Refracting the Analytical Gaze: Studying Media Representations of Migrant Death at the Border[1]

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Introduction

> Things 'in themselves' rarely, if ever, have any one, single, fixed and unchanging meaning. [...] It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them a meaning. In part, we give objects, people and event meaning by the frameworks of interpretation, which we bring to them. (Hall, 1997/2013: xix)

This chapter presents a methodology of *refracting* the analytical gaze that aims to broaden the analysis of media representations. Representations of issues, people and events have traditionally been at the core of media studies. However, scholars have also criticized the fact that the focus on the analysis of text and visual representation is not enough to understand how publics make meanings and circulate signs. What Nick Couldry (2004) has termed 'media practice' directs attention to the use of media technology and content in the everyday life. Digitalization has brought easily available material to media scholars to get a sense of how people interpret and engage with representations. Discussion sites, social media feeds and comments sections of newspapers make even desk research on publics' interpretations possible. However, this easily further estranges scholars from thinking of the situatedness of themselves and others, the ethics of knowledge production and considering multisensorial knowledge.

In this chapter I argue not for a departure from the study of media representation but rather for a broader and transnational vision informed by ethnographic and mobile methods. I build an argument for a re-thinking of the analytical gaze to the study of media representation by presenting two approaches: horizontal and vertical gazes to representation. Firstly, a *horizontal gaze to media representation* encourages a thinking of media in a broad and 'non-media-centric' (Hepp, 2010; Krajina et al., 2014; Morley, 2009) sense. The present day hybrid and transnational media scape demands attention to the ways in which publics produce and transform content as they share and circulate meanings across various media platforms, that is, through media practices of *re-representation*. Secondly, a *vertical gaze to media representation* involves ethnographic, phenomenological and participatory approaches that fracture the analytical eye of the scholar. This idea resonates specifically with anthropology and post-colonial and feminist approaches that have a long tradition of developing dialogic, participatory and activist scholarship.

In this chapter I explain these two methodological departures in the context of media representations of migrant deaths at Europe's borders. Human rights organizations have estimated more than 30,000 deaths since 1992 at the borderscapes of Europe – ranging from the geographical borderlands, checkpoints and sea borders to detention centers, deportation flights and other more 'invisible' borderscapes (about the ideas of borderscape and bordering as practice see, Anderson, 2014; Brambilla, 2014; De Genova, 2013; Georgiou and Chouliaraki, in this *Handbook*; Horsti and Pellander, 2017). Moreover, witnessing such deaths is a formative experience for most of the refugees who continue their life in Europe. A number of agents, such as journalists, refugees, artists, activists, NGOs, humanitarian agents, politicians, the Coast Guards and the securitizing actors like Frontex and the military represent the borders, crossings and fatalities for publics in their communications. This essay offers experimental and novel approaches to the question: how to study media representation of death at Europe's borders?

The first part of the chapter discusses the horizontal gaze to media representation by analyzing the mediated circulation of the Alan Kurdi photograph in 2015. The second part discusses the vertical gaze to media representation in relation to my research project on the afterlife of a migrant disaster in the Mediterranean Sea, *Remembering migration: Memory politics of forced migration in mediated societies* (Karina Horsti, Academy of Finland, 2014–2019).

Horizontal gaze to representation

The rapid evolution of new media technologies has produced a more complex media environment where the 'old' and the 'new' media interconnect. People move across various media platforms and their communicative flows blend between private and public media scapes. The blending of older and newer media logics has been termed to constitute a 'hybrid media system' (Chadwick, 2013) and 'media manifold' (Couldry, 2012: 16–19) among others. Studying representation in such a media environment requires paying attention to circulation. Image or text often spreads across different platforms and it does so through human minds and hands – people re-frame, comment or alter the meaning of what they share: they *re-represent*. Therefore, one direction of the horizontal gaze to representation is to pay attention to the travelling of signs, to the transformation of meaning, that is, to publics' engagement and re-representation of content. While images themselves might have some qualities that make them particularly 'spreadable' (Jenkins et al., 2013) – in the words of W.J.T Mitchell (1996: 73) – some visual images more than others 'seem to have a surprising capacity to generate new directions and surprising twists' – they do not go 'viral' and replicate themselves naturally and irrationally like a virus. On the contrary, images move through producing minds, through active consumers who re-contextualize, change and add meanings to the image.

