	63.0
Celebrities	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other humanitarian actors	16	6.2	5	18.5
Displaced people	10	3.8	2	7.4
State actors	5	1.9	2	7.4
Total	**260**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**

Source: authors.

Represented displaced people

The study also investigated the number of references (nouns and personal names) to and the number of press releases covering displaced people according to age, social relationship, gender, and social status (see Tables 5, 6, and 7). Again, the analysis reveals indications of 'negative' representation strategies.

Table 5. UNHCR press releases (2014–15): specific representation of displaced people (N=78)

	Actors	Number of references	Percentage of references	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Age	Children and infants	133	64.9	29	37.2
	Adults	72	35.1	20	25.6
	Total	**205**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**
Social category	Family (members)	191	97.0	37	47.4
	Individuals	6	3.1	5	6.4
	Total	**197**	**100.1***	**–**	**–**
Gender	Female	51	86.4	15	19.2
	Male	8	13.6	6	7.7
	Total	**59**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**
Social status	Explicitly vulnerable	55	91.7	17	21.8
	Success stories	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Highly educated	3	5.0	3	3.8
	Middle class	2	3.3	2	2.7
	Total	**60**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**

Note: * The total is greater than 100 per cent owing to rounding.
Source: authors.

Table 6. IRC press releases (2014–15): specific representation of displaced people (N=17)

	Actors	Number of references	Percentage of references	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Age	Children and infants	6	31.6	3	17.6
	Adults	13	68.4	4	23.5
	Total	**19**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**
Social category	Family (members)	21	100.0	9	52.9
	Individuals	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Total	**21**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**
Gender	Female	4	30.8	3	17.6
	Male	9	69.2	3	17.6
	Total	**13**	**100.0**	**–**	**–**
Social status	Explicitly vulnerable	2	50.0	2	11.8
	Success stories	2	50.0	1	5.9
	Highly educated	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Middle class	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Total	**4**	**100.0%**	**–**	**–**

Source: authors.

Table 7. DRC press releases (2014–15): specific representation of displaced people (N=27)

	Actors	Number of references	Percentage of references	Number of press releases	Percentage of press releases
Age	Children and infants	29	60.4	11	40.7
	Adults	19	39.6	10	37.0
	Total	**48**	**100.0**	–	–
Social category	Family (members)	56	98.2	12	44.4
	Individuals	1	1.8	1	3.7
	Total	**57**	**100.0**	–	–
Gender	Female	9	69.2	4	14.8
	Male	4	30.8	3	11.1
	Total	**13**	**100.0**	–	–
Social status	Explicitly vulnerable	27	100.0	9	33.3
	Success stories	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Highly educated	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Middle class	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Total	**60**	**100.0**	–	–

Source: authors.

The observed organisations generally spotlight (rather) vulnerable groups. UNHCR and the DRC represent mostly children and babies instead of adults: 64.9 and 60.4 per cent, respectively, of their age-related references in 37.2 and 40.7 per cent of the press releases. The IRC, however, deviates with 68.4 per cent of references to adults in 23.5 per cent of its press releases. All three organisations focus on families and their members. Individuals without family are barely mentioned; if they are, consistent with previous results, it concerns especially unaccompanied children and/or orphans. This is connected to the stronger focus of UNHCR (91.7 per cent) and the DRC (100.0 per cent) on explicitly vulnerable displaced people rather than on social groups with usually more agency, also pointing to 'negative' representation strategies. The IRC, though, differs with an equal number of references to both categories.

Equally fitting with the regime of pity: UNHCR (86.4 per cent of references) and the DRC (69.2 per cent of references) concentrate more on women than on men (mostly as vulnerable people (*infra*)). The IRC deviates again with 30.8 per cent of references to women.

Discursive strategies

The CDA was guided by several argumentation strategies (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016, pp. 24–61) and discursive devices pertaining to representation of actors and actions (Machin and Mayr, 2012, pp. 77–136). As noted, though, the data were scrutinised from an open, inductive standpoint and the study was not limited to these preconceived categories at the outset.

Individualisation versus collectivisation

Regarding the representation of displaced people, the study investigated first whether or not they are presented as individuals or as abstract group members. Providing specific information on actors humanises them, which can generate empathy. Conversely, in collectivisations, the represented actors are part of a generic grouping, which creates distance (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

The observed organisations, particularly UNHCR, almost always collectivise displaced people, both when representing them in general and in more concrete terms. In a press release issued on 16 September 2015, UNHCR said that it:

> *was especially shocked and saddened to witness Syrian refugees, including families with children who have already suffered so much, being prevented from entering the EU [European Union] with water cannons and tear gas* (UNHCR, 16 September 2015).

Consistent with the fact that the DRC and the IRC accord displaced people with relatively more of a voice than UNHCR does, these NGOs individualise them more. Voiced displaced people are always nominated. The IRC personalises them the most: 'a carpenter from Homs, Syria who fled with his family and now lives in Georgia' (IRC, 2 September 2015).

Nomination versus functionalisation

Second, the study explored if the press releases nominated displaced people, as this discursive strategy can personalise and humanise actors. Functionalisation, however, can provide legitimacy, but also possibly dehumanise actors by reducing them to their role (Machin and Mayr, 2012). The boundaries between these categories often are very vague and occasionally they coincide. Therefore, the study considered references emphasising the role of a refugee, asylum seeker, or a displaced or explicitly vulnerable person as functionalisations. Terms concentrating on 'humanity' are regarded as nominations.

The investigated press releases use somewhat more functionalisations than nominations or combinations of both. All examined organisations refer to displaced people using terms such as 'refugees' (DRC, 22 January 2015; IRC, 12 June 2014) or 'Syrian refugees' (UNHCR, 17 January 2014; IRC, 2 December 2015), frequently accompanied by adjectives such as '(the most) vulnerable' or 'desperate' (DRC, 23 January 2015; UNHCR, 10 November 2015). Sometimes actors are even merely

presented as vulnerable: '[t]his plan [. . .] can help us [. . .] support those who are desperate and traumatized' (UNHCR, 18 December 2014).

The organisations use fewer nominations and combinations. Most of these nominations remain of a general and generic nature, associated with the high number of collectivisations. Examples are 'Syrians' (UNHCR, 4 May 2014, 20 June 2014) and 'children' (IRC, 14 July 2014; DRC, 9 November 2015). Rarely are displaced people accompanied by personal information: 'Syrians like Faez and his wife, Shaza, both of whom have been given safe haven in Texas' (IRC, 30 November 2015). Combinations, such as 'refugee families' (IRC, 30 October 2015), are also employed frequently.

Aggregation

Third, the study evaluated whether the organisations use aggregations, quantifying and treating actors as statistics (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Evidence was found to support this, in conjunction with the high number of collectivisations, functionalisations, and generic nominations. Displaced people are often portrayed in numerical terms:

> *1.6 million refugees have had their food assistance reduced this year [. . .] while 45 per cent of refugees in Lebanon live in sub-standard shelters* (UNHCR, 25 June 2015).

Although the organisations usually use numbers, sometimes they opt for abstract representations. In this way one can seek to create a scientific impression, without giving specific figures (van Dijk, 1991): 'Most of the women are struggling to pay the rent' (UNHCR, 8 July 2014). In addition, abstract terms are sometimes used that do not represent displaced people as actors but as part of a phenomenon with a very dehumanising effect. Examples are 'refugee outflows' (UNHCR, 18 November 2015), 'arrivals', and 'influx' (UNHCR, 20 September 2014; DRC, 16 June 2015).

Represented roles

Fourth, the study appraised whether displaced people are represented as doers, beneficiaries, thinkers, and/or speakers (Machin and Mayr, 2012, pp. 106–110). Doers are active and engage in actions aimed at passive beneficiaries. Thinkers are associated with mental processes and provide insights into how they experience something, which can spawn empathy. Speakers are related to verbal processes, attract media coverage, and generally are powerful actors.

The findings reveal that all three organisations represent displaced people mainly as passive beneficiaries who depend on international aid, with a spotlight on their increasing needs and deteriorating living conditions: 'large numbers of Syrian refugees are sliding into abject poverty, and at an alarming rate, due to the magnitude of the crisis and insufficient support from the international community' (UNHCR, 14 January 2015). They are also often represented as the object of resettlement (negotiations) (UNHCR, 12 March 2015, 10 November 2015).

Although displaced people are also depicted as doers, UNHCR, the DRC, and the IRC mostly highlight the actions that they perform out of sheer necessity and/or despair. These include fleeing the violence in Syria (DRC, 25 June 2015; IRC, 17 November 2015), child labour, and begging and exploitation in regional host countries (UNHCR, 14 January 2015, 12 March 2015). The focus is primarily on dangerous journeys to Europe:

> *Their living conditions are deteriorating dramatically, forcing refugees to adopt extreme measures to cope, including increasingly to return to the warzone they fled or to risk their lives crossing to Europe* (DRC, 9 November 2015).

Most actions consequently acquire a negative connotation that implicitly reinforces the perception of displaced people as desperate and needy. This is also supported by similar explicit references (UNHCR, 18 December 2014, 26 February 2015) and calls to assist displaced people (and their host countries) (DRC, 9 July 2015, 10 September 2015). Furthermore, the observed organisations often concentrate on the major impacts that displaced people have on the economies of host countries and their societies. Frequently, they are then ascribed a potential agency, which can only be realised after the provision of some form of support, such as resettlement (IRC, 2 September 2015) or humanitarian and/or development aid, and, as such, they are not a constant 'burden':

> *We need to help the host countries give refugees the opportunity to live dignified lives and make a positive contribution to the communities hosting them* (DRC, 9 November 2015).

The organisations portray displaced people less as thinkers. Their mood is usually indirectly articulated by other actors, who describe them mostly as desperate and/or traumatised (UNHCR, 18 December 2014; DRC, 10 September 2015): 'Children are telling our staff in the field, daily, that they've had enough' (UNHCR, 15 March 2014).

At times, an immediate insight into the internal self of displaced people is provided: 'their' voices regularly imply vulnerability and mostly fit with 'our' moral framework, including a recurring concern for their children (UNHCR, 8 July 2014; DRC, 9 November 2015). Seldom are they represented as truly 'positive' thinkers (DRC, 16 August 2015).

Lastly, the organisations sometimes characterise displaced people as speakers, both 'positive' and 'negative', or paraphrase them as a speaker: 'One woman told UNHCR she moved no fewer than 20 times before finally crossing into Lebanon' (UNHCR, 29 August 2014). Nevertheless, their opinions always correspond with the main messages of press releases. Displaced people testify about difficult living conditions (UNHCR, 24 February 2014, 8 July 2014), call explicitly for international assistance (DRC, 6 March 2014), or represent themselves as model citizens, implicitly to ensure a larger resettlement:

Faez said: 'I've been here for a short time, but even in this short time you notice that America is a better place than many other countries [. . .] I know I can do something here' (IRC, 30 November 2015).

Argumentation strategies

This subsection focuses on how the three organisations attempt to convince the general public and states to engage in solidarity and refugee protection. First, the study analysed 'normative rightness claims' (related to what should [not] be done, and ethical and moral standards) regarding common humanity and the 'Western self'. Second, it investigated 'truth claims' (connected to degrees of knowledge and certainty and theoretical insights) concerning cross-issue persuasion (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016, p. 35).

Normative rightness claims

The observed organisations, especially UNHCR, explicitly seek to foster solidarity, primarily by emphasising common humanity. What is important here is the argumentation technique's two-sided objective. First, the organisations attempt, often subtly, to generate solidarity, by focusing on needy displaced people living in poor conditions (UNHCR, 14 January 2015). Second, they call for solidarity and (general or specific) refugee protection commitments: '2015 should be the year when we finally provide protection and relief for those caught in the cross-fire' (UNHCR, 18 December 2014).

Displaced people are mostly represented 'negatively' within these claims. High-ranking employees respond to common humanity by making implicit us-and-them contrasts. 'They' and 'we' refer respectively to needy displaced people and the (perceived solidary) international community. The purpose is to blur conflicting state interests within the international community and to unite states in alliances centred on international refugee protection (UNHCR, 14 March 2015). For instance:

This moment is an opportunity to unite us all. To come together in a common approach that is based on truly shared humanitarian values (UNHCR, 31 March 2015).

However, UNHCR, the DRC, and the IRC also look to create affinity with displaced people. First, they are represented as victims of a shared (terrorist) enemy: 'But we need to remember that the primary threat is not from refugees, but to them' (UNHCR, 26 February 2015, 12 March 2015, 8 May 2015). In addition, solidarity is sometimes spawned by referring to similar displacement crises in the past (UNHCR, 8 May 2015).

Some solidarity claims are based on the 'Western self'. Celebrity and UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie has a leading role, although she seeks principally to develop solidarity based on common humanity. One can distinguish three strategies in this regime of irony discourse. First, Jolie stipulates repeatedly what the crises and meetings with displaced people mean to her, so as to involve the public

(UNHCR, 25 January 2015, 20 June 2015): 'Meeting these children was a heart-rending experience' (UNHCR, 24 February 2014). Second, she tries to embed the crisis in the personal sphere of citizens (UNHCR, 20 June 2015) and state leaders by speaking explicitly to them, to arouse empathy: 'I ask you to imagine your children going through the horrors in Syria' (UNHCR, 14 March 2014). Third, some press releases focus on self-cultivation, related to participation in campaigns (DRC, 6 March 2014). The following reference to compassion fatigue and consumerist morality also indicates the regime of irony:

> [W]e cannot let the world become fatigued by the situation. The Everyday Heroes of Syria is a Facebook campaign that seeks to inspire and remind all of us that [. . .] we all can be part of the solution for Syrian refugees [. . .] Please join us at Everyday Heroes of Syria and share your Everyday Hero story' (DRC, 9 June 2015).

Truth claims

Organisations, particularly UNHCR, link refugee protection to states' broader economic, human rights, political, and security interests and refute negative public perceptions, in order to persuade them to engage. Cross-issue persuasion serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, the organisations connect displaced people and/or the crisis to various state interests:

> The Syrian crisis has also had major social and economic impacts on host countries, which remain at the forefront of the crisis and are going through political, economic, social and security instabilities [. . .] [T]he Syrian crisis is also having an impact on development and global security (UNHCR, 25 June 2015).

This example illustrates how these organisations connect the Syrian crisis directly and indirectly to state interests worldwide (UNHCR, 17 January 2014, 15 March 2014, 7 August 2015). The aforementioned regional problems are also connected, indirectly, to the international community's interests owing to globalisation and interdependence. This could have global political and/or trade implications.

On the other hand, UNHCR refers in the fragment to the negative effects on development and global security, which are of direct interest to states worldwide. By repeatedly making such a connection, the organisations create opportunities to link refugee protection, in different forms, implicitly and/or explicitly to state interests (DRC, 10 September 2015; IRC, 2 December 2015). In the words of UNHCR:

> 'Imagine the crushing social and economic consequences of this crisis on Lebanon and other countries in the region', [UN Secretary-General António] Guterres said. 'They need much stronger international support than they have received so far, both financially and in terms of commitments to receive and protect Syrian refugees in other parts of the world' (UNHCR, 14 March 2014).

Furthermore, several press releases implicitly and/or explicitly react to aspects that constitute the basis of negative public opinion and, partly overlapping, perceived conflicts with state interests. For

instance, various press releases explicitly counteract common perceptions of displaced people as economic migrants (UNHCR, 20 June 2015), threats to local economies and lifestyles (UNHCR, 26 February 2015), or security risks (UNHCR, 18 November 2015). This is frequently accompanied by a focus on benefits for local communities (UNHCR, 12 March 2015):

> *[T]he small numbers of Syrians who have been admitted have shown an ability to contribute to the US economy and society* (IRC, 2 September 2015).

Discursive practices

As noted, representations, such as press releases, are the product of the social context. Hence the paper now examines, based on semi-structured interviews with press and regional officers, some explanatory professional and institutional practices.

The rationale behind representation strategies

The textual analysis revealed that the three organisations represent displaced people as predominantly homogeneous, suffering, and dependent groups. All respondents agreed that press releases often portray displaced people in a 'negative' manner, and they offered several reasons for this. First, they referred to the specific features of press releases and the importance of news media. Ms Campbell asserted that press releases, unlike other forms of public communication, serve 'as a reactive to the story of the day, to a specific event or report'. The main purpose is to attract media coverage, which is important for building public support. As news media are mainly interested in facts and figures, refugee organisations use quantitative data in press releases. She added: '[r]arely, in those press release type communications do we have the space to individualise people.'

Almost all respondents stressed, however, that in other public communications, such as 'case stories', they attempt to depict displaced people more 'positively' by spotlighting their agency, dignity, and ordinariness. Only displaying 'negative' or shocking pictures does not reflect the reality and is morally inappropriate, most of them argued.

Strategic reasons also play a role here. Several respondents pointed out that 'positive' representations are essential to building long-term social commitment, and that 'positive' images are important in reducing the impact of the prevailing negative news coverage on displaced people. Mr Henry stated that: 'numbers on their own can often come across as negative [. . . and] alarmist and don't themselves contain a narrative'.

Nevertheless, opinions differ on which representation strategy is most effective in gaining financial public support. Mr Bergkamp, Ms Lehman, and Mr Ljungberg pointed to 'negative' representation strategies because urgent needs usually are required for donations and because news media are more interested in 'negative' than 'positive' stories. Mr Henry, however, said that 'positive' representations

generally are more effective, as this elicits greater involvement, although he admitted that '[t]here have been some negative images which all had an extraordinary positive effect on mobilising public support'. These positive effects usually are short-lived, though, he noted.

Selecting displaced people and opinions

The textual analysis revealed that the examined organisations focus more on vulnerable 'categories'. This appears to be due primarily to strategic and practical factors. Several respondents claimed that stories about women and children are more successful, because typically they appear (more) sympathetic and vulnerable. Mr Bergkamp stated that, for the abovementioned reasons, the general field of NGOs focuses on these categories. Furthermore, Mr Vieira contended that many displaced people are women and children, so it is more likely that they are represented.

Most respondents confirmed that, in line with the regime of pity, displaced people's opinions usually correspond with the main messages of the three organisations. Testimonies should especially strengthen their own public communications. Ms Lehman said: 'I am not an objective journalist. So, I can't see why I would accept views which counter the views of the organisation'. Furthermore, the organisations refuse political statements so as not to endanger displaced people and humanitarian personnel and to jeopardise access by the organisations to certain areas. Mr Ljungberg added that such statements also conflict with the principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Compassion fatigue, celebrities, and marketisation

The literature revealed that compassion fatigue plays a relevant part in the reception of humanitarian public communications. Respondents confirmed this, but disagreed about the current extent of compassion fatigue with respect to the Syrian crisis. Mr Bergkamp, Ms Campbell, and Ms Lehman believed the main reason to be an overdose of negative news, particularly on humanitarian crises, and the duration and perceived insolubility of the conflict. Mr Vieira, Mr Henry, and Mr Ljungberg, however, experienced no (substantial) compassion fatigue, whereas Mr Vieira referred to many positive comments on social media, donations, and requests to volunteer.

There is, though, a consensus regarding the importance of celebrities in public communication. They are seen as essential in dealing with compassion fatigue and in building broad public support, both in terms of social and financial commitment. Celebrities are 'media magnets', said Mr Vieira, through whom one can, in combination with social media, reach a wider audience that traditionally is not interested in displacement crises. Several respondents also confirmed the shift in celebrity advocacy from a humanitarian to a post-humanitarian discourse. Mr Henry and Mr Ljungberg asserted that the general public is mostly interested in celebrities' personal experiences and emotions. Ms Campbell, however, thought that the use and success of such a discourse depends mainly on the individual.

Related to this are different opinions about the possible (further) marketisation of the humanitarian sector. Mr Vieira did not believe in marketisation and highlighted that most donations in the humanitarian sector come from solidary citizens. Mr Henry and Mr Ljungberg, though, have experienced marketisation. Humanitarian organisations are primarily funded by voluntary contributions from a few large donors, resulting in fundraising determined by marketing principles to mobilise public support, according to Mr Ljungberg. This marketisation is reflected in the fact that refugee organisations now have specialised communication departments concentrating on public engagement and fundraising, emphasised Mr Henry. Mr Bergkamp and Ms Lehman doubted whether there is further marketisation, as the humanitarian sector has long used marketing tools. Mr Bergkamp noted that '[i]t's more the marketing that continues to develop as the world around it changes'.

States and cross-issue persuasion

Although all respondents agreed that refugee policies vary from country to country, some perceived a certain amount of donor fatigue among states. Ms Lehman said: '[t]here is a huge gap between the means and the funds and the willingness to deal with this'. Other respondents doubted whether this phenomenon is new, pointing out that (humanitarian) aid for the Syrian crisis has increased. Mr Bergkamp underlined that '[w]hat is not popular, is helping refugees in your own country. So the same budget is connected to that reality'. The main reason for this opposition to asylum-seekers is usually negative national public opinion.

Almost all respondents confirmed that their organisation uses cross-issue persuasion. Refugee organisations link refugee protection principally to economics, human rights, humanitarianism, migration, and security. All respondents stressed the importance of international refugee law and claimed that their respective organisations remind states of their obligations. To persuade authorities, however, the organisations must also respond to other state interests. As Mr Ljungberg put it: '[i]f you only [. . .] say states have obligations to protect refugees, it would be a very naive message'. Ms Campbell contended that, for electoral reasons, refugee policies are largely determined by weightier state interests, whereas Mr Bergkamp underscored that one can hardly find evidence of asylum-seekers genuinely fleeing to evade persecution and not for other reasons.

Social practice

Professional practices are embedded in structures and values, and public communication regularly reproduces society's dominant ideologies (*supra*). Consequently, this section explores whether and how UNHCR, the DRC, and the IRC constitute and reflect dominant worldviews.

First, the CDA showed that the three organisations represent displaced people as homogenous and passive masses. If they are somewhat nominated, the focus is on rather vulnerable 'categories'. Furthermore, displaced people rarely have their own voice, which must even correspond with the organisations' key message. Such depersonalising practices are further reproduced through solidarity claims based on common humanity that create discursive us–them polarisations between displaced

people and the international community, which are related to a discursive regime of pity (Chouliaraki, 2012).

Second, the textual analysis revealed the relevance of the Western self within solidarity claims, which manifested itself in three respects: (i) celebrities' self-directed testimonials; (ii) celebrities' direct messages to citizens and state leaders; and (iii) campaign references. Solidarity is thus considered to be a form of self-expression and -cultivation; displaced people are only secondary figures. Likewise, the analysis of discursive practices pointed to the emergence of a self-centred discourse and to the marketisation and celebritisation of the humanitarian sector.

Third, the organisations also employ the cross-issue persuasion strategy. The study demonstrates that they link strategically refugee protection to weightier state interests. They connect initially the displacement crisis to certain direct and/or indirect state interests to connect subsequently refugee protection to state interests with a greater chance of success. Furthermore, the organisations respond explicitly to negative stereotypes that influence public opinions and state perceptions, by highlighting the (potential) benefits of displaced people and refugee protection.

6.5   Discussion and conclusion

This paper focuses on the public communication strategies of refugee organisations. In general, the findings show that the observed organisations substantially dehumanise displaced people and subordinate them to the 'Western self ' and national state interests. This power inequality can be explained by the use of various discursive strategies, as well as the production process and the social context.

The findings demonstrate that displaced people are often portrayed as a homogenous and suffering collective, confirming the dominance of the regime of pity's traditional 'negative' representational strategies (Johnson, 2011; Chouliaraki, 2012; Bettini, 2013). However, unlike existing fragmented research, this analysis also found evidence of the use of other discursive strategies, and explored the production process and the social context. The aforementioned depersonalising humanitarian discourse can be considered to be the product of the specific features of the press releases; the importance of the news media and commercial reasons are other contributing factors. In addition, the study found signs of a simultaneously existing post-humanitarian discourse. The interviews revealed that the humanitarian sector has evolved from a non-economic to a market-oriented sphere within which private choice and self-expression are central. One can relate this post-humanitarian discourse to the regime of irony and see it as an expression of neoliberalism (Chouliaraki, 2012). While post-humanitarian discourses respond to personal fulfilment, the oft-deployed cross-issue persuasion strategy responds to state interests, and reflects political realism (Grieco, 1999). Both strategies are self-directed and reduce displaced people principally to secondary figures.

One can definitely argue that public communication essentially serves (the needs of) displaced people and that informing news media in a numerical (and thus homogenising) way is necessary. Although well-intentioned, the use of the aforementioned strategies does not only have ethical implications, but also could have broader consequences. Media representations can influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours, both at the micro (beliefs about and interactions with displaced people) and macro (refugee legislation and policies) level. Consequently, these strategies could be rendered ineffective in the long term, as they reinforce displaced people's perceived ambivalence in public discourse (Chouliaraki, 2012). Further research is needed on the interaction between refugee organisations' public communications on crises and aiding national economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts, and particularly on the potential impact on the evolution of public and political perceptions and imperatives.

An important nuance is that the examined organisations also produce other forms of public communication (as well as press releases). According to some of the respondents, a 'facts-and-figures' approach is replaced by a more personal (humanising) approach. Hence, this study's results cannot be simply generalised. Nevertheless, it seems important that, to the extent possible, every public communication genre humanises displaced people, especially because not everyone consumes various formats.

To offer some concrete suggestions for more moral and practical communication strategies, which can be used for press releases, but not exclusively, we draw not only on the findings of this study, but also on the reflexive solidarity paradigm of Chouliaraki (2012). This refers, contra irony, to a politicised public, reflective form of solidarity rather than one based on private preference. Contra pity, it can rely on various social values rather than on a limited number of delineated 'universal' truths. Chouliaraki (2012, p. 29) further argues that one should consider a displaced person to be 'an "other" with her/his own humanity', who obtains a voice and 'is represented neither through stereotypes of destitution [or] (. . .) individual sovereignty', but 'in a more complex and, perhaps, a more discomforting [way]'.

With this in mind, various concrete suggestions are presented below for refugee organisations. First, the use of an adjusted humane language, whether or not combined with further information (such as displaced 'people', 'person[s]', '[wo]men', 'children', et cetera, 'on the run/move', 'fleeing', or 'who have fled'), appears important to overcome in part the dehumanising effect of generic terms. Instead of the commonly used term 'refugee(s)', referring to a legal status, this paper employs, where appropriate, the more correct and humane term 'displaced people'. In connection therewith, offering (diverse) displaced people who are willing to pronounce in a significant (uncensored) voice upon various relevant topics, creating stories with a human angle, providing broader background information on the crisis in question, and assisting news media in creating and finding such stories, information, and people, could increase mutual understanding and knowledge in the long run. Similarly, new media and storytelling genres, hypertextuality, and other digital opportunities could enhance (online and face-to-face) interaction. On a more general level, training, informing, and debating constructively with various social actors (such as civil society, citizens, companies,

educational institutions, governments, and news media) on the importance of using correct and humane representations of displaced people could support these goals.

It is neither realistic nor socially desirable to think that 'facts-and-figures' approaches, which have important informational functions, can replace more 'humane' approaches. However, both narratives could potentially reinforce one another when combined: facts and figures could be humanised, whereas human interest stories could acquire more relevance. Future comparative, longitudinal, and multi-method research on the text, and especially the almost unexplored production and reception dimensions, is needed, therefore (Ongenaert, 2019). This should be targeted not only at various public communication media, but also at an assortment of media platforms, organisations, and crises.

6.6   Annexe 1. Press releases by UNHCR, the DRC, and the IRC cited in this paper

UNHCR

UNHCR (2014) 'Turkey hosts ministerial coordination meeting of major host countries for Syrian refugees'. Press release. 17 January. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/1/52d9555d9/turkey-hosts-ministerial-coordination-meeting-major-host-countries-syrian.html?query=Turkey%20 hosts%20Ministerial%20Coordination%20Meeting%20of%20Major%20Host%20Countries%20 for%20Syrian%20Refugees (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits Lebanon, urges aid for Syria's children, expresses gratitude to Lebanon, and welcomes new UN resolution on Syria'. Press release. 24 February. https://www.unhcr.org/530b5c686.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Three years Syria conflict: UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie's appeal to world leaders'. Press release. 14 March. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2014/3/532370a26/three-years-syria-conflict-unhcr-special-envoy-angelina-jolies-appeal-world.html (last accessed on 24 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Three years of Syria conflict have devastated lives of millions of children'. Press release. 15 March. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/3/532423716/three-years-syria- conflict-devastated-lives-millions-children.html?query=Three%20years%20of%20Syria%20 conflict%20have%20devastated%20lives%20of%20millions%20of%20children (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Ministerial coordination meeting of major host countries for Syrian refugees in Jordan'. Press release. 4 May. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/5/536652a39/ministerial-coordination- meeting-major-host-countries-syrian-refugees-jordan.html (last accessed on 11 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Global forced displacement tops 50 million for first time since World War II - UNHCR Report'. Press release. 20 June. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/6/53999cf46/global-forced-displacement-tops-50-million-first-time-since-world-war-ii.html (last accessed on 11 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) '145,000 Syrian refugee women fight for survival as they head families alone'. Press release. 8 July. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/7/53ba6b066/145000-syrian-refugee-women-fight-survival-head-families-alone.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Refugee total hits 3 million as Syrians flee growing insecurity and worsening conditions'. Press release. 29 August. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/8/53ff78ac9/refugee-total-hits-3-million-syrians-flee-growing-insecurity-worsening.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'Sudden refugee influx of Syrians into Turkey: UNHCR steps up relief and commends Turkey for response'. Press release. 20 September. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/9/541ea7179/sudden-refugee-influx-syrians-turkey-unhcr-steps-relief-commends-turkey.html (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2014) 'UN and partners launch major aid plans for Syria and region'. Press release. 18 December. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2014/12/54929c676/un-partners-launch-major-aid-plans- syria-region.html (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR study shows rapid deterioration in living conditions of Syrian refugees in Jordan'. Press release. 14 January. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/1/54b635b49/unhcr-study-shows-rapid-deterioration-living-conditions-syrian-refugees.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie visits Iraq, calls for international leadership to end suffering caused by regional conflicts'. Press release. 25 January. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/1/54c51f824/unhcr-special-envoy-angelina-jolie-visits-iraq-calls-international-leadership.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres – written text of speech to the UN Security Council – 26 February 2015'. Press release. 26 February. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/2/54ef66796/un-high-commissioner-refugees-antonio-guterres-written-text-speech-un-security.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

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UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR calls on Hungary to protect, not persecute, refugees'. Press release. 8 May. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/5/554cc16e9/unhcr-calls-hungary-protect-persecute-refugees.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt calls for action on World Refugee Day'. Press release. 20 June. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/6/558595e96/unhcr-special-envoy-angelina-jolie-pitt-calls-action-world-refugee-day.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UN agencies and partners say funding shortage leaves Syrian refugees and host nations without vital support'. Press release. 25 June. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/6/558ac8829/un-agencies-partners-say-funding-shortage-leaves-syrian-refugees-host-nations.html (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR warns of deepening refugee crisis in Greece and calls for urgent and bold action'. Press release. 7 August. https://www.unhcr.org/55c48ea69.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR urges Europe to change course on refugee crisis'. Press release. 16 September. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/9/55f9a70a6/unhcr-urges-europe-change-course-refugee-crisis.html (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UNHCR hails Canada's pledge to take another 25,000 Syria refugees'. Press release. 10 November. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/11/5641dec16/unhcr-hails-canadas-pledge-25000-syria-refugees.html (last accessed on 10 April 2019).

UNHCR (2015) 'UN Refugee Agency urges continued U.S. leadership in welcoming refugees'. Press release. 18 November. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2015/11/56f bdde64/un-refugee-agency-urges-continued-us-leadership-in-welcoming-refugees.html (last accessed on 12 April 2019).

The DRC

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6.7 Endnotes

[1] The essential non-refoulement principle (Article 33 of the 1951 Convention) states that displaced people may not be returned to an area where their life or freedom would be threatened (Zimmermann, Dörschner, and Machts, 2011).

[2] Pseudonyms were used to preserve the respondents' anonymity.

[3] The first interview ended after 11 minutes owing to technical problems with Skype. A second interview was held two days later.

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Chapter 7: Beyond the humanitarian savior logics? UNHCR's public communication strategies for the Syrian and Central African crises

Abstract

Forcibly displaced people often face restrictive migration policies and stereotypical discourses. Therefore, this study analyzes UNHCR's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises. Through a comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) of UNHCR's (international) press releases (N = 28), news stories (N = 233), photos (N = 462) and videos (N = 50) of 2015, we examined its main representation and argumentation strategies. First, we found that UNHCR primarily represents forcibly displaced people in its press releases and news as victimized and/or voiceless masses, reproducing humanitarian savior and deservingness logics. However, stories, photos, and videos frequently portray them also as empowered individuals. This can be partially explained by media logics and political and private sector discourses and agenda-building opportunities. Moreover, UNHCR mainly voices pity-based and post-humanitarian Self-oriented solidarity discourses, and links protection to states' (perceived) interests. Finally, these discursive strategies respond to dominant migration management paradigms and the increasingly neoliberalized, political realist international refugee regime (IRR).

Keywords

Reference

7.1   Introduction

Forced migration and humanitarian needs have substantially increased in recent years (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021). Nonetheless, forcibly displaced people face restrictive refugee policies, negative public opinions, xenophobia and the far right's rising popularity. In these contexts, international refugee organizations, and particularly the UN refugee agency UNHCR, often play pivotal roles. They mainly assist forcibly displaced people (Betts et al., 2012) but also inform, sensitize, build agendas and influence relevant policies (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005).

Most research in the field has sought to understand news media's agenda-setting roles and processes (McCombs and Valenzuela, 2021). Building on the agenda-setting theory, various studies have adopted an agenda-building perspective and investigated which external sources (e.g. political sector, private sector, civil society) set the agendas of news media and other stakeholders, including on the theme of forced migration. Most studies have examined how these actors attempt to influence *which* topics news media, citizens, or other stakeholders should think about (i.e. first-level agenda-building) (Kim and Kiousis, 2012). However, to our knowledge, only some have thoroughly examined refugee organizations' second-level agenda-building strategies, that is, discursive strategies that shape *how* or *what* news media, citizens and other stakeholders should think about certain topics (ibid.). Nevertheless, refugee organizations' public communication can influence forcibly displaced people's and crises' public perceptions and thus have broader policy and societal consequences, both at macro and micro levels (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert, 2019, Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). More specifically, most studies have identified that refugee organizations mostly use humanitarian and post-humanitarian representation and argumentation strategies (ibid.). However, although being valuable, these studies mostly analyze only one or a few discursive strategies, often neglect underlying production and/or societal contexts, and/or usually focus on only one media genre and/or crisis.

Acknowledging these gaps, we investigate how international refugee organizations usually (or not) present forcibly displaced people and the main argumentation strategies that are used, recognizing that both what is present and absent are discursively meaningful (Richardson, 2007). For this purpose, we apply a comparative-synchronic (Carvalho, 2008) Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Hansen and Machin, 2019; Machin and Mayr, 2012) on UNHCR's (international) press releases (N = 28), news stories (N = 233), and related photos (N = 462), and videos (N = 50) about the recent Syrian and Central African crises of the key year 2015. UNHCR is the key actor in the international refugee regime (IRR) and produces much public communication, including about the Syrian and Central African crises. These are protracted, large-scale displacement crises with a very diverse, complementary nature, allowing us to analyze whether, how and to what extent this affects UNHCR's discursive strategies. The methodology originates from analytic traditions in critical discourse analysis, social semiotics, and (audio)visual studies, and is well suited to study international refugee organizations' discursive strategies. First, it investigates how actors use discourses to influence people's interpretations of topics, considering broader social, economic, and political contexts (ibid.). Second, by adopting multimodal and comparative-synchronic perspectives, we can adequately analyze meanings in both textual, visual and audiovisual media genres, and pinpoint media genre and crisis-related differences and commonalities.

Recognizing interactions between discourses, production contexts, and societal contexts (Fairclough, 1992), we bring together and connect three commonly isolated fields. We first discuss the broader IRR, and then various relevant stakeholders and their forced migration discourses, which both shape and are shaped by international refugee organizations' discursive strategies, and eventually highlight the latter. Hence, the literature review provides new textual, production and societal insights about the subject, which inform the analysis.

7.2   Literature review
The international refugee regime

The IRR is an institutional multilateral framework designed to guarantee principled and predictable responses to forced displacement (Betts et al., 2012). It has followed transformations in the modern state system, international law, politics, economics, and ideology (Barnett, 2002), and its founding (mainly "Northern") states' predominant interests (Aleinikoff and Zamore, 2019), reflecting political realism (Sökefeld, 2017). Its central elements are the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter "the Convention") and its 1967 Protocol and UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency mandated to provide international protection and permanent solutions (Aleinikoff and Zamore, 2019).

Globalization and increasing interdependence have introduced several new regimes (e.g. development, security, human rights, humanitarianism, peacebuilding, trade, travel, and labor migration) in the IRR, coinciding with and complementing or undermining the Convention (Betts, 2010). The IRR is thus a "refugee regime complex" in which overlapping, parallel international regimes interact and shape refugee policies (Betts et al., 2012). Furthermore, regimes are constantly evolving, dynamic and contested sites (Kuyper, 2014). Therefore, we argue that this "international regime complexity" (IRC) (Alter and Meunier, 2009) has enabled current refugee policy paradigms, measures, and underlying factors, as well as influenced stakeholders' forced migration narratives, particularly refugee organizations' public communication strategies (infra).

Regarding the former, since the 1990s, "Northern" states have pursued two overlapping refugee policy paradigms (Crisp, 2005). First, many states worldwide have established more restrictive asylum and border security policies. However, these reactive approaches are regularly inefficient, and sensing the emergence of a migration crisis, the IRR is moving toward "migration management paradigms." This implies that migration should be managed predictably and orderly through comprehensive, internationally harmonized policy approaches, including (re)connecting migration with overlapping regimes (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). Migration is considered beneficial by "regulated openness" toward economically desirable migrants and continued restrictiveness toward unwanted migrants, inserting more political realist and (neo)liberal rationales into migration policies (ibid.).

