

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Critical Analysis of Displacement and Human Rights Violations in Films *

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Abstract

This paper aims to meta-synthesize films for future research on displacement and exposure to human rights violations in cinema. With a purposive sample of eleven films, the focus was on basic human rights violations and impoverishment caused by war-related displacement. The article provided spatial diversity through the thematization, and meta-synthesis of films produced on the topic in different countries. In the selected films, displaced people were often traumatized by material and emotional poverty and human rights violations. However, in most countries of migration, discourses on refugees have been developed with the claim that they cause unemployment and cheap labour. Therefore, the research explored not only the humanitarian injustices suffered by refugees but also whether the voices of non-refugee groups experiencing poverty and unemployment are heard. According to the findings, these films often focused on displaced people, with insufficient dialogue with local people, especially those living in poverty. In an assessment, it was observed that the selected films generally lacked a solidarity ground for refugee and non-refugee vulnerable social groups who are directly and indirectly subjected to human rights violations as a result of fleeing war.

Keywords: War, human rights filmmaking, human rights violations, poverty, displaced people

Öz

Bu çalışma, sinemada yerinden edilme ve insan hakları ihlallerine maruz kalma üzerine gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalar için filmleri meta-sentezlemeyi amaçlamıştır. On bir filmde oluşan amaca yönelik bir örnekleme, temel insan hakları ihlallerine ve savaşa bağlı yerinden edilmenin neden olduğu yoksullaşmaya odaklanılmıştır. Makale, farklı ülkelerde konuyla ilgili üretilen filmlerin temalaştırılması ve meta-sentezi yoluyla mekânsal çeşitlilik sağlamıştır. Seçilen filmlerde, yerinden edilmiş insanlar genellikle maddi ve duygusal yoksulluk ve insan hakları ihlalleri nedeniyle travmatize edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, çoğu göç ülkesinde mültecilerle ilgili söylemler, işsizliğe ve ucuz işgücüne neden oldukları iddiasıyla geliştirilmiştir. Bu nedenle araştırma, yalnızca mültecilerin maruz kaldığı insani adaletsizlikleri değil, aynı zamanda mülteci olmayan yoksulluk ve işsizlik deneyimi yaşayan grupların seslerinin duyulup duyulmadığını da araştırmıştır. Bulgulara göre, bu filmler genellikle yerinden edilmiş insanlara odaklanmış, yerel halkla, özellikle de yoksulluk içinde yaşayanlarla yeterince diyalog kurulmamıştır. Yapılan değerlendirmeye göre, seçilen filmlerin genellikle savaştan kaçmanın bir sonucu olarak doğrudan ve dolaylı olarak insan hakları ihlallerine maruz kalan mülteci ve mülteci olmayan hassas toplumsal gruplar için bir dayanışma zemininden uzak olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Savaş, insan hakları film yapıcılığı, insan hakları ihlalleri, yoksulluk, yerinden edilmiş insanlar

* This article is related to the proceeding 'War, Displaced People and Poverty in Contemporary Films,' presented orally at the International Conference 'Philosophy and Film' (2023), organised by the Philosophical Society of Macedonia (PSM). The article has been extensively rewritten, the methodology has been amended, and the number of films has been increased in accordance with the meta-synthesis.

Introduction

Deprivation of human rights is an essential issue of poverty, and the more people are exposed to human rights violations, the more impoverished they are. The greatest poverty is the deprivation of the right to life of individuals or their loved ones. The right to a safe, healthy, and dignified life is a necessity and not a luxury for anyone. Unfortunately, many wars, conflicts, and climate problems deprive people of their fundamental rights. In addition, local people, especially those who experience poverty, may also feel hatred towards displaced people due to their vulnerability to cheap labour and exploitation. However, exploitation, cheap labour and hazardous labour are global problems and require solidarity between groups subjected to rights violations instead of hatred. The study starts from the hypothesis that films do not adequately portray this lack of dialogue, empathy, and solidarity. It is unique and important because it expresses such a multifaceted perspective through meta-synthesis. The research questions are:

- Which human wrongs do displaced people face in films produced in different countries?
- Do local non-refugee segments who feel negatively affected by migration and experience poverty and unemployment express themselves in these films?

