

## 1 Media representation

a) In May 2021, large groups of migrants crossed the Moroccan-Spanish border in Ceuta. Afterwards, the Spanish government has tried to send back as many migrants as possible. This has led to friction between the Spanish and Moroccan governments; Morocco is not helping Spain as much as Spain would have hoped.

In the media representation of this crisis, we see that there are two main focus points. The first is the question as to what will happen with the migrants, which also shows the friction between the two governments under consideration. We see this in the article by *El País* (Martín, 2021).

The other aspect that is emphasized is the human suffering that the immigrant go through. The article by the BBC (N.A., 2021) shows this in particular, by placing emphasis on emotionally charged pictures that played a large role in the media coverage on the subject. One of these pictures shows a Red Cross volunteer hugging a refugee. The other is of a man saving a baby from the water. There are also photos and videos showing violent military responses.

182 words

b) Question: should the media focus more on the suffering that migrants go through, or on the question of what happens next? We currently see a mix of these two questions. Is the media in charge of representing what *has* happened? Or rather to talk about what *might* happen. By representing what has happened, the media can also influence what might happen. For example, with sufficient social momentum, the media can motivate people to bring about a solution.

79 words

c) The Ceuta crisis reminds me of the discussion on necropolitics in week 7. As discussed in the paper by Mayblin et al. (2020), necropolitics concerns how the human existence is politicized (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 110). Sovereignty concerns the power to be able to determine who is disposable (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 111).

As in their paper, we see that the refugees of Ceuta are being 'kept alive but in a state of injury' (Mayblin et al., 2020, p. 120). They are alive, but they need to hide in the houses of Ceuta to not be sent home. If they are caught, there is the intention to deport them back to a reluctant Morocco. They are not offered the opportunity to form a complete life, but are rather held down. By framing this in terms of protecting the 'territorial integrity' of Spain (Martín, 2021), Spain tries to dehumanize the struggle that is happening there. Legally, they are fulfilling their responsibilities.

151 words

d) In my opinion, this crisis shows the difficulty of the transfer of *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* as defined by Max Weber. We saw in the text by Schindel (2019) that this monopoly entails that a state is the only entity that can legitimately use violence on its grounds. When a person crosses a border, there is a transfer of the right to use violence on that person from one state to the other. The state that is left behind also no longer has a responsibility to protect (Schindel, 2019, p. 121).

We now see in the media, concerning the question of what has to happen next, that there is discussion about who is to protect and who is to use the violence. Morocco stopped using its monopoly to use violence on their side of the border, by letting the migrants cross. This had the effect that they also no longer felt the responsibility to protect. This has been made abundantly clear in the media; Morocco does not feel the need to protect these migrants against whatever Spain does. They also do not accept them, unless they voluntarily come back.

Meanwhile, Spain clearly enforces their newly gained monopoly of violence. They are enforcing it, as we see in the videos that are posted.

Now, when the media discuss this case, several questions pop up. By crossing that border, legally the migrants have given themselves to Spain, so does that make the violence they endure, acceptable? Morocco might have legally given up the responsibility of protection but do we think they have also morally done so? Should Spain have enforced the border more and not relied on Morocco to do so, if they give this much importance to keeping people on either side?

The media clearly struggle with these questions, and so do the two countries involved. They have different opinions these questions.

315 words

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## 2 Cultural production

What is it like to be a child migrant? Most people will likely never have this experience in their lives. Yet, understanding of the struggles the children go through could help them as this would be a first step to resolving the problems that they face. At least, that is what the makers of the serious game *Survival* (Omnium Lab et al., 2017) thought when designing their game. In this game, the player plays a child migrant, which has to work their way through various levels, trying to survive and make it to the end, to safety (or is it really safe?).

The game was developed by young Spaniards and young migrants and refugees. It was supported by several non-profit organizations. Together they launched *Survival* to both the Google and Apple stores.

The name of the game leaves little to the imagination; the player has to survive. And this is difficult; the levels have no instruction on how to play them, which means the player will have to figure that out for themselves. There is also no indication of how far along you are in a level.

This is, of course, meant to resemble the life of a migrant. Migrants also do not receive any instructions or indications on how to proceed. They do not know how long a boat journey will take, just that they need to get to the other end. This is also what we see in *Survival*.

When analyzing this video game, I find it useful to separate how the game discusses *bios* and *zoe* as aspects of life, proposed by Agamben. This distinction is not made clearly by the game, but it is helpful in analysis, as I argue that while the game sufficiently lets the player feel that the *bios* (mode of life) of migrants is harsh, it has an opposite effect on showing the *zoe* (bare life) of migrants.

Let us start with *zoe*. The game is not sufficiently able to show the hardships of the migrant journey in terms of dangers for life and death (thesis 1). Trying to sail with a play boat over the seas is very different from doing so in real life. By gamifying these experiences, where the player gets an infinite amount of lives, the real message does not hit home: that in the real world, real people die. The gamification even made this less real for me. It is easy to disassociate from a video game avatar, because it is not very lifelike, but rather cartoonish.

On the other hand, the quality or mode of life aspect comes across in a much clearer way (thesis 2). As said before, the lack of instruction and hints give the player a feeling of desperation and that desperation does come out of the screen. The conversation at the beginning of the game with the coyote is also insightful in this regard, because it shows the type of stories and lies these children are fed. You keep trying to get out of the conversation in the best way possible, but he is convincing. It shows the insistence with which children are brought into the world of migration.

Especially the second level, in which the player sails with a boat over the seas, is telling. The controls are counter-intuitive, the level is longer than would be comfortably desirable and there is no indication of where you are in the level. These kinds of things are big no-nos for any game designer, because they frustrate and confuse the player. In this game, however, they work well,

precisely to bring about these feelings.

While these feelings are, of course, only minimal compared to what a migrant goes through, they do put a player in the right mindset to be more receptive to a migrant's story, which is interwoven in dialogue screens. Hence, where the game does not really make the player feel the deaths that occur in the real world, the desperation is much clearer in the game.

Should the game have paid more attention to the *zoe* aspect of migration? One can wonder whether a game can really ever show the magnitude of the amount of people that died during these journeys. A game necessarily gamifies the experience and it is therefore difficult for a game to do so convincingly.

Concluding, we see that the game can give us some insight into the emotional distress that migrants experience, but that it necessarily does not really get close to reality. Nonetheless, that does not mean that the game cannot reach its goal: to inform more people about what migrants experience in migration. Even though people only minimally feel it so.

785 words

## References

Omnium Lab, PeaceApp, & Alliance of Civilizations of the United Nations. (2017). Survival. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.omniumlabstudios.peaceapp.survival>