One option to capture circulating media representations under our analytical lens is to think in terms of mobile methodology (Urry, 2007) – that is to follow the image, text, subject

or object and examine its transformations and re-representations across different communities. Hashtags, reverse image search tools and manual snowball methodologies are techniques that help the scholar to follow trajectories of the research objects (for examples of analysis see e.g. Horsti, 2017a, 2017b; Kjeldsen and Andersen, 2018; Mortensen, 2017; D'Orazio, 2015).

The photograph of Alan Kurdi's dead body that captured global attention in 2015 and brought the issue of death at Europe's borders to daily conversations across the world is a case that illustrates how the study of media representation needs re-thinking in the globalized and digitalized era. The different versions[2] of photographs published by Turkish news agency DHA (Dogan Haber Ajansi) of Alan Kurdi's dead body found on the beach of Bodrum on 2 September 2015 arguably have the quality of Mitchell's 'surprising capacity'. There is something poignant in the image itself: the boy does not look like a corpse; he could be asleep or he could be a doll. He could be a son of any European parent; he doesn't look like a stranger. In addition, there is a magical atmosphere in the photograph; the boy looks otherworldly, almost like an angel or a creature of the sea washed on the shore. The contrast of the knowledge that the boy had drowned with the fact that he looked like he was sleeping created a tension, a contradiction that appealed to global publics: it is the 'punctum' (Barthes, 1981) of the photograph that pierces through the attention of the viewer.

The pictures began to circulate first in the social media in Turkey and in Middle Eastern countries. The key nodal points between the regional media and the Western and global media were a Newsweek Middle East correspondent and a Human Rights Watch Geneva based emergency director[3]. However, the pictures did not circulate without explanation, re-framing and alteration – that is without people doing something with them. The photograph of Alan Kurdi's body seemed to demand a response from the publics and many responded by sharing the photograph, transforming it and re-representing it through art or memes. The Bored Panda website invited artistic appropriations of the image and received 97 submissions

that the users rated. The list was published in the order of popularity, starting with the original photo of the boy laying down on the beach and his shoes pointing to the camera with a text: 'These touching responses range from grief to rage, and regardless of where you stand on the Syrian refugee crisis and Europe's response, one thing is certain – children like Aylan and Ghalib should not be dying like this' (Néjé, n.d.). This was representative of the humanitarian positioning and the emotional response of grief or anger (towards a number of agents and emerging from different ideological and moral viewpoints). But what was the circulation as media practice about? For a moment it seemed that global publics had gathered around the image by circulating and appropriating it – by doing that they turned the pictures into an icon, a globally symbolic and recognizable object that represented more than the 'event' (Kjeldsen and Andersen, 2018; Lucaites and Hariman, 2007; Mortensen, 2017). Overnight the photograph became almost like a sacred object – an icon in the religious sense – to which publics could project their emotions. In the analysis of Reddit responses to the photograph, Mortensen and Trenz (2016) observed that, in addition to expressing one's emotions, there were also those who responded by meta-talk about the circulation and the making of the image (see also Kjeldsen and Andersen, 2018).