People displaced by war often face human trafficking, extreme poverty, and xenophobia as human rights violations in transit and destination countries. Furthermore, almost all age groups of refugees are affected by displacement, homelessness, hate speech, crimes, exploitation and abuse by human traffickers and employers, and inability to benefit from opportunities such as education, health, and social security. Refugee children and women are often the most vulnerable groups exposed to various forms of exploitation, such as sexual harassment and rape, begging, prostitution, and child and forced marriage. The victimization of children occasionally and their loss of life on the escape routes may lead to short-term pity literature discourses (Roncallo-Dow, Córdoba-Hernández, & Durán Camero 2019). However, discriminatory language, and hate speech predominate, especially

in social media and various media organs (Wigger 2019, pp.261–65; Brian Knappenberger 2022; Kehya 2018). At the same time, there is discourse that low-income locals at the same class level as refugees are also negatively affected by unemployment and exploitation by forced migration.

Therefore, this study sets out with the need to look at the human wrongs experienced by refugees while not ignoring the non-refugee segments, especially those who experience poverty problems –such a rationale brings to mind the influence of the famous visual culture theorist Rogoff's representation policies and power relations on who is shown and who is not (2002). The method of meta-synthesizing the films will be explained in the next section, and a thematic synthesis and conclusions will be drawn regarding human rights. Before the findings, a conceptual framework on human rights filmmaking and human wrongs watching will be established.

Methodology

The study associates displaced people from different countries with human wrongs and analyses film samples, especially those with a multi-layered structure with judgmental sampling. This study attempts to make a meta-synthesis on films as an alternative to meta-synthesis research as literature reviews in previous scientific research. The selected films are suitable for categorizing the social problems of refugeeism, human rights violations, and poverty. Reading all these films, we come across common themes as a meta-synthesis.

According to the definition by Seyat Polat and Osman Ay, "Meta-synthesis studies are studies that aim to interpret and evaluate the qualitative findings of studies conducted in a specific field, to reveal similar and different aspects and to make new inferences"(2016, p.52). Meta-synthesis research enables thematization of qualitative research findings and the finding and synthesis of common themes. In order for the meta-synthesis to be done correctly, research questions are first asked, literature review is conducted with appropriate keywords, sources are evaluated, and appropriate ones are included, typical themes/sub-

themes are determined, similarities and differences are determined, findings are synthesized, inferences are made and reported (Polat & Ay 2016). In this study, films are considered a source of text and literature. Films were sampled using the search words 'refugee,' 'displaced people,' 'human rights,' and 'poverty' as keywords only for people affected by displacement by war and conflicts in films. People other than war and non-conflict migration were not included in the research.

Bondas and Hall suggest that meta-synthesis studies should be limited to 10-12 purposively selected studies (Bondas and Hall 2007). Therefore, for this meta-synthesis study, eleven purposefully selected films are included in the sample, which are taken care to represent different geographies. The meta-synthesis of the paper on films makes this research article explorative, unique and original. The films selected for meta-synthesis here are tabulated chronologically below:

Films	Director-Year-Country
<i>Baran</i>	(Majid Majidi, 2001, IR)
<i>Turtles can Fly</i>	(Bahman Ghobadi, 2004, IQ, IR & FR)
<i>Terraferma</i>	(Emanuele Crialesi, 2011, FR & IT)
<i>4.1 Miles</i>	(Daphne Matziaraki, 2016, GR)
<i>Misafir (The Guest)</i>	(Andaç Haznedaroğlu, 2017)
<i>Daha (More)</i>	(Onur Saylak, 2017, TR)
<i>Exodus: Our Journey to Europe</i>	(James Bluemel et al., 2016-2018)
<i>Capernaum</i>	(Nadine Labaki, 2018, LB)
<i>Afganistanbul</i>	(Ulaş Tosun, 2018, TR)
<i>Island of the Hungry Ghosts</i>	(Gabrielle Brady, 2018, DE, GB & AU)
<i>Aylan Bebek</i>	(Ömer Sarıkaya, 2023, TR)