Both paradigms serve state interests and are reflected in shifting emphases from protection (e.g. local integration and resettlement) to humanitarian approaches (e.g. voluntary repatriation and [limited]

local assistance) (Aleinikoff and Zamore, 2019). As most forcibly displaced people originate from and remain in the "Global South" (UNHCR, n.d.), "Southern" states have the largest legal responsibilities but, acknowledging diversity, usually have the least capacity to protect incoming forcibly displaced people (e.g. through asylum). Resourceful "Northern" states are barely obliged to contribute to "Southern" protection (i.e. burden or responsibility sharing), incentivizing them to pursue regional containment. While this "North-South impasse" severely affects forcibly displaced people's access to protection and sustainable solutions (Betts, 2010), many states increasingly close, securitize, and/or externalize their borders, focus on policies in and/or with third countries, and/or violate forcibly displaced people's rights (Andersson, 2014). These measures are regularly enabled through overlapping regimes (e.g. travel migration restrictions) (Betts, 2010).

Various stakeholders and their forced migration discourses

Considering these socio-political contexts, refugee organizations and other stakeholders interact and attempt to build agendas through public communication to obtain media, political, financial, and/or public support (Green, 2018), possibly affecting refugee organizations' communication strategies. Therefore, we respond to calls for approaching "representational strategies on migration from a multi-stakeholder perspective" (d'Haenens and Joris, 2020: 437), which enables investigating how different relevant actors reproduce or counter certain migration representations. Specifically, this article discusses refugee organizations' interactions with, and the forced migration discourses of news media, political, and private sector actors, as they substantially influence, directly and/or indirectly, refugee organizations' discursive strategies.

News media

Since the 1980s, competition for media attention within the growing humanitarian sector has increased dramatically (Cottle and Nolan, 2007). Additionally, given increasingly digitalized and globalized news landscapes, international NGOs (INGOs) obtain greater agenda-building opportunities (Van Leuven and Joye, 2014). Driven by professionalization, mediatization, and marketization, NGOs increasingly create mainstream news-aligned content (Ongenaert et al., in review; Powers, 2018), tapping into journalists' amenability toward information subsidies (Reich, 2011). Hence, INGOs' agenda-building efforts increasingly culminate in more diversified yet media logic-aligned news reporting (Powers, 2018).

Specifically, news media mainly ambivalently portray forcibly displaced people as economic, socio-cultural, health and/or security threats and/or burdens, and as, mirroring humanitarian images (infra), conflict victims (Eberl et al., 2018), spotlighting iconic images of victimized children (Al-Ghazzi, 2019). Likewise, these representations are often gendered: forcibly displaced women are underrepresented and rather depicted as (inoffensive, vulnerable, submissive) victims (Amores et al., 2020). Similarly, forcibly displaced people are frequently collectivized, homogenized, anonymized, silenced, and decontextualized (Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017). More broadly, news coverage repeatedly reproduces crisis and emergency discourses, including cartographic and numerical representations of forcibly displaced people. This mirrors seemingly neutral management mindsets (Nikunen, 2019),

similarly shaping refugee policies (supra) and influencing broader political and societal processes (Eberl et al., 2018). News media rely on numbers, as they mainly aim to provide clear factual information, but simultaneously simplify complex issues, ignore tragic events and create distance from the suffering of others (Silverstone, 2007).

However, news media sometimes evoke sympathy through human interest and/or heroic discourses (Pantti and Ojala, 2019), in which forcibly displaced people are personalized as normal, contributing citizens. Nevertheless, these humanitarian stories can also be problematic. By centering gratitude, innocence, humility, explicit vulnerability, and/or local charity, their agency and/or voices can be impeded (Wickramaararchchi and Burns, 2017).

Political actors

Reflecting news discourses, politicians generally portray forcibly displaced people as threats and/or victims (Van Leuven et al., 2018). Migration management measures are usually legitimized through these discourses (Crane, 2020). Through threat or burden narratives, political actors want to generate fear and "us-them" divisions, position themselves as necessary strong leaders, and divert attention from or blame forcibly displaced people for urgent socioeconomic issues (de Haas et al., 2020), facilitating xenophobia, the far right's popularity and more restrictive policies (Betts et al., 2012).

For refugee organizations, influencing governments through public communication is thus complex, especially with states' increasing reluctance to cooperate (ibid.) and financial and political authority (Maxwell and Gelsdorf, 2019). UNHCR and many INGOs largely rely on states' voluntary, short-term, earmarked responsibility-sharing contributions (e.g. funding, resettlement quotas) (Betts, 2009), inhibiting too strong criticism about refugee rights' erosion (Chimni, 2000). Additionally, refugee organizations must continuously balance advocacy and adhering to national policies to assist (Maxwell and Gelsdorf, 2019). Furthermore, enabled by the IRC, UNHCR faces increased institutional competition, forum-shopping and regime shifting and has lost moral authority (Betts, 2009; Richey and Ponte, 2011).

Private sector actors

Following declining government and individual donations, growing resource demands, and competition, refugee organizations increasingly form partnerships with private sector actors (Benton and Glennie, 2016), mainly involving mutual financial, substantive, and branding benefits (Richey and Ponte, 2011). These partnerships embody the IRR's increasing neoliberalization and technologization (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010) and broader global humanitarian-corporate complexes, which largely coordinate, finance, and implement humanitarian aid (Johnson, 2011a).

Equally echoing neoliberalism, private sector actors usually represent forcibly displaced people heroically, spotlighting their agency, determination, courage, and rational decision-making, commonly

in gendered ways. Technology companies strategically argue that technology can empower forcibly displaced people, presenting themselves as adequate humanitarians and eliminating the need for further assistance (Plambech et al., 2021). Likewise, corporate humanitarian initiatives tend to represent refugee women as homogeneous "Others" who can be empowered by participating in labor markets and activating latent entrepreneurial skills. Such neoliberal, self-reliance-oriented narratives reproduce humanitarian savior logics, obscuring the gender division of responsibilities and artisanal labor's precarious nature (Bergman Rosamond and Gregoratti, 2020).

Refugee organizations' discursive strategies

Representation strategies

In representing forcibly displaced people, refugee organizations mainly respond to the above-mentioned stakeholders' discourses and states' limited incentives for protection by applying humanitarian discourses of pity, relying on universalist common humanity, and, increasingly, post-humanitarian ironic discourses (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert, 2019).

Pity-based representations

Forcibly displaced people's humanitarian images have generally changed from heroic, politicized individuals in the Cold War period to, mirroring media and political discourses (supra), anonymous, voiceless, depoliticized, dehistoricized, decontextualized, universalized, racialized, and/or victimized masses from the "Global South," mostly involving (innocent and vulnerable-looking) women and children as "ideal victims" (Höijer, 2004; Johnson, 2011b). Recognizing important genre differences (Ongenaert and Joye, in review), mainly refugee organizations, celebrities, and other humanitarian actors obtain voices about forcibly displaced people, largely neglecting and dehumanizing forcibly displaced people themselves (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). These discursive transformations interact with the aforementioned policy shifts and serve to mobilize public support and manage forcibly displaced people's perceived threats (Johnson, 2011b). These representations belong to frequently oversimplified (Fransen and de Haas, 2019) crisis and emergency discourses that, driven by financial and media interests, emphasize the severity of humanitarian situations (Crisp, 1999; Kleres, 2018) and can have negative long-term implications (e.g. [indirectly] fueling threat narratives and compassion fatigue) (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019a).

Given increasing skepticism about these "negative," agency-lacking representation strategies, forcibly displaced people from the "Global South" are sometimes portrayed more "positively" (Chouliaraki, 2012) as hopeful, self-determined, talented, fitting within "Northern" cultures and morals, and contrasting reality (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018), distinguishable from economic migrants, indicating assimilation and hierarchies of deservingness (Rodriguez, 2016). As a result of refugee organizations' focus on self-reliance, resilience (Krause and Schmidt, 2020), and innovation within an increasingly neoliberalized, technologized IRR, they commonly echo private sector discourses. Forcibly displaced people are reframed from "burdens" or "threats" (supra) to "entrepreneur," "opportunities," "resources," being closer to "whiteness," and more acceptable for Western audiences and donors

(Turner, 2020). These "self-reliance" narratives support cost-effective exit strategies from long-term refugee populations and can imply unintended consequences for refugees' well-being, protection (Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018), economic subjectivity, broader conditions (Pascucci, 2019), and migration politics (Gürsel, 2017).

Furthermore, these representation strategies can also dehumanize forcibly displaced people by representing them as, contrasting reality, too self-determined (Chouliaraki, 2012). Typically, only charming, talented, and/or middle-class forcibly displaced people acquire a "voice". These are regulated to reinforce organizational messages (Pupavac, 2008) and consequently are depoliticized and homogenized (Godin and Doná, 2016). Hence, refugee organizations risk strengthening hierarchies of deservingness (Yukich, 2013) and undermining asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008). Generally, the regime of pity perpetuates forcibly displaced people's perceived ambivalence via "negative" and "positive" strategies (Chouliaraki, 2012).

Irony-based representations

In the emerging regime of irony, refugee organizations use post-humanitarian, "Western Self"-oriented discourses. They attempt to remove forcibly displaced people's perceived ambivalence through innovative portrayals that respond to Western audiences' self-reflection and cultivation. Specifically, this regime focuses on celebrity advocacy, mainly involving personalized testimonies and contrasting earlier more human rights-oriented communication. Meetings with forcibly displaced people are usually represented as contributions to self-development (Chouliaraki, 2012). While this celebrity humanitarianism can reach broader audiences (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), citizens tend to engage and identify more with the media spectacle and celebrities than with forcibly displaced people (Chouliaraki, 2012; Kyriakidou, 2019). Coproduced "doing good" reality television and films also repeatedly focus on voiced Western figures, largely neglecting forcibly displaced people and their broader contexts. While generally effective in promoting solidary feelings and mobilizing donations, they lean on the politics of emotion, centering on self-directed senses of doing good (Nikunen, 2019).

The regime of irony is thus a generally innovative, financially successful but morally problematic response to the regime of pity's limitations, increasing competition and audience-related challenges (Chouliaraki, 2012). This ironic shift relates to three fundamental intersecting transformations since the 1970s: the profit-oriented instrumentalization of aid and development fields, the decline of major solidarity narratives, and the "technologization" of communication (Chouliaraki, 2013).

Argumentation strategies

Acknowledging these trends, refugee organizations frequently try to persuade states to voluntarily engage in protection by connecting their contributions to larger interests in related regimes (e.g. human rights, humanitarianism, economics, migration, and security) (Betts, 2009; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). This pragmatic, political realist communication strategy, known as "cross-issue persuasion," is enabled by IRC, builds on issue linkage (see McGinnis, 1986), and presupposes two crucial factors. First, protection must be structurally connected to the other issue area(s). Second, refugee organizations

should create, change, or recognize and communicate effectively about these substantive relationships to states (Betts, 2009).

In the early 1990s, UNHCR and numerous NGOs tried to persuade governments to structurally address displacement issues by presenting them as security challenges (Hammerstad, 2014). This strategy further securitized forced migration, making forcibly displaced people more politically relevant. Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, UNHCR withdrew from security discourses. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States and prevailing (possible) security threat perceptions of forcibly displaced people, it sought to desecuritize protection and reconnect it with human rights and humanitarianism (Hammerstad, 2014). More recently, UNHCR stated that supporting "Southern" protection can help reduce "Northward" irregular migration (Betts, 2009).

Having linked various commonly isolated discursive strategies and production and social contexts of refugee organizations, we now extend and nuance the literature by applying an MCDA to different media genres of public communication on two crises and comparatively analyzing interactions between text, production and/or societal dimensions.

7.3   Methodology

This paper examines how UNHCR's public communication typically (not) represents forcibly displaced people, and the argumentation strategies used. Being the key actor in the IRR (supra), UNHCR is engaged in and communicates about the large-scale Syrian and Central African crises, including in 2015, forming our empirical focus. The Syrian crisis has existed since 2011 and was at the end of 2015, then involving 11.7 million forcibly displaced people, the largest displacement crisis worldwide. The Central African Republic, affected by recurring conflicts for decades, constituted with 0.99 million forcibly displaced people the 14th largest crisis worldwide (UNHCR, 2016). Furthermore, in 2015, both the number of forcibly displaced people, particularly those involved in the Syrian crisis, the humanitarian needs (UNHCR, 2016) and levels of mediatization increased tremendously (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). Moreover, the sample constitutes a temporally limited and logical entity, enabling relevant statements on contextual dimensions.

The first author applied, supported by Microsoft Office software, a comparative-synchronic (Carvalho, 2008) MCDA (Machin and Mayra, 2012) on UNHCR's international press releases (N = 28), news stories (N = 233), and related photos (N = 462) and videos (N = 50), which represent forcibly displaced people involved in the above-mentioned crises.[1] The aselect data selection of the media content units (MCUs) included applying crisis category-specific search formulas in UNHCR's main website. Because the Boolean operators (apart from "AND") do not function adequately within the search filters of UNHCR's website, we used respectively "Syr*", "Central African", and "Syr* AND 'Central African'" for searching press releases, and news and stories in the respective sections "Press releases and news comments", and "Stories". Based on their media genre and content, we then identified and listed all relevant MCUs, both primarily or secondarily mentioning the investigated people.

Considering crisis categories, we identified that UNHCR communicated (much) more about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis than about those in the Central African crisis or about both groups (see Table 1). All analyzed photos and videos belong to news stories and particularly to the more human-interest-focused subcategory, "stories" than to "news."

Table 1. Number of Relevant MCUs per Crisis Category and/or Media Genre

	Crisis Category			
Media genre	Syrian crisis	Central African crisis	Both crises	**Total**
Press releases	23 (82,1%)	4 (14,3%)	1 (3,6%)	**28 (100,0%)**
News stories	200 (85,8%)	29 (12,4%)	4 (1,7%)	**233 (99,9%)***
Photos	344 (74,5%)	113 (24,5%)	5 (1,1%)	**462 (100,1%)****
Videos	48 (96,0%)	1 (2,0%)	1 (2,0%)	**50 (100,0%)**
Total	**615 (79,6%)**	**147 (19,0%)**	**11 (1,4%)**	**773 (100,0%)**

Note: The total is less than 100 percent due to rounding; The total is greater than 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Authors' calculations

(M)CDA is, however, a critical, interpretative state of mind, rather than an explicit, systematic, reproducible research method (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016). Hence, for the reliability of this study's results, we reflexively discuss our research decisions and used various discursive criteria (Joye and Maeseele, 2022: in press), informed by multiple key works (Hansen and Machin, 2019; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Reisigl and Wodak, 2016) and the literature review. Nevertheless, given the limited and fragmented research on the subject, this study approaches the data from an open, explorative, inductive perspective. Hence, we respond to common criticisms that (M)CDA lacks comparative analyzes and large datasets, gives little attention to (non-journalistic) social actors' discursive strategies, and is too text-focused, neglecting (audio)visual content (Carvalho, 2008; Hansen and Machin, 2019).

7.4 Results

We discuss the general results and relevant variations regarding (sub)media genre and crisis category. While not distinguishing between the dimensions of text, discursive practices, and social practices (Fairclough, 1992), the latter two are integrated into the discussion of textual strategies to contextualize the analysis.

Representation strategies

Refining earlier research, the analysis shows that UNHCR mainly uses different intertwined "negative" and/or "positive" pity-based representation strategies, varying according to the media genre.

Generic forced migration masses versus specific, nominated individuals

In general, we find that UNHCR represents forcibly displaced people in its press releases and to lesser extents in its news as generic forced migration masses, while in its stories, photos and videos it mainly portrays them as specific, nominated individuals.

First, UNHCR largely represents forcibly displaced people as groups in its press releases and frequently in its news through semiotic choices, including particular terminology (e.g. "refugees," "[internally] displaced people"), pronouns, and/or statistics, which might homogenize and dehumanize. It barely presents forcibly displaced people as individuals, which might humanize and elicit sympathy (Hansen and Machin, 2019).

Corresponding with the large numbers of collectivizations and acknowledging gradations of a generic nature (e.g. "refugees" vs. "Syrian refugee households"), we found that UNHCR always presents forcibly displaced people, including individuals, as generic types in its press releases, and mainly in its news, which might dehumanize them.

Likewise, UNHCR routinely aggregates forcibly displaced people in its press releases to refer to and/or emphasize crises' magnitude or the large reach of its assistance (e.g. "millions of refugees"). Aggregations can suggest objective scientific credibility while obscuring underlying ideological motives (Van Dijk, 1991). However, aggregations are not always strategically used. UNHCR routinely utilizes more statistics than aggregations, and aggregations are frequently based on and/or clarified by statistics. Nevertheless, UNHCR sometimes aggregates forcibly displaced people as part of a phenomenon, dehumanizing them (e.g. "massive refugee flows," "a tsunami of people"). These elements reflect and reproduce crisis and emergency discourses, corresponding with news media logics (supra).

Similarly, the analysis shows that UNHCR tends to functionalize forcibly displaced people in its press releases by reducing them to their generic role (e.g. "refugees," "asylum-seekers"), which can dehumanize. However, corresponding with the few individualizations and specifications, UNHCR barely nominates (e.g. proper nouns and/or humanity oriented terms), which sounds more personal and can humanize, Machin and Mayr, 2012), and if so, mostly generically (e.g. "Syrians", "children").

More generally, the large presence of collectivizations, genericizations, aggregations, and functionalizations points to the prevalence of "negative" pity-based representation strategies in UNHCR's press releases. Responding to news media logics (supra), UNHCR tries to gain necessary

media attention and build news agendas through fact- and figures-based press releases. However, these numerical approaches tend to present forcibly displaced people as generic masses, which has dehumanizing implications. This requires a reflexive reassessment from UNHCR as to whether, how, and to what extent UNHCR can gain media attention while limiting or even avoiding such dehumanizing effects.

In contrast, UNHCR's stories mostly involve more individualizations (e.g. personal names and pronouns) than collectivizations. Further, we often observed individualizations and collectivizations in the photos (Figures 3 and 6), respectively, spotlighting the person's thoughts and/or experiences, or the related events, as well as combinations, which have mixed effects (Figures 1, 4, and 5). In the latter cases, one or a few people within a group, including affiliated celebrities, are highlighted, mainly through the setting, different poses, actions, gazes, facial expressions, clothing, and/or physical characteristics, visibility, and/or digitally increased focus. Coinciding with the large numbers of individualizations, stories and photos mostly present forcibly displaced people more as specific (Figures 4 and 6) than as generic figures (Figure 3) or combinations (Figures 1 and 5), which can be humanizing (Hansen and Machin, 2019). Likewise, in its news, and particularly in its stories, more nominations than functionalizations are applied, which is frequently reflected in their respective photo captions (Figures 1 and 6).

Figure 1. "Gildas walks through the Grand Séminaire camp in Bangui. 'Our duty is to provide these kids with a good education'. It's essential for them to grow up and help in rebuilding our country." © UNHCR/Anthony Fouchard' (UNHCR, 2015, May 3).

Figure 2. Screenshot of video "Jordan: The Syrian Mousetrap Inventor" © UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015, March 15).

Similarly, in the videos, we mainly observe combinations of individualizations and collectivizations. One or a few individuals, including UNHCR officers and/or affiliated celebrities, are projected as protagonists, facilitating relatedness and identification (Figure 2). Other forcibly displaced people are mostly collectivized, impeding audience engagement and emphasizing the protagonists' individual nature, and/or (briefly) individualized, especially children as "ideal victims" (supra). Likewise, the protagonists and sometimes one or more relatives are usually specified (Figure 2), while other people are mostly genericized and/or occasionally (briefly) specified. Moreover, in the videos, UNHCR usually nominates the main characters (Figure 2) and the (few) UNHCR officers and celebrities, while functionalizing other forcibly displaced people.

More generally, the large presence of individualizations, specifications, and nominations points to the prevalence of "positive" pity-based representation strategies in UNHCR press releases. UNHCR tries to engage wider audiences through in-depth human-interest focuses in its stories, photos and videos. More concretely, it seems to try to facilitate identification and relatability among the general public through more elaborate individualized, specified, and nominated representations of forcibly displaced people. The forcibly displaced people presented in UNHCR's stories, photos and videos are consequently more humanized.

Figure 3. "A Syrian man looks longingly as a boat heads out to sea from Izmir on Turkey's Aegean coast. The city has become a popular departure point for those crossing to Greece. © UNHCR/D.Breen" (UNHCR, 2015, February 2).

Anonymous forced migration characters

We identify that UNHCR often does not mention represented individualized people's names in its news stories, photos or videos, or, in the case of main characters, usually only uses their first names or, for explicit protective reasons, pseudonyms. These pseudonymized people are sometimes (audio)visually anonymized (e.g. through extreme genericization, limited or no visibility, side and/or rear views, and/or extreme and very long shots, infra) (Figure 3), but are regularly simultaneously in other content, to varying extents, textually and/or (audio)visually recognizable. While recognizing that necessary protection levels may vary on a case-by-case basis, this seems to indicate inconsistent, questionable protection approaches, both for the featured people and their broader environments.

As forcibly displaced people are seldom represented as "speakers" in press releases and news (infra), they are sometimes anonymized through indirect representations of voiced high-ranked employees: "one father said life as a refugee was like being stuck in quicksand (…)" (UNHCR, 2015, March 12). While anonymous resource use is common and often recommended for protective reasons, this might also indicate unequal access to UNHCR's communication department. Similarly, forcibly displaced people are sometimes anonymized through general, not easily verifiable, unsubstantiated paraphrases: "Most see little opportunity of returning home in the near future" (ibid., June 12). While we do not question per se these statements' veracity, it seems important, especially given their

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content and implications, to substantiate them, especially as such discursive devices can be used to avoid developing specific, easily refutable arguments (Hansen and Machin, 2019).

Figure 4. "Syrian refugees rest in an emergency shelter after their tents collapsed when heavy snows lashed Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan. Hundreds of refugee families were effected by the winter storm and had to sue emergency centres. © UNHCR/B.Szandelszky" (UNHCR, 2015, January 9).

Us-them portrayals

We examined if UNHCR tries to align audiences around or against certain ideas through using pronouns, presenting their ideas as "ours" and creating contrasting collective "Others" (Machin and Mayr, 2012). In sum, UNHCR often uses, particularly in its press releases, various implicit interconnected discursive "us"-"them" dichotomies in pity-based solidarity expressions and calls (infra) to generate solidarity for forcibly displaced people and to persuade states to engage in protection.

First, "us" mainly refers to (envisioned) "active doers," including the international community, states, UNHCR, and citizens. "Them" mostly refers to the "beneficiaries": the examined forcibly displaced people and sometimes the most important regional host states and communities, and/or forcibly displaced people in general. The latter are thereby often implicitly Othered as dependent actors in need whom "we", discursively constructed as homogeneous actors to emphasize unity, should

support, trying to align "us" around "negative" and "positive" pity-based humanitarian discourses. For example, "As anti-foreigner rhetoric echoes through Europe, it is important that we remember that refugees are fleeing war and violence in places such as Syria" (ibid., March 12).

Figure 5. "A Syrian refugee family from Raqqa finds safety in Suruc refugee camp in southern Turkey. © UNHCR/I.Prickett" (UNHCR, 2015, June 25).

Second, it tries to align "us" against anti-immigration discourses, counteracting common negative images of forcibly displaced people and constructing anti-immigration actors and threats as contrasting, hostile collective "Others":

> "Refugees are made scapegoats for any number of problems from terrorism to economic hardship and perceived threats to their host communities' way of life. But we need to remember that the primary threat is not from refugees, but to them," Guterres said.

Third, confirming the literature, UNHCR sometimes reproduces deserving–undeserving dichotomies between "refugees" and "economic migrants" to strengthen refugees' rights and claims. For example: "These are not economic migrants looking for a better life, these are desperate refugees who are fleeing war and persecution" (ibid., June 20). Although UNHCR wants to strengthen refugee rights in this way, it neglects that these policy categories in reality usually conflate, undermines other types of

migrants' rights, and risks undermining forcibly displaced people's rights in the long term (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; Pupavac, 2008).

Figure 6. "Justine sits in the back of a UNHCR vehicle that will evacuate her from Bili to Gbadolite, where medical facilities are better. Her leg may need to be amputated if she cannot get there in time. © UNHCR/Brian Sokol" (UNHCR, 2015, January 29).

Finally, "we" occasionally refers to forcibly displaced people, contrasting traffickers or state authorities, or both forcibly displaced people and UNHCR communication officers, indicating the potential for forcibly displaced people-centered and/or more unifying, inclusive discourses devoid of humanitarian savior-saved dichotomies.

Passive, voiceless victims versus the empowered doer, speaker, and/or thinker

Based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) verb classification, we investigated the roles in which forcibly displaced people are mostly (not) presented and subsequent implications. We observe that forcibly displaced people are generally represented in diverse media genre-related ways. More concretely, the findings reveal a predominantly "negative" pity-based representation strategy, particularly in press releases (cf. Ongenaert and Joye, 2019).

First, UNHCR regularly presents forcibly displaced people as passive, suffering, impoverished, and dependent beneficiaries of material processes. They are rescued, hosted and/or assisted by active doers, particularly UNHCR, states, the international community, and humanitarian, private sector, and/or celebrity partners. These representations reproduce and reflect humanitarian savior logics. For example, "UNHCR also distributed 29,000 blankets donated by the United Arab Emirates to Syrian refugees, many of whom live in precarious conditions and are ill prepared for the sub-zero temperatures" (UNHCR, 2015, January 7).

Relatedly, we found representations of forcibly displaced people as victimized "done-tos" of material processes, facing and/or suffering from (increasing) violence, hostility, restrictive policies and regulations, and severe climatic conditions, including in news stories. UNHCR typically condemns the violence but, contrasting its discursive treatment of the Central African conflict, barely (explicitly) names the culprits in the Syrian conflict, including through concealing passive verb forms, nominalizations, and/or vague terminology. This seems to indicate the importance of pragmatic, context-sensitive communication. Additionally, UNHCR often presents forcibly displaced people as passive participants of primarily negative existential processes (e.g. living in miserable, usually deteriorating physical, psychological, and/or material conditions) in all media genres (Figure 4).

Connected therewith, the findings reveal representations of forcibly displaced people as largely voiceless, passive objects of verbal processes, including solidarity expressions, calls, and needs assessments primarily by UNHCR and its affiliated organizations and celebrities. Moreover, UNHCR regularly portrays forcibly displaced people as subjects of relational processes. In press releases and news, forcibly displaced people are presented as (part of) aggregations and/or statistics while in stories and photos they sometimes symbolize particular qualities, emotions, people, and/or phenomena. Finally, UNHCR frequently represents forcibly displaced people in press releases as active "doers". However, corresponding with the previous representations, these material processes often imply rather negative and desperate connotations (e.g. conducting drastic coping and/or survival strategies). For example, "Last year, the number of people risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean on smugglers' boats rose dramatically" (ibid., February 12).

More generally, these representations of forcibly displaced people as passive, suffering, voiceless beneficiaries indicate, corresponding with the above-mentioned discursive devices, the prevalence of "negative" pity-based representation strategies in UNHCR's press releases. UNHCR seeks to gain news media coverage and build news agendas by using crisis and emergency discourses in its press releases. Likewise, while acknowledging refugee organizations' need to gain news media coverage and to report truthfully about the gravity of (often very dire) humanitarian situations, UNHCR should consider whether, how, and to what extent it can mitigate or avoid the dehumanizing implications of these representations.

In news stories, photos, and videos, however, forcibly displaced people are, coinciding with more personalized focuses, generally more diversely and nuanced represented, including through both

"negative" and "positive" pity-based representation strategies. First, forcibly displaced people are more represented as active "doers" of "positive" material processes, including fleeing and seeking and/or finding safety, shelter, asylum, work, healthcare and/or education, and contributing positively to host societies (Figure 2). Likewise, contrasting press releases, forcibly displaced people are repeatedly presented in news stories and videos as speakers, who mainly talk about their pre-, intra-, and/or post-conflict lives (e.g. living conditions, flight[s] and underlying reasons, profession[s], activities, plans, and aspirations), indicating their agency and relative access to these media genres (ibid.).

Furthermore, they are frequently presented as subjects of both negative and positive mental processes, providing insights into their feelings and/or state of mind (mainly affection-oriented, such as, being distressed, desperate, hopeful, grateful, resilient; sometimes cognition-focused, such as thinking, studying; less perception-directed). These representations often humanize and can generate empathy, but frequently also imply some passivity. Furthermore, forcibly displaced people are regularly presented as subjects of behavioral processes (e.g. looking, posing, smiling, Figures 1, 3, and 6), which does not suggest strong agency, and mainly in photos and videos but never in press releases. Finally, the photo captions contextualize the pictures, including, reflecting their strategic nature, UNHCR's involvement (Figure 6) and typically represent more active roles than those visually displayed.

More generally, these representations of forcibly displaced people as more empowered individual doers, speakers and/or thinkers demonstrate, coinciding with the aforementioned discursive devices, the presence of both "negative" and "positive" pity-based representation strategies in UNHCR's news stories, photos and videos. UNHCR tries to engage audiences for the theme of forced migration through these media genres. Consequently, it uses more in-depth, individualized representations through which it seeks to facilitate identification and relatability. Consequently, the representations of forcibly displaced people in UNHCR's news stories, photos and videos are more layered and humane than in its press releases.

Relative audiovisual closeness

In photos and videos, angles of interaction and proximity with the represented people influence audience engagement, including relative power relations and degrees of association (Hansen and Machin, 2019). We find that UNHCR generally brings audiences relatively close to the represented people, particularly through the angles of interaction used. This is consistent with the previously commonly identified discursive strategies, which, corresponding with the general purpose of UNHCR's photos and videos, are mainly aimed at engaging the general public through generating identification and relatability, and encouraging solidarity. However, considering the distances and gazes used, UNHCR does not portray forcibly displaced people very closely, presumably to avoid discomfort.

First, regarding vertical angles, we identify that UNHCR usually represents forcibly displaced people from the same or similar levels, often implying equality, ordinariness, and/or closeness, and facilitating sympathy (Figures 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6).

UNHCR sometimes uses bird's eye views, as they, coinciding with the dominant "negative" pity-based representation strategies, repeatedly suggest low(er) statuses, physically weak(er) positions, and/or limited agency and/or empowerment (Figure 4). However, frog's eye views are barely used, and interacting with other devices frequently does not suggest their assumed meanings. Generally, UNHCR seems to use these perspectives for strategic reasons, as they commonly reinforce the news story's dominant representations and/or imply conscious production practices (often similar level as little children, lying or sitting people, in Figures 5 and 6), practical reasons (e.g. accessibility, visibility) and/or contextual reasons (e.g. height differences between settings, people, positions, and/or objects).

Regarding horizontal angles, we found that UNHCR mostly uses front views, particularly in photos, facilitating more audience involvement (Figures 1, 4, 5, and 6). Side views are also routinely used, particularly in videos, which, especially from a distance, imply detachment, objectivity, broader scene observations, and/or sometimes anonymity. However, we also identified close side views, often suggesting togetherness, closeness, and/or shared positions (Figure 2). Furthermore, rear views are sometimes used in photos to move audiences more into represented persons' perspectives and/or to guarantee anonymity (Figure 3), but rarely in videos.

Further, based on Bowen's (2018) frame size categorization, we observe that UNHCR mainly uses medium shots, particularly in photos (Figures 3 and 6), and long shots, especially in videos. Furthermore, UNHCR frequently uses medium-long shots (Figure 1) and medium close-ups (Figures 4 and 5). These shots imply, to varying degrees, connotations situated between intimacy, closeness, approachability, and/or genuineness, facilitating empathy, and impersonality, distance, isolation, and/or loneliness. Additionally, in videos, the protagonists and their relatives are mostly displayed through both closer and longer shots, while other forcibly displaced people (especially babies and children as ideal victims, supra) are mainly briefly displayed through longer shots or closer shots.

Finally, examining gaze, we mainly observe "offer images" (Figures 2–5), which provide information for scrutiny and consideration. The represented people predominantly watch other (visible) people, objects, and/or settings or sometimes look off-frame, usually suggesting thoughtfulness (Figure 5). They look about equally often up or down off-frame, which, especially if reinforced through other aspects (e.g. facial expression, pose, action, body, setting, represented role, and context), can suggest positive thoughts, empowerment, and/or agency, or rather negative or introspective thoughts, vulnerability, low energy and/or low status, respectively (Figure 4). Occasionally, one or more people look directly at the audience, particularly the main characters (Figures 1 and 6) and/or (weak) children. These "demand images" generate imaginary, symbolic relationships and moral demands, especially if reinforced by the above-mentioned aspects.

Argumentation strategies

Corresponding with literature, we analyzed validity claims of normative rightness (i.e. linked to practical and/or ethical norms) and truth (i.e. related to knowledge, degree of certainty, and theoretical insights) (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016). We observed them more in press releases than in news stories and (obviously) rarely in the (audio)visual media genres.

Pity-and irony-based solidarity discourses

The results suggest that UNHCR generates and perpetuates pity-based solidarity and political actions toward its beneficiaries (e.g. forcibly displaced people, their host states, and/or host communities) through interconnected reporting verb-inspired argumentation strategies (see Caldas-Coulthard, 1994). These discourses are mostly voiced by high-ranked employees and affiliated celebrities, presumably to enhance modality, and are aimed at (potential) donors and/or partners (e.g. the international community, states, citizens, civil society, or private sector actors).

Specifically, UNHCR often expresses and/or calls for solidarity toward its beneficiaries, sometimes contextualizing its public communication (e.g. centering national security, integration, common pasts of displacement), and/or emphasizing the crisis's magnitude, contributing to crisis and emergency discourses. For example, "Guterres emphasized that this crisis can be mitigated if the international community steps up efforts to alleviate the suffering of the refugees" (UNHCR, 2015, January 14).

Furthermore, actors are thanked and/or praised for their solidarity and/or political actions, which is sometimes further legitimized through (grateful) testimonials of forcibly displaced people (cf. the importance of accountability, Jacobsen and Sandvik, 2018). Moreover, UNHCR warns and/or fears for and/or condemns (the consequences of) a lack of solidarity, and/or negative political actions toward its beneficiaries. Mirroring culprits (supra), UNHCR rarely explicitly addresses actors involved in the Syrian conflict, again contrasting with its treatment of the Central African conflict.

Furthermore, UNHCR applies various neoliberal post-humanitarian (mainly Western) Self-oriented solidarity discourses, mostly voiced by high-ranked employees and affiliated celebrities and directed at citizens. More concretely, celebrities commonly discuss crises and/or call for solidarity through personalized, testimonialized frames, centering their emotional (e.g. experiences and perceptions) and/or professional connections (e.g. track record, current activities) to the subject, to indirectly involve broader audiences: "[Angelina Jolie]: 'It is shocking to see how the humanitarian situation in Iraq has deteriorated since my last visit'" (UNHCR, 2015, January 25).

Moreover, UNHCR frequently tries to embed the subject directly into audiences' (e.g. citizens, policy-makers) personal environments through individualized frames (e.g. addressing directly, encouraging self-reflection). For example: "Think of your own life. Think of what that would mean" (ibid., June 20).

Relatedly, UNHCR calls for solidarity via individualized frames, responding to audiences' individual responsibilities, needs, and opportunities "to do good."

Finally, confirming the literature, humanitarian self-reliance and resilience discourses promoting (extraordinary) refugee entrepreneurialism are used, especially for the forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis. Forcibly displaced people are framed as (pro)active, creative, and inventive, being closer to "whiteness" and more acceptable for Western audiences and donors (supra). In these ways, UNHCR responds to various mainstream news media conventions, affecting forcibly displaced people's, broader crises' and humanitarianism's imagery.

Multi-layered cross-interest persuasion

Refining cross-issue persuasion, we found that UNHCR attempts to persuade states to engage in protection through responsibility-sharing, such as financial and humanitarian assistance and sometimes legal avenues, while rarely suggesting asylum. This is achieved through linking up to states' (perceived) interests in various commonly (e.g. human rights, humanitarianism, development, economy, and trade, peace-building) and newly identified issue areas (e.g. education, labor, health, societal stability, diplomacy, integration). For example, "We must protect them and invest in them. (…) They are the potential for the rebuilding and restabilization of countries" (ibid., June 20).

By mainly persuading "Northern" states to engage in regional assistance but rarely to provide asylum, UNHCR largely responds to the "North-South impasse," endorsing "Northern" states' interests in regional containment and, more generally, migration management. However, UNHCR risks contributing to eroding essential refugee law principles (cf. the "right to seek asylum"). Connected therewith, it also links state contributions in protection to, extending the literature, states' (perceived) interests in migration management (e.g. fairness, balance, efficiency, manageability, safety, order, self-reliance), common humanity (e.g. solidarity, empathy, reciprocity), and multiculturalist (e.g. tolerance, diversity) principles and values. For example, "The relocation scheme (…) is an important first step towards a comprehensive approach for the management of refugee flows into Europe based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility-sharing" (ibid., November 4). Hence, we propose broadening the concept of "cross-issue persuasion" to "cross-interest persuasion," emphasizing the argumentation strategy's political realist nature.

We also observed various argumentation strategies involving different degrees of explicitness. First, UNHCR sometimes mentions the crisis and/or (perceived) state interests without (explicitly) linking them to protection but emphasizing the situation's severity. Second, UNHCR regularly links protection to (perceived) state interests without (explicitly) calling for protection but enabling the opportunity to do so. Third, protection is linked to (perceived) state interests, and states are explicitly called upon to provide (more) protection.

Finally, the presented connections and benefits can be rather direct (e.g. linking protection to human rights improvements in "Southern" host states or economic benefits for "Northern" states) or rather indirect (e.g. linking protection to limiting international implications resulting from host states' affected economy, societal stability, and/or security).

7.5   Conclusion

This study examined UNHCR's public communication strategies toward the Syrian and Central African crises. We generally observe a mixed picture involving mainly media genre and crisis-specific differences and commonalities, extending and nuancing earlier research.