While circulating the image, people altered it – wings were added to the boys back, his figure was sculpted from sand, and he was pictured alive – but nevertheless the origin of the image remained identifiable. Mette Mortensen (2017) identifies two categories of appropriations: decontextualizing and re-contextualizing ones, arguing that the decontextualized versions isolate the motif (the boy and particularly his pose), whereas the other category re-contextualizes it with some other topic. However, if we examine any of the appropriations in their new contexts – even an image or just the pose of the boy – the scene always gains site-specific meanings. For example, when activists and artists enacted the position of the corpse in performances, it was never exactly the same. The place and the mode of circulating the image of the enactment were central to the representation. Chinese artist

Ai Weiwei performed the pose for the global mediated public in a photo shoot for India Today Magazine in 2016 on the shores of Lesbos in Greece and he later re-did the pose on top of his installation, 'Maybe, maybe not', of ceramic sunflower seeds in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The two places frame the pose in a different way. The first pose was done for an Indian photographer and it could be argued that this further globalized the symbolic meaning of the island of Lesbos and accelerated the global imagery of the fatal border. The second pose was done as a protest against Donald Trump's visit to the Museum in Jerusalem, and by doing the pose Weiwei protected his art from being used as an a-political background for figures that so obviously represented non-humanistic global politics. Nevertheless, in both cases Ai Weiwei re-represented an icon – death that had already become a spectacle by creating another mediated spectacle. The center of attention was no longer the fatal border or the boy's death but Ai Weiwei and his art.

Another example of an appropriation in a specific place is a mural on the wall on the shore of the river Main in Frankfurt, Germany. A large size realistic painting of the boy in a red T-shirt and blue pants lying on his stomach extends horizontally below the Honsellbrücke bridge. The painting of the mural could be understood as a re-location of the fatal border to the economic center of Europe in such a way that it potentially demanded Germany accepted responsibility for the deaths. What could be externalized as an event that happened elsewhere (in Turkey) was visibly represented in huge size to happen 'here'. Whereas Weiwei's enactment of the pose in Lesbos potentially globalized the issue of the fatal border, this work localized or domesticated it.

Some artists imagined the boy alive or as an angel. For example, Yante Ismail painted a pillow under the boy's head and a teddy bear next to his body for the two-year anniversary statement by UNHCR (2017). This could suggest an intervention on the meta-representational level, an invitation to think that the afterlife of the boy's death was meaningful as the photograph transformed the representation of the people who crossed the border towards a

more humanitarian direction. The depictions of Alan Kurdi alive could also mean that some Europeans could identify with the boy: they would have wanted to welcome him to their community and by engaging with the photograph they wanted to distance themselves from the governments that produced the fatal border.

More controversial appropriations of the Alan Kurdi photograph include the French magazine Charlie Hebdo's satire where three pig nosed caricatures run after a woman accompanied by a text: 'What would little Aylan grow up to be? A groper in Germany'. On the left hand corner of the cartoon was a drawing of the boy laying his face in the sea. The reference to the sexual harassment during New Year's Eve in Cologne next to the death of a child repeated a typical comparison of the right wing and Islamophobic online media (about the phenomenon and terminology see Hafez, 2014; Horsti, 2017b; Kumar, 2012). In Islamophobic and anti-immigrant media spaces, such as Breitbart.com in the United States or MV-lehti in Finland, the people who shared and discussed the photograph did not respond to the photograph itself or share emotions that the photograph evoked but instead their emotions and responses were related to the circulation and emotional responses to the photograph elsewhere. In the Finnish nationalist-populist MV-lehti the Alan Kurdi image itself was represented as 'fake' and propaganda of the 'multicultural' establishment that – according to the Islamophobic ideology – wanted to Islamize the West. The boy was represented as a victim, not of European border control or the failed (global or European) refugee protection regime, but as a victim of his father's self-interest, European humanitarian actors' practices, the mainstream media's allegedly humanitarian coverage and Sweden – which the Finnish anti-Muslim media claimed was encouraging people to take dangerous journeys. Gathering at the photograph, the Islamophobic online community in Finland produced an identity of those who protect the West from 'Muslim invasion', in which, they claimed, compassion and multiculturalism are used as weapons.

An ad-hoc public emerged in relation to the photograph, first through Twitter and Facebook, and only then did the mainstream media join by publishing and commenting on the photograph, its global circulation and the ethics of its publication. The photograph first started to circulate in Turkish, Syrian and Lebanese networks. It is therefore particularly noteworthy that in media scholarship the analysis of representation and reception of the photograph in these media platforms, as well as in for example Syrian diasporic media platforms, is rather thin. This calls for transnationalizing the study of media representations (Hegde, 2011; Orgad, 2012) in ways that connect to transnational and diasporic media.