Human Rights Filmmaking-Human Wrongs Watching

The representation of human rights in films falls within the political film genre and can give filmmakers an activist mission by making human rights violations visible. Establishing a link between "human rights journalism," "human rights media," and "human rights filmmaking" is feasible. Concepts such as video activism (Harding 2001), participatory research method, militant research (Bookchin et al. 2013, p.64), the "cinema of the affected" or "cinema of duty" (Malik 1996, pp.203-4) and human rights film festivals cannot

be considered independent from the concepts of "human rights journalism" and "peace journalism" (Lynch 2008; Hanitzsch 2007)." Especially since documentaries are fact-based productions, human rights intersect with journalism and filmmaking. Therefore, human rights journalism should be considered at the intersection of war, migration, human rights violations, and poverty in film meta-synthesis research.

According to Selvarajah, human rights journalism (HRJ) can provide a protective function and engage activists and human rights organizations. Opposing HRJ is human wrongs journalism (HWJ), and traditional journalistic methods (HWJ) need to be revised in war journalism for reasons such as censorship and agenda-setting rather than being preventive and protective (2020, 2021). Approaching refugees in wartime and post-war situations in the context of human rights journalism requires much national and international cooperation with its preventive and protective role. It requires going beyond politics, censorship, and destructive ideological perspectives to fulfil its protection role. Destructive ideologies such as racism, xenophobia, and exclusion are meant here.

As Kate Nash mentions, by resonating beyond news reports and NGO campaigns, human rights films potentially contribute to constructing deeper and broader human ideals (Nash 2022, p.29). The fact that the people of countries with higher current vulnerabilities than Western countries with higher economic prosperity have such views should not be considered only from deductive cultural and ideological perspectives. Despite cultures and discourses of hospitality in countries with existing economic vulnerabilities, such as Greece (Yalouri 2019, p.224), Lebanon, and Turkey, there are discussions about the fragility of states in dealing with traffickers, exploitative employers and the various forms of exploitation of children and women. On the other hand, popular discourses such as unemployment, cheap labour, causing social and cultural deterioration, increasing rents, produced with the perception of refugee-induced threats and the perception that states do not prevent them contradict the previous discussions. Films can mediate the problems experienced by public authorities, local people, and refugees.

There is a need for solidarity between local and refugee-affected people in dialogues that can decipher people and establishments that are the source of injustices, authorities that will provide better supervision and regulation, and institutional and individual responsibility development. Films should be circulated with rights-based understandings to articulate human wrongs on a large scale, generating emotions, knowledge, and action. Films can serve at least more peaceful—wartime and post-wartime—approaches that can help to intervene with more prejudicial phenomena such as hate speech and crimes. Films with their potential to generate emotion (Schiffer 2022, p.253; Soykan 2020, p.335) and sustainable empathy are perfect for this.

Attributing responsibility to the audience to intervene in violations is also possible. Nash explores how films screened at human rights film festivals contribute to human rights culture. In films about victims and perpetrators, the audience is invited to identify with the protagonist who advances a narrative of self-responsibility. Human rights films contribute to a culture of human rights through working on oneself to become a subject of human rights, which requires the advancement of a global community of citizens and institutions capable of securing human rights for all on a regular and routine basis (Nash 2018, p.393). Advancing citizens and organizations in the global community must consider the imaginary (Anderson 2016; Rorty 1992) and the distinctive nature of communities, identities, and cultures.

According to Livia Hinegardner, examining human rights media in terms of the space for action and organization can uncover much more profound aspects of social and political change through the media. Making and distributing human rights videos allows individuals to militate and become active participants. Changes in political culture are much more profound than changes in formal law. Social justice spaces for political films are equipped to make profound changes (Hinegardner 2009, pp.183–84). Nash criticizes humanitarianism in human rights films, which involve appeals to ‘humanity’ beyond the imagined

community of the nation. On the other hand, humanitarianism is based on the value of ‘saving strangers’, and human rights are fundamentally concerned with justice (Nash 2022). In short, film productions based on human rights can lead to political and social change with active participation framing the solutions of the victims, not their victimization.