First, consistent with previous research (Johnson, 2011b; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), UNHCR predominantly represents forcibly displaced people through interrelated "negative" pity-based discursive strategies, mainly in its press releases and often in its news. UNHCR largely portrays forcibly displaced people as anonymized, passive, victimized, and/or voiceless masses, which potentially has dehumanizing effects and reproduces humanitarian savior logics alongside hierarchies of deservingness. These portrayals are related to broader crisis and emergency discourses that emphasize the severity of humanitarian situations that can have negative long-term implications (supra).

Second, in contrast to previous studies, this article shows the importance of media genre- and crisis-related differences. Specifically, forcibly displaced people are generally represented more in-depth and diversely in UNHCR's stories and (audio)visual media genres, both through "negative" and "positive" pity-based representation strategies. They are represented as more active, empowered individual doers, speakers, and/or thinkers. Furthermore, both the "negative" and "positive" pity-based textual representation strategies are frequently reinforced, but sometimes also weakened or contrasted by (audio)visual discursive devices, generally implying relative closeness with the represented people. Representation differences thus relate to media logic variations and often reflect and respond to political and private-sector discourses, facilitating agenda-building opportunities. Additionally, we found relevant crisis-related differences in discursively approaching actors involved in the examined crises, indicating the importance of context-specific communication and sensitivities.

Third, this article identifies various argumentation strategies, particularly validity claims of normative rightness and truth in UNHCR's (mainly textual) public communication. We discovered that UNHCR primarily uses various interwoven reporting verb-based argumentation techniques (cf. Caldas-Coulthard, 1994) to stimulate and sustain pity-based solidarity and political acts, and voices various neoliberal post-humanitarian (mainly Western) Self-oriented solidarity discourses. Furthermore, extending and refining cross-issue persuasion literature (Betts, 2009; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), we observed that UNHCR seeks to induce governments to participate in protection by linking it to states' (perceived) interests in various issue areas as well as principles and values. Hence, we proposed the more comprehensive term "cross-interest persuasion."

To our knowledge, this is the first article that demonstrates that UNHCR discursively reflects, reproduces, responds to, and, at least indirectly, legitimizes, normalizes and/or maintains certain forced migration discourses of news media, political and private sector actors, current dominant migration management paradigms, and related broader trends (increasing neoliberalization and political realism). However, we should also consider the shaping influence of broader institutional, social, political and economic contexts and trends. By applying a comparative-synchronic MCDA, this study shows the importance of and calls for further critical comparative humanitarian communication research, particularly on the largely unexplored production and reception dimensions and their interactions. Given our dataset's magnitude and our research method's time-consuming nature, we had to focus on one (key) year, 2015 and one (key) actor, UNHCR. Nevertheless, further research should adopt inter-organizational and/or historical-diachronic perspectives in which both discursive and contextual evolutions are examined (Carvalho, 2008). Furthermore, since they play increasingly important roles within the IRR, private sector actors' forced migration discourses urgently require further investigation.

7.6   Note

1. Press releases provide formal, concise, and easily accessible information about a specific subject. News stories focus beyond a specific event and/or subject, and are often somewhat more engaged, personalized, time-less, and/or longer, usually including (more) photos and/or videos (Pasquier and Villeneuve, 2018).

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Chapter 8: (Un)seen, (un)heard, (un)known? A quantitative content analysis of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies for the Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018)

Abstract

As many states have adopted more restrictive refugee policies, this study investigates three major international refugee organizations' public communication strategies for the Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018). Through a comparative, longitudinal, intersectional quantitative content analysis of the organizations' press releases and news stories (N=1244), we scrutinized 'who' (voiced and represented actors) and 'what' (key characteristics and themes) are (not) represented, and secondarily why (production and societal context), which are largely unexplored dimensions of humanitarian communication. We observe a mixed picture, involving interorganizational commonalities and differences. First, regarding 'what', the refugee organizations predominantly communicated in 2015 and 2016 about forcibly displaced people involved in the high-profile Syrian crisis, because of various individual, routine, organizational, institutional and societal aspects. Second, regarding 'who', we observed that, recognizing medium-based differences, primarily forcibly displaced people and refugee organizations obtain voices about the investigated forcibly displaced people, refining earlier studies. Furthermore, examining several sociodemographics, this study finds that individualized forcibly displaced people are represented in significantly unbalanced sociodemographic manners. Shaped by production and societal contexts, humanitarian communication reproduces and reflects quantitative mediated hierarchies of suffering, both between and within crises. Therefore, we argue that well-balanced humanitarian communication is essential for societal and strategic reasons.

Keywords

Reference

8.1 Introduction

Although forced migration has always occurred throughout history, in recent years it has increased significantly. However, many states have adopted more restrictive refugee policies (Betts & Loescher, 2011). Furthermore, since 2015, the theme has dominated often polarizing, interwoven public, media and political agendas and debates (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019). In these contexts, refugee organizations often play essential roles. They provide assistance and/or protection to forcibly displaced people (Betts et al., 2012) but increasingly also use public communication to inform, raise awareness and build the above-mentioned agendas (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Paulmann, 2019). Although these organizations can influence how audiences perceive forcibly displaced people (Chouliaraki, 2012) and subsequently can have broader policy and societal consequences, few studies have examined how they attempt to influence them in terms of '*what* to think' (second-level agenda-building) (Sallot & Johnson, 2006, p. 152, original italics). Furthermore, most studies on refugee organizations' public communication, examine *how* forcibly displaced people are represented (e.g., Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-b, Rodriguez, 2016). However, few investigate *who* and *what* are (not) represented and/or *why*, and if so, often qualitatively and/or limitedly.

Acknowledging these gaps, we apply a quantitative content analysis (QCA) with a comparative, longitudinal and intersectional design (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) on three major international refugee organizations' press releases and news stories (N=1244) about the recent Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018). We investigate the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and two international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). They are leading organizations and are varyingly involved in and communicate about the forcibly displaced people involved in the recent Syrian and Central African crises (ECRE, n.d.-a; NRC, n.d.-b, n.d.-c; UNHCR, n.d.-c). Following Orgad's (2018) call to triangulate text-focused, normative and production-focused, practice-based approaches to better understand and be able to make evidence-based policy recommendations for humanitarian communication, we examine in this study *who* and *what* are represented in these organizations' public communication and contextualize and attempt to explain this, among others, by findings from previous qualitative multi-method production research on NRC's public communication strategies (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a). This involved ethnographic research at NRC's main media and communication department, expert interviews with media and communication officers and a document analysis of its key policy documents. Likewise, we include extra-media data (Rosengren, 1970) as 'an appropriate basis of comparison and an objective determination of reality' (Gaddy & Tanjong 1986, p. 105) to identify possible biases in public communication. We first briefly discuss the international refugee regime, as it has influenced refugee organizations' public communication in various ways (infra), then situate the latter, and eventually discuss the most common humanitarian representations.

8.2 Literature review
The international refugee regime

The international refugee regime (IRR) can be considered as an institutional multilateral body to ensure that responses to forced displacement can occur in principled and predictable manners (Betts, 2010; Loescher, 2001). It builds on the United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 (hereinafter: the Convention) and its 1967 Protocol, and UNHCR, the UN refugee agency mandated to provide and supervise international protection (Crisp, 2005). Throughout history, the

regime has evolved simultaneously with transformations in the modern state system, international law, politics, economics and ideology (Barnett, 2002). Through globalisation and interdependence, several new regimes (e.g., human rights, humanitarianism, development, security, travel and labour migration) have emerged, imbricating with and supplementing or eroding the Convention (Betts, 2010). The refugee regime has thus become a 'refugee regime complex', comprising different interacting regimes which shape refugee policies (ibid.).

Regarding the latter, since the 1990s, industrialized states have generally adopted two-track asylum approaches (Crisp, 2005). First, many states worldwide have established more restrictive asylum legislation and policies, including border security policies. Due to the lack of effectiveness of these reactive approaches and the perception of an emerging migration crisis, the IRR is gradually shifting towards the 'migration management paradigm' (ibid.). This approach implies that migration can and must be controlled and managed through comprehensive, coherent, and internationally harmonized policy approaches (Geiger & Pécoud, 2010). Migration is understood to be beneficial for all involved actors through 'regulated openness' towards economically desirable migrants and continued restrictiveness towards unwanted migrants. As this paradigm considers migration as potentially positive, it counters 'zero immigration' policies and rhetoric, inserting more pragmatic, political realist and (neo)liberal rationales into refugee policies (ibid.).

Both paradigms are reflected in policy changes, including shifting focuses from local integration and resettlement to local protection and voluntary repatriation (Betts and Loescher, 2011). Additionally, many states are increasingly closing, securitizing, and/or externalizing their borders, focusing on policies in and/or with third countries, and involving forcibly displaced people in economic, political and military negotiations (Crisp, 2005), often enabled by regimes of the refugee regime complex (e.g., travel migration restrictions). Migration and refugee policies are often largely shaped by larger state interests in other overlapping regimes (Betts, 2010).

These policy shifts can be largely related to various socio-economic, socio-cultural and political trends generating unfavourable public opinions about forcibly displaced people (Betts et al., 2012). Acknowledging temporal and spatial differences (Sana, 2021), forcibly displaced people, especially young men (MacDonald, 2017) are often perceived as economic (Frelick, 2007), sociocultural (Majeed, 2019), health and/or security threats to host countries (Betts et al., 2012). This can be partially linked to growing discomfort with former colonial and labour immigration and integration, Islamist terrorism, globalization, increases in social inequality and right-wing populism, inefficient migration policies (Lucassen, 2018), and Islamophobic (Sayyid & Vakil, 2010), anti-Semitic (Lipstadt, 2019) and homophobic movements (Weiss & Bosia, 2013) worldwide.

Furthermore, news outlets often reproduce adverse public opinions by portraying forcibly displaced people ambivalently as 'threats' to the international order and/or 'victims' of conflicts (Chouliaraki, 2012). They are frequently collectivized, anonymized, decontextualized and, subsequently, dehumanized (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017), while only limitedly personalized and voiced, especially women (Blumell and Cooper 2019). In these contexts, politicians often neglect their socio-economic and socio-cultural contributions to host countries and even marginalize and blame them

(Crisp, 2005). Such climates facilitate xenophobia, the far right's popularity, and more restrictive refugee policies (Betts et al., 2012).

Situating refugee organizations' public communication

In such contexts, refugee organizations need to communicate effectively (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). Public communication can be summarized as a comprehensive, diverse communication genre that is strategically focused on different target groups in the public sphere to achieve informational and strategic objectives (Atkin & Rice, 2013; Ongenaert, 2019). Humanitarian organizations generally utilize it to obtain visibility and credibility, inform, sensitize, influence behaviours and shape agendas, to ultimately achieve public, financial and/or political support (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005).

Given the evolving news ecology and emergence of international public spheres, refugee organizations and especially INGOs have obtained larger agenda-building opportunities (Van Leuven et al., 2013). Journalists have become more receptive to information subsidies, especially from NGOs (Reich, 2011), following tendencies of digitalization, cost-saving and associated higher workload in newsrooms worldwide (Schudson, 2011). Furthermore, since the 1980s, the number of organizations in the humanitarian landscape has increased significantly, resulting in strong competition for media attention and donations (Cottle & Nolan, 2007). The former is being perceived as an important predictor for the amount of provided aid for humanitarian crises, more than its actual magnitude (Franks, 2013). Facilitated by processes of professionalization, mediatization and marketization, NGOs largely adapt their communication strategies to mainstream media conventions (Powers, 2018; Richey, 2018). For humanitarian news, particular news values (e.g., magnitude, cultural, psychological and geographic proximity, economic, military and [geo]political importance), and adequate working conditions (e.g., accessibility, security, press freedom) are important (Joye, 2010). Hence, 'the topics and frames within humanitarian journalism continue to reflect the priorities and worldview of audiences in the Global North' (Bunce et al., 2019, p. 6), whereby mainly 'high-profile' conflicts are covered, while others are marginalized and/or remain invisible (Hawkins, 2011).

Understanding humanitarian representations

In terms of representing forcibly displaced people, refugee organizations mainly use humanitarian discourses of pity, which morally justify solidarity by relying on universalist common humanity (Ongenaert & Joye, 2019; Chouliaraki, 2012).

Specifically, humanitarian images of forcibly displaced people have generally changed from heroic, political individuals (freedom advocates and escaped war victims) in the Cold War, to 'negative', depoliticised, dehistoricized, decontextualized, universalized and victimized images of anonymous, voiceless masses from the Global South, with focuses on women and children (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011). This shift results from three overlapping discursive transformations: the imagined refugee's racialization, victimization and feminization in humanitarian communication. These transformations interact with the above-mentioned refugee policy shifts and are part of broader strategic humanitarian discourses of depoliticizing refugees to mobilize public support and manage their perceived threat to the global order (Johnson, 2011). Corresponding therewith, contrasting

refugee organizations' (high-ranked) employees, and, to lesser extents, affiliated celebrities, other humanitarian actors and state actors, forcibly displaced people are barely voiced, largely dehumanizing them (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert & Joye, 2019).

Due to growing suspicion of these agency-lacking portrayals, refugee organizations started to display forcibly displaced people from the Global South in more 'positive', agency-oriented ways (Chouliaraki, 2012). They are presented as optimistic, resilient, and gifted individuals, suiting within the audience's culture and morals. Dichotomous contrasts are thereby often created with economic migrants (Rodriguez, 2016), hinting at hierarchies of deservingness, while the distinction between both is often ambiguous. Resulting from humanitarian agencies' focus on self-reliance, resilience, and innovation within an increasingly neoliberal refugee regime, they often represent refugees as 'entrepreneurs' (cf. refugee entrepreneurialism). As such, they want to reframe them from 'burdens' or 'threats' to 'opportunities' and 'resources' and to render them more acceptable to Western audiences and donors (Turner, 2020).

However, these 'positive' representation strategies can also dehumanize forcibly displaced people, as they can represent them as unrealistically self-determined (Chouliaraki, 2012). Moreover, often only charming, talented, and/or middle-class people acquire voices. Furthermore, their voices are mostly 'regulated' to amplify humanitarian organizational messages (Pupavac, 2008), and can consequently become homogenized and depoliticized (Godin and Doná, 2016). Further, '[a]sylum rights are thereby implicitly made conditional on qualifying as nice, talented, sensitive individuals' (Pupavac, 2008, p. 285). Relatedly, some organizations defend the rights of specific sociodemographic immigrant groups, relying on model minority stereotypes (Fujiwara, 2005) and/or dominant sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., regarding marital status, family situation, sexual orientation, profession, personality, political stance, religion, 'race'). In both cases, refugee organizations risk implicitly strengthening hierarchies of deservingness (Yukich, 2013) and indirectly undermining asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008).

In sum, migrant advocacy narratives are often characterized by 'expectations of assimilation and erasure of difference; victimhood and lack of agency; and hierarchies of deservingness. These frames, moreover, implicitly recenter whiteness and reinforce neoliberal values' (DeTurk, 2021, p. 92). While the regime of pity's discourse, through the aforementioned 'negative' and 'positive' strategies, tried to eliminate forcibly displaced people's perceived ambivalence, they further reproduce it (Pupavac, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012).

Having connected various commonly secluded research fields, we identified that most studies examine *how* forcibly displaced people are represented but few investigate *what* and *who* are (not) represented and/or *why*, and if so, often qualitatively and/or limitedly. Therefore, we now extend and refine literature by primarily examining through large-scale quantitative research *what* and *who* are (not) represented in international refugee organizations' public communication, and, secondarily, the underlying reasons.

8.3 Methodology

We applied a QCA (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) to UNHCR's, NRC's and ECRE's (international) press releases and news stories (N=1244) representing forcibly displaced people involved in the recent Syrian and Central African crises, or both (2015-2018). Press releases provide formal, concise and easily accessible information about a specific subject. News stories focus beyond a specific event and/or subject, and are often somewhat more engaged, personalized, time-less and/or longer, usually including (more) photos and/or videos (Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2018). We label both as 'media content units' (MCUs). Our aselect data selection comprised applying crisis- and website-specific search formulas in the organizations' main communication archives, excluding irrelevant MCUs, and adding relevant MCUs.[88]

Further, an extensive codebook and Qualtrics registration form were, based on insights from the literature review, empirical pretesting and coder training, cyclically constructed (e.g., Neuendorf, 2017), and grounded in the intersectionality framework. Following our objectives, intersectionality mostly examines discriminated, marginalized and voiceless subjects' multidimensional experiences of identity and oppression (Nash, 2008), is relevant to study media and/or migration discourses, including representations (Maegaard et al., 2019; Fisher et al., 2020), and is increasingly used for quantitative methods (Atewologun, 2018). Our QCA has social constructivist origins (Krippendorff, 2018), and relies on McCall's (2005, p. 1773) 'intercategorical complexity' approach, as we 'provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions' ('strategic essentialism', Spivak, 1996). We respond to Nash's (2008) call to use clear, rigorous intersectional methodologies, go beyond binary racial-gender thinking, and examine how privilege and oppression intersect and how subaspects of identity are strategically (not) deployed.

Additionally, we conducted two pilot intercoder reliability (ICR) tests on two aselect subsamples. For the second test, the first author and a job student both analysed the first 150 relevant MCUs of the total sample (appropriate 12,05%) (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorff, 2018). Subsequently, Hayes and Krippendorff's macro (2007) was used in IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to calculate Krippendorff's alpha (KALPHA) coefficients. Overall, the variables' KALPHA scores are relatively satisfactory, although some are too low (see Table 1).[89] First, as the macro cannot (properly) calculate KALPHA scores for binary and/or skewed variables (variables 2.3, 4.11, 4.16, 5.10 and 5.15), percent agreements were calculated, all indicating high and acceptable (minimum 80,00%) degrees of intercoder agreement. Second, for theoretical, methodological and empirical reasons, we maintained the latent and/or interpretive variables with insufficiently high KALPHA scores (variables 2.11, 2.12, 3.1, 3.2, 4.10, 5.4, 5.9 and 5.14) but qualitatively report about them. Further, we recoded some ordinal to ratio variables (2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 4.4, and 5.3).

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[88] For NRC, we used respectively (1) "Syria" OR "Syrian" OR "Syrians" NOT "Central African", (2) "Central African" NOT "Syria" NOT "Syrian" NOT "Syrians", and (3) "Central African" AND "Syria" OR "Syrian" OR "Syrians". For ECRE, we used respectively (1) Syr, (2) "Central African", and (3) Syr AND "Central African". For UNHCR, we used respectively (1) Syr*, (2) "Central African", and (3) Syr* AND "Central African".

[89] KALPHA < 0,67: the variable is unreliable; 0,67 > KALPHA < 0,80: cautious conclusions are allowed; KALPHA > 0,80: the variable is reliable (Krippendorff, 2018).

Finally, we precautiously and reflexively coded the sociodemographic variables: characteristics should be explicitly stated and/or be contextually derived with absolute certainty, otherwise 'unable to determine' should be indicated. This approach provides less sociodemographic data, forming an important nuance to the results but facilitates a more consistent, unprejudiced, reliable, feasible coding of often interpretive, latent sociodemographic information. Moreover, it is relevant to examine which sociodemographics the refugee organizations (do not) communicate explicitly. In that regard, some sociodemographics are not applicable or relevant for some forcibly displaced people, and thus less explicitly mentioned (e.g., marital status, sexual orientation, current and former profession, for [very] young, deceased, and/or generically presented people). For further methodological and ethical discussions, see the codebook and related documents.

8.4   Results

For reasons of focus and space, we comparatively discuss the main relative organizational differences and, where relevant, general results and/or variations of the basic variables, which structured the data selection and analysis ('organization', 'media genre', 'publication year' and 'crisis category').

What: Key characteristics and themes

Basic variables

First, UNHCR (63,91%, N=795) published mainly and significantly more MCUs than NRC (18,49%, N=230) and ECRE (17,60%, N=219)[90], which is not surprising, as it has more, larger and arguably more professional communication departments than NRC and especially ECRE (ECRE, n.d.-b; NRC, n.d.-a; UNHCR, n.d.-a). Specifically, UNHCR (83,65% versus 16,35%) and NRC (82,61% versus 17,39%) published mainly and significantly more news stories than press releases and, interorganizationally, than ECRE (5,48% versus 94,52%), and vice versa. These interorganizational differences can be partly explained methodologically, as both NRC and UNHCR use more submedia genres which we considered as 'news stories' than 'press releases' (see codebook) and, more fundamentally, by differences in organizational goals, trends (e.g. professionalization, specializations), and size (cf. Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a).

Regarding output, forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis attracted the most attention from all organizations, contrasting those involved in the Central African crisis who are even not present in ECRE's output if not in combination with the former (see Figure 1). ECRE clearly focused on the Syrian crisis, publishing significantly more about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis than UNHCR and NRC. NRC, however, publicized respectively significantly more about those involved in the Central African crisis, and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more about those involved in the Syrian and Central African crises than UNHCR and ECRE. These crisis- and/or organization-specific communication differences can be explained by interacting societal, institutional, organizational, routine, and individual factors (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a). Institutional forces (e.g., media, public, political, and/or donor attention) generally incentivize reporting about high-profile crises (e.g., the Syrian crisis), which is reinforced and/or limited by various organizational and individual (counter)incentives, and sensitive societal contexts and context-sensitive routines. Corresponding

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[90] Throughout this paper we applied hypothesis tests to determine if two population proportions differ significantly, with z = 1,96 (α = 0,05): (p1-p2)0±z*√((p1*(1-p1))/n1+(p2*(1-p2))/n2).

therewith, the organizations communicated significantly more about the examined forcibly displaced people in 2015 and/or 2016, mainly reflecting the developments of the Syrian crisis (see Figure 2). Many people from Syria, representing most communication, became forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and increasingly mediatized in 2015 and 2016 (Krzyżanowski et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Number of MCUs per crisis category and organization
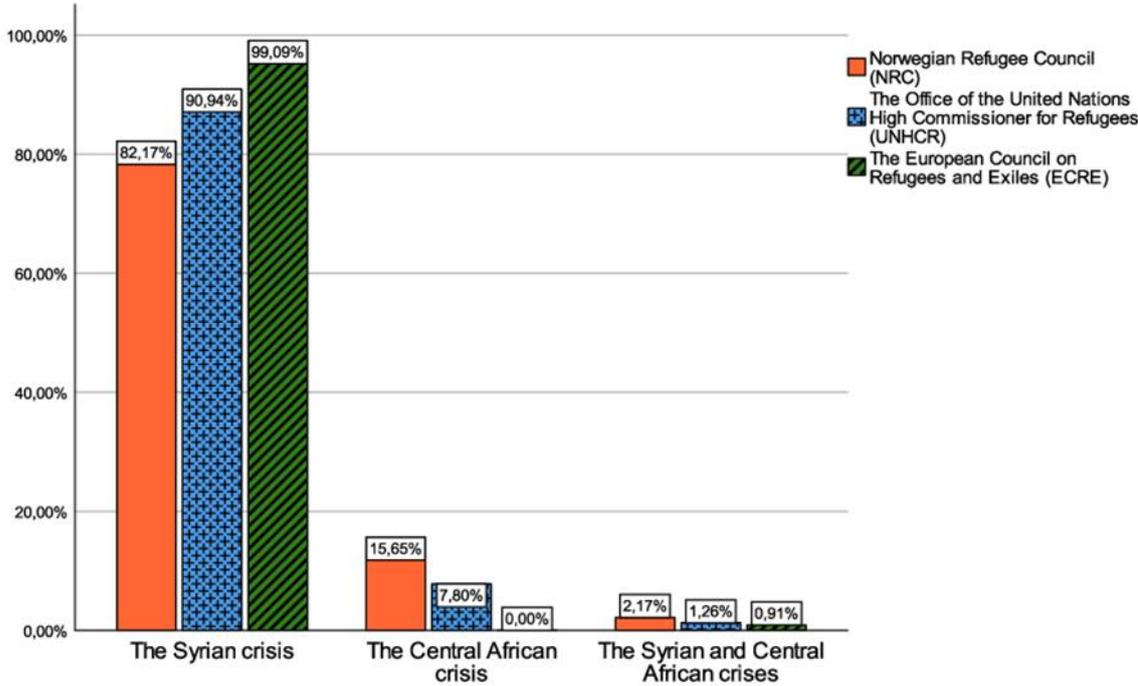
Figure 2. Number of MCUs per publication year and organization
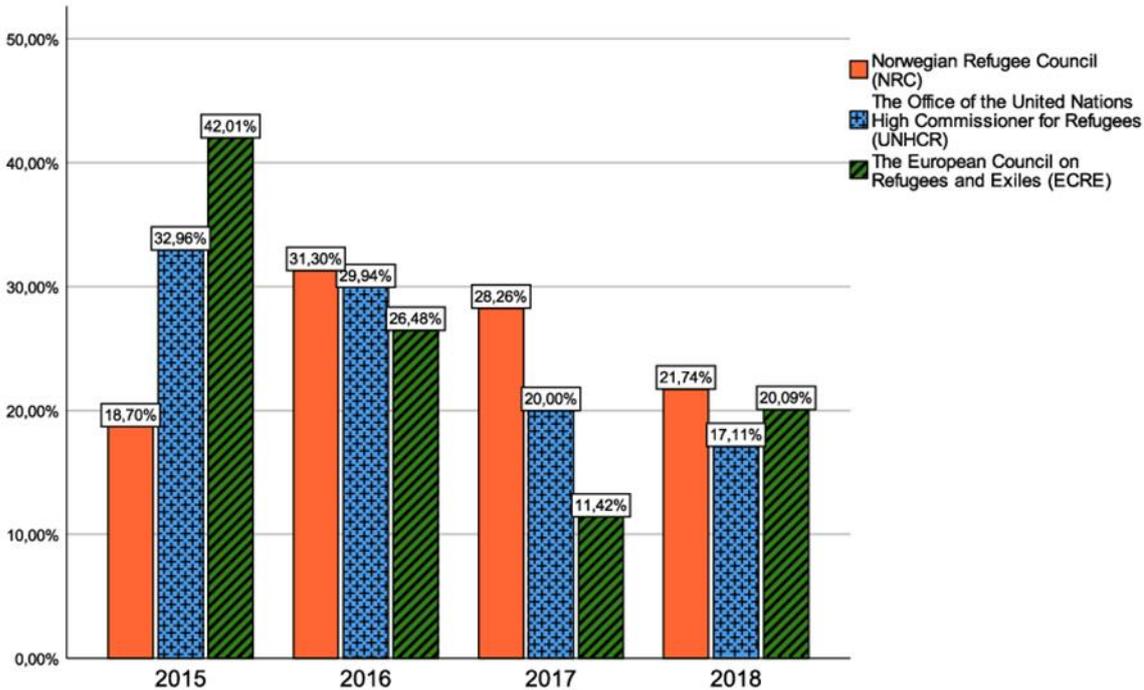
Length

Further, UNHCR publishes significantly longer MCUs than NRC, and especially ECRE (see Table 2). Confirming literature, UNHCR's and ECRE's, and NRC's news stories are respectively significantly and slightly (but not significantly) longer than their respective press releases. ECRE's press releases are significantly shorter than NRC's and UNHCR's, and, as commonly recommended, rather short. However, length is also context-specific (Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2018). ECRE's press releases comprise more hard news themes, fewer primary and secondary source categories, and significantly fewer visual (VCUs, e.g., photos) and audiovisual (ACUs, e.g., videos) content units, forcibly displaced people as main subjects, and represented forcibly displaced people than UNHCR's and NRC's, and vice versa (infra).

VCUs and ACUs

Regarding (audio)visual approaches, UNHCR's and NRC's MCUs contain significantly more VCUs and ACUs than ECRE's MCUs (see Table 3). Confirming literature, all organizations' news stories comprise significantly more VCUs than their respective press releases as the former, given their length and objectives, allow more human-interest perspectives, extensive coverage and/or multimedia approaches. Likewise, UNHCR's and NRC's news stories have respectively significantly and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more ACUs than their respective press releases.

Finally, NRC and ECRE, and NRC and UNHCR increasingly use respectively VCUs and ACUs, indicating increasingly professional, specialized and (audio)visual multimedia approaches (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a). Specifically, NRC's and ECRE's MCUs of 2017 and 2018 contain significantly more VCUs

than those of 2015 and 2016. Similarly, NRC's and UNHCR's MCUs of 2017 and 2018 contain significantly more ACUs than those of 2015 and, regarding NRC, than those of 2016, whereas UNHCR's MCUs of 2018 contain significantly more ACUs than those of 2016 (see Table 4).

Main subjects

We examined to which extent the examined forcibly displaced people are the main or only secondary subjects of the MCUs. Extending variable 2.6, this variable provides insights into the organizations' degree of media attention for and value of these people. NRC and UNHCR represent, conform their significantly larger numbers of MCUs on the Syrian crisis, significantly more often forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis as main subjects than those involved in the Central African crisis and other actors and, interorganizationally, than ECRE. The latter represents significantly more other main subjects (see Figure 3), which corresponds with its significantly lower numbers of primary and secondary individualizations and its hard news focus, and vice versa (infra). Finally, corresponding with its relative focus on the Central African crisis, NRC's MCUs have significantly more often forcibly displaced people involved in the Central African crisis as main subjects than UNHCR's and ECRE's.

Figure 3. Main subjects per organization
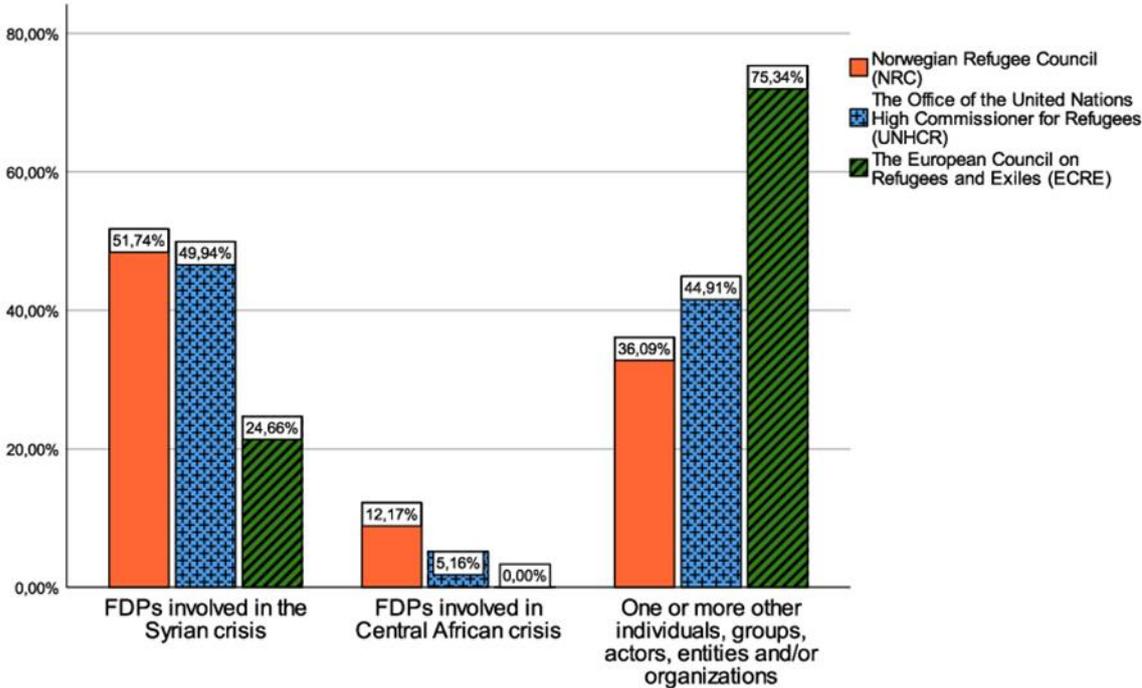
Primary and secondary themes

All organizations feature the same three primary and secondary themes but, coinciding with their different operations, focuses and/or objectives (ECRE, n.d.-a; NRC, n.d.-b; UNHCR, n.d.-c) often thematically differ. Corresponding with their operations, all organizations centre protection, needs assessment and advocacy (see Figures 4 and 5). Similarly, NRC and UNHCR communicate extensively

about living conditions. ECRE, however, is not active in and publicizes limitedly about this theme. Conversely, ECRE, reports extensively on legal issues and policy, while NRC and UNHCR frequently. Similarly, mainly UNHCR and NRC respectively publicize about communication, health, and other themes (especially culture, sports and social integration), and education and camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) (for explanations of the themes, see codebook). Finally, UNHCR and NRC address thus rather soft news themes (living conditions, education, health, and other themes), while ECRE rather hard news themes (protection, needs assessment and advocacy, and legal issues and policy), which can be largely explained by their medium-based focuses (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a)

Figure 4. Main themes per organization
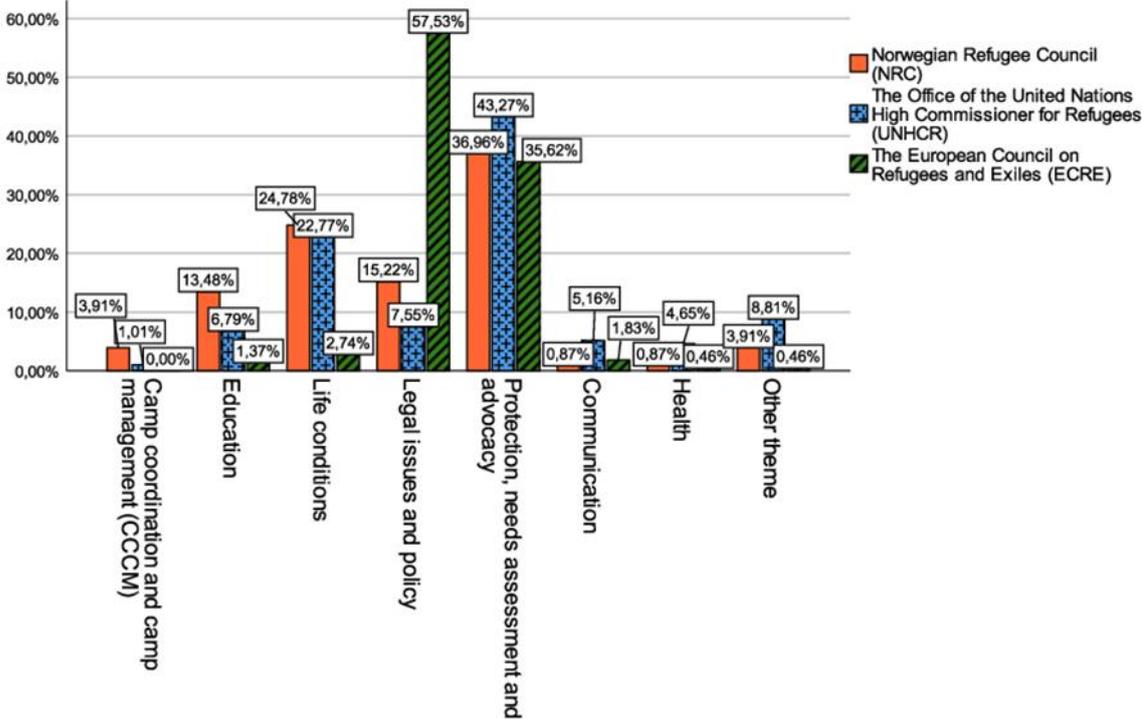
Figure 5. Secondary themes per organization
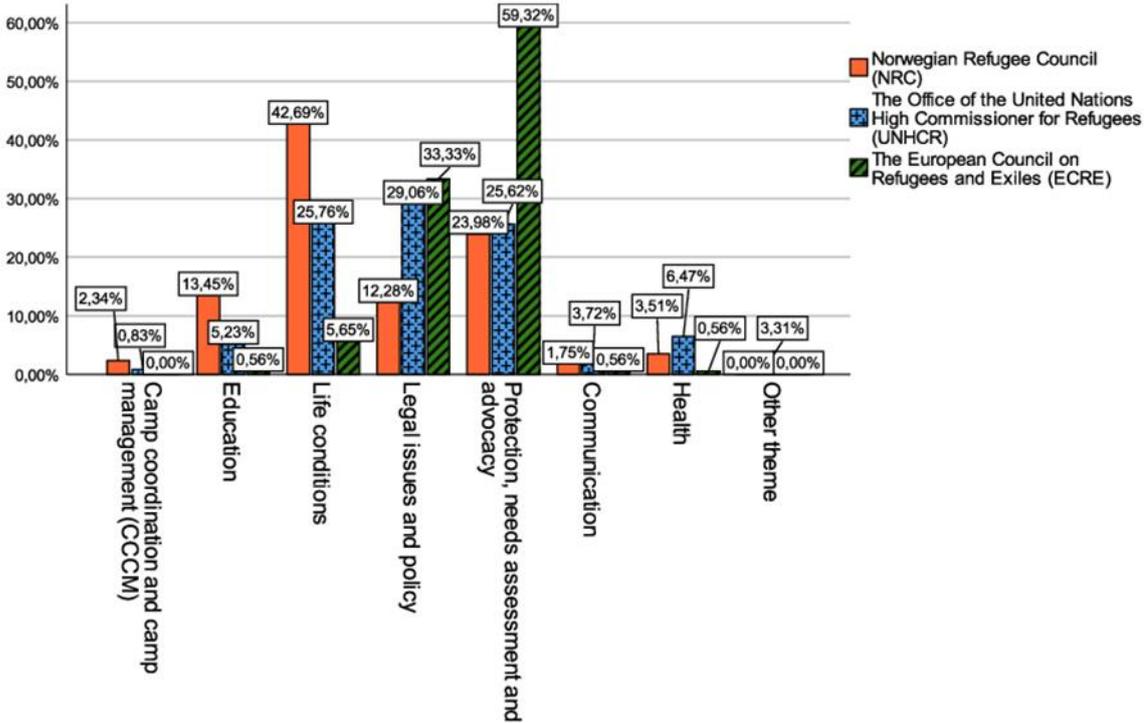
Who: Voiced and represented actors

Source categories of representations

We examined which categories of sources obtain the largest or second-largest voice (cf. through sentences or, if equal, words) via quotes and paraphrases to represent the examined forcibly displaced people, forming the primary and secondary source categories (PSCs and SSCs). UNHCR and NRC have mainly forcibly displaced people as respectively the most common PSC and second most common SSC (see Figures 6 and 7). However, while ECRE (n.d.-a) argues that it 'promotes the inclusion of refugee advocates and refugee-led organisations in all of its advocacy', this is not reflected in its (limited) numbers of forcibly displaced people as source categories, especially as PSCs, and individualizations (infra), which can be partially explained by its medium-based and thematic focuses (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a). Importantly, voices of forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis and/or the Central African crisis always represent, even without explicit references, themselves. Their voices are also representations of the studied people, implying larger shares for forcibly displaced people as source categories. If we would examine source categories in general or about forcibly displaced people in general, the latter's voices will be much smaller (see Ongenaert & Joye, 2019). Furthermore, we also identified relevant medium-based differences. Whereas forcibly displaced people are largely voiced in news stories, they are far less in press releases, because of different medium-based objectives (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-b).