In the West, the emotional response of the public gathering around the icon was mainly humanitarian – arguably so because it was about a dead child, but also because, contrary to the typical representation of refugees as a group, the photograph focused on one individual whose name was very quickly known by the public. In Canada, the country where Alan Kurdi's family had relatives and where they would have sought protection if it were possible, the debate around the photograph helped to shape a more humanitarian refugee policy of the new Liberal Justin Trudeau government that won the elections seven weeks after the Kurdi photographs emerged (Kingsley and Timur, 2015). For a short while, the attitude to asylum seekers crossing European borders was more compassionate (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017; Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017; Lenette and Miskovic, 2018). For example, Francesco D'Orazio's (2015) analysis of Twitter shows how the photograph changed the terms of public debate from 'migrant' to 'refugee'. By transforming, re-contextualizing, and sharing the image of Alan Kurdi, people defined both their individual identities and relationships to others: they could present themselves as caring, humanitarian, hospitable or shameful of their governments politics. Or they could participate in the drama and horror that was manifested in such a beautifully composed photograph. They could experience being part of a caring transnational community. Or in cases such as Charlie Hebdo, people could take a critical and satirical position in response to the 'humanitarian wave'. But, as with many mediated events

and issue cultures, the remembering of Alan Kurdi and the issue of border related death dissolved quickly. Mediated circulation has become the dominant cultural logic that shapes social relations today (Benkler, 2006; Horsti 2017a, 2017b; Jenkins et al., 2013; Mortensen and Trenz 2016; Prøitz, 2017; Valaskivi and Sumiala, 2014) and so by circulating and appropriating the image – *re-representing* it – people made sense of the world and their place in it. The image was used for various politics: humanitarian, cynical, critical and Islamophobic.

Vertical gaze to representation

The politics of interpretation and the gaze of the scholar are particularly important in research on transnational communication and in the context of irregular migration. In this respect I propose my second departure from the refracting of the gaze in the analysis of media representation: participatory co-analysis that is influenced by ethnography and phenomenology. This is predicated on self-reflexive and ethical thinking, epistemological departures that feminist scholarship, anthropology and post-colonial scholarship have developed. Central to this thinking is to re-consider 'the research objects' as 'subjects', 'participants' and as co-authors and co-researchers. Standpoint epistemologies that developed in feminist scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Alcoff and Potter 1993; Haraway, 1988; Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002; Van Zoonen, 1994: 127–147; for an overview, see Doucet and Mauthner, 2006) and their intersection with post-colonial perspectives have been significant in forming migrant-centered research in social sciences and humanities, including media and migration research. Situatedness that attends to the intersections of class, race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality opens critical interventions not only in what is being studied and known but also to the 'knower' and the process of knowing (for an overall argument, see Yuval-Davis, 2014).

Conversations about the role of dialogue during fieldwork and in the publication of research findings have been central to anthropology since the 1970s. 'Dialogical anthropology'

(Tedlock, 1987) encourages letting the voices of people be heard in ethnography and questions authorial control and the relationships of power. The issue of whether the experience or 'voice' of others can be listened to in the research process is a contested terrain. Politically engaged research (for example 'activist anthropology' Hale, 2006 and 'participatory action research' Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Reason and Bradbury-Huang, 2000) is another approach that aims to re-think the power relations between the scholar and the subjects by affirming 'a political alignment with an organized group of people in struggle and allow dialogue with them' throughout the research and dissemination process (Hale, 2006: 97).