There is an urgent need for new, self-reflexive ways of exposing not only the tragic plight of refugees but also those (us) who enable this refugee situation by silently consenting to it (Yalouri 2019, p.234).³ With responsibility we bear, the films should be a mediating arena, addressing not only the rights of refugees but also the voices of the affected local people, for example, people experiencing poverty and, if possible, the human rights defenders who face various problems in their interventions and the struggles of the states that are refugee countries in a multi-dimensional way. If it is necessary to ensure justice, the balance of representation of those subjected to human wrongs is also a matter that must be considered. An example of a film in which both the refugee and non-refugee sides are represented is Gianfranco Rosi’s *Fuocoammare* (2016). Dudley Andrew gives the most recognizable depiction of the contact zone between Europeans and refugees. For doctors dealing with refugees who die daily, it can turn from a crisis into a routine. The 6,000 inhabitants of the island have not yet given up their way of life. However, every week, they have to imagine the impact on a child of the pain and panic that is happening just over the hill (Dudley 2022, p.36). The routinization of what is happening close by on a transit island also brings to mind Susan Sontag’s (2004) concept of “image fatigue” of people at remote locations. Of course, witnessing suffering at close quarters elicits more intense emotionality, even at the risk of desensitization and routinization, but in both cases, most local people go about their ordinary daily lives.

Deniz Göktürk’s questions about the Refuse Works Collective’s (Artıkışler Kolektifi 2007) documentary, *Hakkari’den Ankara’ya Kağıtçılar* (*Scavengers from Hakkari to Ankara*), raise some inspirations about the visual culture and sociology of human

³ I consider “us” more as privileged groups that the author refers to here.

rights, poverty, and migration. The author asks who can tell the stories of migrants suffering from poverty, what can be done with them and for them, and what kind of difference such films, videos and research can make. (Göktürk 2022, pp.158–59). These questions of representation are not new, but the story of each displaced individual is new, unique, and, at the same time, collective and raises questions that need to be answered repeatedly. As in the next stage of the article, this requires a filmic meta-synthesis.

The Critical Meta Synthesis of Films: Human Wrongs and Displacement

People fleeing war, famine, conflict, and violence are often impoverished. Certain films reveal that the extreme impoverishment of displaced people, who leave their possessions and lose or leave loved ones behind, can generate negative consequences, including delinquency, lack of educational opportunities, and forced early labour. The selected films are suitable for categorizing the social problems of refugeeism and poverty. We analyse the films under two sub-headings to reach a meta-synthesis: (1) films about the greatest poverty and deprivation of human life on crossing borders, and (2) the poverty of refugees who have managed to reach the destination or transit countries.⁴

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, low- and middle-income countries host 76 percent of the world's displaced people and people needing international protection. Also, 70 percent live in neighbouring countries (2023). It is no coincidence that many of the selected films' locations are among low- and middle-income and neighbouring countries of refugees.

The ones experiencing human wrongs on the escape

Displaced people who cannot flee to their destination countries experience the most profound poverty as a human wrong by losing their or loved ones' lives on escape routes. Examples of the films we will examine here are as follows: Onur

Saylak's *Daha* (2017), Daphne Matziaraki's short film *4.1 Miles* (2016), Gabrielle Brady's *Island of the Hungry Ghosts* (2018), *Exodus: Our Journey to Europe* (Bluemel 2016), and Ömer Sarıkaya's *Aylan Bebek* (Sarıkaya 2023). The themes of these films are typical of the third article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the right to a safe life (1948).

Onur Saylak's *Daha* (2017) is a Turkish film on Syrian victims of forced migration who are exposed to abuse and mistreatment by human traffickers. According to 2022 statistics, Turkey is hosting the most considerable number of refugees, with 3.6 million people (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2023). The socio-medical issues in *Daha* are the endangerment of the life safety of the Syrians, who are victims of war and face great tragedies in human trafficking, such as being kept and waiting for days in inhumane places, being harassed, being dragged into prostitution, being killed and being subjected to verbal and physical ill-treatment. These problems are presented to the audience through the eyes of the narrator of the film, the non-refugee *Daha*, who is entering adolescence. *Daha* matures early, like refugee children. He becomes cruel and turns into a criminal against refugees throughout the film. Many refugees serve the interests of human traffickers. The text "*The first tool used by a human being is another human being*" at the film's beginning is the premise and expresses that human beings are objectified like goods and commodities. In *Daha*, displaced people are exposed to highly unhealthy living conditions before they lose their lives and turn into inanimate objects. According to Semra Öztürk and Yonca Altındal, *Ahad*, one adult protagonist of the film, expresses his marginalizing thought by comparing Syrians to "insects" because they fled their homeland (2019, 190). Eren Yüksel evaluates the representation and spatial experiences of refugees in *Daha* based on Marc Augé's non-place (Augé 1995) and Giorgio Agamben's concepts of bare life and camp (Agamben 1998). The spatial experiences of refugees are determined by immobility and transience. Refugees living in underground warehouses or non-places are reduced to Agamben's "bare life" concept. In general, the choice of