Further, NRC and UNHCR largely voice themselves (e.g., high-profile employees, reports and/or figures, or as institution). As large international refugee organizations with broader organizational scopes, they likely attempt to obtain more own attention within the increasingly competitive humanitarian sector

(supra). Likewise, NRC and especially UNHCR address relatively more (mostly donating and/or collaborating) private sector actors. ECRE, however, voices itself far less but, corresponding with its thematic focus, more (all mainly European) other humanitarian actors (e.g., member organizations), state actors, news media and legal actors. NRC and UNHCR, however, voice these less, and if so, mostly partner or collaborating humanitarian organizations, and donor states. Acknowledging methodological and medium-based differences, our results thus partially contrast claims arguing that mainly humanitarian actors and celebrities obtain voices about forcibly displaced people, while the latter are barely voiced (supra).

Figure 6. Primary source categories per organization
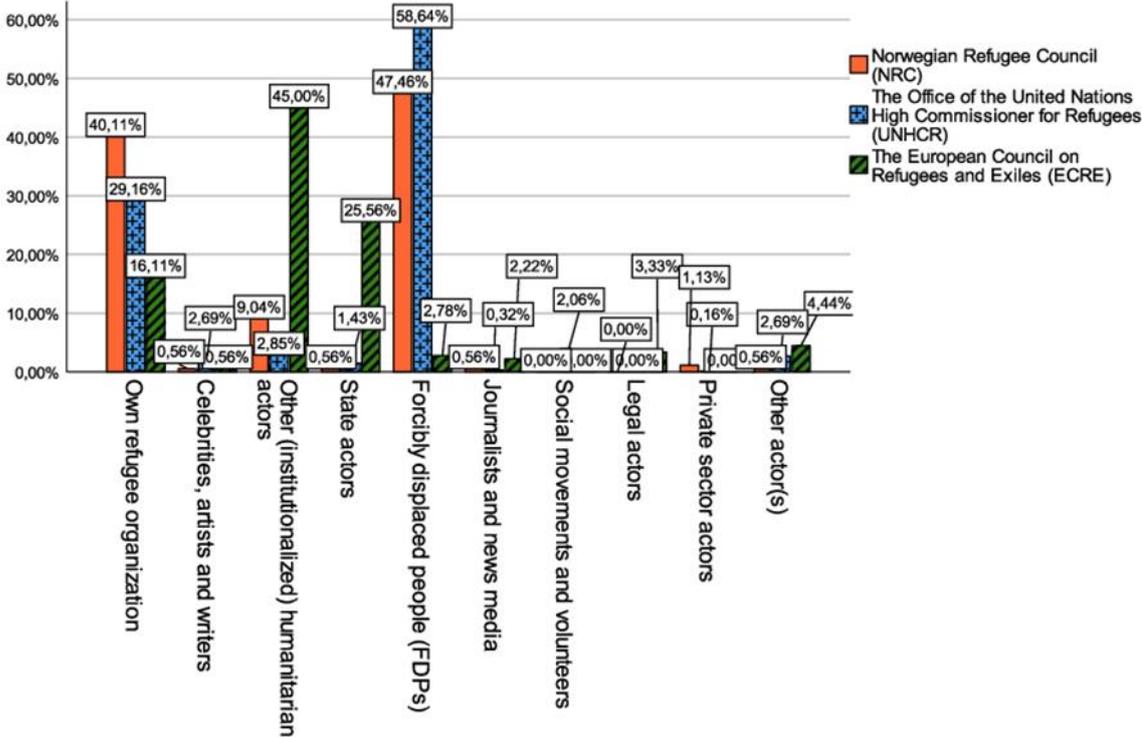
Figure 7. Secondary source categories per organization
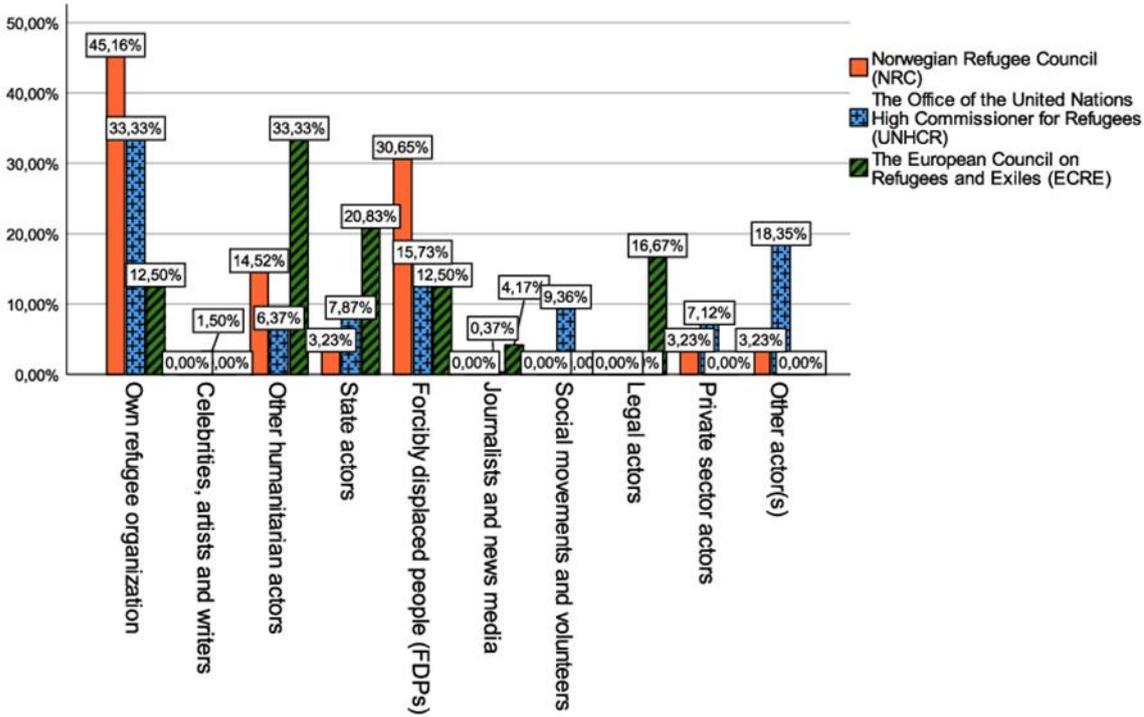
Represented forcibly displaced people

Collectivizations and individualizations

Before exploring the sociodemographics of the primary (N=653, 52,49%) and secondary (N=468, 37,62%) represented forcibly displaced people (i.e. represented through the largest and second-largest number of sentences or, if equal, words), we first briefly discuss *how* the examined people are generally represented. We noticed an overall tendency to collectivization in the organizations' imagery (see Figures 8 and 9). The majority of examined MCUs had at least one fragment in which forcibly displaced people were represented as a large (anonymous) group. However, collectivizations can create distance between represented actors and audiences, and dehumanize the former (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Nevertheless, to counterweigh these outcomes and to influence public perception and feelings of identification positively, all three organizations appear to acknowledge the value of individualization as a representational strategy in public communication. UNHCR has significantly more MCUs containing at least one examined forcibly displaced person represented as an individual than NRC and especially ECRE. Further, news stories rely more heavily on individualization than press releases, explaining ECRE's fewer individualizations (see also Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a).

Figure 8. Number of MCUs containing at least one collectivization per organization
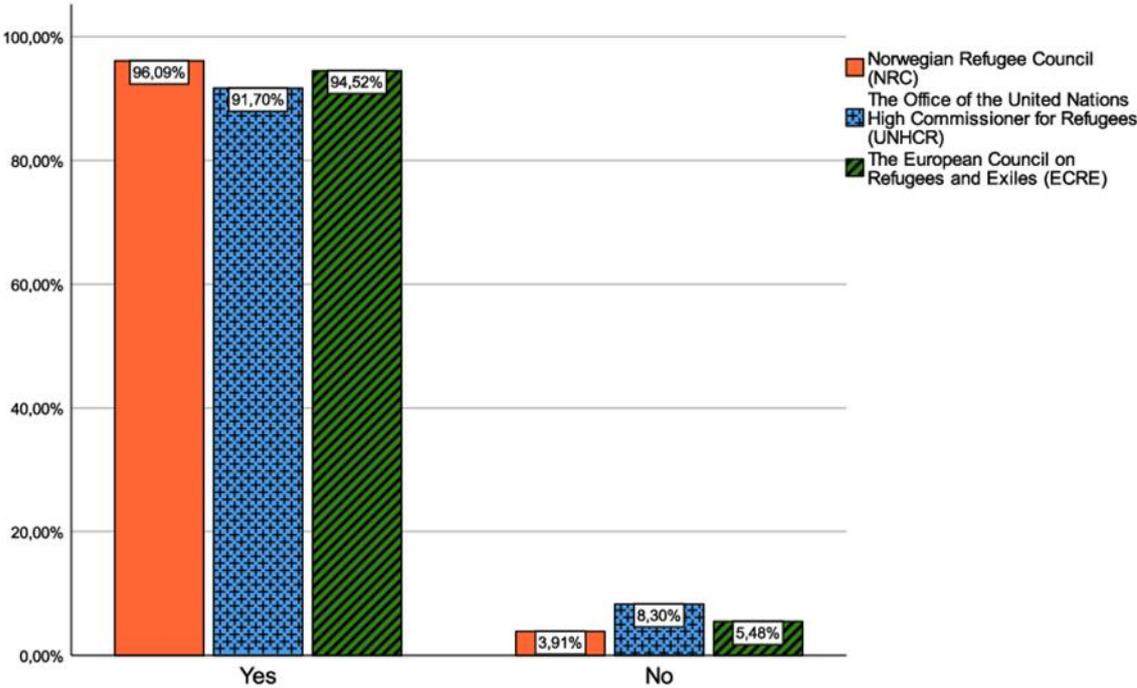
Figure 9. Number of MCUs containing at least one individualization per organization
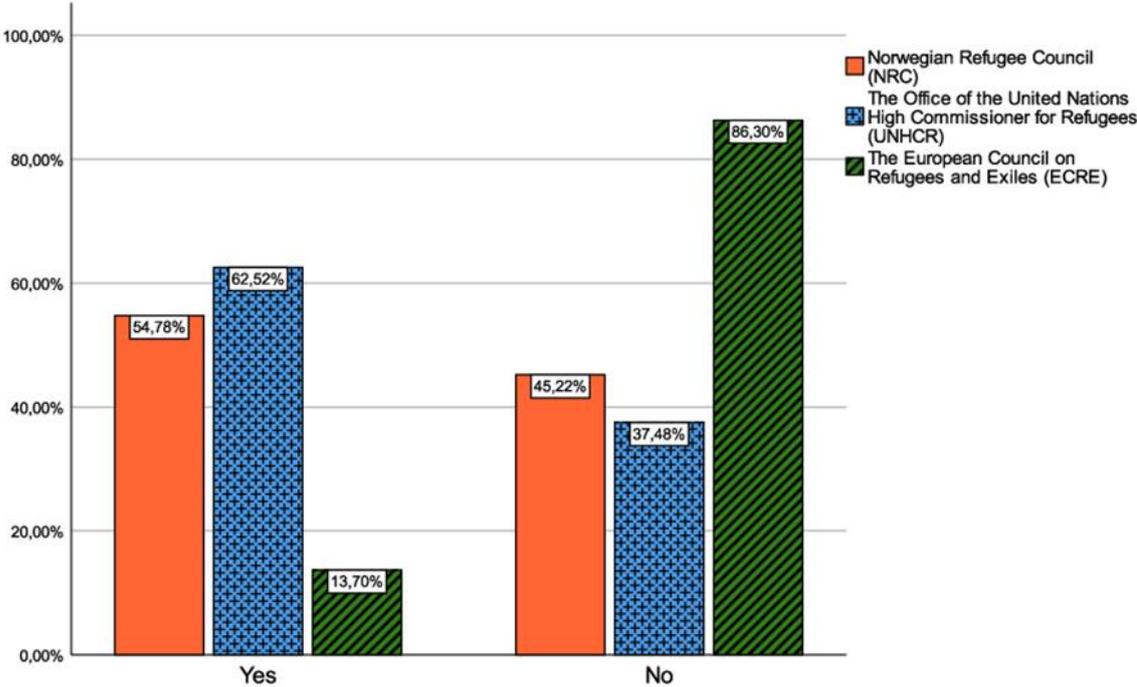
Gender and age

NRC represents mainly and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more female than male forcibly displaced people. However, UNHCR and ECRE portray significantly more male than female primary represented people. Nevertheless, UNHCR displays approximately as many male and female secondary represented people, while ECRE's (few) MCUs include significantly more female than male secondary represented people. Further, corresponding with its medium-based and thematic focuses, ECRE represents significantly more people without an explicitly mentioned gender identity than NRC and UNHCR. Finally, no people are (mediated as) transsexual or transgender.

Further, numeric and textual indicators of age and age group are scarce in the observed sample of MCUs, requiring caution when interpreting these data. We can deduce that the average represented person is relatively young, being in their twenties or younger (see Table 5). Regarding textual age, the majority of represented people are identified as 'adults', while the age categories of infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and (primary school) children, and adolescents appear relatively more often.

Both indicators of gender and age (partially) follow findings from the literature that suggest that refugee organizations mainly spotlight children and women, for strategical reasons (supra). However, we identify additional societal (relatively more female refugees in the Central African crisis and young refugees in both crises than other gender or age groups [UNHCR, n.d.-a]), organizational (presence of child- and/or woman-centred programs), and ethical/personal (media officers want to empower children and women in their communication and overcome [perceived] biases in media representations) reasons.

Geographic location

Regarding locations, each organization appears to have a unique strategy, corresponding with their thematic focuses: UNHCR, having a broad organizational scope, represents mainly and significantly more urban, peri-urban and/or rural areas but, considering census data, covers relatively often refugee camps and displacement sites, ECRE, holding a legal and policy focus, opts to not explicitly mention geographic locations while NRC refers mainly and significantly more to refugee camps and/or displacement sites as forcibly displaced people's current geographic locations (see Figures 10 and 11). Corresponding therewith, our production research (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a) indicates that, although most forcibly displaced people live in urban areas (UNHCR, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), refugee organizations often strategically focus on people in refugee camps. As refugee organizations mainly work in refugee camps, this can be explained by routine (e.g., access, visuality of needs, simplified communication), organizational (e.g., organizational visibility), institutional (e.g., funding) and societal (e.g., political and/or security) reasons. For similar reasons, people in static, passive positions are more often represented than those in mobile, active positions, fuelling the overall image of forcibly displaced people as passive victims awaiting relief aid.

Figure 10. Geographic location of the primary represented forcibly displaced people
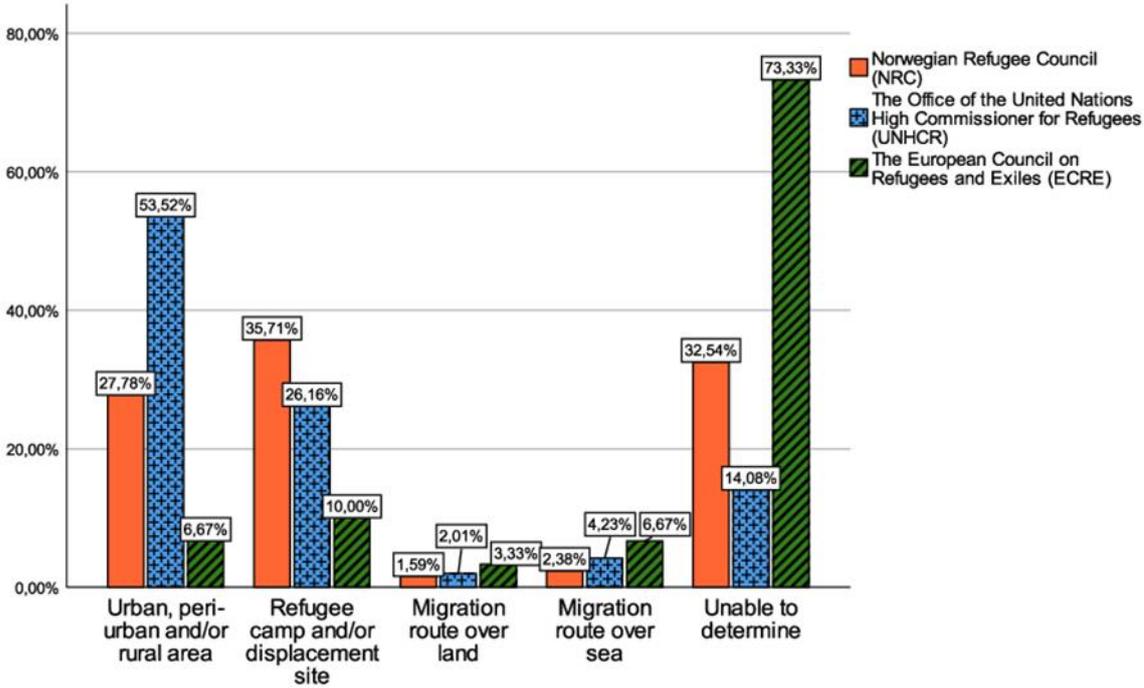
Figure 11. Geographic location of the secondary represented forcibly displaced people
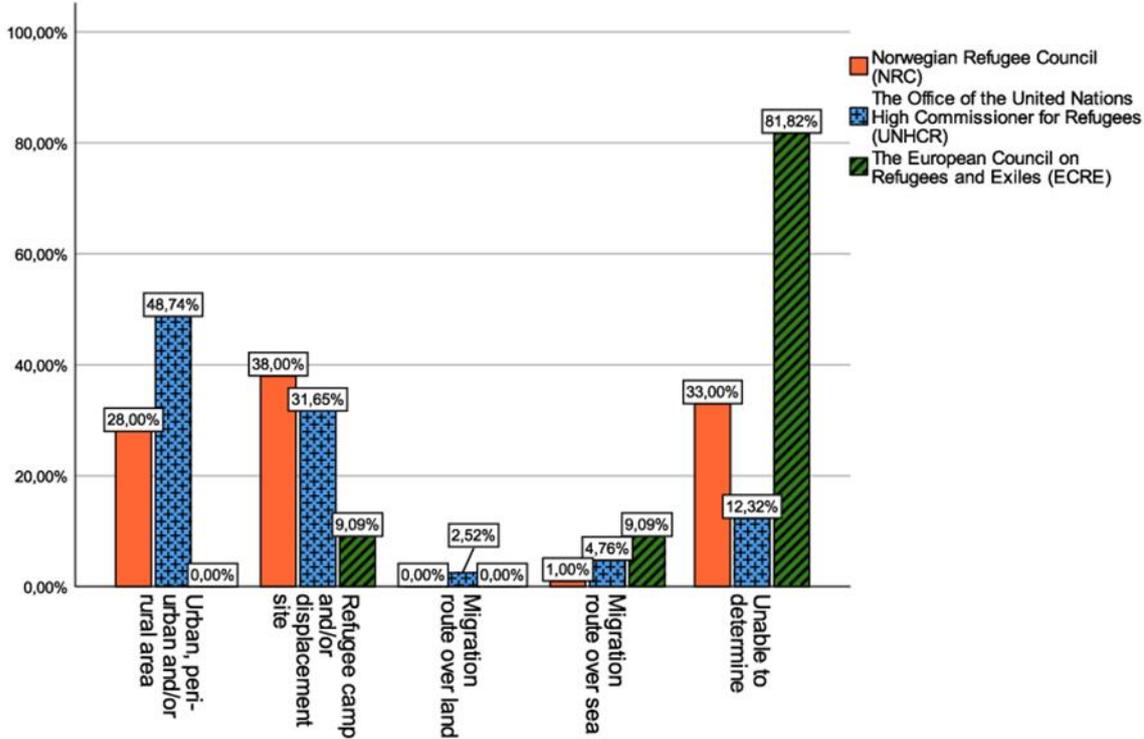
Legal status

All organizations, especially ECRE, represent mainly and significantly more often externally forcibly displaced people (people abroad who are seeking and/or have received international protection) than other legal categories (see Figures 12 and 13). NRC, however, holds the largest diversity in terms of legal status, representing significantly more IDPs (forcibly displaced people who have not crossed an international border), returned IDPs (IDPs who returned to their areas of habitual residence; for UNHCR only at the primary level [PL]), and forcibly displaced people without an explicitly mentioned legal status, and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more returned externally forcibly displaced people (externally forcibly displaced people who have returned to their home country), and stateless people (people who are legally not considered as nationals by any state; significant differences at the secondary level [SL]) than UNHCR and ECRE. The overrepresentations of externally forcibly displaced people and underrepresentation of other groups can be largely explained by organizational (e.g., focus on countries of operation) and societal (e.g., political and security issues) reasons (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a).

Figure 12. Legal statuses of the primary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
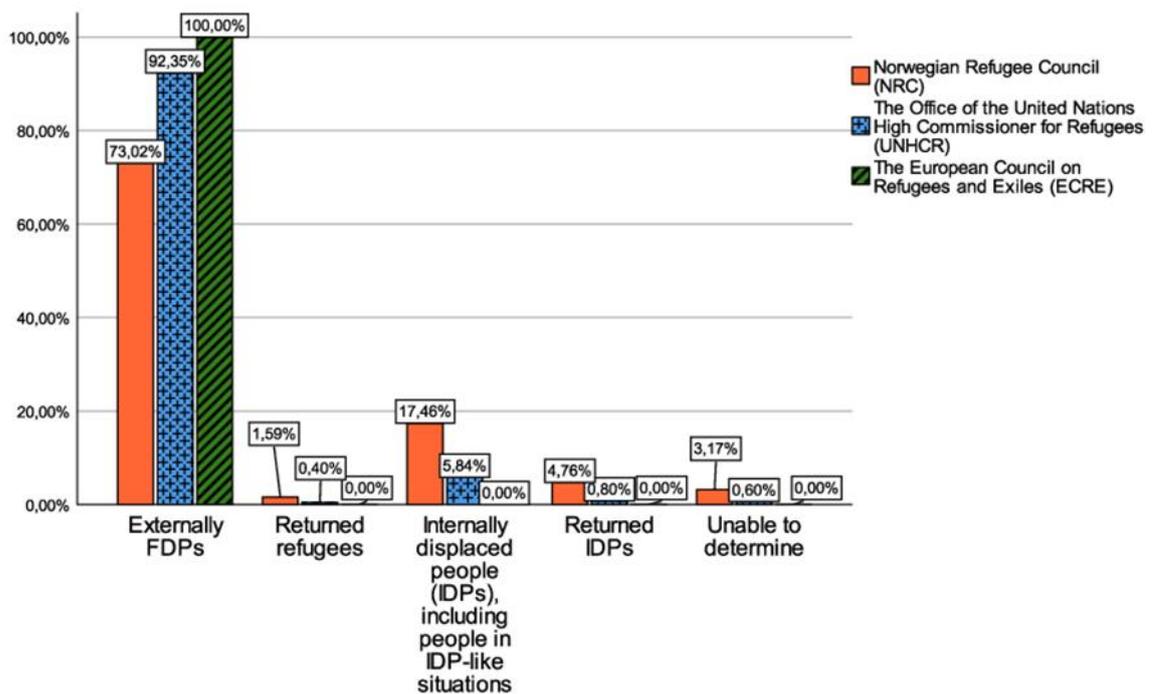
Figure 13. Legal statuses of the secondary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
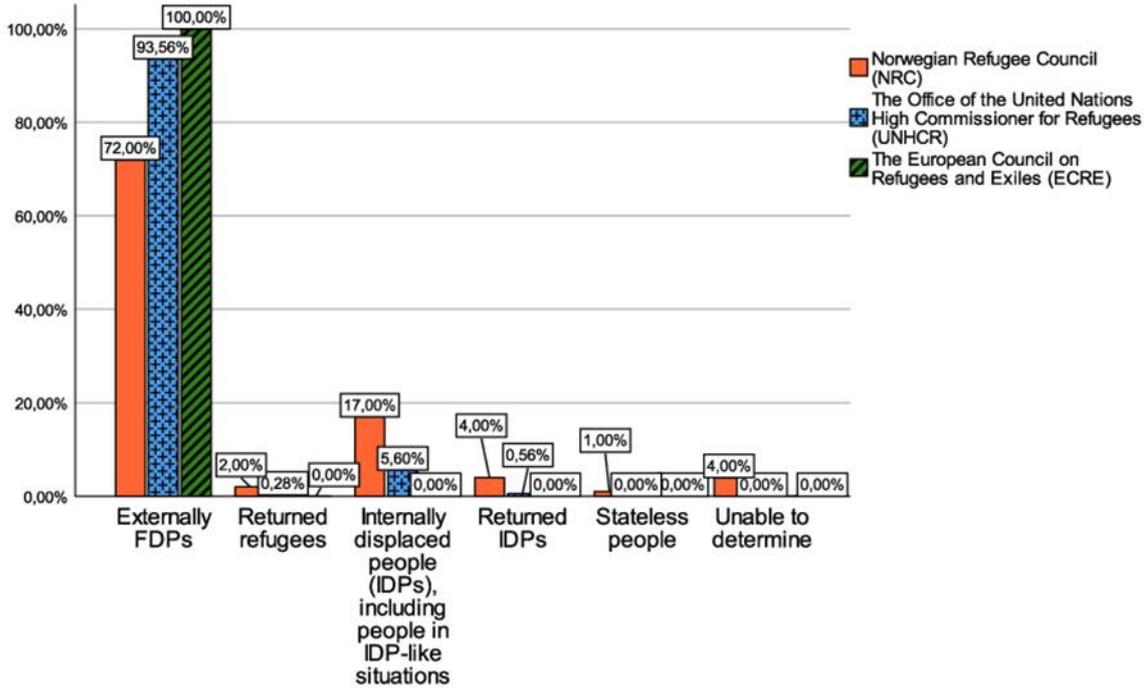
Given the different nature and context of the examined crises, we analysed the relationship between legal status and the media output on both crises. Following the previously presented findings, all organizations' and particularly ECRE's MCUs on the Syrian crisis comprise mainly and significantly more externally forcibly displaced people than other categories. All three organizations seem to overrepresent externally forcibly displaced people and underrepresent IDPs involved in the Syrian crisis, respectively entailing 47,38%% and 49,63% of the total number of forcibly displaced people (2015-2018) (calculations based on UNHCR, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).[91]

Taking into account the absence of exclusively focused MCUs on the Central African crisis from ECRE, UNHCR's MCUs on the Central African crisis comprise mainly and significantly more externally forcibly displaced people, while NRC's contain respectively significantly more IDPs, and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more returned IDPs, forcibly displaced people without an explicitly mentioned legal status, and returned externally forcibly displaced people. Hence, UNHCR and NRC seem to respectively overrepresent and underrepresent externally forcibly displaced people involved in the Central African crisis (42,86%), and IDPs involved in the Central African crisis (39,03%) (ibid.).

NRC's different focus on legal categories according to crisis is related to organizational (the Central African Republic forms an important country of operations), and societal (more difficult to report from and about Syria than the Central African Republic) reasons. Likewise, UNHCR's and ECRE's respectively

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[91] For methodological reasons (e.g., exclusion of stateless people in specific census data, the reliability of our data and the census data, the represented people without explicitly mentioned legal statuses), we rather regard them as indications of certain trends than as exact percentages.

larger and exclusive focus on externally forcibly displaced people can be partially organizationally explained. UNHCR takes up a worldwide coordinating role and, while in reality it also assists other groups, is strictly speaking only mandated to protect refugees. ECRE's mission statement stipulates its aim to protect the rights of forcibly displaced people in Europe, consequently implying externally forcibly displaced people, although also those involved in Europe's external policies (infra).

Current country and continent

Moving on to the geographic scope of the public communication efforts, NRC represents mainly and significantly more often Jordan, Lebanon, and the Central African Republic, and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more often Syria, as current countries of its represented forcibly displaced people (see Figures 14 and 15), and correspondingly significantly more often Asia and Africa as current continents (see Figures 16 and 17) than UNHCR and ECRE.[92] This geographically concentrated, narrow communication focus (5,08% [N=10]) can be largely explained organizationally, as NRC mainly operates in these key countries, while hardly in any other continents (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a; NRC, n.d.-b).

Likewise, as ECRE works policy-wise mainly around forcibly displaced people in Europe or involved in Europe's external policies, it mainly represents European countries such as Greece. However, its communication focus is, except one key partner (Turkey), exclusively European and arguably Eurocentric. Although largely neglected (supra), the forcibly displaced people involved in the Central African crisis are also part of Europe's external policies, as the EU is the largest donor of humanitarian and development aid and focuses on security and stabilization in the country (ECHO, 2020). Further, as an international key actor, UNHCR operates in much more countries than NRC and ECRE, which is reflected in its geographically broader and more diverse coverage (N=47, 23,86%). Notwithstanding its international profile, UNHCR's communication output is also, considering census data, geographically unbalanced, and arguably to some extent Eurocentric. Generally, most countries (PL: N=148, 75,13%, SL: N=154, 78,17%) are not mentioned. Corresponding with the examined crises' main host countries (UNHCR, n.d.-b), the communication focuses are thus relatively localised, partially contrasting common 'global refugee crisis' narratives (Fransen & de Haas, 2019).

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[92] We merged countries representing less than 5,00% at the PL or SL in 'Other countries'. Further, we mention percentages on the number of countries represented (N=197) (see codebook).

Figure 14. Current countries of the primary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
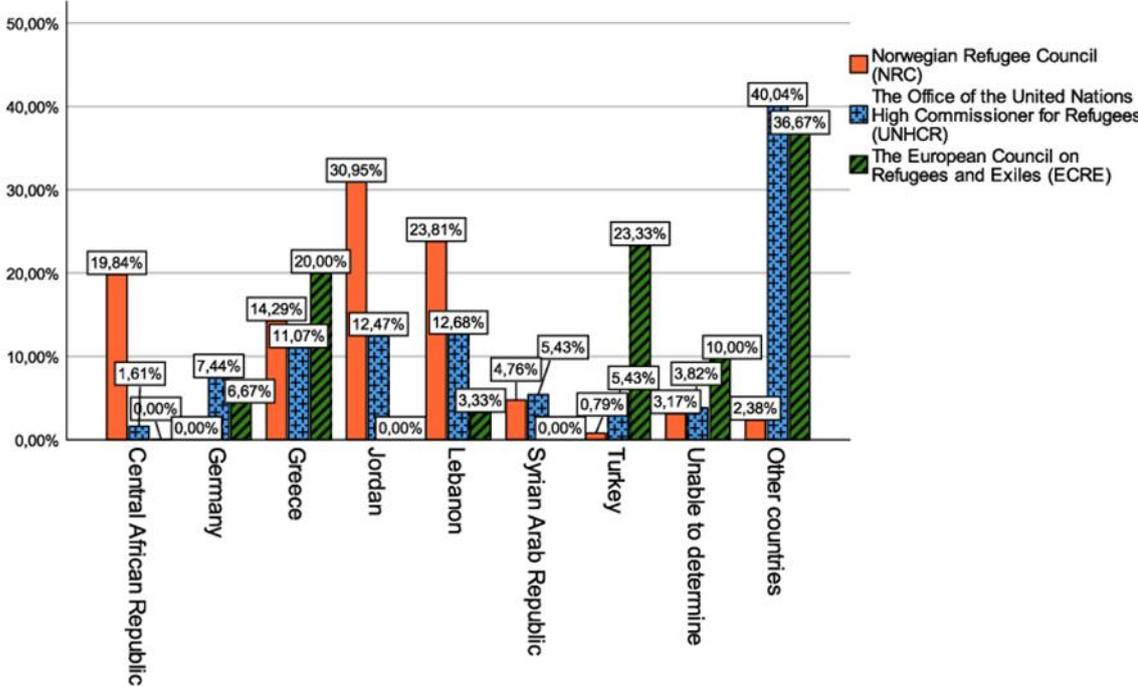
Figure 15. Current countries of the secondary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
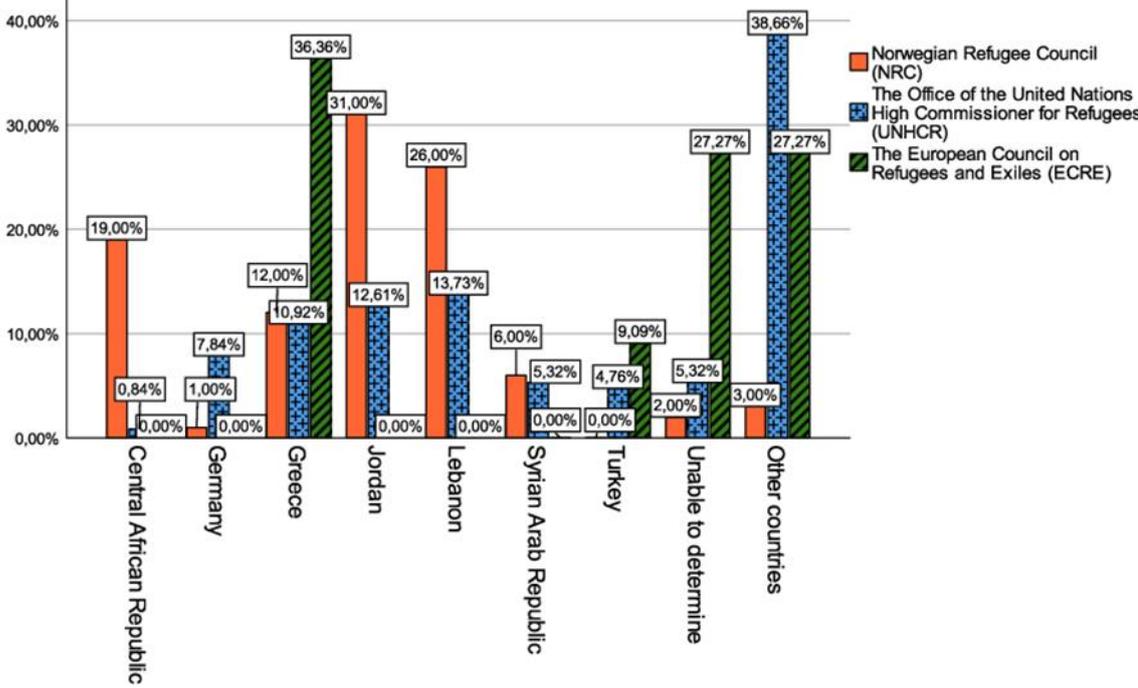
Figure 16. Current continents of the primary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
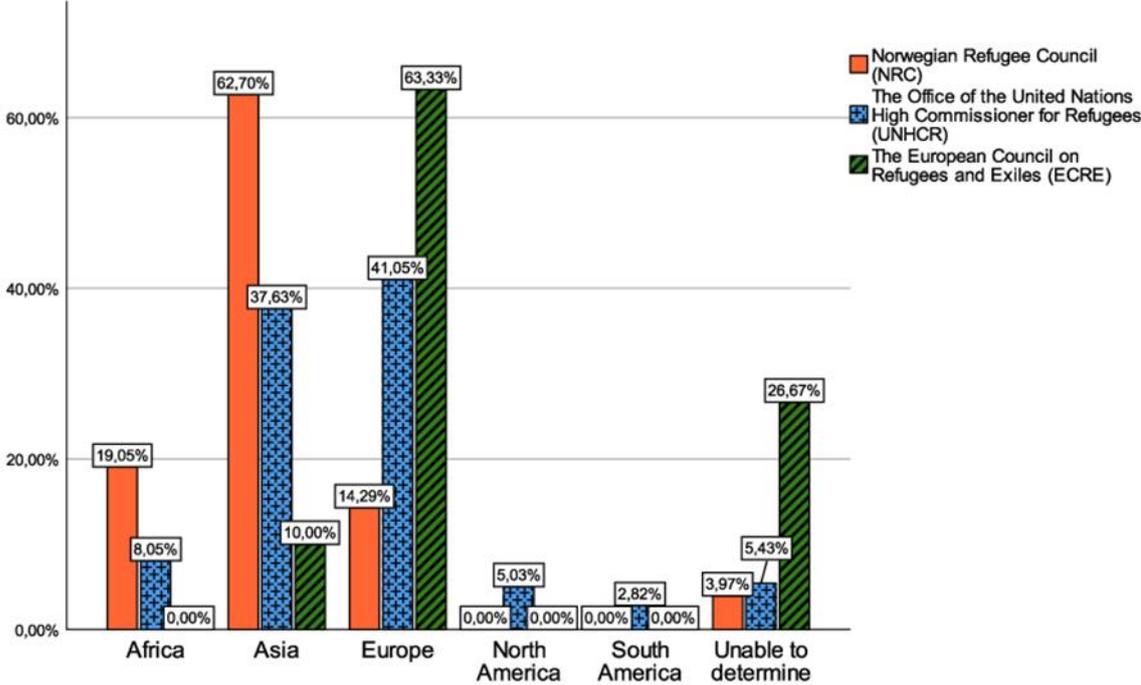
Figure 17. Current continents of the secondary represented forcibly displaced people per organization
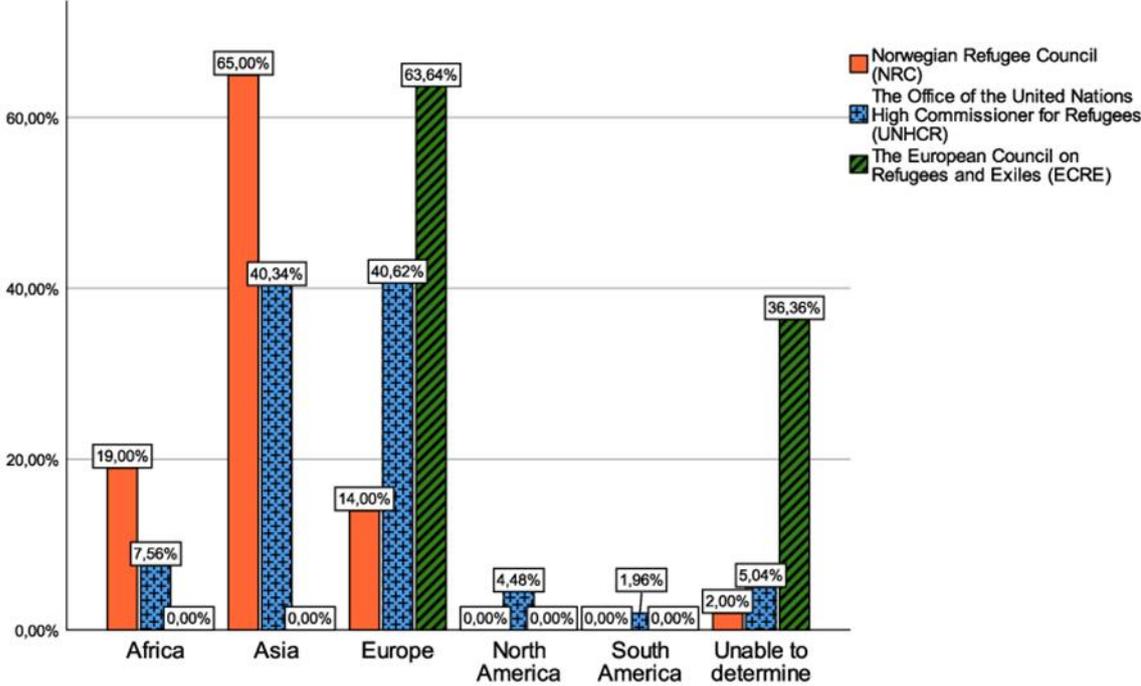
Nationality

Corresponding with their focus on the Syrian crisis (supra), all organizations, especially ECRE, mainly represent Syrians, while barely or not (explicitly) Central Africans, Palestinians, Lebanese, and Chadians. However, Syria and the Central African Republic have long histories of hosting people from respectively mainly Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, Sudan and Armenia, and Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, France, and Sudan (UN, 2019; UNHCR, n.d.-b). Nevertheless, given the lack of recent census data, and insufficiently high KALPHA scores (supra), we cannot make adequate sociodemographic comparisons. Additionally, our applied methodological principle of precaution partially explains the relatively low numbers of specific nationalities, particularly main nationalities. Specifically, various MCUs are largely about people involved in the Syrian and/or Central African crisis, including collectivizations of Syrians or Central Africans. However, the nationalities of individualized forcibly displaced people are often not explicitly mentioned, and thus not indicated.