Scholars have also critically debated both the possibility and the fundamental ethics of such approaches that attempt to make the relationships in research more egalitarian. There is also a danger that collaborative approaches and experimentation with ethnographic methods are more for the scholar 'to relieve a discomfort with the power' and yet 'the fundamental issues of domination keep being skirted' (Abu-Lughod, 2006/1991: 469). In her critique of anthropological experimentation, Lila Abu-Lughod (2006/1991) presents three answers to the challenges of decolonializing scholarship, one of which I find crucially important for the vertical approach developed here: ethnographies of the particular. This is her response to the question: Are there ways to write about lives so as to constitute others as less other? (Abu-Lughod, 2006/1991: 473). She argues that generalizing – characteristic to social sciences – is a practice that maintains distance and positions oneself alongside those in managerial positions in relation to who and what is being studied. Focusing on the particular – that is paying attention to time and place – allows nuance, conflicts and doubts to emerge in scholarship. Descriptions of individual circumstances and experiences allows the subjectivity and agency to visibly emerge, and, in this way, the 'otherness' can be countered by the particular.

Allowing details, particularities, and doubts to surface in research produces the kind of uncertainty that is characteristic of democracy in the sense of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal

Mouffe's (2001) term 'radical democracy'. They argue that democracy is never finished or secured but that it depends upon difference and dissent – antagonism rather than consensus. Accepting incompleteness, yet striving for transparency by dialogue and encounter co-analysis, is based on an awareness and a constant re-negotiation of the power relations that are nevertheless present in the scholarly practice.

My core question is how do the people represented in the media interpret what they see, and how can this knowledge inform the analysis of media representations? This is the foundation for experimentation in co-creation and *co-analysis*, a move towards a participatory method of *listening to and seeing with* migrants (and others involved in the scene that is represented) that is predicated on critical politics of interpretation – in other words, on an awareness of differences in interpretation and on a re-negotiation of power relations. I am not referring to reception or audience research but to a collaboration in which the scholar analyzes alongside those who have experienced something similar to what is being represented (in media studies see also Horsti, 2018; Khan, 2013; De Leeuw and Rydin, 2007; Nikunen, 2011; Leurs et al., 2018; Smets et al., 2019). By co-viewing media representation, talking about what is being seen and observing the encounters that happen during the co-analysis, the scholar develops an ethnographic stance in which media representations are examined. Ethnographic stance here refers to epistemology that aims to understand media representations in a very broad and transnational sense. The conversations and bodily expressions that emerge during co-analysis become instruments of knowing differently and alternatively. Scholars of ethnography in various disciplines have developed methods that pay attention to sensory knowledge that allow openness to knowledge that may be difficult to put into words or grasped in interviews, or through textual analysis methods and ethics that aim to balance the power relations between the scholar and the subjects (e.g. Lorimer, 2005; Pink, 2015; Pyyry, 2015).

To this end, migration scholar Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen (2016) uses the term 'encounter' as a key practice in producing a mutual willingness and openness in the moment where knowledge production takes place. This approach requires that the scholars throw themselves in not only as a professional researcher but also as a person (see also Lorimer 2005; Pink 2015; Pyyry 2015).

These ideas of co-analysis resonate with Participatory Action Research's (PAR) (Bradbury, 2015; Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Reason and Bradbury-Huang, 2000) orientation towards democratic and participatory knowledge produced through co-creation and a position of 'knowing with, not on about, people' (Bradbury, 2015: 1). Nevertheless, to call the kind of methodology that I'm developing through the notion of vertical gaze as action research would not be correct. Central to the practice of PAR is a commitment to social change through a combination of practice and theory. There is often a practical problem that is addressed through PAR. Therefore, the projects have a specific goal and their success can be evaluated. Another feature of activist research is that projects align politically with a group or a social movement. My call for refracting the analytical gaze of the scholar does not require one singular problem-oriented approach. Participants may stress different goals. The key is conversation and understanding the motivations, and that they do not conflict. Continuous conversation and awareness of motivations are the ways in which an appropriation of migrant experiences by the researcher can be avoided.

While media representations produce culture through common or shared understanding – that is a similar interpretation of an image or text among people – it is also important to be aware of alternative understandings. Changes in representations and in their interpretations also change culture. For example, a question that has not been asked in scholarship is what do the images of the fatal border (e.g. the Alan Kurdi photograph or appropriations of it) represent for those who survived the sea crossing or to those who lost family members at the border? The people who intimately experienced Europe's borders are,

or will be, citizens of the European societies and cultures that media representations contribute to.