⁴ This article also approaches the similar poverty experienced by refugees and non-refugees equally in the context of human rights.

“innocent children” and “vulnerable women” figures reveals the helpless or victim status of refugees (Yüksel 2019, p.228). Augé’s “non-places” refer to places of passage, the waiting rooms of society, temporary spaces where life is suspended and devoid of agency, a temporality defined by waiting, and waiting areas are non-places and have no relevance to identity or history (Augé 1995). Giorgio Agamben first theorized the “bare life” definition concerning the concentration camps of World War II, referring to stateless refugees deprived of even minimal biological rights without state protection (Agamben 1998). In a world where wars do not end, these concepts developed by Agamben and Augé continue to be frequently referred to.

Daphne Matziaraki’s non-fictional short film, *4.1 Miles* (2016), reflects the efforts of the coast guard teams to rescue a refugee boat on the Greek island of Lesbos and presents to the audience the horrors faced by migrants. The location is a touristic resort, Lesbos Island in Greece, which is a place that is often the subject of news of refugees stuffed into narrow boats and drowned by sinking. The film shows European migrant crisis rescues moments by Greek authorities—drowning at sea. The greatest poverty is the loss of life of a person or loved ones and the most significant moments of despair. On the one hand, the local people or tourists go about their everyday lives, such as having breakfast or dinner on the beach. For locals with purchasing power and tourists, eating on the seafront is pleasant. It is a struggle for survival for refugees who share the same time and geographical space. In Emanuele Crialesé’s *Terraferma* (Crialesé 2011), a film centred on the locals of Linosa Island off the coast of Sicily, there is a relatively, similar representation and the tourist-refugee dialect (see a study for further discussion, Gün & Tekemen, 2021, p. 71). The fact that fuel for the body and soul can be bought with money and survival can be bought with money contrasts. It is contrary to each other that a nice lunch for body and soul and survival can be bought. At that moment, the refugees, who are struggling to survive, not drown at sea and not be deported, pay human traffickers, and for them, eating in a tourist restaurant is ultra-luxury. *4.1 Miles* is an exceptional non-fictional documentary about the European refugee crisis of 2015,

which tells the life and death moments of the zero zone of the case. It is one exception because the refugee news, which usually drowned in the Mediterranean Sea and turned from human identity to numbers, has become image and content fatigue. We frequently heard about refugees who died in overloaded boats in Turkey and Greece, especially during this period, through social and traditional media. Among these, “Aylan Kurdi,” a 3-year-old baby who drowned in the sea and whose body washed up on the Turkish shores, caused international outrage and turned into a pity fury. However, according to Roncallo-Dow et al., the effect of this news was short-lived. We should question its sustainability in this sense (2019). Similarly, during the pilot research phase of a master’s thesis, while there was intense hate speech in Turkish YouTube videos about refugees, the comments under the Aylan Kurdi video showed pity, and compassion for a small child (Kehya 2018).

The body of a three-year-old Syrian baby, Aylan Kurdi, washed up on the Aegean coast of Turkey, caused outrage in Europe in 2015. *Aylan Bebek* (‘Aylan Baby’ Sarıkaya, 2023) became one of the symbols of the 2015 refugee crisis. The discourse and cartoonish images of *Aylan Bebek* were reproduced on social media and remained in circulation for three to five days. Even if it has a short-term effect, showing the truth rather than remaining unresponsive is preferable. The Turkish film *Aylan Bebek*, directed by Ömer Sarıkaya and released in 2023, also starred Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu and Bülent Kuşoğlu, Deputy Chairman of the opposition Republican People’s Party, featuring both professional and non-professional actors (such as politicians and refugees). This film criticizes human traffickers, the silence and blindness of the rest of the world and has the discourse that they left Turkish state organs alone in the struggle with human traffickers and the survival of refugees.