Notwithstanding these methodological reservations and reflections, as the MCUs on the Central African crisis (54,08%) comprise slightly (but nonsignificantly) more at least one individualization than the MCUs on the Syrian crisis (52,79%), the nationalities of people involved in the Syrian crisis seem to be relatively more often explicitly mentioned than those of people involved in the Central African crisis. Especially as all the above-mentioned minority nationalities, except Chadians, are involved in the Syrian crisis. More generally, the relative absence of minority nationalities can be largely explained by societal (e.g., political and security contexts), organizational (no operational focus on minority nationalities), and routine (e.g., irrelevant, unknown) reasons.

Life stance and sexual orientation

All organizations significantly more often do not explicitly mention life stances than Islam and Christianity, while no other life stances are explicitly represented. Likewise, all organizations significantly more often do not explicitly mention sexual orientations than homosexual orientation at the primary level; at the secondary level, no specific sexual orientations are mentioned.

We can explain these findings in several ways. First, while textual cues suggested the likeability of the represented forcibly displaced people having a heterosexual orientation (e.g., representations of men and women as couples), this is never explicitly mentioned or could not be contextually inferred with absolute certainty. Hence, critical of heteronormative perspectives, our precautionary principle led to large numbers of not explicitly mentioned sexual orientations. Furthermore, refugee organizations are not keen on mentioning these sociodemographics because of organizational (no life stance- or sexual orientation organizational focuses), and ethical (personal, sensitive topics in both crisis and host countries), narrative (cf. mostly irrelevant), medium-based (conflicting with social media logics of simplified communication), humanitarian (potentially conflicting with humanitarian principles, e.g., neutrality, impartiality) and/or pragmatic (avoiding to contribute to incorrect 'religious conflict' narratives that humanitarian aid favours certain religious groups) routine reasons (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a).

Family situation and marital status

Corresponding with the organizations' respective thematic focus, NRC and UNHCR mainly and significantly more often represent family members than people without explicitly mentioned family situations. ECRE, however, portrays the latter slightly (but nonsignificantly) more often than the former, and significantly more often than NRC and UNHCR. Non-family members are never (explicitly) represented. This can be explained by societal (many [nuclear, extended and/or non-blood] families among the examined populations), and pragmatic routine reasons (appealing sociodemographic groups) (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a).

Second, all organizations mainly and significantly more often represent people without an explicitly mentioned marital status than non-singles and especially singles. This can likely be explained by similar narrative and ethical reasons as uttered in the discussions on family situation, life stance and sexual orientation. Likewise, ECRE significantly more often does not explicitly mention the marital status than NRC and UNHCR, corresponding with its thematic focuses. Conversely, UNHCR significantly more often explicitly represents non-singles than ECRE at the primary level, and than NRC and ECRE at the secondary level.

The focus on non-singles rather than on singles (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-b) can be mainly explained by similar routine (e.g., engagement) and societal reasons (e.g., many early marriages in the analysed countries) as for family situations. Further, marital status is often non-applicable or irrelevant (supra). Finally, our precautionary principle also plays a role, as being 'part of a family' and 'non-single' can be more easily contextually deduced with absolute certainty (e.g., representations of the person's family, partner).

Former and current profession[93]

Similar to the sociodemographic indicators of life stance, sexual orientation and marital status, all organizations often do not mention the represented people's professions, especially former ones, because of narrative (non-applicable or irrelevant) and defensive routine reasons (cf. often not legally allowed to work in host countries). Corresponding with their thematic focus (supra), ECRE barely mentions these professions while NRC's and UNHCR's represented professions are often organizationally related. This concerns participating in one or more types of the respective organization's (supported) assistance, courses and/or projects (NRC has mainly an educational focus; e.g., NRC, 2017, August 1), and volunteering (e.g., NRC, 2018, December 5) and/or working for the respective or another related organization (e.g., NRC, 2017, July 28; UNHCR, 2016, January 15). This frequently creates images of dependent, grateful beneficiaries who, relying on necessary assistance, can be resilient and ambitious in developing and/or deploying their talents (Ongenaert & Joye, 2019).

However, there are important interorganizational differences. NRC represents, to lesser extents, (low-skilled) agrarian, manufacturing and construction professions and unemployed people, while barely high-skilled professions. This can be explained by routine, organizational, and societal reasons. First, NRC mainly focuses on people with clear, relatable, visual and/or socially relevant considered

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[93] Given the large diversity of existing professions, we opted for a conventional, inductive, qualitative coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and then theoretically (e.g., UN, 2008) and empirically informed thematic analyses.

professions (e.g., shop owner, teacher, mechanic), for engagement reasons, rather than high-skilled professions. Second, NRC has many programs related to these professions (e.g., education programs, livelihood assistance). Third, these professions largely reflect the socio-economic profiles of NRC's 'beneficiaries' (Ongenaert et al., forthcoming-a). Forcibly displaced people in the crisis countries or respective regions often live in (extreme) poverty, especially as most vulnerable populations are often unable to leave the country or region (Lubkemann, 2008), cannot continue education and/or (legally) work, and thus are mostly unemployed (Verme et al., 2016). Furthermore, Syria and especially the Central African Republic do not have high education levels (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018).

UNHCR, however, highlights more diverse professions, probably related to its larger, more professionalized communication departments and broader scope (supra). This includes low- and high-skilled professions in especially arts, entertainment and recreation, agriculture, manufacturing, construction, education, wholesale and retail trade, food service activities, and professional, scientific and technical activities. UNHCR frequently centres on high-skilled, entrepreneurial, ambitious, recognizable, special and/or appealing professions and ditto people (e.g., UNHCR, 2016, July 11), reflecting refugee entrepreneurialism and, more broadly, neoliberal organizational (Turner, 2020) and institutional (supra) outlooks. These representations respond to important mainstream news values (e.g., bad news, surprise, entertainment, celebrity, good news, news organization's agenda,… see Harcup & O'neill, 2016), and are aimed to gain more public, media, political and financial support (Turner, 2020).

8.5   Discussion and conclusion

This article examined *who* and *what* are (not) presented in international refugee organizations' public communication for the Syrian and Central African crises and *why* (not). We generally observe a mixed picture of *what* and *who* are (not) represented, involving interorganizational commonalities and differences. Both can be mainly explained by various routine, organizational, institutional and societal reasons.

First, regarding *what*, the organizations predominantly communicated in 2015 and 2016 about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis, because of various individual, routine, organizational, institutional and societal aspects. Following media logics (Hawkins, 2011), humanitarian communication also mainly covers 'high-profile' conflicts. However, reflecting its organizational focus, NRC reported significantly more on people involved in the Central African crisis than UNHCR and especially ECRE. Although usually adapting to mainstream media logics, humanitarian organizations sometimes bypass them (Powers, 2018), mirroring 'alternative media logics' (Pajnik et al., 2020). Furthermore, the organizations mainly but varyingly communicated about the same three themes, following organizational and medium-based focuses (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). Finally, we confirm an increasing (audio)visualization, professionalization, and specialization of their communication approaches (Powers, 2018).

Second, regarding *who*, we observed that, acknowledging medium-based differences, mainly forcibly displaced people and refugee organizations obtain voices about the investigated populations, refining

earlier studies (e.g., Ongenaert & Joye, 2019; Chouliaraki, 2012). Further, the organizations mainly collectivize them (e.g., Ongenaert & Joye, 2019) but, considering interorganizational and medium-based differences, also individualize them. Shaped by production and societal contexts, the organizations represent these individualized forcibly displaced people, to varying degrees, in sociodemographically unbalanced ways. Specifically, this paper confirms earlier findings that generally young people are represented in humanitarian communication, but nuances that mainly women are portrayed (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011). Further, we examined various unexplored sociodemographics, and likewise found, acknowledging (significant) interorganizational differences, imbalances regarding (explicit) indicators of geographical location, legal status, current country and continent, nationality, life stance, sexual orientation, family situation, marital status and former and current profession. Summarized, connecting *what* and *who*, this study finds that, besides foreign news reporting (Joye, 2010), humanitarian communication likewise reproduces and reflects quantitative mediated hierarchies of suffering, both between and within crises.

However, we argue that refugee organizations, to the extent that routine, organizational, institutional and/or societal contexts allow for it, should communicate about crises and the involved actors in accurate, well-balanced manners, both for societal and strategic reasons. First, news and humanitarian communication can influence the image of, and, subsequently, public opinion on, and policies for humanitarian crises and the involved people (Chouliaraki, 2012). By overemphasizing and/or neglecting certain crises or actors, oversimplified narratives, perceptions and policy measures could be subconsciously and/or indirectly reinforced. By spotlighting particular sociodemographic groups, refugee organizations risk implicitly reinforcing hierarchies of deservingness (Yukich, 2013), eroding asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008), and affecting the representations and voices of and identification opportunities with other groups. Second, refugee organizations should provide correct, balanced information, to debunk populist myths and stereotypes, and as disinformation can harm humanitarian relief, humanitarian journalism and those affected by humanitarian emergencies, can disengage audiences, facilitates criticism, and exacerbates conflict and violence. While exaggerated or sensational communication can be well-intended (e.g., raising awareness and support), it can have adverse long-term effects (Bunce, 2019). Third, refugee organizations could simultaneously strategically position themselves in the highly competitive humanitarian sector as reliable 'authorised knowers' (Fenton, 2010), particularly in post-truth times when news media and citizens demand accurate, truthful sources and reporting (Bunce, 2019).

More generally, our study has extended and nuanced the scarce, fragmented literature about the *what* and *who* dimensions of refugee organizations' public communication by conducting quantitative research with a comparative, longitudinal and intersectional design, and relying on qualitative production research. Hence, it calls for comparative, longitudinal, intersectional and/or mixed methods research of humanitarian communication and warns for empirically unfounded generalizations. For reasons of focus, space and statistical validity, we mainly examined statistical relationships between the organizations and other variables. Future research can analyse further statistical relationships and explore interactions with additional components (e.g., *how*) and/or broaden them (e.g., distribution and/or reception dimensions).

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8.7 Tables with captions

Table 1. Intercoder reliability scores per variable

Name variables	KALPHA coefficient	Probability (q) of failure to achieve an alpha of at least alphamin 0,6700	Percent agreement (%)	Reliability
2.1 Title of the MCU	0,96	0,00		Reliable
2.3 Refugee organization	No KALPHA possible		100,00	Reliable
2.4 Type of media content	1,00	0,00		Reliable
2.5 Publication date	1,00	0,00		Reliable
2.6 Displacement crisis	1,00	0,00		Reliable
2.7 Length of the MCU	0,97	0,00		Reliable
2.8 Number of visual content units (VCUs)	0,99	0,00		Reliable
2.9 Number of audiovisual content units (ACUs)	1,00	0,00		Reliable
2.10 Main subject	0,86	0,00		Reliable
2.11 Primary theme	0,51	1,00		Unreliable
2.12 Secondary theme (optional)	0,37	1,00		Unreliable
3.1 Primary source category representing FDP(s) involved in the Syrian and/or Central African crises (optional)	0, 57	0,90		Unreliable
3.2 Secondary source category representing FDP(s) involved in the Syrian and/or Central African crises (optional)	0,34	1,00		Unreliable
4.1 Collectivization of represented forcibly displaced people	0,44	0,83	95,33	Relatively reliable
4.2 Individualization of represented	0,95	0,00		Reliable

forcibly displaced people				
4.3 Gender	0,89	0,00		Reliable
4.4 Age	0,92	0,00		Reliable
4.5 Described age group	0,90	0,02		Reliable
4.6 Geographic location	0,74	0,13		Relatively reliable
4.7 Legal status	0,82	0,05		Reliable
4.8 Current country	0,88	0,00		Reliable
4.9 Current continent	0,85	0,01		Reliable
4.10 Nationality	0,60	0,78		Unreliable
4.11 Life stance	0,00	0,63	92,54	Relatively reliable
4.12 Former profession	0,83	0,00		Reliable
4.13 Current profession	0,75	0,05		Relatively reliable
4.14 Family situation	0,86	0,01		Reliable
4.15 Marital status	0,92	0,00		Reliable
4.16 Sexual orientation	No KALPHA possible		94,03	Relatively reliable
5.1 Individualization of represented forcibly displaced people	0,80	0,06		Relatively reliable
5.2 Gender	0,76	0,15		Relatively reliable
5.3 Age	0,83	0,05		Reliable
5.4 Described age group	0,61	0,59		Unreliable
5.5 Geographic location	0,72	0,27		Relatively reliable
5.6 Legal status	0,73	0,38		Relatively reliable
5.7 Current country	0,89	0,00		Reliable
5.8 Current continent	0,81	0,05		Reliable
5.9 Nationality	0,29	1,00		Unreliable
5.10 Life stance	No KALPHA possible		86,27	Relatively reliable
5.11 Former profession	0,81	0,01		Reliable
5.12 Current profession	0,74	0,14		Relatively reliable
5.13 Family situation	0,86	0,05		Reliable
5.14 Marital status	0,57	0,72		Unreliable
5.15 Sexual orientation	No KALPHA possible		86,27	Relatively reliable

Table 2. Inter- and intraorganizational media genre differences regarding length

Compared media genres	Compared organizations	N	M	Mdn	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U
MCUs versus MCUs	NRC_{MCU}	230	777,84	689,50	446,11	76041,00 (p < .001)
	$UNHCR_{MCU}$	795	819,60	765,00	532,35	
	NRC_{MCU}	230	777,84	689,50	294,57	9185,00, (p < .001)
	$ECRE_{MCU}$	219	450,92	378,00	151,94	
	$UNHCR_{MCU}$	795	819,60	765,00	588,25	22855,50 (p < .001)
	$ECRE_{MCU}$	219	450,92	378,00	214,36	
PR versus NS	NRC_{PR}	40	668,30	645,50	104,49	3359,50 (p = .249)
	NRC_{NS}	190	800,90	710,00	117,82	
	$UNHCR_{PR}$	130	661,09	619,50	276,38	27415,00 (p < .001)
	$UNHCR_{NS}$	665	850,59	789,00	421,77	
	$ECRE_{PR}$	207	387,50	369,00	104,02	5,00 (p < .001)
	$ECRE_{NS}$	12	1.545,00	1.794,50	213,08	
PR versus PR	NRC_{PR}	40	668,30	645,50	89,81	2427,50 (p = .526)
	$UNHCR_{PR}$	130	661,09	619,50	84,17	
	NRC_{PR}	40	668,30	645,50	201,64	1034,50 (p < .001)
	$ECRE_{PR}$	207	387,50	369,00	109,00	
	$UNHCR_{PR}$	130	661,09	619,50	235,55	4803,50, p < .001
	$ECRE_{PR}$	207	387,50	369,00	127,21	

Table 3. Inter- and intraorganizational media genre differences regarding the numbers of VCUs and ACUs

Compared media genres	Compared organizations	N	VCUs				ACUs			
			M	Mdn	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	M	Mdn	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U
MCUs versus MCUs	NRC$_{MCU}$	230	2,35	1,00	521,78	89406,00 (p = .590)	0,14	0,00	436,13	73746,00 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{MCU}$	795	2,86	1,00	510,46		0,34	0,00	535,24	
	NRC$_{MCU}$	230	2,35	1,00	305,30	6716,00 (p < .001)	0,14	0,00	235,47	22776,00 (p < .001)
	ECRE$_{MCU}$	219	0,33	0,00	140,67		0,00	0,00	214,00	
	UNHCR$_{MCU}$	795	2,86	1,00	578,57	30550,50 (p < .001)	0,34	0,00	539,45	61648,50 (p < .001)
	ECRE$_{MCU}$	219	0,33	0,00	249,50		0,00	0,00	391,50	
PR versus NS	NRC$_{PR}$	40	1,03	1,00	71,35	2034,00 (p < .001)	0,08	0,00	112,98	3699,00 (p = .604)
	NRC$_{NS}$	190	2,63	1,50	124,79		0,15	0,00	116,03	
	UNHCR$_{PR}$	130	0,28	0,00	126,40	7917,00 (p < .001)	0,02	0,00	290,94	29307,50 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{NS}$	665	3,37	1,00	451,09		0,40	0,00	418,93	
	ECRE$_{PR}$	207	0,31	0,00	107,36	694,50 (p = .002)	0,00	0,00	110,00	1242,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{NS}$	12	0,75	1,00	155,63		0,00	0,00	110,00	
PR versus PR	NRC$_{PR}$	40	1,03	1,00	120,20	1212,00 (p < .001)	0,08	0,00	88,88	2465,00 (p = .121)
	UNHCR$_{PR}$	130	0,28	0,00	74,82		0,02	0,00	84,46	
	NRC$_{PR}$	40	1,03	1,00	176,21	2051,50 (p < .001)	0,08	0,00	131,76	3829,50 (p < .001)
	ECRE$_{PR}$	207	0,31	0,00	113,91		0,00	0,00	122,50	
	UNHCR$_{PR}$	130	0,28	0,00	165,11	12949,50 (p = .462)	0,02	0,00	171,39	13144,50 (p = .028)
	ECRE$_{PR}$	207	0,31	0,00	171,44		0,00	0,00	167,50	
NS versus NS	NRC$_{NS}$	190	2,63	1,50	411,15	59973,50 (p = .258)	0,15	0,00	348,22	48017,50 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{NS}$	665	3,37	1,00	432,81		0,40	0,00	450,79	
	NRC$_{NS}$	190	2,63	1,50	104,97	481,50 (p < .001)	0,15	0,00	102,10	1026,00 (p = .251)
	ECRE$_{NS}$	12	0,75	1,00	46,63		0,00	0,00	92,00	
	UNHCR$_{NS}$	665	3,37	1,00	342,42	1716,00 (p < .001)	0,40	0,00	341,07	2616,00 (p = .013)
	ECRE$_{NS}$	12	0,75	1,00	149,50		0,00	0,00	224,50	

Table 4. Intraorganizational temporal differences regarding the numbers of VCUs and ACUs

Compared publication years	Compared organizations	N	VCUs				ACUs			
			M	Mdn	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U	M	Mdn	Mean Rank	Mann-Whitney U
2015 versus 2016	NRC$_{2015}$	43	2,02	1,00	56,40	1479,00 (p = .666)	0,00	0,00	57,50	1526,50 (p = .440)
	NRC$_{2016}$	72	1,85	1,00	58,96		0,01	0,00	58,30	
	UNHCR$_{2015}$	262	2,85	1,00	242,02	28955,50 (p = .138)	0,22	0,00	234,09	26877,500 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{2016}$	238	3,08	1,00	259,84		0,38	0,00	268,57	
	ECRE$_{2015}$	92	0,01	0,00	73,82	2513,00 (p = .054)	0,00	0,00	75,50	2668,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2016}$	58	0,07	0,00	78,17		0,00	0,00	75,50	
2015 versus 2017	NRC$_{2015}$	43	2,02	1,00	46,62	1058,50 (p = .026)	0,00	0,00	49,50	1182,50 (p = .007)
	NRC$_{2017}$	65	2,71	2,00	59,72		0,23	0,00	57,81	
	UNHCR$_{2015}$	262	2,85	1,00	203,00	18732,00 (p = .063)	0,22	0,00	195,41	16743,50 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{2017}$	159	2,81	1,00	224,19		0,38	0,00	236,69	
	ECRE$_{2015}$	92	0,01	0,00	47,14	58,50 (p < .001)	0,00	0,00	59,00	1150,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2017}$	25	0,96	1,00	102,66		0,00	0,00	59,00	
2015 versus 2018	NRC$_{2015}$	43	2,02	1,00	41,02	818,00 (p = .040)	0,00	0,00	41,50	838,50 (p = .001)
	NRC$_{2018}$	50	2,88	1,50	52,14		0,32	0,00	51,73	
	UNHCR$_{2015}$	262	2,85	1,00	195,09	16661,50 (p = .253)	0,22	0,00	182,47	13353,00 (p < .001)
	UNHCR$_{2018}$	136	2,57	1,00	207,99		0,44	0,00	232,32	
	ECRE$_{2015}$	92	0,01	0,00	46,74	22,00 (p < .001)	0,00	0,00	68,50	2024,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2018}$	44	1,00	1,00	114,00		0,00	0,00	68,50	
2016 versus 2017	NRC$_{2016}$	72	1,85	1,00	60,98	1762,50 (p = .006)	0,01	0,00	64,44	2011,50 (p = .003)
	NRC$_{2017}$	65	2,71	2,00	77,88		0,23	0,00	74,05	
	UNHCR$_{2016}$	238	3,08	1,00	197,13	18475,00 (p = .681)	0,38	0,00	194,48	17845,50 (p = .241)
	UNHCR$_{2017}$	159	2,81	1,00	201,81		0,38	0,00	205,76	
	ECRE$_{2016}$	58	0,07	0,00	30,86	79,00 (p < .001)	0,00	0,00	42,00	725,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2017}$	25	0,96	1,00	67,84		0,00	0,00	42,00	
2016 versus 2018	NRC$_{2016}$	72	1,85	1,00	55,92	1398,50 (p = .022)	0,01	0,00	56,33	1428,00 (p < .001)
	NRC$_{2018}$	50	2,88	1,50	69,53		0,32	0,00	68,94	
	UNHCR$_{2016}$	238	3,08	1,00	188,26	16004,00 (p = .853)	0,38	0,00	179,79	14350,00 (p = .028)
	UNHCR$_{2018}$	136	2,57	1,00	186,18		0,44	0,00	200,99	
	ECRE$_{2016}$	58	0,07	0,00	31,02	88,00 (p < .001)	0,00	0,00	51,50	1276,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2018}$	44	1,00	1,00	78,50		0,00	0,00	51,50	
2017 versus 2018	NRC$_{2017}$	65	2,71	2,00	57,57	1597,00 (p = .868)	0,23	0,00	56,36	1518,50 (p = .371)
	NRC$_{2018}$	50	2,88	1,50	58,56		0,32	0,00	60,13	
	UNHCR$_{2017}$	159	2,81	1,00	150,73	10377,50 (p = .542)	0,38	0,00	144,04	10183,00 (p = .311)
	UNHCR$_{2018}$	136	2,57	1,00	144,81		0,44	0,00	152,63	
	ECRE$_{2017}$	25	0,96	1,00	34,12	528,00 (p = .185)	0,00	0,00	35,00	550,00 (p = 1.000)
	ECRE$_{2018}$	44	1,00	1,00	35,50		0,00	0,00	35,00	

Table 5. Numeric age of the primary and secondary represented forcibly displaced people per organization

Organization	Level	Parameters	Statistics
NRC	PL	N	69
		M	21,99
		Mdn	17,00
	SL	N	37
		M	18,27
		Mdn	12,00
UNHCR	PL	N	305
		M	27,89
		Mdn	27,00
	SL	N	171
		M	23,35
		Mdn	21,00
ECRE	PL	N	7
		M	15,00
		Mdn	15,00
	SL	N	0
		M	N.a.
		Mdn	N.a.

8.8 Figure captions

Chapter 9: Manufacturing humanitarian imagery. Explaining Norwegian Refugee Council's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises

Abstract

Although the public communication of refugee organizations can influence public perceptions, current research lacks essential production and societal perspectives. This study multimethodologically analyses the production and societal contexts of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies. We conducted a three-week office ethnography at Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) main media and communication department, ten expert interviews with NRC's media and communication officers, and a document analysis of its key communication policy documents. By drawing on and contributing to the Hierarchy of Influences model and neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency, we analyse NRC's key discursive strategies towards the recent Syrian and Central African crises. First, we found that NRC's main representation and argumentation strategies are moulded by different intertwined medium-based and/or context-sensitive routines, organizational goals and trends, institutional 'traditional' path dependencies, and challenging societal contexts. Second, NRC's crisis foci are institutionally shaped through the 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect'. This leads to widening attention and funding gaps between high- and low-profile crises and is reinforced and/or limited by organizational and individual (counter)incentives, sensitive contexts, and context-sensitive routines. Finally, NRC's choice of represented forcibly displaced people can be largely explained by organization-, pragmatics- and/or ethics-driven selection criteria, and various contextual sociodemographic reasons.

Keywords

expert interviews, forcibly displaced people, hierarchy of influences model, humanitarian communication, neo-institutionalism, office ethnography, public communication, refugee organizations

Reference

9.1 Introduction

In recent decades, the number of forcibly displaced people has increased substantially worldwide (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021). Nonetheless, they often encounter restrictive refugee policies, adverse public opinions, and xenophobia (Khiabany, 2016). While international refugee organizations often play critical roles in these situations through providing humanitarian assistance (Betts et al., 2012), they increasingly also inform, sensitize, and influence media, public and political agendas (Green, 2018). Refugee organizations' public communication can influence the public perceptions about forcibly displaced people and crises, and thus have broader policy and societal effects (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019).

Most research has examined the news-making activities of humanitarian organizations, and broader changing journalism-NGO relationships (e.g., Powers, 2016, 2018; Van Leuven and Joye, 2014). However, fewer studies specifically investigated refugee organizations' agenda-building strategies that influence *which* topics target audiences should think about (i.e. first-level agenda-building) and/or *how* they should think about them (i.e. second-level agenda-building) (Kim and Kiousis, 2012). Similarly, most studies have focused on 'how' refugee organizations represent and discuss forcibly displaced people, and identified and criticized—from ethical-normative perspectives—these discursive strategies as dehumanizing, decontextualizing and/or universalizing (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert et al., 2022). More concretely, refugee organizations mainly represent forcibly displaced people either as passive, vulnerable, voiceless victims in need or as voiced, self-determined individuals, and often discuss them as part of political realist argumentation strategies (ibid.). However, little research (e.g., Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson HL, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, in review) exists about 'what' and 'who' refugee organizations mainly communicate. Moreover, the research on refugee organizations' public communication is mainly text-focused, and barely discusses underlying reasons, lacking comprehensive, comparative, explanatory production and societal perspectives (e.g., Ihlen et al., 2015, Nikunen, 2019; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). Nevertheless, triangulating text-focused, normative and communication production-focused, practice-based approaches is essential to better understand and be able to make evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication (Orgad, 2018). Especially as critical junctures, such as the ongoing Syrian and Ukrainian crises, may prompt refugee organizations to reassess their communication policies and practices (Green, 2018).

Therefore, we investigate *how international refugee organizations' public communication strategies can be explained by their production and societal contexts* through an in-depth, comparative multi-method case study. We have conducted a three-week office ethnography at the main media and communication department of the leading international non-governmental organization (INGO) Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), ten expert interviews with media and communication officers, and a document analysis of key communication policy documents to explain key discursive strategies in various media genres towards the recent Syrian and Central African crises. By drawing on and contributing to Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) model, and neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency (e.g., Scott 2014), which both examine production and societal processes, we analyse the underlying reasons of NRC's main (1) representation and argumentation strategies ('how'), (2) crisis foci ('what'), and (3) represented groups of forcibly displaced people ('who'). We first discuss refugee organizations' discursive strategies and production

contexts, followed by the interactions between refugee organisations, institutional stakeholders and broader societal trends to identify further explanations and ground our analytical framework.

9.2   Literature review
Discursive strategies and production contexts

Representation strategies

Refugee organizations generally use 'negative' pity-oriented representation strategies emphasizing common humanity, particularly in their press releases (Ongenaert et al., 2022). They tend to portray forcibly displaced people from the Global South as passive, anonymous, victimized, voiceless masses, juxtaposed to 'economic migrants', and foster saviour-saved and hierarchical deservingness narratives (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). This humanitarian imagery is part of broader crisis and emergency discourses, seems to interact with particular political and media trends and narratives (see below), and can be explained by pragmatic reasons, including gaining media attention, opposing threat narratives, and/or facilitating solidarity and fundraising (Johnson HL, 2011).

Having said that, refugee organizations also utilize 'positive' pity-oriented representation strategies, portraying forcibly displaced people from the 'Global South' as (sometimes unrealistically) hopeful, empowered, entrepreneurial individuals, close to 'whiteness' (Turner, 2020), and this particularly in human interest-oriented media genres (e.g., news stories, photos and videos) (Ihlen et al., 2015, Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Ongenaert et al., 2022). These discursive choices can be explained by intertwined ethical and pragmatic reasons. First, there is a growing ethical awareness about the implications of negative pity-oriented representations among humanitarian organizations (Chouliaraki, 2012). Further, these representations counter burden and threat narratives and are aimed to foster public solidarity (Turner, 2020). More generally, they reflect private sector narratives (see below), and refugee organizations' self-reliance focus in the increasingly neoliberalized international refugee regime (Krause and Schmidt, 2020). Forcibly displaced people's voices are thereby often used to strengthen organizational discourses (Pupavac, 2008).

As previously mentioned, few studies have analysed 'who' and 'what' are mainly portrayed. What we do know is that women and children are spotlighted and/or acquire 'voices' as 'ideal victims' ('who', Höijer, 2004) mainly for pragmatic reasons (e.g., engagement, fundraising) (Johnson HL, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). Hence, refugee organizations risk supporting hierarchical deservingness discourses (Kyriakidou, 2021) and eroding asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008). Second, acknowledging important organizational differences, refugee organizations generally focus on high-profile rather than low-profile crises ('what') (Ongenaert and Joye, in review), which can be potentially explained by pragmatic news-making efforts (cf. news logics, see below).

Argumentation strategies

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Refugee organizations frequently attempt to convince states to voluntarily participate in protection by using 'cross-issue persuasion' (Betts, 2009) or, more comprehensively, 'cross-interest persuasion' (Ongenaert et al., 2022). They link states' contributions to protection to (perceived) larger state interests in various areas (e.g., human rights, humanitarianism, economics, migration, security, Betts, 2009), principles and values (Ongenaert et al., 2022). For instance, UNHCR states that providing 'Southern' protection can assist in containing North-oriented irregular migration (Betts, 2009; Ongenaert et al., 2022).

This pragmatic, political realist argumentation strategy is enabled by and responds to broader 'migration management' policy trends. These suggest that migration should be controlled in organized and consistent manners (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). This paradigm serves state interests and mirrors policy shifts from protection (e.g., local integration, resettlement) to humanitarian-security nexus approaches (e.g., voluntary repatriation, [limited] local assistance) (Betts et al., 2012). As most forcibly displaced people come from and reside in the 'Global South' (UNHCR, n.d.), 'Southern' states have the largest legal duties but usually the least protection capacity (e.g., asylum). Resourceful 'Northern' states, however, are barely obliged to contribute to 'Southern' protection (i.e. responsibility-sharing), incentivizing regional containment. While this 'North-South impasse' seriously affects forcibly displaced people's protection and needs for durable solutions (Betts, 2009), many states increasingly close, securitize, and/or externalize their borders, and focus on policies in and/or with third countries (Andersson, 2014), requiring international refugee organizations to use pragmatic argumentation strategies.

Interacting institutional and societal trends

Pursuing media, political, financial, and/or public support, refugee organizations often interact with news media, political actors and private sector actors, and/or engage in agenda-building (Green, 2018). These actors disseminate particular 'institutional messages', which are 'collations of thoughts that take on lives independent of senders and recipients. They may have the force of rules, spread intentionally or unintentionally via multiple channels to narrow or wider audiences', and 'carry institutional logics—patterns of beliefs and rules' (Lammers, 2011, p. 154).

First, in recent decades, the competition for media attention within the expanding humanitarian sector has intensified substantially. Furthermore, following journalistic, political and advocacy transformations, INGOs have generally obtained larger agenda-building possibilities (Powers, 2016; Van Leuven and Joye, 2014). Considering digitalization, globalization, economic constraints, and rising workloads (Schudson, 2011), journalists are generally open to information subsidies, particularly from INGOs. Given growing distrust in politics, NGOs are progressively viewed as reliable news sources (Powers, 2018). Furthermore, resulting from increasing institutionalization, competition, professionalization, mediatization, and marketization, (refugee) NGOs increasingly produce professional publicity (Ihlen et al., 2015; Powers, 2018) that responds to and aligns with mainstream 'news logics', thus following the news rhythm, formats, values, and working conditions (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014). Humanitarian journalism generally relies on particular news values (e.g., magnitude;

cultural, psychological and geographical proximity; economic, military and [geo]political importance), and adequate working conditions (e.g., accessibility; security; press freedom) (Joye, 2010). Its subjects and frames consequently often mirror 'Northern' interests and perspectives, spotlighting 'high-profile' conflicts, while neglecting others (Hawkins, 2011). Further, news media tend to ambivalently present forcibly displaced people as threats, burdens and/or, reflecting humanitarian narratives, victims (Chouliaraki and Stolic, 2017; Pantti and Ojala, 2019), centring on iconic imagery (Mortensen, 2017; Imanishi, 2022).

Mirroring said news narratives and practices, forcibly displaced people are mainly represented as 'threats' and/or 'victims' in political discourses (Van Leuven et al., 2018). Hence, influencing governments through public communication proves to be difficult for NGOs, especially given increasing populism (Nikunen, 2019) and states' rising unwillingness to collaborate (Betts et al., 2012) and financial and political influence on these organizations (Maxwell and Gelsdorf, 2019). Various refugee organizations depend heavily on states' voluntary, short-term, inflexible funding (Betts, 2009), sometimes preventing extensive policy criticism (Chimni, 2000). Additionally, refugee organizations must continuously balance advocacy and compliance with national policies to be able to assist (Green, 2018).

Finally, given dwindling public and individual funding, rising demands, and growing competition, refugee organizations increasingly engage in private sector collaborations, primarily for mutual financial, substantive, and branding reasons (Benton and Glennie, 2016). These alliances represent the expanding neoliberalization and technologization in the international refugee regime (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010), primarily embodied by large global humanitarian-corporate complexes, assembling the main humanitarian relief organizers, donors, and providers (Johnson CG, 2011). Private sector actors usually heroize forcibly displaced people, showcasing their abilities, drive, bravery, and rational behaviour, often in gender-stereotypical manners, mainly for humanitarian branding reasons (Bergman Rosamond and Gregoratti, 2020).

The hierarchy of influences model and theories of path dependency

Consistent with our research focus, Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) HOI model considers media content to be influenced by the interactions between:

(1) individual characteristics of media professionals (e.g., personal and professional backgrounds, roles, attitudes, ethics);

(2) working routines (i.e. repeated working practices, forms and rules, both with production-, audience-, and supplier-oriented foci);

(3) organizational characteristics (e.g., organizational policies, activities, goals, target audiences, resources);

(4) institutional issues (i.e. institutional trends, including mediatization, professionalization, specialization, and interactions with other institutions such as media, political, and economic institutions); and

(5) social systems (e.g., political, cultural, economic, ideological subsystems).

Although technological developments have shifted and/or diffused these levels' boundaries in new media ecosystems, the model remains a valuable, guiding systematic framework to analyse media content in various (including non-journalistic) contexts and identify new elements (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016). Hence, we aim to theoretically contribute to the model. First, by examining our research subject at all levels of the model, we address its hiatuses of hardly been (fully) applied outside journalism research. Second, acknowledging the importance of institutional interactions for explaining refugee organizations' public communication strategies (see above), we complement the model with neo-institutionalist theories, which consider communication important in understanding organizations, institutions and society (Fredriksson et al., 2013).