In addition to the traditional obligation to contextualize the analysis of representation to broader systems of culture, power dynamics and injustice, the practice of *refracting the vertical gaze* is predicated on two obligations of the scholar: first, to open a non-judgemental and receptive space where knowledge can be produced though collaborative conversation and accepting observance of responses; second, to open a space in the moment of co-analysis and also in the reporting of the research to those whose experiences are being analyzed.

To illustrate this approach, I explain one instance in which I searched ways to refracture my analytical gaze. While analysing news representations of the shipwreck in Italy on the 3 October 2013 where at least 368 Eritrean refugees died, an event known in Italian as 'Strage di Lampedusa' (Massacre of Lampedusa). I paid attention to what I considered a rare instance of a representation of the grief of relatives: Mauro Buccarello's (AFP) photo of a woman who had thrown herself on top of a victim's coffin. The image caught my attention as it represented grief that was largely missing from the flow of news images. The woman's loss of control was an expression of grief that was a cultural anomaly, at least in my analytic gaze. I wondered about the ethics of showing the loss of control (supposedly) without the consent of the woman photographed (she was not named). During my research I witnessed a moment where the same ethical dilemma of representation emerged in front of my eyes.

[INSERT FIGURE 18.1 HERE]

Figure 18.1. Commemoration ceremony at the 3 October 2013 disaster site near Lampeudsa (3 October 2015, photo by the author.)

In 2015 I participated in a commemorative ritual of the 3 October shipwreck on a *Carabinieri* boat with a cameraman (who wishes to stay anonymous) who worked for the Italian public service broadcaster RAI. Four boats representing the institutional Italian rescuers

of *Guardia Costiera*, *Guardia di Finanza*, and *Carabinieri* stopped their engines once they reached the shipwreck site in front of the island of Lampedusa. The boats formed a circle around the symbolic memorial site in the middle. The RAI cameraman and I had a direct view of a group of Eritrean survivors (Figure 17.1) who threw a wreath of yellow flowers to the sea from the *Guardia di Finanza* vessel in front of us. I could hear how the survivors cried aloud. Two men collapsed on their knees sobbing loudly. There was a cameraman of another news organization on their vessel and he approached the collapsing men, filming from a close range. Then, the RAI cameraman on my boat shut his camera off and backed from his filming position at the boat's bow. He took a seat next to me and said he couldn't film when a person loses self-control, that, for him, it wasn't ethical. I said that I agreed. For me, it was difficult, somehow intrusive, to even watch the Eritreans grieve so strongly and filming that scene seemed like representational violence.

The act of filming in that very moment of grief, the RAI cameraman thought, was not right. But in addition he was thinking of the future use of the material. Possibly the scene would be replayed and repeated in the media circulation and that might again objectify the survivors. The cameraman justified non-filming as his professional and ethical choice. However, the act of putting his equipment away was done in public, in the circle of the boats, and therefore it was also a performative statement. Not only were the survivors looking at him, but he must have also been aware of others who were in a similar spectator-observer position in the ritual as he was. While he was filming he saw another cameraman on the *Guardia di Finanza* vessel filming at close range and perhaps this – the simultaneous position of both witnessing an act of filming and filming – made him aware of the gazes in the situation.

I brought this example and the photograph of the grieving woman to a session of co-analysis that I organized in Stockholm a month after the commemorations in 2015 with a group of three survivors of the Lampedusa shipwreck (who wish to stay anonymous) and Adal Neguse, an Eritrean-Swedish refugee activist. The three survivors had fled Eritrea and, after

being rescued in Lampedusa, they had resisted the European internal borders, traveling without permits to Sweden to seek protection. By the time of the co-analysis they had received refugee status in Sweden and, as they put it, their 'passports' – documentation that allowed them to travel back and forth to Italy for the commemorative rituals.