Neo-institutionalist theory examines how organizations interact with their social environment, and how this environment, materialized in institutions, shapes, confines and alters organizations. Institutional logics guide organizations' actions, issues, and structures. Previous decisions and broader histories shape current actions and processes (Scott, 2014). Accordingly, theories of path dependency imply that institutional developments are path-dependent, constraining radical change. These theories typically analyse institutions' internal self-reproducing capacity. Reflecting the three pillars, Scott (2014) identifies three institutionalization mechanisms that incentivize continuity and disincentivize (radical) change:

(1) Institutionalization based on increasing returns (e.g., feedback effects, setup costs, learning effects).

(2) Institutionalization based on increasing commitments (e.g., norms, values, structures, procedures).

(3) Institutionalization as increasing objectification (shared beliefs).

Nevertheless, external pressures, including triggering, status quo undermining events ('critical junctures'), can create dramatic changes (Pierson, 2000). Theories of path dependency, however, barely examine if and how external pressures reinforce path dependencies. Powers (2018) finds that 'traditional' path dependencies in institutional fields are strengthened by 'reinforcing' path dependencies in interacting proximate institutional fields. Specifically, INGOs persist in pursuing media-centred publicity strategies because they consider journalism as a socially proximate ally to obtain publicity, facilitated by knowledge accumulation, feedback effects, and start-up costs. This path dependency is reinforced by political and donor fields which stimulate media coverage for informative and evaluation purposes (Powers, 2018).

9.3 Methodology

This paper investigates multimethodologically the production and social contexts of NRC's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises. NRC is a leading INGO, which operates in and communicates about the current large-scale, protracted Syrian and Central African crises (NRC, n.d.). Furthermore, these crises are in nature complementary (e.g., scale, implications, level of mediatization), allowing us to analyse if and how these contextual factors influence NRC's public communication. Informed by the literature, including earlier findings on NRC's public communication strategies as concrete starting points (Ongenaert and Joye, in review), we examined the underlying reasons of NRC's main (1) representation and argumentation strategies ('how'), (2) crisis foci ('what'), and (3) represented groups of forcibly displaced people ('who'). To ensure the reliability and validity of the results, we report transparently and reflexively about the research decisions and used triangulation (Clark et al., 2021).

The first author conducted a three-week office ethnography at NRC's Oslo-based main media and communication department in March and April 2019. This method is particularly suited to examine how humanitarian communication is influenced by individual, routine, organizational, institutional and societal levels (Hansen and Machin, 2019). Ethnographic research can reveal daily practices that might be too self-evident or sensitive to disclose in interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019), and can complicate and/or refine critiques of hegemonic humanitarian discourses (Markowitz, 2001). Nevertheless, this method has barely been used in examining refugee organizations' discursive strategies (e.g., Ihlen et al., 2015) and broader humanitarian communication (Ong, 2019).

After having obtained institutional informed consent (e.g., not disclosing confidential information), the researcher observed the media officers' work in the open-plan office, including all daily, weekly and monthly media meetings, a social media team meeting, various seminars, daily lunches, and two social events. After initial reluctance, by being friendly and open, and sensitive to the working context (e.g., high workload), trust relationships were gradually developed, many informal on-the-scene conversations were held, and confidential communication policy documents were obtained, which arguably increased the quality of the research (Tracy, 2010).

At all times, the researcher pursued to be reflexive (e.g., writing field and reflexive notes) and sensitive to 'ethically important moments' (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) to avoid common ethical issues, including 'going native' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019), and a 'tightening humanitarian embrace' (Brankamp, 2021). Correspondingly, he rather engaged in participant observation than in observant participation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). This implied a more mobile field positioning (e.g., observing various people, teams, places), an outward analytic gaze (i.e. rather participant- than self-directed), and an inscription-oriented data assembly (i.e. taking field notes during and/or after observations) (Seim, 2021), triangulating descriptive observations with focused and selective observations (Spradley, 1980). Finally, the researcher tried to thoughtfully leave the research scene (e.g., openness about the research period and further procedures, thanking for participating) and complete and publish the research (e.g., asking permission for interview quotes, reporting reflexively) (Tracy, 2010).

Additionally, the first author conducted ten audio-recorded semi-structured expert interviews with NRC media and communication officers, involving reconstruction (Reich and Barnoy, 2016) and oral history methods (Ritchie, 2015), to flexibly gain in-depth insights into their perspectives on the subject (Clark et al., 2021). The interviewees were selected in mutual consultation on function and availability. Upon providing informed consent, the English-spoken interviews took place in March and April 2019, either face-to-face or remotely, and lasted between 55 and 98 minutes. We used interview guides, adapted to the interviewees' specific function, and newly acquired insights, and sensitive interview techniques (e.g., first posing open, exploratory questions). Two research assistants typed the transcriptions; the first author checked and corrected them. For privacy and security reasons, pseudonyms are used and no identity-deriving or other sensitive information is mentioned. Finally, the first author conducted a document analysis (Asdal and Reinertsen, 2022) on nine confidentially obtained key communication policy documents (e.g., global communication strategy, branding, style), focusing on relevant production and social aspects.

Our multi-method approach is theoretically informed, but—given the limited, fragmented research— also inductive and explorative. The first author cyclically analysed the field notes, interview transcriptions, and documents through thematic coding (Jensen, 2021) at three levels: open; axial; and selective. First, the data were broken down, analysed, compared and assigned to one or more codes. During axial coding, these codes were integrated into broader, abstract concepts. Finally, during selective coding, the codes were consolidated to develop a theoretical framework (Clark et al., 2021).

9.4   Results
'How': Representation strategies explained

The data indicate the combined use of 'negative' and 'positive' pity-oriented representation strategies, albeit to different degrees.

Numerical 'negative' pity-oriented representations

In press releases, NRC usually represents forcibly displaced people through 'negative' pity based-representation strategies, that is as homogeneous, passive, victimized masses (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert et al., 2022). While mainly high-level NRC (field) staff are quoted and/or paraphrased, including about forcibly displaced people, the latter are barely, and if being given a voice, their statements mainly correspond with the organizational perspectives (Ongenaert and Joye, in review).

Most interviewees argue that NRC's main goal with press releases is to briefly convey key organizational advocacy messages about urgent, newsworthy considered 'hard' themes (e.g., forced displacement, protection, humanitarian needs, refugee rights) to generate media, public and political attention, interest and support (Green, 2018). Press releases consequently tend to imply 'negative' pity-oriented representations which support its narratives and objectives. This humanitarian imagery

is shaped through NRC's intertwined medium-based audience-, organization- and supplier-oriented routines, which mainly respond to organizational, humanitarian and/or news logics.

First, audience-wise, we found that NRC's practice to only include concise, factual, 'hard' information, without (large) quotes or portrayals of forcibly displaced people, is motivated by the staff's (perceived) knowledge of news logics, including (perceived) journalistic working conditions (limited time), format preferences (limited space), and norms and values (perceived newsworthiness and/or source reliability) (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014). As Mr. Mpenza elucidates:

> 'In press releases, the priority is to find the news angle (…) And if we have new figures, new data (…) then there is a place for a press release (…). [A]nd that's partly also why I'm not a big fan of putting individual stories in the press release, because in a press release, I think, you need to speak to a bigger picture (…)' (Personal Interview, 15 April 2019).

Second, organization-wise, this is further informed by organizational logics, including the officers' working conditions (limited time and/or access to create extensive portrayals), which need to respond to media (urgent, reactive nature of press releases) and institutional logics (strong humanitarian competition for media attention) (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014). Furthermore, NRC's focus on high-level staff can be largely explained by organizational and news logics (importance of organizational perspectives and visibility). Finally, supplier-wise, NRC's main information sources are quantitative data-oriented organizational (e.g., programs, research) and other humanitarian sources (e.g., UN agencies, other humanitarian [partner] organizations), which further explains why organizational and humanitarian perspectives, including 'negative' pity-oriented representations, prevail in NRC's communication efforts. However, sometimes NRC mediates these numerical representations' dehumanizing effects through various routines, both directly (e.g., including at least one quote of a forcibly displaced person, and/or decent photos) and indirectly (e.g., providing multimedia packages with more humanizing media genres [see below], and/or contact details of forcibly displaced people willing to testify to journalists), mainly responding to organizational and news logics.

Personalizing pity-oriented representations

In news stories, photos and videos, the data show that NRC mainly represents forcibly displaced people more extensively through 'negative' and/or 'positive' pity-oriented representation strategies, that is as victimized, suffering and/or resilient, active doers, thinkers and/or speakers with agency (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert et al., 2022). Here, both forcibly displaced people and high-level staff are mainly voiced (Ongenaert and Joye, in review).

Various interviewees state that NRC's key objectives with these media genres range from gaining audience awareness, engagement, brand awareness, accountability, fundraising to donor visibility (Orgad and Seu, 2014). Therefore, they mainly cover engaging 'soft' themes, including human interest, basic facts about humanitarian situations, NRC's impact, staff and organizational core tasks (e.g., education, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food aid, Ongenaert and Joye, in review). This usually

implies more extensive, personalizing 'negative' and/or 'positive' pity-oriented representations. Likewise, we observed that these are shaped through medium-based routines, which mainly respond to organizational, general public, and/or donor logics.

First, audience-wise, various interviewees argue that these media genres and the representations are strongly shaped by various audience parameters involving elements of production (e.g., appealing story angles, narrative structure, representations, emotions, values), distribution (e.g., strategic, sociodemographic, Global Northern-targeted social media communication), and audience evaluation (e.g., web and social media metrics, particularly on engagement). With 'strong', personalizing stories, NRC tries to create identification and relatability, and engage audiences (Chouliaraki, 2012; Orgad and Seu, 2014). While 'positive' pity-oriented representations often enhance awareness, accountability and donation motivations, 'negative' pity-oriented representations are believed to be frequently fundraising effective. As Mr. Mpenza explains:

> 'One form of story that we tend to look for is the story of hope (…) to push contrary to the idea that refugees or displaced people are just a burden (…) Of course when there are moments of crisis (…), we tend to focus more on the immediate needs that we need to provide. That is mostly also a story for donors, for governments, to tell them, "look, there is this happening"' (Personal interview, 15 April 2019).

With some news stories, NRC tries to meet donor visibility requirements for funded projects, essentially to thank donors for their contributions and to highlight the actual achievements, encouraging the use of 'positive' pity-oriented representations.

Second, organization-wise, these representation strategies are further moulded by organizational logics, particularly regarding working conditions (e.g., more production time than for press releases given their less urgent and time-bound nature) (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014). We found that NRC identified these media genres as ideal vehicles to disseminate its organizational perspectives, explaining the prominence of 'suited' organizationally related forcibly displaced people (see below). Intertwined therewith, the main sources are organizational sources (mainly NRC country staff), again illustrating the importance of inserting organizational perspectives and thus (self)promoting and enhancing NRC's visibility (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Pupavac, 2008).

Finally, we can explain NRC's discursive strategies through various organizational tendencies. Our observation research indicates that, following internationalization and expansion trends, NRC's media and communication work has become professionalized and specialized (e.g., different media and advocacy, and communication sections with distinct logics) (Powers, 2018). Further, NRC's focus has shifted over the years from media-oriented to general public-oriented media genres partially explaining NRC's extensive 'negative' and 'positive' pity-oriented representation strategies. Due to increasing ethical awareness about representation issues, NRC's communication policy emphasizes that forcibly displaced people should not only be portrayed as victims but also as voiced, self-

determined people (NRC, 2019), leading to NRC's observed 'positive' pity-oriented representation strategies.

'How': Argumentation strategies explained

The expert interviews reveal various key argumentation strategies, including pity-, needs- and solutions-oriented strategies, cross-interest persuasion, and irony-oriented argumentation strategies that attempt to generate relatability by embedding the subject into audiences' environments (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019; Ongenaert et al., 2022).

NRC's use of these pragmatic, context-sensitive argumentation strategies is stimulated by intertwined organizational, institutional and societal factors. NRC pursues a rights-based communication approach (NRC, 2019). However, references to international legal frameworks and their obligations are perceived by various officers as insufficiently convincing (Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). Furthermore, the international political climate has become very hostile towards forcibly displaced people, both discursively and policy-wise (Betts et al., 2012). This sometimes results in tensions between NRC's advocacy positions, and its (targeted) political donors' positions and policies.

More generally, NRC's discursive strategies, and especially its argumentation strategies, can be partly explained by its broader pragmatic, context-sensitive, proactive communication approach. Most interviewees argue that NRC does not allow any actor to censor or dictate its public communication (cf. NRC, 2019). Nevertheless, NRC's public communication—regarding what, how and when it communicates—is mainly indirectly shaped by its (perceived) institutional relationships with, and receptions of its key target groups and/or stakeholders (e.g., political actors, donors, other humanitarian organizations), and broader societal contexts, for pragmatic political, security, financial and/or humanitarian reasons.

First, we observed that officers tend to communicate generically about humanitarian, less political (sensitive) themes (e.g., needs, funding gaps), particularly regarding the Syrian crisis. Information that might endanger staff, forcibly displaced people, access to regions, and/or programs are identified as so-called 'red lines' (cf. defensive working routines, NRC, 2019; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). As Ms. Kompany explains, referring to NRC's organizational humanitarian nature:

> '[A]t the end of the day we're aid providers, we're not human rights activists. So our first priority will also be to deliver aid, and if a press release where we mention needs that we know can have us kicked out of the country, then we won't do it' (Personal interview, 27 March 2019).

Therefore, NRC will frequently first exhaust pragmatic private communication strategies (e.g., private advocacy, off-the-record briefings with journalists) before covering such sensitive issues in its public communication.

Second, since donors usually provide inflexible funding (i.e. earmarked grants for specific geographical and/or thematic projects), they influence both directly (i.e. through donor visibility requirements) and indirectly (e.g., importance of organizational visibility, access) about 'what' (e.g., geographic and/or thematic foci, see below), and, to lesser extents, 'how' NRC can or will (not) communicate (cf. first- and second level agenda-building). Similarly, given partnerships with other humanitarian organizations, NRC will not communicate opposite or critical messages about humanitarian responses.

'What': Crisis foci explained

In forthcoming research (Ongenaert and Joye, in review), we illustrate that NRC mainly communicated about the Syrian crisis but, contrasting other organizations, also relatively much about the Central African crisis. Let us now explain these crisis- and/or organization-specific communication differences.

The vicious neglected crisis circle

Based on our observations and analyses, we can conclude that NRC's crisis foci are linked to various institutional 'traditional' and 'reinforcing' path dependencies which incentivize, what we term, the 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect'.

All interviewees acknowledge the imbalance in international media, public, political and/or donor attention when comparing the Syrian crisis with the Central African crisis. They foremost refer to common news values, such as the international and geopolitical significance of the events (e.g., economics, security, migration), magnitude, (geographic, psychological and cultural) proximity (Joye, 2010), clarity, topical value and follow-up (Harcup & O'neill, 2017). Additionally, they feel that media attention and interest are also shaped by audience parameters (e.g., public awareness, engagement, memory, attention span), journalistic working conditions, and the influence of agenda-building actors. Hence, humanitarian organizations, including NRC, generally obtain far more inflexible funding, including for media and communication, for covering high-profile crises (e.g., the Syrian crisis) than for neglected crises (e.g., the Central African crisis), which remain underfunded (Hawkins, 2011). Hence, humanitarian organizations adapt to and adopt this logic in their operations and communication practices, resulting in more communication about high-profile rather than low-profile crises. They consequently contribute to widening attention and funding gaps between both, or the VNCC effect. As Ms. Kompany argues: '[W]ith this international neglect (…), it almost turns into a vicious cycle, because we might not then have the same teams on the grounds, because we don't have the same money to put into media and advocacy resources' (Personal interview, 27 March 2019). However, this can seriously affect the people involved in neglected crises (Hawkins, 2011).

Organizational and individual (counter)incentives, and context-sensitive routines

Various organizational and individual factors strengthen and/or limit said VNCC effect. First, the Syrian crisis forms for NRC an organizational priority, implying large organizational resources being deployed

to cover the Syrian crisis, including for media and communication, and higher internal expectations. Relatedly, NRC is one of the few agencies operating throughout Syria (NRC, n.d.), and wants to make use of this unique position, both operationally and communication-wise. Finally, NRC's Secretary-General was from 2015 to 2018 simultaneously Special Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, which undoubtedly facilitated more communication efforts about the Syrian crisis.

Countering the above, interviewees referred to one of NRC's key communication objectives which is to increase public, political, and financial attention and support for neglected crises through public communication (NRC, 2019). They are aware and attentive to not ignore neglected crises themselves. For instance, NRC's supporting head office consciously tries—including by relying on flexible funding—to prioritize the Central African crisis communication-wise by creating public communication and annual neglected crises lists, and by making sporadic media visits to the Central African Republic. Nevertheless, our interviewees admitted that international media and public attention remain generally limited.

Finally, the VNCC effect is also reinforced and/or limited by intertwined societal contexts and routines. Various interviewees state that the societal contexts of the 'Syrian host countries' (e.g., Lebanon, Jordan) and of the Central African Republic facilitate (relatively) good working conditions, hence fostering (relatively) much communication about these countries (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). However, delicate political and security contexts also complicate NRC's routines (e.g., obtaining access, travelling, information gathering) and communication from and about Syria (ibid.).

'Who': Represented forcibly displaced people explained

While NRC (2019, p. 5) aims to 'include a diversity of voices from displaced people' with different sociodemographic characteristics, our study identified mediated sociodemographic imbalances in NRC's public communication, following several criteria and parameters.

General selection criteria

First, we examined NRC's general selection criteria to portray forcibly displaced people, especially in its web and/or social media communication. Generally, these people should

> (1) be organizationally related (mainly project participants), for routine (e.g., access, pre-existing relationship) and organizational reasons (e.g., organizational visibility, Ongenaert and Joye, 2019),

> (2) have a strong, relevant (personal) story and/or profile (e.g., interesting, identifiable, relatable),

> (3) be willing to share their story, ideally as openly and visually as possible,

> (4) fulfil ethical requirements (e.g., informed consent, do no harm), and

(5) optionally speak English or any other language that facilitates communication, for respectively pragmatic, ethical and practical routine reasons.

These criteria influence NRC's mediated sociodemographic representativeness in various ways. Ms. Wilhelmsson (Personal interview, 19 April 2019) argues that whereas project participants with a strong story and/or profile are often (very) vulnerable people with (very) low sociodemographic positions, the ethical requirements mostly exclude (vulnerable) people in insecure contexts (e.g., [female] internally displaced people in Syria). Likewise, the language preferences indicate high(er) sociodemographic profiles. NRC's routines, organizational goals, and societal contexts thus already strongly influence its mediated sociodemographic representativeness. Let us now discuss some of these sociodemographic reasons.

Gender and age

Previous research (Chouliaraki, 2012, Johnson HL, 2011) focused merely on issues of gender and age, and mainly identified humanitarian foci on women and children, for pragmatic reasons. Related to our case, earlier research (Ongenaert and Joye, in review) already found that NRC also mainly covers children but differs in terms of gender, reporting slightly but not significantly more women than men. This study revealed several underlying reasons.

Various interviewees confirm that pragmatic routines lead to more output on women and children. Due to their more vulnerable, honest and/or innocent images, they are generally more engaging and fundraising effective. The gender-based focus is reinforced by journalists and donors for engagement reasons and/or donor visibility requirements (cf. 'reinforcing' path dependencies). Other interviewees referred to the fact that, societally, there are relatively more female refugees in the Central African crisis and young refugees in both crises than any other gender or age group (UNHCR, n.d.). Moreover, they are often more vulnerable, implying both humanitarian and pragmatic communication motivations. Organizationally, NRC strongly focuses on youth and education programs. Ethically/individually, various NRC officers stated to prioritize and pursue in culture-sensitive ways female and/or child voices, responding to the (perceived) prominence of adult men in media and humanitarian coverage of various crises. While acknowledging this reality, other interviewees believe that NRC generally focuses (too) much on mothers and children (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson HL, 2011 Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), and attempt to counter or balance this by covering age and gender more diversely. Finally, production-wise, covering children is believed to be easier than reporting on adults, both production-technically (i.e. children are mostly happy and smiling), affective-emotionally (i.e. involving less affective-emotional commitments than with traumatized adults), and ethically (i.e. men of fighting age are usually not eager to speak [openly]).

Geographic location

NRC mainly communicates about people in refugee camps and displacement sites, while it covers fewer urban, peri-urban and/or rural areas, and barely migration sea and land routes (Ongenaert and

Joye, in review). Our data suggest various reasons intersecting with NRC's foci on crises, project participants, legal status, countries and nationalities. Interviewees mention that NRC primarily communicates about its work locations, mainly refugee camps, for routine (e.g., access, visuality of needs, preferences for simplified narratives), organizational (e.g., organizational visibility), institutional (e.g., funding) and societal (e.g., political and/or security) reasons. However, as most forcibly displaced people live in urban areas (UNHCR, 2021), there is a risk for selective, simplified humanitarian imagery, which can indirectly have detrimental societal consequences. As Ms. Zitka states: '[S]ometimes I think the people in displacement camps are overrepresented in articles and media, and also in terms of the assistance they receive' (Personal interview, 1 April 2019).

Legal status

International refugee organizations, including NRC, represent significantly more forcibly displaced people who have crossed an international border than other legal groups (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). Again somehow going against the flow, NRC portrays the largest legal diversity, including significantly more internally displaced people (i.e. forcibly displaced people who have not crossed an international border) and returned internally displaced people (i.e. who returned to their areas of habitual residence) than the other organizations (Ongenaert and Joye, in review).

NRC spotlights the countries where it mainly works and its project participants (see above). Regarding the (highly covered) Syrian crisis, NRC both operates in and communicates much more about important host countries (e.g., Lebanon, Jordan) than in and about Syria (see above), and vice versa for the (less covered) Central African crisis. Hence, concerning the Syrian crisis, NRC mainly communicates about internationally forcibly displaced people, and regarding the Central African crisis about internally displaced people and returnees. As mentioned above, NRC operates in and communicates much more about the Central African Republic than other organizations, largely explaining its inter-organizational legal differences. NRC's diverse legal foci are especially relevant given public misperceptions about forcibly displaced people's legal statuses and/or current countries and continents. Most forcibly displaced people are internally displaced and/or remain in their country and/or broader region (UNHCR, 2021).

Current country and continent

We found earlier that NRC refers significantly more to Jordan, Lebanon, and the Central African Republic, and slightly (but nonsignificantly) more to Syria, as current countries of its represented forcibly displaced people. Correspondingly, it also covers significantly more often Asia and Africa as current continents than other refugee organizations (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). The data demonstrate this can be explained by intertwined organizational and routine reasons. NRC mainly works in these Global Southern host and crisis countries, while barely with forcibly displaced people in the Global North. As mentioned above, political and security contexts which influence NRC's routines (e.g., obtaining access, travelling, information gathering) also explain the broader output on the 'Syrian host countries' than on Syria. While NRC plays an important democratic role by focusing on neglected

crises and countries, we should equally be aware that its geographically concentrated communication focus only partly reflects where the examined people are located.

Nationality

We discovered previously that refugee organizations, including NRC, mainly portray majority nationalities (i.e. forcibly displaced Syrians or Central Africans), and, despite both crisis countries' long migration histories (UNHCR, n.d.), barely (explicitly) represent minority nationalities (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). We can partially explain this by societal, organizational and routine reasons. First, NRC does not (often) (consciously) work with and consequently (explicitly) communicate about nationality minorities in both crises. Second, this is reinforced through medium-based audience-oriented routines, particularly in press releases (figures and numbers will mainly cover majority groups) and social media communication (importance of concise simplified communication). Third, production-wise, minority nationalities may not be mentioned for narrative (e.g., perceived as less relevant or unknown), and, taking into account the vulnerable positions of minorities in these crises, political and security reasons. Although this nationality focus is thus shaped by several legitimate aspects, it contributes to a relatively selective, simplified humanitarian imagery.

Life stance and sexual orientation

NRC barely or not (explicitly) mentions life stance and sexual orientation. People with (minority) life stances and/or sexual orientations are barely (explicitly) represented and/or voiced. Our observations and interviews clarify this as they point towards intertwined organizational reasons (no life stance- or sexual orientation organizational foci), and ethical (personal, sensitive topics in both crisis and host countries), narrative (mostly irrelevant), media genre (conflicting with social media logics of simplified communication), humanitarian (potentially conflicting with humanitarian principles, e.g., neutrality, impartiality) and/or pragmatic (avoiding to contribute to incorrect 'religious conflict' narratives that humanitarian assistance favours certain religious groups) routine reasons. However, we noted reflexivity about this output's indirect implications among some interviewees. While acknowledging these reasons, Ms. Wilhelmsson (Personal interview, 19 April 2019) argues that NRC consequently indirectly reinforces heteronormative structures and traditions in non-LGBTI community recognizing areas.

Family situation and marital status

Findings show that NRC mainly and significantly more often represents family members than people without an explicitly mentioned family situation (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). We observed that this can be mainly explained by routine and societal reasons. First, audience-wise, families and unaccompanied (particularly minor) individuals with explicitly mentioned distant families are often more engaging and/or can counter increasing audience scepticism (Höijer, 2004). Our respondents also refer to some routine and societal reasons. Production-wise, it proves to be much more difficult to identify individuals on their own than families, especially as most of the studied people flee with their (nuclear, extended and/or non-blood) family.

Relatedly, NRC mainly represents forcibly displaced people without an explicitly mentioned marital status rather than non-singles and particularly singles (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). This can be explained by similar narrative and ethical reasons as uttered in the interviewees' discussions on life stance and sexual orientation. NRC's focus on non-singles rather than on singles (Ongenaert and Joye, in review) can be mainly explained by similar routine (e.g., engagement) and societal reasons (e.g., many early marriages in the analysed countries) as for family situation.

Profession

Finally, we found that refugee organizations often do not mention the represented actors' professions (Ongenaert and Joye, in review), because of narrative (non-applicable or irrelevant) and defensive routine reasons (often not legally allowed to work in host countries). However, when NRC does, including for narrative (relevant) and ethical (humanizing) reasons, these mainly concern educational professions and, to lesser extents, (low-skilled) agrarian, manufacturing and construction professions and unemployed people, while barely or not highlighting high-skilled professions (ibid).

Our observations and interviews demonstrate underlying routine, organizational, and societal reasons. First, NRC staff mainly focus on people with clear, relatable, visual and/or socially relevant considered professions (e.g., shop owner, teacher, mechanic), sometimes involving other appealing subjects (e.g., pupils, students) for engagement reasons, rather than high-skilled professions (e.g., clerk). Second, NRC has many programs related to these professions (e.g., education programs, livelihood assistance in rural areas) which makes it more accessible and understandable from its organizational goals to report on these cases. Intertwined therewith, these professions largely reflect the socio-economic profiles of NRC's project participants (see above).

In sum, while NRC's public communication is thus mainly shaped by various (relatively fixed) routine, organizational, institutional and societal factors, it usually only partly reflects the sociodemographic reality of both crises, hence contributing to a selective and/or simplified humanitarian imagery with potential broader policy and societal consequences. While acknowledging the (often legitimate) underlying reasons, we believe that more balanced representations could provide opportunities to enhance public awareness and engagement for, and more nuanced knowledge about various (including less visible and/or popular) sociodemographic groups and crises (Author removed, forthcoming.

9.5   Discussion and conclusion

This study examined the production and social contexts of NRC's public communication strategies towards the Syrian and Central African crises and extended and refined earlier research.

First, the data showed that NRC's representation strategies can be mainly explained by medium-based routines, organizational goals and trends, and institutional 'traditional' path dependencies. Similarly, NRC's argumentation strategies are encouraged by its intertwined context-sensitive routines, organizational (humanitarian) nature, delicate institutional relationships, and challenging societal contexts. Hence, this study contributes to existing literature (e.g., Betts, 2009; Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019) that (limitedly) explains international refugee organizations' discursive strategies through general pragmatic institutional and societal factors.

Second, NRC's crisis foci are largely moulded by various institutional 'traditional' and 'reinforcing' path dependencies which incentivize the 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect', which is further reinforced and/or limited by organizational and individual (counter)incentives, and sensitive societal contexts and context-sensitive routines. We partially found similar institutional news logics-oriented aspects as identified in journalism research (Hawkins, 2011, Joye, 2010) but also discovered the importance of organizational and individual (counter)incentives, sensitive contexts, and context-sensitive routines.

Finally, we observed that NRC's choice of representing particular forcibly displaced people is motivated by routine-, organization-, society-driven selection criteria, and various contextual sociodemographic-specific reasons that go beyond the often-cited merely pragmatic reasons (Johnson HL, 2011; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019). The study thus adds to our understanding of the underlying factors of 'what' and 'who' are mainly represented in humanitarian communication.

In general, this article shows that research should attempt to grasp the complexity and diversity of humanitarian communication strategies and underlying factors, rather than limiting itself to generic, decontextualized, and/or one-dimensional findings. Furthermore, by applying Shoemaker and Reese's (2014) full HOI model and neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency to a largely neglected subject, we demonstrated the added value of such a complementary, original approach to the scholarly study of humanitarian communication, as well as to the fields of humanitarian practitioners and their stakeholders. International refugee organizations often function in complex, delicate, largely influencing routine, organizational, institutional path-dependent and societal contexts. As their public communication can influence the public perceptions about forcibly displaced people and crises, and can potentially influence people's beliefs and governmental policies (Chouliaraki, 2012; Ongenaert and Joye, 2019), reflexivity about the social and ethical implications of their communication strategies is critical. Imbalanced communication could otherwise potentially complicate and/or undermine their organizational objectives (Ongenaert and Joye, in review). However, to fundamentally change humanitarian imagery, structural institutional changes seem to be essential. For instance, the data suggested that more flexible donor funding could (partially) counter institutional path-dependent effects and facilitate more balanced representations.

Given the time-consuming nature of the applied research methods, we opted to focus on one international refugee organization. Hence, we cannot generalize the organization-specific findings.

However, as various international refugee organizations have similar routines and objectives, function in similar institutional and/or societal contexts, and are characterised by similar institutional trends of professionalization and specialization, including regarding media and communication (Powers, 2018), we assume that various results largely hold true. Nevertheless, further research should adopt comparative interorganizational perspectives and conduct more long-term, multi-site ethnographic research. Greater diversity in observed crisis areas and/or host countries would further benefit our understanding of crisis-specific individual, routine, organizational, institutional and/or societal dimensions.

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PART IV – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 10: Discussion and conclusion

The central research objective of this doctoral project was ***to investigate the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions and their interactions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies*.** This overarching objective was operationalized through three more specific, interrelated sub-objectives, corresponding to three components and adopting a source-to-end product perspective. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, this doctoral research analysed international refugee organizations' public communication strategies from multiple perspectives. Following the above-mentioned central research objective and sub-objectives, the central research question of this project was ***whether, how and to what extent international refugee organizations communicate about the forcibly displaced people involved in the recent Syrian and/or Central African crises (2014-2018), and why are they doing so?*** This central research question was operationalized through five more specific, interrelated research questions. To be able to answer this central research question and the more specific research questions, we present the main lines of the literature review and the empirical research.

1. Main theoretical findings

For reasons of theorization and contextualization, we started Part I with an extensive exploration of the literature on the public communication of refugee organizations and related fields. First, in Chapters 1 and 2, we focused on the broader underlying political and social contexts in which international refugee organizations, including their media and communication departments and officers, function. An important contribution of the first chapter to the literature is that it reveals that the peculiar nature of the IRR (i.e. IRC, Alter & Meunier, 2009) has enabled the current dominant forced migration policy paradigms and measures. In interaction with Chapter 2, it demonstrates that it has also influenced the forced migration discourses of other important interacting institutions. Most importantly, by facilitating these two trends, the IRR has greatly influenced the public communication strategies of refugee organizations. Drawing upon theories of agenda-setting and -building, a multi-stakeholder analysis showed that the key social institutions of news media, political actors and private sector actors disseminate different 'institutional messages' (Lammers, 2011) about forced migration. We observed that these institutional discourses align with, and thus potentially create agenda-building opportunities for, and/or contrast the humanitarian imagery of forcibly displaced people created by refugee organizations.

Further, we examined the conceptual dimension of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies (chapter 3). By adopting a historical perspective, we demonstrated that in recent decades the social and scientific relevance of research on strategic and non-profit communication in general and on refugee organizations' public communication, in particular, have increased. Nevertheless, these fields and especially the latter remain underdeveloped and are mostly text-focused, while the production and reception dimensions are barely explored. Remarkably, however, little or no research has been conducted from an organizational communication perspective, although this study demonstrates that the subject can be adequately embedded in and examined from the fields of strategic, non-profit and public communication. Specifically, the literature review highlights the relevance of the holistic Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) perspective

(e.g., Cooren et al., 2011; Heide et al., 2018; Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Corresponding with broader 'reflexive' (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018), 'interpretative' and 'linguistic' turns (Mumby, 2014) in the field of strategic communication, this perspective argues that communication is not just an activity that occurs within or between organizations, but forms the constitutive process of organization. 'Organization' thereby both refers to a process or perpetual state of change, an object or entity, and an entity grounded in action - as organizations are not objective, constant, stable entities but are (re)produced by communication, and these outcomes and processes reflexively shape communication (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Further, strongly influenced by the understandings of Oliveira (2017), Atkin and Rice (2013), and Macnamara (2016), we defined the public communication of refugee organizations as ***the practice of organized and systematic symbolic social action (diversified communication disseminated through a variety of channels and activities) within the public sphere to reach set goals, co-create the refugee organization, perform civic relations and fulfil its mission by groups of people that pursue the (perceived) common good for forced migration***. Finally, the literature review demonstrated that future research can benefit by adopting multi-perspective, practice-oriented, multi-methodological, comparative and/or interdisciplinary approaches to which we respond in our empirical article-based chapters.

A central focus of this dissertation concerned the textual dimension (cf. subdivided into the *how*, *what* and *who* elements), and the production and social dimensions (cf. *why*) of refugee organizations' public communication. We found that refugee organizations mainly seem to use public communication to respond to the two (partially overlapping) main causes of restrictive forced migration policies. More concretely, refugee organizations mostly utilize particular rather general public-oriented representation strategies, as well as some argumentation strategies to influence the (rather adverse) public opinions on forcibly displaced people (cf. Chapter 1). Likewise, they utilize particular argumentation strategies to respond strategically to the limited incentives of states in the 'Global North' to engage in the protection of forcibly displaced people from and in the 'Global South' (cf. the 'North-South impasse'). Intertwined therewith, most existing research investigates 'how' refugee organizations represent and discuss forcibly displaced people. These studies mainly identified and criticized - from ethical-normative perspectives - these discursive strategies as dehumanizing, decontextualizing and/or universalizing. In other words, refugee organizations mainly represent forcibly displaced people through humanitarian discourses of pity that are based on common humanity as the moral justification for solidarity on human vulnerability. They present them either as passive, vulnerable, voiceless groups of victims in need (cf. 'negative' pity-centred representation strategies, e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Fass, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Vasavada, 2016; Wroe, 2018) or as voiced, resilient individuals with personal characteristics and/or agency (cf. 'positive' pity-centred representation strategies, e.g., Cabot, 2016; Catenaccio, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012a; DeTurk, 2020; Godin & Doná, 2016). Further, refugee organizations sometimes portray forcibly displaced people through post-humanitarian discourses of irony that are oriented to the self as the new morality of humanitarianism (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2010, 2012a; Irom, 2018, 2022; Vestergaard, 2010) and frequently discuss forcibly displaced people as part of rights-based (e.g., Basok, 2009; DeTurk, 2020, 2022; Krebs & Cope, 2022) or political realist argumentation strategies (e.g., cross-issue persuasion, Betts, 2009c; DeTurk, 2020, 2022; Freedman, 2011; Hammerstad 2014a, 2014b). Although valuable in their own right, these studies, however, mostly analyse only one or a few discursive strategies, often neglect the underlying production and/or societal contexts, and/or usually focus on

only one organization, publication year, media genre and/or crisis. Acknowledging these gaps, we primarily investigated how international refugee organizations usually (or not) present forcibly displaced people and the main argumentation strategies that are used, recognizing that both what is present and absent are discursively meaningful (Richardson, 2006).

Moreover, we found that little research (e.g., Clark-Kazak, 2009; Höijer, 2004; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Pupavac, 2008; Vasavada, 2016; Wright, 2014) exists about 'who' and 'what' refugee organizations mainly communicate, and if so, these topics are mainly only qualitatively and/or limitedly examined. In line with broader trends in humanitarian communication, some studies point to the prominence of 'ideal victims' (i.e. focus on women and children, e.g., Höijer, 2004; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Moeller, 1999; Pupavac, 2008; Vasavada, 2016). The 'what' element (e.g., themes, organizations, crises, media genres, years, etcetera) seems barely or not explored. Therefore, we primarily examined these elements and attempted to extend and refine the literature. As mentioned before, the research on refugee organizations' public communication is mainly text-focused. It barely discusses the reasons underlying these representation and argumentation strategies and when it does, it is usually done in a limited manner and it mostly refers to general institutional and societal reasons (e.g., generating media, public, political, donor support and/or interest), lacking comprehensive, comparative, explanatory production and societal perspectives (cf. *why*, e.g., Chouliaraki, 2012a, Ihlen et al., 2015; Nikunen, 2019a; Vestergaard, 2010). Nevertheless, as Orgad (2018) argues, the triangulation of text-focused, normative and communication production-focused, practice-based approaches is essential to better understand and be able to make evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication. Especially as critical junctures, such as the Syrian crisis, may prompt refugee organizations to reassess their communication policies and practices (Green, 2018).

2. Main empirical findings

Acknowledging these findings and addressing the identified gaps in the literature, this doctoral research empirically analysed international refugee organizations' public communication strategies through a mixed-methods research design, with a focus on the text dimension (cf. *how*, *what*, *who*) and the production and societal dimensions (cf. *why*). We thereby conducted a CDA, an MCDA, a QCA, an office ethnography, expert interviews and a document analysis.

First, we focused on the discursive strategies (i.e. both representation and argumentation strategies, cf. *how*) of three international refugee organizations (UNHCR, DRC and International Rescue Committee) towards the recent Syrian crisis. Based on a CDA applied to their international press releases on the Syrian crisis (2014-2015), the data showed that forcibly displaced people were predominantly portrayed as **homogenous and suffering groups of victims in need**, which arguably has dehumanizing effects. Similarly, another study applying MCDA found that one of the most prolific actors in the field, UNHCR, largely portrays forcibly displaced people as anonymized, passive, victimized, and/or voiceless masses, which potentially has dehumanizing effects and reproduces humanitarian saviour logics alongside hierarchies of deservingness. UNHCR mainly represents forcibly displaced people through interrelated 'negative' pity-based discursive strategies, particularly in its press releases and often in its news. The findings of both studies confirm the dominance of the regime

of pity's traditional 'negative' representational strategies (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson, 2011). However, at the same time, the study on UNHCR also identified that forcibly displaced people are generally represented more in-depth and diversely in its stories and (audio)visual media genres, both through 'negative' and 'positive' pity-based representation strategies. They are often **simultaneously represented as victims and active, empowered individual doers, speakers, and/or thinkers**, implying a more nuanced, humanitarian imagery. Furthermore, both the 'negative' and 'positive' pity-based textual representation strategies are frequently reinforced, but sometimes also weakened or contrasted by (audio)visual discursive devices, generally implying relative closeness with the represented people. In that regard, the analysis nuances the existing literature in the sense that the latter rather points to the use of either 'negative' pity-centred representation strategies (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Fass, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Vasavada, 2016; Wroe, 2018) or 'positive' pity-centred representation strategies by refugee organizations (e.g., Cabot, 2016; Catenaccio, 2015; Chouliaraki, 2012a; DeTurk, 2020; Godin & Doná, 2016) but not on a more simultaneous mixed use of both representation strategies. Additionally, this study revealed relevant crisis-related differences in discursively approaching actors involved in the examined crises, indicating the importance of context-specific communication and sensitivities.

We also attempted to contribute to the literature by examining in depth the (barely explored) **underlying production and societal reasons** for using these representation strategies (cf. *why*). Although the CDA study is mainly text-focused and only secondarily investigated the underlying production and social contexts, it indicates that the dominant use of 'negative' pity-based representation strategies in press releases can be largely explained by media genre-specific organizational objectives (i.e. the importance of gaining news media and donor attention and interest) and subsequent media genre-specific features (e.g., reactive, factual nature, limited space, particularly for individualizations of forcibly displaced people). Although we have not explicitly referred to it in this study, these results indicate the great importance for refugee organizations of responding to 'news logics' or thus the news rhythm, formats, values, and working conditions (Thorbjornsrud et al., 2014, Ihlen et al., 2015; cf. Chapters 2 and 9). Moreover, the study confirms the above-mentioned textual findings that refugee organizations indeed attempt to portray forcibly displaced people more 'positively' in other, more human-interest genres of public communication (e.g., case stories), for both ethical and pragmatic reasons (i.e. generating long-term social commitment and possibly donations, and countering negative news coverage and images). Our ethnographic production study found similar but more extensive, rich findings. This study argues that both NRC's 'negative' and 'positive' representation strategies can be explained by specific medium-based routines, organizational goals and trends, and institutional 'traditional' path dependencies. More concretely, NRC's main organizational goal with press releases is to briefly convey key organizational advocacy messages about urgent, newsworthy considered 'hard' themes (cf. *what*) to generate media, public and political attention, interest and support, confirming and extending earlier general findings on humanitarian advocacy (cf. Green, 2018). Press releases consequently tend to imply 'negative' pity-oriented representations which support its narratives and objectives. This humanitarian imagery is shaped through NRC's intertwined medium-based audience-, organization- (e.g., own working conditions, the importance of organizational perspectives and visibility) and supplier-oriented (e.g., mainly quantitative data-oriented organizational and other humanitarian sources) routines, which generally respond to organizational, humanitarian and/or news logics. However, sometimes NRC mediates these

numerical representations' dehumanizing effects through various routines, both directly and indirectly. NRC's key objectives with news stories, photos and videos, in their turn, range from gaining audience awareness, engagement, brand awareness, accountability, and fundraising to donor visibility, confirming and refining earlier general findings on humanitarian communication in general (e.g., Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Lang, 2012; Orgad & Seu). Therefore, they tend to cover engaging 'soft' themes, including human interest, basic facts about humanitarian situations, NRC's impact, staff and organizational core tasks (e.g., education, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food aid) (cf. *what*). This usually implies more extensive, personalizing 'negative' and/or 'positive' pity-oriented representations. Likewise, we observed that these are shaped through medium-based audience-oriented (e.g., the importance of audience parameters, both at the levels of production, distribution, and evaluation, donor visibility requirements), organization- (e.g., own working conditions, the importance of organizational perspectives and visibility), and source-oriented (e.g., mostly input from organizational staff) routines, which mainly respond to organizational, general public, and/or donor logics. More generally, these medium-based routines and organizational goals are underpinned by broader organizational tendencies of, following internationalization and expansion trends, professionalization and specialization, confirming earlier observed trends in the humanitarian sector (e.g., Powers, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Richey, 2018; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014).

Examining the (barely investigated) **argumentation strategies** in the public communication of refugee organisations, we found evidence of the use of various argumentation strategies, particularly validity claims of normative rightness and truth. We discovered that the investigated organizations use various interwoven reporting verb-based argumentation techniques (cf. Caldas-Coulthard, 1994) to stimulate and sustain pity-based solidarity and political acts, primarily by emphasizing common humanity. These argumentation strategies correspond with the observed dominant 'negative' pity-based representation strategies, which adequately demonstrates the inherent connectedness of representation and argumentation (cf. supra). Both (M)CDA studies demonstrated that the analysed refugee organizations voice various neoliberal post-humanitarian (mainly Western) Self-oriented solidarity discourses that simultaneously exist alongside humanitarian representation strategies. Attempting to explain the use of these discursive strategies, our findings demonstrated that the humanitarian sector has evolved from a non-economic to a market-oriented sphere within which private choice and self-expression are central. Correspondingly, refugee organizations use these post-humanitarian argumentation strategies to respond to the 'Western Self', and especially the personal fulfilment of 'Global Northern' audiences. These argumentation strategies can be related to the regime of irony and are considered discursive expressions of broader neoliberalism and its consumerist morality (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Further, we found that the observed organisations use the political realist so-called **'cross-issue persuasion'** strategy, through which refugee organizations, and particularly UNHCR, attempt to induce states to engage in protection by linking contributions to protection to states' (perceived) larger interests in various issue areas (e.g., human rights, humanitarianism, development, economy, trade, peace-building) (Betts, 2009c). Our data allowed us to extend and refine the previous (scarce) literature on cross-issue persuasion on several dimensions (Betts, 2009c). First, we identified new issue areas (e.g. education, labour, health, societal stability, diplomacy, integration) to which protection was discursively linked. Second, most importantly, we demonstrated that UNHCR not only seeks to persuade states by linking contributions to protection to states' (perceived) larger interests in various issue areas as well as in various migration management,

common humanity, and multiculturalist principles and values. Hence, we proposed the more comprehensive term 'cross-interest persuasion'. Rather than just to other (perceived) important issue areas, refugee organizations link contributions to protection to the interests of states in general. Moreover, the term emphasizes the political realist nature of the pragmatic argumentation strategy. Third, we exposed the multi-layered nature of the concept by revealing its different degrees of explicitness and its direct and indirect connections and benefits. Whereas we considered the use of this pragmatic argumentation strategy as a reflection of political realism, enabled by IRC, our production research further nuanced and contextualized refugee organizations' use of it. Specifically, the research demonstrated that various forms of cross-issue persuasion are used, as refugee- and human-rights based communication approaches are usually insufficiently convincing for states. NRC's rather pragmatic argumentation strategies are motivated by its intertwined context-sensitive routines, organizational (humanitarian) nature (e.g., key focus on providing humanitarian assistance), delicate institutional relationships (e.g., the importance of perceived institutional relationships with and receptions of various target groups and stakeholders), and challenging societal contexts (e.g., hostile and/or dangerous socio-political climates). In sum, there is already a lot of knowledge about the general objectives of humanitarian advocacy (e.g., Green, 2018) and communication (e.g., Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005; Lang, 2012; Orgad & Seu), and certain recent trends in the field of humanitarian communication (e.g., Powers, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Richey, 2018 Van Leuven & Joye, 2014). At the same time, this doctoral research expands and refines the literature on the production and societal contexts of both the representation and argumentation strategies of refugee organizations (cf. *why*). Specifically, this work contributes to existing literature (e.g., Betts, 2009c; Chouliaraki, 2012a) that (limitedly) explains international refugee organizations' discursive strategies through general pragmatic institutional and societal factors by providing new as well as more in-depth, multi-layered findings, taking into account the influences of both individual, routine, organizational, institutional and societal levels.

Approaching our central topic from a quantitative perspective, we investigated *who* (i.e. **voiced and represented actors**) and *what* (i.e. **key characteristics and themes**) are (not) represented in international refugee organizations' public communication for the Syrian and Central African crises. We observed a mixed picture of *what* and *who* are (not) represented, involving interorganizational commonalities and differences. Both can be mainly explained by various routine, organizational, institutional and societal reasons. First, regarding *what*, the organizations predominantly communicated in 2015 and 2016 about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis, because of various individual, routine, organizational, institutional and societal aspects. Following media logics (Hawkins, 2011), humanitarian communication also mainly covers 'high-profile' conflicts. However, reflecting its organizational focus, NRC reported significantly more on forcibly displaced people involved in the Central African crisis than UNHCR and especially ECRE. In that regard, the production study found out that NRC's crisis foci are largely shaped by various institutional 'traditional' and 'reinforcing' path dependencies which incentivize the 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect', which is further reinforced and/or limited by organizational and individual (counter)incentives, and sensitive societal contexts and context-sensitive routines. In sum, we partially found similar institutional news logics-oriented aspects as identified in journalism research (e.g., Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Hawkins, 2011; Joye, 2010) but also discovered the importance of organizational and individual (counter)incentives, sensitive contexts, and context-sensitive routines. Moreover, the organizations

mainly but varyingly communicated about the same three themes, following organizational and medium-based focuses (Dijkzeul & Moke, 2005). Finally, we confirm an increasing (audio)visualization, professionalization, and specialization of their communication approaches (Powers, 2018; Richey, 2018).

Second, regarding *who*, we observed that acknowledging medium-based differences, mainly forcibly displaced people (i.e. mainly in human interest genres) and refugee organizations (i.e. mainly in press releases) obtain voices about the investigated populations, refining earlier studies (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Fass, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011). Confirming earlier research, the organizations mainly collectivize them (e.g., Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Clark-Kazak, 2009; Fass, 2011; Johnson, H. L., 2011; Vasavada, 2016; Wroe, 2018) but, considering interorganizational and medium-based differences, also individualize them. Shaped by production and societal contexts, the organizations represent these individualized forcibly displaced people, to varying degrees, in sociodemographically unbalanced ways. Specifically, our research confirms earlier findings that generally young people are represented in humanitarian communication (e.g., Höijer, 2004; Malkki, 1996; Wright, 2014) but nuances that mainly women are portrayed (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011). Further, we examined various unexplored sociodemographics, and likewise found, acknowledging (significant) interorganizational differences, imbalances regarding (explicit) indicators of geographical location, legal status, current country and continent, nationality, life stance, sexual orientation, family situation, marital status and former and current profession. Explaining these trends, the production study showed that NRC's choice of representing particular forcibly displaced people is motivated by routine-, organization-, society-driven selection criteria, and various contextual sociodemographic-specific reasons that go beyond the often-cited merely general, pragmatic institutional and societal reasons (Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson H. L., 2011). In sum, *who* is portrayed is thus not only purely a question of strategic motivations but also shaped by broader contextual factors. Summarized, connecting *what* and *who*, this study finds that, besides foreign news reporting (e.g., Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Hawkins, 2011; Joye, 2010), humanitarian communication likewise reproduces and reflects quantitative mediated hierarchies of suffering, both between (cf. *what*) and within crises (cf. *who*).

In sum, we believe the greatest theoretical added value of this project is that it provides in-depth, nuanced, often new insights into and concepts on the conceptual, text, production and societal dimensions of the public communication of refugee organizations, particularly the *how*, *who*, *what*, and *why* and - most importantly - their mutual interactions. To a large degree, these findings may also apply to humanitarian organisations, as similar gaps can also be identified within the broader literature of humanitarian communication, which is mainly text-focused and focuses on ethical-normative research on representation. As such, we meet Orgad's (2018) call to triangulate text-focused, normative and communication production-focused, practice-based approaches, which is essential to better understand and be able to make evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication. More generally, this research also has theoretical added value through the use of different broader theoretical frameworks from various disciplines (e.g., regimes of representation, intersectionality, the HOI model and neo-institutionalist theories of path dependence). We both embed and theorize the topic of the public communication of refugee organizations in these broader theoretical frameworks, but also apply and validate these frameworks to new, often not explored

empirical themes and cases, which is a theoretical win-win situation. Additionally, we also exposed several theoretical gaps in the literature review, and we make relevant theoretical links between different, often isolated theoretical fields within social sciences and humanities, including communication sciences, sociology, history, linguistics, (social) anthropology, (international) political sciences and international relations and diplomacy. In that sense, this interdisciplinary approach of our dissertation also has a large theoretical added value for broader fields.

3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

In this doctoral research, we investigated the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions and their interactions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies. Originally, our (very ambitious) aim was to comparatively analyse both the textual, production and societal dimensions of all three organizations. Unfortunately, due to time and focus reasons, we were unable to do so. In that sense, as mentioned earlier, we should be cautious about the extent to which the findings of several studies are **generalizable** to other refugee organizations. However, as various international refugee organizations have similar routines and objectives, function in similar institutional and/or societal contexts, and are characterized by similar institutional trends of professionalization and specialization, including regarding media and communication (Powers, 2018), we assume that various (especially non-organization-specific) results largely hold true. Nevertheless, it is clear that - particularly considering the limited, fragmented, and mainly qualitative existing research - future comparative, longitudinal, mixed-methods and/or intersectional studies on the text, and particularly the almost unexplored production, societal and reception dimensions is needed to investigate whether these results can actually be generalized, and/or to obtain new, additional insights. Further, for reasons of focus, space and statistical validity, the quantitative content analysis mainly examined statistical relationships between the organizations and other variables, which limits the 'true' intersectional nature of the findings. Future quantitative research (e.g., quantitative content analysis, big data analysis) can analyse more in-depth statistical relationships and explore interactions between various components (e.g., *how*, *what*, *who*, *why*) and/or broaden them (e.g., distribution and/or reception dimensions).

Further, in Chapter 3, we proposed the CCO perspective as a relevant perspective to investigate strategic communication and the public communication of refugee organizations in particular. Nevertheless, we do not adopt it in our empirical studies, for reasons of relevance and focus. Specifically, in the production research, we found the HOI model and the neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency to be more relevant theories for answering the specific research questions, as they focus on explaining communication output by, in the case of the HOI model, studying different micro, meso and macro levels, and, in the case of the neo-institutionalist theories of path dependency, analysing in-depth the institutional level. However, the CCO perspective focuses on how communication constitutes organization. In that sense, it rather explores the conceptual opposite: how communication can explain organization. The CCO perspective is thus not only more abstract, but above all less relevant to answer our research question (cf. *why*) than the aforementioned theories, which explains why we ultimately did not adopt it. Nevertheless, we would argue that our production research confirms that public communication of refugee organizations constitutes and shapes 'organization' in different ways. Public communication reflects and reproduces broader organizational

focuses (e.g., geographical and thematic), values (e.g., ethics towards forcibly displaced people), objectives (e.g., focus on neglected crises), contexts (political, sociocultural, financial), etcetera and will thus both constitute, reproduce and reflect organization.

Future research should preferably also analyse **various organizations, crises, media genres and platforms, (publication) years, and regions**. For reasons of relevance, focus and feasibility, we mainly focused on the *public communication* of refugee organizations. Nevertheless, other, often related forms of communication, including marketing, fundraising communication (e.g., Yoo & Drumwright, 2018), private advocacy, and internal organizational communication of international refugee organizations are highly relevant but barely explored and require further research. For similar reasons, in the empirical research, we spotlighted the textual, production and societal dimensions of public communication of international refugee organizations. However, as emerged from the production research, public communication does not only consist of tangible, relatively easy analysable *textual* public communication (e.g., press releases, news stories, photos, videos) but also of less tangible social interaction with other actors or thus *verbal* public communication (e.g., pitching to journalists, press conferences, official and unofficial briefings with journalists, public events with citizens, politicians, journalists and/or donors) which requires in-depth production research (e.g., observation research). In the empirical studies, we narrowed our focus to particular organizations, media genres, crises, and years. In that regard, we examined international refugee organizations because of their relevance, scope, reach, and size, including in terms of media and communication. Nevertheless, future research on the public communication strategies of regional, national, and local refugee organizations, both in the 'Global North' and 'Global South', is also very relevant, including on the increasingly prominent and important refugee-led and diaspora-led organizations (e.g., Ehmer, 2017; Pimentel Walker et al., 2021). In addition, we mainly focused on press releases, various types of news stories, photos and videos. Research into other used media genres is also important, including new media genres such as drone footage, virtual reality, and 360-degree videos (Wright, 2019, Yoo & Drumwright, 2018). Finally, although international refugee organizations very occasionally communicate about affected people who have not and/or cannot fled (cf. forced immobility), we have opted not to analyse this communication despite its relevance. These highly vulnerable but barely visible populations are often not the target group of international refugee organizations, both in humanitarian and communication terms, which rather focus on forcibly displaced people. Nevertheless, research on the (lack of) mediated representations of these highly vulnerable but barely visible, largely unexplored, and often ignored populations is critical (Lubkemann, 2008; Schewel, 2020), including from a media perspective (Smets, 2019), as well as from a humanitarian communication perspective.

As earlier mentioned, an important dimension that we have not explored for ethical and practical reasons (e.g., limited time, the impact of the corona crisis) is the **reception dimension**. However, in our view, further research must adopt a critical and multidimensional perspective, including by examining the reception of the public communication of refugee organizations, and humanitarian communication in general, by various actors (e.g., citizens, forcibly displaced people, news media, political actors, private sector actors). After all, this work mainly examined the discursive strategies of refugee organizations and the underlying explanatory production and societal contexts. However, it is also important to assess the perceptions and effectiveness of public communication strategies among

various target groups and stakeholders, including through focus groups, expert interviews, and quantitative content analyses (e.g., Van Leuven & Joye, Powers, 2018). Particularly the inclusion of forcibly displaced people would be innovative, as current research mostly ignores this segment of the public, despite their obvious centrality in debates related to issues of forced migration and the fact that they form the subject of the public communication. Not only from a moral and societal point of view but also from a scientific perspective, the examination of the perceptions and voices of people who fled on public communication strategies of refugee organizations would be very relevant, interesting and useful, considering their unique involvement in crises. Following the epistemic belief of intersectionality that the perspectives of these people are unique and valuable, researchers should take them into account, if not adopt them when developing a normative vision of a fair society (Nash, 2008) (cf. Chapter 5). In line therewith, expert and focus group interviews involving active co-creation with participants and visual ethnography (Gauntlett, 2007; Pink, 2014) are particularly suitable, relevant research methods. Thereby community-based participatory methods such as photo voicing (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997), photo-elicitation (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Harper, 2002), cartoon-elicitation (Figoureux & Van Gorp, 2021), and participatory drawing (Ademolu, 2021) can be used. Revisiting the concepts of 'common differences' and 'dissonance' as essential for deeper reflective solidarity through unequal power relations (Dean, 1996; Hemmings, 2012; Mohanty, 2003), these research methods imply not merely *providing* a voice to, but also, *listening to, collaborating with* and *supporting* commonly 'voiceless' populations (cf. Dreher, 2009, 2010). By using these new, creative, and empowering methodologies, researchers will likely gain new, in-depth insights into the views, perceptions and opinions of 'the represented people' regarding adequate representations, as well as facilitate methodological innovation. This can be used to examine people's perceptions of humanitarian imagery (e.g., Ademolu & Warrington, 2019; Girling, 2017; Warrington & Crombie, 2017) as well as their (equally largely unexplored) views about broader media (e.g., Smets et al., 2019), political, private sector, and cultural narratives.

As discussed in the positionality section (cf. Chapter 5), although I investigated a topic largely related to the 'Global South', I limited myself to collaborations with my supervisor and other 'Global Northern' (situated) researchers, which implies theoretical, methodological and empirical limitations, and is also rather questionable from ethical and societal points of view. In that regard, future research should adopt more appropriate, balanced perspectives and frameworks, including reflexive and, as far as possible, **balanced and equal 'Global North'-'Global South' academic collaborations**, which move away from academic colonialism and result in further decolonized research. Finally, as observed in Chapter 2, current research has mainly analysed news discourses (e.g., Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017; Eberl et al., 2018; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017; Saric, 2019; Wigger et al., 2021) and, to lesser extents, on political discourses (Hammerstad, 2014a; Heidenreich et al., 2020; Kirkwood, 2017; Klaus, 2017; Van Leuven et al., 2018) about forced migration. However, few studies have examined the (mediated) forced migration discourses of private sector actors (e.g., Bergman Rosamond & Gregoratti 2020; Plambech et al., 2021), citizens (e.g., Avraamidou & Eftychiou, 2021; Bozdag & Smets, 2017; Yantseva, 2020), forcibly displaced people themselves (e.g., Chouliaraki, 2017; Rae et al., 2018; Risam, 2018), cultural actors (e.g., Menozzi, 2019; Özdemir & Özdemir, 2017; Yalouri, 2019), (pro-)refugee and/or grassroots movements (e.g., Bishop, 2019; Costanza-Chock, 2014; Georgiou, 2018; Nikunen, 2019b) and alt-right and anti-migration movements (e.g., Farkas et al., 2018; Monnier et al., 2022), necessitating additional studies on these lines of research.

4. Recommendations for practice

As said, we have tried to meet Orgad's (2018) call to triangulate text-focused, normative and communication production-focused, practice-based approaches, which is essential to better understand and be able to make evidence-based recommendations for humanitarian communication (Orgad, 2018). In that sense, in this dissertation, we have positioned ourselves both theoretically and ethically in a kind of balanced intermediate position, which seeks to integrate both ethical-normative text-focused and production-focused, practice-based perspectives. We are fully convinced of this position. Formulating only ethically normative but hardly practical or useful critiques or preaching unrealistic utopias that do not take into account the broader production, political, socio-cultural, economic and material contexts makes little sense, and will not foster societal change.

On the other hand, we also of course want to contribute societally by making ethical practice-oriented recommendations that can foster societal change. Regarding ethical positioning, we followed Nikunen (2019a) who draws on postcolonial and feminist theories of solidarity to expand the 'we' in traditional political theories of solidarity and to emphasize the importance of recognizing differences in constructions of solidarity in a multicultural, globalized world. More specifically, feminist theory promotes the idea of 'common differences' as a basis for deeper solidarity through unequal power relations (Dean, 1996; Mohanty, 2003). Thus, instead of generating solidarity based on similarities, feminist theorists posit 'dissonance' as essential for reflective solidarity (Dean, 1996; Hemmings, 2012). But, rather than emphasizing difference per se, the point is to also understand common interests. This can be achieved through listening, collaborating and supporting each other (Dreher, 2009, 2010).

We observed and fully acknowledge that international refugee organizations often function in complex, delicate routine, organizational, institutional path-dependent and societal contexts that strongly shape their public communication. Nevertheless, as their public communication can influence the public perceptions about forcibly displaced people and crises, and can potentially influence people's beliefs and governmental policies (Chouliaraki, 2012a), refugee organizations must be reflexive and critical about the social and ethical implications of their communication strategies. Unbalanced, simplified, little nuanced communication - both in terms of *how*, *what* and/or *who* - could not only imply **ethical concerns** (cf. mediated hierarchies of suffering) but could in the long-term also have broader repercussions that potentially complicate and/or undermine the organizational objectives of refugee organizations. More concretely, as argued in Chapter 8, refugee organizations should, to the extent that routine, organizational, institutional and/or societal contexts allow for it, communicate about crises and the involved actors in accurate, well-balanced manners, both for **societal and strategic reasons**.

First, news and humanitarian communication can influence the image of, and, subsequently, public opinion on, and policies for humanitarian crises and the involved people (Chouliaraki, 2012a). By overemphasizing and/or neglecting certain crises or actors, oversimplified narratives, perceptions and

policy measures could be subconsciously and/or indirectly reinforced. By spotlighting particular sociodemographic groups, refugee organizations risk implicitly reinforcing hierarchies of deservingness (Yukich, 2013), eroding asylum rights (Pupavac, 2008), and affecting the representations and voices of and identification opportunities with other groups. Second, refugee organizations should provide correct, balanced information to debunk populist myths and stereotypes. Moreover, disinformation can harm humanitarian relief, humanitarian journalism and those affected by humanitarian emergencies, and disengage audiences, facilitates criticism, and exacerbates conflict and violence. While exaggerated or sensational communication or so-called 'advocacy research' can be well-intended (e.g., raising awareness and support), it can have adverse long-term effects (Bunce, 2019; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). Third, refugee organizations could simultaneously strategically position and brand themselves in the highly competitive humanitarian sector as reliable, accountable 'authorised knowers' (Fenton, 2010), particularly in post-truth times when news media and citizens demand accurate, truthful sources and reporting (Bunce, 2019). However, to fundamentally change humanitarian communication and imagery, structural institutional changes seem to be essential. For instance, the production study suggests that more flexible donor funding could (partially) counter institutional path-dependent effects and facilitate more balanced representations.

Nevertheless, while fundamental structural institutional changes - which require major political and donor support - are presumably not feasible in the short term (cf. the often difficult, delicate relationships with donor states), it seems important that refugee organizations attempt, to the extent possible, to humanize forcibly displaced people or at least portray them in dignified ways, including because not every actor consumes various public communication formats. To provide some concrete advice for more ethical and practical communication strategies, which can be used for various media genres, we drew in Chapter 6 on the findings of this work but also on **the reflexive solidarity paradigm of Chouliaraki** (2012a). This refers, contra irony, to a politicized public, reflective form of solidarity rather than one based on private preference. Contra pity, it can rely on various social values rather than on a limited number of delineated 'universal' truths. Chouliaraki (2012a, p. 29) further argues that we should consider and represent a forcibly displaced person to be 'an "other" with her/his own humanity', who obtains a voice and 'is represented neither through stereotypes of destitution [or] (…) individual sovereignty', but 'in a more complex and, perhaps, a more discomforting [way]'. As is clear, this proposed type of solidarity largely corresponds with the earlier mentioned feminist and postcolonial conception of solidarity as based on 'common differences' and 'dissonance' (Dean, 1996; Hemmings, 2012; Mohanty, 2003). As Ahmed (2004, p. 189) elegantly puts it:

> 'Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground.'

As evidenced in our MCDA studies, refugee organizations already portray, to varying extents and for various ethical and pragmatic reasons, forcibly displaced people in more human and nuanced ways. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of room for improvement and different practices (e.g., more human-

oriented language, hypertextuality) can be implemented relatively easily (for more concrete suggestions for refugee organizations, we refer to the discussion section of Chapter 6).

It goes without saying that further policy and academic attention to the situation of forcibly displaced people is critical, particularly as the perilous situation of these people has been exacerbated by the impact of the Corona crisis. First, the Covid pandemic has resulted in lower numbers of refugees and asylum seekers than expected in non-Covid circumstances, reflecting how many of those seeking international protection became stranded in 2020 (UNHCR, 2021b). Moreover, the Corona crisis made the situation of these people, and in particular of (highly) vulnerable groups (e.g., people with an insecure housing situation and residence status, older people, women), even more precarious in various areas (e.g., social, public and mental health, access to education, work, safety and financial means, discrimination) (Näre et al., 2020; Pertek et al., 2020; Primdahl et al., 2021; Spiritus-Beerden et al., 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

This work at least hopes to provide an adequate scientific foundation as well as a stimulus for future research on the public communication of refugee organizations, and humanitarian communication in general. As Nikunen (2019a, p. 34) eloquently argues: 'It is our task as researchers to provide possibilities to imagine alternatives, to find spaces of hope that are not based on unrealistic utopias but in understanding complexities of social worlds and their challenges.'

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English summary

Although forced migration has always occurred throughout history, it has increased significantly recently. The largest increase took place between 2012 and 2015 and was largely driven by conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Central African and East African countries (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021). Worldwide, forcibly displaced people are, however, nowadays confronted with hostility, xenophobia and the increasing popularity of extreme right-wing political parties (Frelick, 2007; Freedman, 2015). Furthermore, in recent decades, several states have tightened their asylum policies and/or become more reluctant to cooperate with refugee organizations (Johnson, 2011; Freedman, 2015). Since 2015, the theme of forced migration has been ubiquitous in (often polarized, overlapping and interacting) public, media and political debates (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019).

Within such contexts, UNHCR, which is mandated to lead and coordinate refugee protection worldwide (Jones, 2013), and other international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) play key roles as providers of assistance and/or protection to forcibly displaced people (Betts et al., 2012). However, through public communication, they also try to inform, raise awareness and set news media, public, political and donor agendas. Therefore, they provide diverse communication content to news media and increasingly communicate directly with citizens via social media and websites (Atkin & Rice, 2013). Hence, these organizations can significantly influence how the general public perceives forcibly displaced people and related displacement crises (Chouliaraki, 2012a) and consequently can have broader policy and societal consequences. Nevertheless, few studies have examined how they attempt to influence public, media and political agendas, and even less studies have analysed the underlying reasons behind the use of their discursive strategies. While most research has analysed the news-making activities of humanitarian organizations, and broader changing journalism-NGO relationships in evolving news and humanitarian ecologies (e.g., Ongenaert & Joye, 2016; Powers, 2018; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014), fewer studies specifically investigated refugee organizations. Second, most research centres on agenda-setting (e.g., McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021) and, to lesser extents, stakeholders' efforts to influence *about which* subjects news media, citizens or other stakeholders should think (cf. first-level agenda-building) (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). However, to our knowledge, only a few studies, have thoroughly explored refugee organizations' second-level agenda-building strategies which attempt to influence *how* stakeholders perceive certain subjects (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). Further, they mainly textually focus on one organization, media genre, year, and/or crisis, lacking essential explanatory comparative, production, and/or societal perspectives.

Therefore, adopting a mixed-methods research design, this research project analysed refugee organizations' public communication strategies from multiple perspectives. More specifically, we examined various relevant international refugee organizations' public communication strategies regarding the recent Syrian and Central African crises. Hence, the central research objective of this project is *to investigate the conceptual, textual, production and societal dimensions and their interactions involved in international refugee organizations' public communication strategies*. This overarching objective is operationalized through three more specific, interrelated sub-objectives, corresponding to three components and adopting a source-to-end product perspective.

First, we examined the *conceptual* dimension of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies (component 1). How can the public communication of international refugee organizations be conceptualized? For this purpose, we conducted an extensive literature review.

Second, we studied the *textual* dimension of international refugee organizations' public communication strategies (component 2). Which discursive strategies do international refugee organizations mainly use (cf. *how*, *who*, *what*)? Acknowledging current trends and gaps within the literature, this sub-objective can be further divided into three more specific objectives:

1. *How* are forcibly displaced people mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication? In other words, which representation and argumentation strategies do the international refugee organizations use?

For this purpose, we conducted two empirical studies. First, acknowledging potential organizational differences, we applied a comparative-synchronic (Carvalho, 2008) critical discourse analysis (CDA) according to Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA model on the international press releases (N=122) of UNHCR and two INGOs, de 'Danish Refugee Council' (DRC) and de 'International Rescue Committee' regarding the Syrian crisis (2014-2015). Additionally, we conducted semi-structured expert interviews (N=6) with press and regional officers at these organizations to yield additional empirical material about the underlying production and societal contexts. Second, recognizing potential media genre and crisis differences, we applied a comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012), again following Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA model, on UNHCR's international press releases (N=28), news stories (N=233), and related photos (N=462) and videos (N=50) of the key year 2015.

2. *Who* is mainly (not) represented and given a voice in international refugee organizations' public communication?
3. *What* is mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication? Which key characteristics (e.g., organizations, crises, media genres, years) and themes do international refugee organizations represent?

To meet these specific objectives and acknowledging organizational, media, crisis and temporal differences, we applied a comparative, longitudinal, intersectional quantitative content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) on the press releases and news stories (N=1244) about the recent Syrian and Central African crises (2015-2018) of UNHCR, and two INGOs, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE).

Third, we focused on the *production and societal* dimensions (component 3). Central to the corresponding component are the production, political, economic and socio-cultural contexts, forces and motivations behind the public communication strategies. How do the underlying production, political, economic and socio-cultural contexts, forces and motivations explain the discursive strategies

of international refugee organizations (cf. *why*)? Likewise, this sub-objective can be further divided into three more specific objectives that correspond with the specific textual objectives:

1. How can we explain *how* forcibly displaced people are mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication?
2. How can we explain *who* is mainly (not) represented and given a voice in international refugee organizations' public communication?
3. How can we explain *what* is mainly (not) represented and discussed in international refugee organizations' public communication?

Therefore, we conducted a three-week office ethnography at NRC's main press and communication department, semi-structured expert interviews with press and communication officers of NRC (N=10), and a document analysis of the key communication policy documents of NRC. We thereby focused each time on the production and societal contexts of NRC's public communication regarding the recent Syrian and Central African crises.

In general, we found diverse, often mixed results that nuance, extend and sometimes contradict the existing literature on the public communication of refugee organizations and, more generally, humanitarian communication, and frequently interact with and explain each other. For reasons of relevance, focus and space, we discuss below interactions between different dimensions, as evidenced within one or more studies. The literature review indicated that in recent decades the social and scientific relevance of research on strategic and non-profit communication in general and on refugee organizations' public communication particularly have increased. Nevertheless, these fields remain underdeveloped and are mostly text-focused, while the production and reception dimensions are barely explored. Remarkably, however, little or no research has been conducted from an organizational communication perspective, although this study demonstrates that the subject can be adequately embedded in and examined from the fields of strategic, non-profit and public communication. Specifically, our dissertation highlights the relevance of the holistic Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO) perspective. This perspective argues that communication is not just an activity that occurs within or between organizations, but forms the constitutive process of organization (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Further, strongly influenced by the understandings of Oliveira (2017), Atkin and Rice (2013), and Macnamara (2016), we define refugee organizations' public communication as the practice of organized and systematic symbolic social action (diversified communication disseminated through a variety of channels and activities) within the public sphere to reach set goals, co-create the refugee organization, perform civic relations and fulfil its mission by groups of people that pursue the (perceived) common good for forced migration. Finally, our conceptual study argues that future research can benefit by adopting multi-perspective, practice-oriented, multi-methodological, comparative and/or interdisciplinary approaches to which we respond in our empirical studies.

Regarding the 'how' and related 'why' dimensions, the critical discourse analysis shows that the observed organisations to varying extents dehumanize forcibly displaced people and subordinate them to the 'Western Self' and national state interests in their press releases. Acknowledging organizational and media genre differences, these power inequalities can be explained by the use of various discursive strategies, as well as the broader production and social contexts. The findings demonstrate

that forcibly displaced people are often portrayed as a homogenous and suffering collective, confirming the dominance of the regime of pity's traditional 'negative' representational strategies (Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson, 2011). However, unlike existing fragmented research, this analysis also found evidence of the use of other discursive strategies and explored the production process and the social context. The aforementioned depersonalising humanitarian discourse can be considered to be the product of the specific features of the press releases. The importance of news media attention and commercial reasons are other explanatory factors. In addition, the study found articulations of a simultaneously existing post-humanitarian discourse. The interviews revealed that the humanitarian sector has evolved from a non-economic to a market-oriented sphere within which private choice and self-expression are central. One can relate this post-humanitarian discourse to the regime of irony and consider it as an expression of neoliberalism (Chouliaraki, 2012a). While post-humanitarian discourses respond to the needs for personal development and self-expression, the oft-deployed cross-issue persuasion strategy responds to state interests and reflects political realism (Grieco, 1999). Both strategies are self-directed and reduce forcibly displaced people principally to secondary figures.

Similarly, the comparative-synchronic multimodal critical discourse analysis reveals that UNHCR primarily represents forcibly displaced people in its press releases and, to lesser extents, in its news as generic, anonymized, passive, victimized, deprived, and/or voiceless masses, reproducing humanitarian saviour logics and hierarchies of deservingness. However, stories, photos, and videos frequently combine these representations with portrayals of empowered individual doers, speakers, and/or thinkers. Both representation strategies can be partially explained by news logics such as genre characteristics, news media conventions, and representations, and by respectively political and private sector discourses and agenda-building opportunities, and related organizational goals, as the expert interviews show. Furthermore, we identified several argumentation methods, particularly in textual communication genres. UNHCR mainly attempts to stimulate pity-based solidarity but also voices various neoliberal post-humanitarian (mainly Western) Self-oriented solidarity discourses. Refining cross-issue persuasion, we discovered that UNHCR links protection to states' (perceived) interests in various issue areas but also in various principles and values, and propose the more appropriate concept of 'cross-interest persuasion'. Rather than just to other (perceived) important issue areas, refugee organizations link contributions to protection to the interests of states in general. Moreover, the term emphasizes the political realist nature of the pragmatic argumentation strategy. Finally, we consider these discursive strategies as reflections and reproductions of, and responses to dominant migration management paradigms and the increasingly neoliberalized and political realist international refugee regime.

Concerning the textual 'who', 'what' and connected 'why' dimensions, the comparative, longitudinal and intersectional quantitative content analysis shows a mixed picture of what and who are (not) represented, involving interorganizational commonalities and differences. First, regarding 'what', the refugee organizations predominantly communicated in 2015 and 2016 about forcibly displaced people involved in the Syrian crisis, because of intertwined organizational, societal and/or financial reasons and mainstream media logics. More specifically, it is far more difficult for international refugee organizations to obtain media attention for the Central African crisis than the Syrian crisis, because of

various factors such as the nature, magnitude, implications, mediatization and comprehensibility of the conflicts, and geographic and cultural proximity. As there is more media attention on Syria, international refugee organizations generally obtain also more resources specifically intended for the Syrian crisis, including for press and communication efforts. This leads on its turn to even more attention for this crisis, creating a 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect'. Organizational factors generally reinforce this effect, while security and political factors in the case of communication about Syria limit it.