My intention was to co-analyze with the survivors the mediated scene and the non-mediated scene that I had observed on the *Carabinieri* boat. The possibility of representational violence or intrusion of privacy that made the cameraman refuse filming, and me to confirm his ethical position, was one interpretation of the scene. But I was also interested in how the three survivors and Adal Neguse, whose brother had died in the shipwreck, would interpret it.

All three survivors and Adal Neguse had participated in the commemorative ceremonies in Lampedusa and they were aware that they were being looked at and filmed by others during the rituals. Therefore, they assumed that so were the ones grieving on the *Guardia di Finanza* boat that I had witnessed. The survivors had accepted the invitation to the commemorations knowing that it was a public event, they reminded me. The decision to participate for many survivors had by no means been an obvious one but it had been discussed within the survivors' community beforehand in their closed Facebook group. Some of the people who posted opinions to the group were concerned that their grief would be politicized and instrumentalized for various Eritrean or European political issues. Others, like the ones that I met in Stockholm, nevertheless felt responsible and obliged to remember and to express grief publicly: 'to remember our brothers and sisters who left us in that terrible journey'. Two of the survivors and Adal Neguse deliberately wanted to express their feelings through the media. One of the survivors had felt uncomfortable about the media presence and had declined interviews. I had also observed how some survivors in Lampedusa would not stay in the survivors group during rituals but would stand among people like myself who were at the margins of what was going on, in the position of participant-observer.

The survivors had been living in Sweden for almost two years by the time of the co-analysis and they realized why I was curious about the public emotions performed in Lampedusa. One of them showed me a meme on his phone that said in English: 'Waiting for a bus like a Swede'. In the picture six people are lined up on a snowy gray roadside several meters in between each person. This, he said, contrasted with 'our culture'. 'I am proud of the custom we have in our culture that we come together to mourn the dead and to comfort others. It's a good thing', one survivor said, underlining that he conflicted with the Swedish, and seemingly less emotional and individualistic, public appearance of grief.

Crying out loud on the boat was a genuine feeling, each of the survivors assured me, not a faked emotive performance. Nevertheless, it was also a conscious performance of feelings. The survivors' understanding of violence at the border was that it was not only produced by the European governments that prevented them from seeking protection in a safe way, but that it was also a consequence of the human rights abuse of the Eritrean regime. The survivors explained to me that the right to publicly commemorate death at the border was one that they could access only in Europe. 'The regime in Eritrea does not want the world to know of such incidents (as the shipwreck), and therefore they prohibit public commemoration which would attract large crowds,' one of the survivors said. Another one continued: 'When you look at it from a political point of view, we do these commemorative ceremonies together in exile in the memory of those who died during their escape because we didn't have the right to do so in Eritrea.'

From the survivors' perspective the scene that the Italian RAI cameraman and I had observed as potentially unethical – the filming by the other cameraman – looked very different. I was caught up in my aesthetic framework that interpreted the scene automatically as the one where the European media have representational dominance over the survivors. I could only see the European public as the potential audience – the one for which such loosing of control looks like excessive grief. My Eurocentric frame limited my analytical gaze.

The survivors didn't see an ethical problem in depicting the break in emotional control that for them visualized the pain of several experiences: losing loved ones, forced escape from human rights abuses and the humiliating treatment during the journey. In fact, a representation of grief that would *not* communicate the pain that such death causes in this particular way would be unethical, they thought. The expression of grief, and specifically the act of grieving together was a practice that had been suppressed by the Eritrean regime. In this particular moment in time the ability to express grief in the way they wanted to do was freedom. To restrict it and to confirm to the standards of Nordic public performance of grief would have meant to give up that freedom. The political in the public feelings for the survivors was to share emotions together and to imagine the public as also of the Eritrean global diaspora which is divided between the opposition, the regime supporters and those who do not take a political stance. The images of the commemorative rituals circulated across different media platforms – ranging from the European mainstream and activist media to the Eritrean diasporic media and social media networks.