Regarding 'who', we observed that primarily forcibly displaced people and refugee organizations obtain voices in het public communication about the investigated forcibly displaced people, refining earlier studies. Additionally, examining several (largely unexplored) sociodemographics, this study finds that individualized forcibly displaced people are represented in significantly unbalanced manners (e.g., mainly along age, geographical location, legal status, current country and continent, nationality, life stance, sexual orientation, family situation, marital status and former and current profession). This can be explained by a myriad of pragmatic, humanitarian, societal, organizational, ethical/personal, practical, security, political and/or narrative reasons. Shaped by production and societal contexts, humanitarian communication reproduces and reflects quantitative mediated hierarchies of suffering, both between (cf. *what*) and within (*who*) crises. In general, we can conclude that various pragmatic and contextual factors explain 'how', 'who' and 'what' are represented. Finally, we argue that well-balanced humanitarian communication is essential for societal and strategic reasons (e.g., negative long-term implications of imbalanced humanitarian imagery and sensational public communication, branding opportunities as reliable, accountable 'authorised knowers').

Dutch summary (Nederlandse samenvatting)

Hoewel gedwongen migratie doorheen de geschiedenis altijd heeft plaatsgevonden, is het de laatste tijd aanzienlijk toegenomen. De grootste stijging vond plaats tussen 2012 en 2015 en werd grotendeels veroorzaakt door conflicten in Syrië, Irak, Jemen en Centraal-Afrikaanse en Oost-Afrikaanse landen (het Bureau van de Hoge Commissaris voor de Vluchtelingen van de Verenigde Naties [UNHCR], 2021). Wereldwijd worden gedwongen ontheemde mensen tegenwoordig echter geconfronteerd met vijandigheid, xenofobie en de toenemende populariteit van extreemrechtse politieke partijen (Frelick, 2007; Freedman, 2015). Bovendien hebben verschillende staten de afgelopen decennia hun asielbeleid aangescherpt en/of zijn ze terughoudender geworden om samen te werken met vluchtelingenorganisaties (Johnson, 2011; Freedman, 2015). Sinds 2015 is het thema van gedwongen migratie alomtegenwoordig in (vaak gepolariseerde, overlappende en interagerende) publieke, media- en politieke debatten (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019).

Binnen dergelijke contexten spelen UNHCR, dat het mandaat heeft om de bescherming van vluchtelingen wereldwijd te leiden en te coördineren (Jones, 2013), en internationale niet-gouvernementele organisaties (ngo's) een sleutelrol als verleners van bijstand en/of bescherming van gedwongen ontheemde mensen (Betts et al., 2012). Ze proberen via publieke communicatie echter ook te informeren, het bewustzijn te vergroten en nieuwsmedia-, publieke, politieke en donor-agenda's te bepalen. Daarom bieden ze diverse communicatiecontent aan nieuwsmedia en communiceren ze in toenemende mate rechtstreeks met burgers via sociale media en websites (Atkin & Rice, 2013). Bijgevolg kunnen deze organisaties een aanzienlijke invloed uitoefenen op hoe het brede publiek gedwongen ontheemde mensen en gerelateerde ontheemdingscrisissen percipieert (Chouliaraki, 2012a) en kunnen dus bredere beleids- en maatschappelijke gevolgen hebben. Desalniettemin hebben maar weinig studies onderzocht hoe ze proberen de nieuwsmedia-, publieke, politieke en donor-agenda's te beïnvloeden, en nog minder studies hebben de onderliggende redenen achter het gebruik van hun discursieve strategieën geanalyseerd. Hoewel het meeste onderzoek de nieuwsactiviteiten van humanitaire organisaties en bredere veranderende relaties tussen journalistiek en ngo's in veranderende nieuws- en humanitaire ecologieën heeft geanalyseerd (bv. Ongenaert & Joye, 2016; Powers, 2018; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014), hebben minder studies specifiek vluchtelingenorganisaties onderzocht. Ten tweede, richt het meeste onderzoek zich op 'agenda-setting' (bv. McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021) en, in mindere mate, op de inspanningen van stakeholders om te beïnvloeden *over welke* onderwerpen nieuwsmedia, burgers of andere belanghebbenden zouden moeten denken (cf. het eerste niveau van agenda-building) (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). Naar onze kennis, hebben echter slechts enkele studies grondig onderzoek gedaan naar de agenda-buildingstrategieën van vluchtelingenorganisaties op het tweede niveau, die proberen te beïnvloeden *hoe* stakeholders bepaalde onderwerpen waarnemen (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). Verder richten ze zich voornamelijk tekstueel op één organisatie, mediagenre, jaar en/of crisis, en ontbreekt het hen dus aan essentiële verklarende comparatieve, productie- en/of maatschappelijke perspectieven.

Daarom analyseerde dit onderzoeksproject vanuit een 'mixed-methods' onderzoeksdesign de publieke communicatiestrategieën van vluchtelingenorganisaties vanuit meerdere perspectieven. Meer specifiek, onderzochten we de publieke communicatiestrategieën van verschillende relevante

internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties met betrekking tot de recente Syrische en Centraal-Afrikaanse crisissen. Bijgevolg is de centrale onderzoeksdoelstelling van dit project *het onderzoeken van de conceptuele, tekstuele, productie- en maatschappelijke dimensies en hun interacties die betrokken zijn bij de publieke communicatiestrategieën van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties*. Deze overkoepelende doelstelling wordt geoperationaliseerd door middel van drie meer specifieke, onderling samenhangende subdoelstellingen, die overeenkomen met drie componenten en een bron-tot-eind productperspectief hanteren.

Allereerst, onderzochten we de *conceptuele* dimensie van de publieke communicatiestrategieën van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties (component 1). Hoe kan de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties worden geconceptualiseerd? Om deze doelstelling te realiseren, hebben we een uitgebreide literatuurstudie uitgevoerd.

Ten tweede, bestudeerden we de *tekstuele* dimensie van de publieke communicatiestrategieën van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties (component 2). Welke discursieve strategieën gebruiken internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties vooral (cf. *hoe*, *wie*, *wat*)? De huidige trends en hiaten in de literatuur erkennend, kan deze subdoelstelling verder worden onderverdeeld in drie meer specifieke doelstellingen:

1. *Hoe* worden gedwongen ontheemde mensen voornamelijk (niet) gerepresenteerd en bediscussieerd in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties? Met andere woorden, welke representatie- en argumentatiestrategieën gebruiken de internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?

Om deze doelstelling te verwezenlijken, hebben we twee empirische studies uitgevoerd. Ten eerste, hebben we, rekening houdend met mogelijke organisationele verschillen, een kritische discoursanalyse (CDA) met een comparatief perspectief (Carvalho, 2008) volgens Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA-model toegepast op de internationale persberichten (N=122) van UNHCR en twee internationale ngo's, DRC en het 'International Rescue Committee' over de Syrische crisis (2014-2015). Daarnaast hebben we semigestructureerde expertinterviews (N=6) afgenomen met pers- en regiofunctionarissen bij deze organisaties om aanvullend empirisch materiaal te verkrijgen over de onderliggende productie- en maatschappelijke contexten. Ten tweede hebben we, rekening houdend met mogelijke mediagenre- en crisisverschillen, een comparatieve multimodale kritische discoursanalyse (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012) toegepast, opnieuw volgens Fairclough's (1992, 1995) CDA-model, op UNHCR's internationale persberichten (N=28), nieuwsberichten (N=233) en gerelateerde foto's (N=462) en video's (N=50) van het sleuteljaar 2015.

2. *Wie* wordt voornamelijk (niet) gerepresenteerd en krijgt een stem in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?
3. *Wat* wordt vooral (niet) gerepresenteerd en besproken in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties? Welke kernkenmerken (bv. organisaties, crisissen, mediagenres, jaren) en thema's representeren internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?

Om aan deze specifieke doelstellingen te voldoen en organisationele, media-, crisis- en temporele verschillen te erkennen, hebben we een vergelijkende, longitudinale, intersectionele kwantitatieve inhoudsanalyse (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) toegepast op de persberichten en nieuwsberichten (N=1244) over de recente Syrische en Centraal-Afrikaanse crisissen (2015-2018) van UNHCR, en twee internationale ngo's, de 'Norwegian Refugee Council' (NRC) en de 'European Council on Refugees and Exiles' (ECRE).

Ten derde, hebben we ons gericht op de *productie- en maatschappelijke* dimensies (component 3). Centraal in de corresponderende component staan de productie, politieke, economische en sociaal-culturele contexten, krachten en motivaties achter de publieke communicatiestrategieën. Hoe verklaren de onderliggende productie, politieke, economische en sociaal-culturele contexten, krachten en drijfveren de discursieve strategieën van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties (cf. waarom)? Evenzeer kan deze subdoelstelling verder worden onderverdeeld in drie meer specifieke doelstellingen die overeenkomen met de specifieke tekstuele doelstellingen:

1. Hoe kunnen we verklaren *hoe* gedwongen ontheemde mensen voornamelijk (niet) worden gerepresenteerd en besproken in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?
2. Hoe kunnen we verklaren *wie* vooral (niet) gerepresenteerd wordt en een stem krijgt in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?
3. Hoe kunnen we verklaren *wat* er voornamelijk (niet) wordt gerepresenteerd en besproken in de publieke communicatie van internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties?

Daarom voerden we een drie weken durende kantooretnografie uit bij het belangrijkste pers- en communicatiedepartement van NRC, namen we semigestructureerde expertinterviews af van pers- en communicatiemedewerkers van NRC (N=10) en pasten we een documentanalyse toe op de belangrijkste communicatiebeleidsdocumenten van NRC. Daarbij hebben we ons telkens gericht op de productie- en maatschappelijke contexten van NRC's publieke communicatie over de recente Syrische en Centraal-Afrikaanse crisissen.

Over het algemeen vonden we diverse, vaak gemengde resultaten die de bestaande literatuur over de publieke communicatie van vluchtelingenorganisaties en, meer in het algemeen, humanitaire communicatie nuanceren, uitbreiden en soms tegenspreken, en die vaak met elkaar interageren en elkaar verklaren. Om redenen van relevantie, focus en ruimte bespreken we hieronder interacties tussen verschillende dimensies, zoals geobserveerd in een of meer studies. Uit het literatuuronderzoek bleek dat de maatschappelijke en wetenschappelijke relevantie van onderzoek naar strategische en non-profitcommunicatie in het algemeen en naar de publieke communicatie van vluchtelingenorganisaties in het bijzonder de afgelopen decennia is toegenomen. Desalniettemin blijven deze velden onderontwikkeld en zijn ze meestal tekstgericht, terwijl de productie- en receptiedimensies nauwelijks worden onderzocht. Opmerkelijk is echter dat er weinig of geen onderzoek is gedaan vanuit het perspectief van organisationele communicatie. Dit onderzoek toont nochtans aan dat het onderwerp adequaat kan worden ingebed in en onderzocht worden vanuit de velden van strategische, non-profit en publieke communicatie. In het bijzonder benadrukt ons

proefschrift de relevantie van het holistische perspectief van 'Communicative Constitution of Organizations' (CCO). Dit perspectief stelt dat communicatie niet alleen een activiteit is die plaatsvindt binnen of tussen organisaties, maar het constitutieve proces van organisatie vormt (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). Verder, sterk beïnvloed door de inzichten van Oliveira (2017), Atkin en Rice (2013) en Macnamara (2016), definiëren we publieke communicatie van vluchtelingenorganisaties als de praktijk van georganiseerde en systematische symbolische sociale actie (gediversifieerde communicatie verspreid via een verscheidenheid aan kanalen en activiteiten) binnen de publieke sfeer om gestelde doelen te bereiken, de vluchtelingenorganisatie te co-creëren, maatschappelijke relaties aan te gaan en de missie te vervullen door groepen van mensen die het (gepercipieerde) algemeen belang van gedwongen migratie nastreven. Ten slotte stelt onze conceptuele studie dat toekomstig onderzoek baat kan hebben bij multi-perspectieve, praktijkgerichte, multi-methodologische, vergelijkende en/of interdisciplinaire benaderingen, waarop we inspelen in onze empirische studies.

Met betrekking tot de *hoe-* en gerelateerde *waarom*-dimensies blijkt uit de kritische discoursanalyse dat de geobserveerde organisaties in verschillende mate gedwongen ontheemde mensen ontmenselijken en in hun persberichten ondergeschikt maken aan het 'Westerse Zelf' en nationale staatsbelangen. Organisationele en mediagenreverschillen erkennend, kunnen deze machtsongelijkheden worden verklaard door het gebruik van verschillende discursieve strategieën, evenals de bredere productie- en maatschappelijke contexten. De bevindingen tonen aan dat gedwongen ontheemde mensen vaak worden afgeschilderd als een homogeen en lijdend collectief, wat de dominantie bevestigt van de traditionele 'negatieve' representatiestrategieën van het discursief stelsel van medelijden (Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson, 2011). In tegenstelling tot bestaand gefragmenteerd onderzoek, vond deze analyse echter ook het gebruik van andere discursieve strategieën en verkende het productieproces en de maatschappelijke context. Het eerder genoemde depersonaliserende humanitaire discours kan worden beschouwd als het product van de specifieke kenmerken van de persberichten. Het belang van de nieuwsmedia-aandacht en commerciële redenen zijn andere verklarende factoren. Bovendien vond de studie articulaties van een simultaan bestaand post-humanitair discours. Uit de interviews bleek dat de humanitaire sector is geëvolueerd van een niet-economische naar een marktgerichte sfeer waarbinnen privékeuze en zelfexpressie centraal staan. Men kan dit post-humanitaire discours relateren aan het discursief stelsel van ironie en het beschouwen als een uiting van neoliberalisme (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Terwijl post-humanitaire discoursen inspelen op de nood aan persoonlijke ontwikkeling en zelfexpressie, reageert de vaak toegepaste 'cross-issue persuasion'-strategie op staatsbelangen en reflecteert het politiek realisme (Grieco, 1999). Beide strategieën zijn zelfgericht en herleiden gedwongen ontheemde mensen voornamelijk tot secundaire figuren.

Evenzeer onthult de comparatieve multimodale kritische discoursanalyse dat UNHCR in zijn persberichten en, in mindere mate, in zijn nieuws voornamelijk gedwongen ontheemde mensen representeert als generische, geanonimiseerde, passieve, getroffen, achtergestelde en/of stemloze massa's, die 'humanitarian saviour'-logica en 'hierarchies of deservingness' reproduceren. Verhalen, foto's en video's combineren deze representaties echter vaak met afbeeldingen van empowered individuele doeners, sprekers en/of denkers. Beide representatiestrategieën kunnen deels worden verklaard door nieuwslogica zoals genrekenmerken, nieuwsmediaconventies en representaties, en door respectievelijk politieke en private sectordiscoursen en opportuniteiten voor agenda-building, en gerelateerde organisationele doelstellingen, zoals blijkt uit de expertinterviews. Verder hebben we verschillende argumentatiemethoden geïdentificeerd, met name in tekstuele communicatiegenres.

UNHCR probeert vooral op medelijden gebaseerde solidariteit te stimuleren, maar uit ook verschillende neoliberale post-humanitaire (voornamelijk Westerse) zelfgerichte solidariteitsdiscoursen. Voorts verfijnen we het concept van 'cross-issue persuasion'. Zo ontdekten we dat UNHCR bescherming koppelt aan de (vermeende) belangen van staten in verschillende domeinen, maar ook omtrent verschillende principes en waarden, en stelden we het meer geschikte concept van 'cross-interest persuasion' voor. Vluchtelingenorganisaties linken bijdragen aan bescherming niet alleen aan andere (gepercipieerde) belangrijke domeinen, maar eerder aan de belangen van staten in het algemeen. Bovendien benadrukt de term het politiek-realistische karakter van de pragmatische argumentatiestrategie. Ten slotte beschouwen we deze discursieve strategieën als reflecties en reproducties van en reacties op dominante paradigma's voor migratiemanagement en het steeds neoliberalere en politiek realistischere internationale vluchtelingenstelsel.

Wat betreft de tekstuele *wie-*, *wat-* en samenhangende *waarom*-dimensies, laat de comparatieve, longitudinale en intersectionele kwantitatieve inhoudsanalyse een gemengd beeld zien van wat en wie (niet) gerepresenteerd worden, met interorganisationele overeenkomsten en verschillen. Ten eerste, wat betreft de *wat*-dimensie, communiceerden de vluchtelingenorganisaties voornamelijk in 2015 en 2016 over gedwongen ontheemde mensen die betrokken waren bij de Syrische crisis, en dit omwille van verweven organisationele, maatschappelijke en/of financiële redenen en mainstream medialogica. Meer specifiek is het voor internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties veel moeilijker om media-aandacht te krijgen voor de Centraal-Afrikaanse crisis dan voor de Syrische crisis, vanwege verschillende factoren zoals de aard, omvang, implicaties, mediatisering en begrijpelijkheid van de conflicten, en geografische en culturele nabijheid. Naarmate er meer media-aandacht is voor Syrië, krijgen internationale vluchtelingenorganisaties over het algemeen ook meer middelen die specifiek bedoeld zijn voor de Syrische crisis, onder meer voor pers- en communicatie-inspanningen. Dit leidt opnieuw tot nog meer aandacht voor deze crisis, waardoor een 'Vicious Neglected Crisis Circle (VNCC) effect' ontstaat. Organisationele factoren versterken dit effect over het algemeen, terwijl veiligheids- en politieke factoren in het geval van communicatie over Syrië dit beperken.

Wat betreft de *wie*-dimensie, zagen we dat vooral gedwongen ontheemde mensen en vluchtelingenorganisaties stemmen verkrijgen in de publieke communicatie over de onderzochte gedwongen ontheemde mensen, wat een nuance vormt op eerdere studies. Bovendien, bij het onderzoeken van verschillende (grotendeels onontgonnen) sociodemografische gegevens, blijkt uit deze studie dat geïndividualiseerde gedwongen ontheemde mensen op aanzienlijk onevenwichtige manieren worden gepresenteerd (bv. voornamelijk naargelang leeftijd, geografische locatie, legale status, huidig land en continent, nationaliteit, levenshouding, seksuele oriëntatie, gezinssituatie, burgerlijke staat en voormalig en huidig beroep). Dit kan worden verklaard door een groot aantal pragmatische, humanitaire, maatschappelijke, organisationele, ethische/persoonlijke, praktische, veiligheids-, politieke en/of narratieve redenen. Vormgegeven door productie- en maatschappelijke contexten, reproduceert en reflecteert humanitaire communicatie kwantitatieve gemedieerde hiërarchieën van lijden, zowel tussen (cf. *wat*) als binnen (*wie*) crisissen. Over het algemeen kunnen we concluderen dat verschillende pragmatische en contextuele factoren het '*hoe*', '*wie*' en '*wat*' verklaren. Ten slotte betogen we dat evenwichtige humanitaire communicatie essentieel is om maatschappelijke en strategische redenen (bijv. negatieve lange termijnimplicaties van onevenwichtige humanitaire beeldvorming en sensationele publieke communicatie, brandingopportuniteiten als betrouwbare, verantwoordelijke 'authorised knowers').

French summary (résumé en Français)

Bien que la migration forcée ait toujours eu lieu tout au long de l'histoire, elle a considérablement augmenté ces derniers temps. La plus forte augmentation s'est produite entre 2012 et 2015 et a été en grande partie causée par les conflits en Syrie, en Irak, au Yémen et dans les pays d'Afrique centrale et orientale (Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés [HCR], 2021). À l'échelle mondiale, cependant, les personnes déplacées de force sont aujourd'hui confrontées à l'hostilité, à la xénophobie et à la popularité croissante des partis politiques d'extrême droite (Frelick, 2007; Freedman, 2015). En outre, plusieurs États ont resserré leurs politiques d'asile au cours des dernières décennies et/ou sont devenus plus réticents à coopérer avec les organisations de réfugiés (Johnson, 2011 ; Freedman, 2015). Depuis 2015, le thème de la migration forcée est omniprésent dans les débats publics, médiatiques et politiques (souvent polarisés, se chevauchant et interagissant) (Hellman & Lerkkanen, 2019).

Dans ces contextes, le HCR, qui a pour mandat de diriger et de coordonner la protection des réfugiés dans le monde entier (Jones, 2013), et les organisations non-gouvernementales (ONG) internationales jouent un rôle clé en tant que fournisseurs d'assistance et/ou de protection des personnes déplacées de force (Betts et al., 2012). Cependant, ils cherchent également à informer, sensibiliser et définir les agendas des médias, du public, des politiques et des donateurs par le biais de la communication publique. Par conséquent, ils fournissent un contenu de communication diversifié aux médias d'information et communiquent de plus en plus directement avec les citoyens par le biais des médias sociaux et des sites Web (Atkin & Rice, 2013). Par conséquent, ces organisations peuvent exercer une influence significative sur la façon dont le grand public perçoit les personnes déplacées de force et les crises de déplacement connexes (Chouliaraki, 2012a) et peuvent donc entraîner des conséquences politiques et sociétales plus larges. Néanmoins, peu d'études ont examiné comment ils tentent d'influencer les médias d'information, les agendas publics, politiques et des donateurs, et encore moins d'études ont analysé les raisons sous-jacentes à l'utilisation de leurs stratégies discursives. Alors que la plupart des recherches ont analysé les activités d'information des organisations humanitaires et les relations plus larges en évolution entre le journalisme et les ONG dans l'évolution de l'information et des écologies humanitaires (par exemple, Ongenaert & Joye, 2016 ; Powers, 2018 ; Van Leuven & Joye, 2014), moins d'études ont spécifiquement étudié les organisations de réfugiés. Deuxièmement, la plupart des recherches se concentrent sur 'l'agenda setting' (p. ex. McCombs & Valenzuela, 2021) et, dans une moindre mesure, sur les efforts des parties prenantes pour influencer les sujets *auxquels* les médias, les citoyens ou d'autres parties prenantes devraient réfléchir (cf. le premier niveau de 'l'agenda building') (Kim & Kiousis, 2012). À notre connaissance, cependant, seules quelques études ont effectué des recherches approfondies sur le deuxième niveau de stratégies 'd'agenda building' des organisations de réfugiés, qui tentent d'influencer la façon *comment* les parties prenantes perçoivent certains sujets (Kim et Kiousis, 2012). En outre, ils se concentrent principalement textuellement sur une organisation, un genre médiatique, une année et/ou une crise et donc ils manquent des perspectives explicatives comparatives, de production et/ou sociétaux essentielles.

C'est pourquoi ce projet de recherche a analysé les stratégies de communication publique des organisations de réfugiés à partir de multiples perspectives, en utilisant une conception de recherche de 'méthodes mixtes'. Plus précisément, nous avons examiné les stratégies de communication publique de plusieurs organisations internationales de réfugiés pertinentes liées aux récentes crises

syrienne et centrafricaine. Par conséquent, l'objectif central de recherche de ce projet est *d'étudier les dimensions conceptuelles, textuelles, de production et sociétales et leurs interactions impliquées dans les stratégies de communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés*. Cet objectif global est opérationnalisé à travers trois sous-objectifs plus spécifiques, interdépendants, correspondant à trois composantes et utilisant une perspective du produit de la source à la fin.

Tout d'abord, nous avons examiné la dimension *conceptuelle* des stratégies de communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés (composante 1). Comment peut-on conceptualiser la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés? Afin d'atteindre cet objectif, nous avons mené une vaste étude de la littérature.

Deuxièmement, nous avons étudié la *dimension textuelle* des stratégies de communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés (composante 2). Quelles stratégies discursives les organisations internationales de réfugiés utilisent-elles principalement (cf. *comment, qui, quoi*)? Compte tenu des tendances actuelles et des lacunes dans la littérature, ce sous-objectif peut être subdivisé en trois objectifs plus spécifiques:

1. *Comment* les personnes déplacées de force sont-elles principalement (non) représentées et discutées dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés? En d'autres termes, quelles stratégies de représentation et d'argumentation les organisations internationales de réfugiés utilisent-elles?

Pour atteindre cet objectif, nous avons mené deux études empiriques. Tout d'abord, en tenant compte des différences organisationnelles possibles, nous avons appliqué une analyse critique du discours (ADC) avec une perspective comparative (Carvalho, 2008) selon le modèle CDA de Fairclough (1992, 1995) aux communiqués de presse internationaux (N=122) du HCR et de deux ONG internationales, la RDC et l'International Rescue Committee sur la crise syrienne (2014-2015). De plus, nous avons mené des entretiens d'expert semi structurés (N=6) avec des attachés de presse et des fonctionnaires régionaux de ces organisations afin d'obtenir des informations empiriques supplémentaires sur les contextes sociaux et de production sous-jacents. Deuxièmement, en tenant compte des différences possibles entre les genres médiatiques et les crises, nous avons appliqué une analyse comparative multimodale du discours critique (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012), toujours selon le modèle CDA de Fairclough (1992, 1995), aux communiqués de presse internationaux du HCR (N=28), aux reportages (N=233) et aux photographies connexes (N=462) et aux vidéos (N=50) de l'année clé 2015.

2. *Qui* est principalement (non) représenté et a une voix dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés?

3. *Qu'est-ce qui* est principalement (non) représenté et discuté dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés? Quelles caractéristiques fondamentales (par exemple, organisations, crises, genres médiatiques, années) et quels thèmes représentent les organisations internationales de réfugiés?

Pour atteindre ces objectifs spécifiques et reconnaître les différences organisationnelles, médiatiques, de crise et temporelles, nous disposons d'une analyse comparative, longitudinale et intersectionnelle quantitative du contenu (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019) s'appliquaient aux communiqués de presse et aux nouvelles (N=1244) sur les récentes crises syrienne et centrafricaine (2015-2018) du HCR et de deux ONG internationales, le Conseil norvégien pour les réfugiés (NRC) et le Conseil européen pour les réfugiés et les exilés (ECRE).

Troisièmement, nous nous sommes concentrés sur les *dimensions productives et sociétales* (composante 3). Au cœur de la composante correspondante se trouvent les contextes de production, politiques, économiques et socioculturels, les forces et les motivations qui sous-tendent les stratégies de communication publique. Comment les contextes de production, politiques, économiques et socioculturels sous-jacents, les forces et les motivations expliquent-ils les stratégies discursives des organisations internationales de réfugiés (cf. *pourquoi*)? De même, ce sous-objectif peut être subdivisé en trois objectifs plus spécifiques correspondant aux objectifs textuels spécifiques:

1. Comment expliquer *comment* les personnes déplacées de force sont principalement (non) représentées et discutées dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés?

2. Comment expliquer *qui* est principalement (non) représenté et qui a une voix dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés?

3. Comment expliquer *ce qui* est principalement (non) représenté et discuté dans la communication publique des organisations internationales de réfugiés?

C'est pourquoi nous avons effectué une ethnographie de bureau de trois semaines au service principal de la presse et des communications du NRC, mené des entrevues semi-structurées avec des experts du personnel de la presse et des communications du NRC (N=10) et appliqué une revue littéraire aux principaux documents de politique de communication du NRC. Ce faisant, nous avons toujours mis l'accent sur les contextes de production et sociale de la communication publique du NRC sur les récentes crises syrienne et centrafricaine.

Dans l'ensemble, nous avons trouvé des résultats divers, souvent mitigés, qui nuancent, élargissent et parfois contredisent la littérature existante sur la communication publique des organisations de réfugiés et, plus généralement, la communication humanitaire, et qui interagissent souvent les uns avec les autres et s'expliquent mutuellement. Pour des raisons de pertinence, de concentration et d'espace, nous discutons ci-dessous des interactions entre différentes dimensions, telles qu'observées dans une ou plusieurs études. La revue littéraire a montré que la pertinence sociale et scientifique de la recherche sur la communication stratégique et à but non lucratif en général et sur la communication publique des organisations de réfugiés en particulier a augmenté au cours des dernières décennies. Néanmoins, ces domaines restent sous-développés et sont principalement centré sur le texte, tandis que les dimensions de production et de réception sont à peine explorées. Remarquablement, cependant, peu ou pas de recherche a été faite du point de vue de la communication organisationnelle.

Cependant, cette recherche montre que le sujet peut être intégré et étudié de manière adéquate dans les domaines de la communication stratégique, à but non lucratif et publique. En particulier, cette thèse met l'accent sur la pertinence de la perspective holistique de la 'Constitution communicative des organisations' (CCO). Cette perspective affirme que la communication n'est pas seulement une activité qui a lieu au sein ou entre les organisations, mais forme le processus constitutif de l'organisation (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010). En outre, fortement influencés par les idées d'Oliveira (2017), Atkin et Rice (2013) et Macnamara (2016), nous définissons la communication publique des organisations de réfugiés comme la pratique d'une action sociale symbolique organisée et systématique (communication diversifiée diffusée à travers une variété de canaux et d'activités) dans la sphère publique pour atteindre les objectifs fixés, à l'organisation de réfugiés de co-créer, entrer dans des relations sociales et remplir la mission par des groupes de personnes qui poursuivent l'intérêt général (perçu) de la migration forcée. Enfin, notre étude conceptuelle indique que les recherches futures pourraient bénéficier d'approches multi-perspectives, axées sur la pratique, multi-méthodologiques, comparatives et / ou interdisciplinaires, auxquelles nous répondons dans nos études empiriques.

En ce qui concerne les dimensions *comment* et *pourquoi* connexes, l'analyse critique du discours montre que les organisations observées déshumanisent les personnes déplacées de force à des degrés divers et les subordonnent dans leurs communiqués de presse au 'Moi occidental' et aux intérêts de l'État national. Reconnaissant les différences organisationnelles et médiatiques entre les genres, ces inégalités de pouvoir peuvent s'expliquer par l'utilisation de différentes stratégies discursives, ainsi que par les contextes de production et sociétaux plus larges. Les résultats montrent que les personnes déplacées de force sont souvent dépeintes comme un collectif homogène et souffrant, confirmant la prédominance des stratégies traditionnelles de représentation 'négative' du système discursif de la pitié (Bettini, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2012a; Johnson, 2011). Cependant, contrairement à la recherche fragmentée existante, cette analyse a également révélé l'utilisation d'autres stratégies discursives et a exploré le processus de production et le contexte social. Le discours humanitaire dépersonnalisant susmentionné peut être considéré comme le produit des spécificités des communiqués de presse. L'importance de la couverture médiatique et des raisons commerciales sont d'autres facteurs explicatifs. En outre, l'étude a révélé des articulations d'un discours post-humanitaire existant simultanément. Les entretiens ont montré que le secteur humanitaire est passé d'une atmosphère non économique à une atmosphère axée sur le marché dans laquelle le choix privé et l'expression de soi sont au centre. On peut relier ce discours post-humanitaire au système discursif de l'ironie et le considérer comme une expression du néolibéralisme (Chouliaraki, 2012a). Alors que les discours post-humanitaires répondent au besoin de développement personnel et d'expression de soi, la stratégie de 'cross-issue persuasion' souvent appliquée répond aux intérêts de l'État et reflète le réalisme politique (Grieco, 1999). Les deux stratégies sont égocentriques et réduisent les personnes déplacées de force principalement à des personnages secondaires.

De même, une analyse comparative intermodale du discours critique révèle que dans ses communiqués de presse et, dans une moindre mesure, dans ses actualités, le HCR décrit les personnes déplacées de force principalement comme des masses génériques, anonymisées, passives, affectées, défavorisées et/ou sans voix, qui reproduisent la logique du 'sauveur humanitaire' et les 'hiérarchies du mérite'. Cependant, les histoires, les photos et les vidéos combinent souvent ces représentations

avec des images d'acteurs, de conférenciers et/ou de penseurs individuels habilités. Les deux stratégies de représentation peuvent s'expliquer en partie par la logique de l'information telle que les caractéristiques du genre, les conventions et les représentations des médias d'information, ainsi que par les discours politiques et du secteur privé et les possibilités d'élaboration d'un ordre du jour, et les objectifs organisationnels connexes, respectivement, comme en témoignent les interviews experts. De plus, nous avons identifié plusieurs méthodes d'argumentation, notamment dans les genres de communication textuelle. Le HCR tente principalement de stimuler la solidarité basée sur la compassion, mais aussi à partir de divers discours de solidarité néolibéraux post-humanitaires (principalement occidentaux) auto-orientés. Nous sommes également en train d'affiner le concept de 'cross-issue persuasion'. Par exemple, nous avons découvert que le HCR lie la protection aux intérêts (allégués) des États dans différents domaines, mais aussi à différents principes et valeurs, et nous avons proposé le concept plus approprié de 'cross-interest persuasion'. Les organisations de réfugiés lient les contributions à la protection non seulement à d'autres domaines importants (perçus), mais plutôt aux intérêts des états en général. En outre, le terme souligne le caractère politiquement réaliste de la stratégie d'argumentation pragmatique. Enfin, nous considérons ces stratégies discursives comme des réflexions, des reproductions et des réponses aux paradigmes dominants de la gestion des migrations et au système international des réfugiés de plus en plus néolibéral et politiquement réaliste.

En ce qui concerne les dimensions textuelles *qui*, *quoi* et *pourquoi* lié, l'analyse de contenu quantitative comparative, longitudinale et intersectionnelle montre une image mitigée de quoi et qui ne sont (pas) représentés, avec des similitudes et des différences inter organisationnelles. Premièrement, en ce qui concerne la dimension *quoi*, les organisations de réfugiés ont principalement communiqué en 2015 et 2016 sur les personnes déplacées de force impliquées dans la crise syrienne, pour des raisons organisationnelles, sociales et/ou financières entrelacées et la logique des médias grand public. Plus précisément, il est beaucoup plus difficile pour les organisations internationales de réfugiés d'attirer l'attention des médias sur la crise centrafricaine que sur la crise syrienne, en raison de divers facteurs tels que la nature, la taille, les implications, la médiatisation et la compréhensibilité des conflits, ainsi que la proximité géographique et culturelle. Comme il y a plus d'attention médiatique pour la Syrie, les organisations internationales de réfugiés reçoivent généralement plus de ressources spécifiquement destinées à la crise syrienne, y compris pour les efforts de presse et de communication. Cela conduit à nouveau à accorder encore plus d'attention à cette crise, créant un 'effet de cercle vicieux de crise négligée (VNCC)'. Les facteurs organisationnels renforcent généralement cet effet, tandis que les facteurs sécuritaires et politiques dans le cas des communications sur la Syrie limitent cet effet.

En ce qui concerne la dimension *qui*, nous avons vu que les personnes déplacées de force et les organisations de réfugiés en particulier reçoivent des voix dans la communication publique sur les personnes déplacées de force enquêtées, ce qui est une nuance par rapport aux études précédentes. En outre, en examinant diverses données sociodémographiques (largement inexplorées), cette étude montre que les personnes déplacées de force individualisées sont présentées de manière significativement déséquilibrée (par exemple, principalement en fonction de l'âge, de la situation géographique, du statut juridique, du pays et du continent actuels, de la nationalité, de l'attitude à l'égard de la vie, de l'orientation sexuelle, de la situation familiale, de l'état matrimonial et de la

profession antérieure et actuelle). Cela peut s'expliquer par un grand nombre de raisons pragmatiques, humanitaires, sociales, organisationnelles, éthiques/personnelles, pratiques, sécuritaires, politiques et/ou narratives. Façonnée par les contextes de production et sociétaux, la communication humanitaire reproduit et reflète des hiérarchies quantitatives de souffrance médiatisées, tant entre (cf. *quoi*) qu'à l'intérieur (*qui*) des crises. En général, nous pouvons conclure que divers facteurs pragmatiques et contextuels expliquent le '*comment*', le '*qui*' et le '*quoi*'. Enfin, nous soutenons qu'une communication humanitaire équilibrée est essentielle pour des raisons sociétales et stratégiques (par exemple, les implications négatives à long terme d'une imagerie humanitaire déséquilibrée et d'une communication publique sensationnelle, les opportunités de marquage en tant que 'connaisseurs autorisés' fiables et responsables).

Appendices

Given the size, the types (including Excel files and SPSS files) and the sensitive nature of the subject (a politically sensitive theme, involving representations of vulnerable people) of the appendices, we have opted to share the appendices digitally with the jury members. Various appendices are available to other readers upon reasonable request from the author of this dissertation.

Chapter 6

1. Appendix 1: Analysis scheme of the CDA
2. Appendix 2: Interview guide of the UNHCR, IRC and DRC expert interviews
3. Appendix 3: Meta document of the interviewees of the UNHCR, IRC and DRC expert interviews
4. Appendix 4: Transcriptions of the UNHCR, IRC and DRC expert interviews
5. Appendix 5 Audio files of the UNHCR, IRC and DRC expert interviews

Chapter 7

6. Appendix 6: Analysis scheme of the MCDA
7. Appendix 7: Guide of the data selection and analysis process of the MCDA
8. Appendix 8: Quantitative overview document of the textual UNHCR data for the MCDA
9. Appendix 9: Relevant data document of textual UNHCR data for the MCDA

Chapter 8

10. Appendix 10: Full dataset of the QCA
11. Appendix 11: Final codebook of the QCA – Post ICR test data analysis
12. Appendix 12: Final registration form of the QCA - Post ICR test data analysis
13. Appendix 13: Data cleaning and management of the QCA – Post ICR test data analysis
14. Appendix 14: Quantitative overview document textual data of all refugee organizations – QCA
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18. Appendix 18: Relevant data document textual data UNHCR – QCA
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21. Appendix 21: Statistical analyses – QCA
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Chapter 9

23. Appendix 23: Interview guide of the NRC expert interviews
24. Appendix 24: Meta document of the interviewees of the NRC expert interviews
25. Appendix 25: Analyses of the NRC expert interviews
26. Appendix 26: Transcriptions of the NRC expert interviews and interview transcription conventions
27. Appendix 27: Audio files of the NRC expert interviews
28. Appendix 28: Signed informed consent letters of the NRC expert interviews