The cameraman and I thought that an appropriate public mourning was supposed to look like something else; our shared repertoire of media representations of public mourning was different from that of the survivors. However, the conversation in Stockholm with Adal Neguse and the survivors opened an alternative reading of the scene and I began to think in alternative ways: Could it be possible that the mediated repetition of such a scene of public emotions would broaden the representation of mourning in the northern European public life? Rather than being a secondary violence, could it potentially create a new kind of multifaceted emotional landscape? Could I take a position of solidarity without an emotive performance that I recognize with?

Conclusions

This chapter has presented two departures for refracting the analytical gaze of the scholar in the analysis of media representations and media practices around representations. Firstly, *horizontal gaze* encourages an examination of what people do with mediated images and words and how they engage with media representations in their media practice. Mediated circulation has become the dominant logic that shapes culture, identities and social relations. Therefore, in the understanding of media representations it is also necessary to look into the practices of *re-representation*. Such horizontal gaze to representations expands cosmopolitan sensibility in media research. The scholar becomes aware of various, simultaneous representations in transnational, sub-cultural and diasporic settings. I am not suggesting a comparative research as such but an awareness of the often Eurocentric and mainstream media biased research agendas. As images and words circulate across different platforms, mobile methods that follow the object of analysis can lead to emerging and surprising representations. This perspective highlights how the public sphere needs to be conceived in transnational and transcultural terms: images travel across boundaries but, in addition, the world is 'here' through the diasporic and global media (e.g. Georgiou, 2013).

The second departure, *vertical gaze*, from media representation underlined a participatory and multimodal method of *listening to*, and *seeing with*, migrants. With this perspective I underlined the non-judgemental and receptive analytic space where knowledge can be produced collaboratively. An important part of this practice is to make migrants' experiences and readings of mediated images and words visible and bring them into conversation with the scholar's interpretations. In doing so, collaborative analysis of media representations can develop awareness of various readings and ways of seeing. It is also a means to make the interpretive process and its situatedness more transparent and the

uncertainty of it more visible. Through co-analysis the analytical process becomes more self-reflexive.

Both approaches – the horizontal and the vertical – underline that representations are situated and cultural constructions, which are produced in certain cultural, political, phenomenological and ideological contexts. By more transparent and 'doubtful' research practices and the 'ethnography of the particular', media scholarship can produce a critical understanding of phenomena and events in ways that may allow alternative politics to emerge. This was most obvious in the co-analysis of representations of grief over death at Europe's borders with the survivors in Stockholm. The understanding of grief as a private emotion that the RAI cameraman and I had during the commemorative ceremony in Lampedusa was in contrast with the survivors understanding of grief as a predominantly public and communally experienced emotion. In addition, I was caught up in a humanitarian rationale in my reading of the situation and failed to understand the survivors as politically engaged agents who had , in fact, made the claim for their protection on the grounds of political persecution. The survivors stressed that they were subjects in the specific performative moment and that the public that they imagined was not only European but also global – including the Eritrean regime and the Eritrean diaspora.

As Stuart Hall (1997/ 2013: xix) has argued, the focus on 'culturally shared meanings' may make cultures seem unitary and hide the diversity and transformativity within every culture. The methodological practice of *vertical gaze to representation* – the prioritizing of listening to migrants' reading and experience – refracted my gaze to 'culturally shared meanings', my epistemology of media representation and my understanding of public grief. The nature of knowledge became more nuanced, particular and contextualized, and, through the co-analysis methodology, the survivors in Stockholm emerged as subjects in knowledge production.

Notes

[TS: Insert endnote here]

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[2] Pictures of drowned migrant bodies have circulated before and after Alan Kurdi in smaller human rights, diasporic and migrant networks. For example, Khaled Barakeh, a Syrian artist based in Germany, in 2015 shared anonymous photographs of drowned children in a Facebook album titled 'Multicultural Graveyard' that also reached European publics through arts and human rights networks.

[3] See further details about the circulation of the photographs in D'Orazio (2015).