The documentary *Island of the Hungry Ghosts* (2018), shot on a remote Christmas Island by Gabrielle Brady, is about a trauma therapist working in a high-security detention centre. She has been traumatized by the stories of asylum seekers (Phillips 2018). The film is set in the Australian territory of Christmas Island, where the natural migration

of animals is divinely protected. On the contrary, the chaotic migration of humans is a living hell for refugees held in a detention centre on a paradise island. Such a life reveals the temporal hell of the film with its perpetual transience and slowness. Animals usually subject to anthropocentric discrimination are now protected, and displaced people are in "other" positions. According to one reviewer, Philip Hayward, *Island of Hungry Ghosts* takes advantage of the nature, history, and culture of the island's concentration camp or society. The film's setting thus conveys the experiences and emotional traumas of a group of internees and their therapists. As the therapy sessions, the film depicts the shared experiences of people who have been invisibilised by state power, incarceration, and silencing (Hayward 2019, p.189). *Island of Hungry Ghosts* differs from many of the other films in the sample. It is not about human rights violations by "locals" in various transit countries but rather about the state's invisible and inaudible state and removing their freedom of movement.

Exodus: Exodus, Our Journey to Europe (2016-2018) is a spatially diverse activist documentary series about the European Migration crisis, using the direct address interview style and refugees' own cameras. The *Exodus* series was filmed in thirty-one countries over three years. Therefore, the series itself is a geographical meta-synthesis. *Exodus, Our Journey to Europe* records the perilous journey of refugees to Europe. In her article, Bianca Briciu discusses the narrative and cinematic strategies used by the documentary series to develop viewers' empathy towards refugee experiences:

The film dismantles the stereotypes of refugees as low class, opportunistic and potentially dangerous by showing their multidimensional experiences of suffering, resilience and courage. It creates for spectators an intersubjective experience of connection with migrants through empathic concern. The *Exodus* series faces us with a difficult moral dilemma: the dilemma of changing the way we define nations, boundaries and human identity, the true dilemma of globalization (Briciu 2020, p.8).

In the selected films on escape and forced standby, one watches the dichotomy of refugees' poverty and captivity, contrasting nature's richness and the sea's metaphorical freedom. Such places may be a paradise for the privileged Self,

but for refugees, they are a hell of standby, absence, incarceration, and deprivation. In other words, it is possible to see the relative status of heaven's beauty and hell's ugliness in the world through the drama of refugees.

Poverty is a human wrong of the surviving refugees and local low-income people

Displaced people who manage to flee to their destination countries experience less poverty by surviving than those who cannot escape and die from an existential perspective. What makes them wealthier here is their survivability. However, the socioeconomic and cultural problems of refugees who can arrive in transit or destination countries are still a reason for them to experience poverty and encounter non-refugee locals experiencing poverty. Examples of the related films to be analysed are here: Majid Majidi's *Baran* (2001), Bahman Ghobadi's *Turtles Can Fly* (2004), Emanuele Crialesé's film *Terraferma* (2011), Andaç Haznedaroğlu's *Misafir (The Guest)* (2017), Nadine Labaki's *Capernaum* (2018), and Ulaş Tosun's *Afganistanbul* (2018).

Since the 2000s, the issue of refugees in Iranian cinema has been dealt with because Iran has received intensive immigration due to the war in Afghanistan. In the film *Baran* (2001), in which a refugee woman disguised as a man works in construction sites, ethnic discrimination, lack of identity, illegal, low-paid and uninsured labour in unhealthy and dangerous workplaces are common problems, as observed in migration countries. Since they are employed illegally, the fear of continuous concealment is evident. As we will see from some other examples, non-professional actors without training were employed. Also, the film includes feeling annoyed and self-discourses on the grievances of non-refugee workers against the exploitation of Afghan workers as a low-cost labour force.

Turtles Can Fly (Bahman Ghobadi, 2004) depicts how war adversely affects children and their vulnerability in the face of war, portraying displacement in a closer geography and close past tense. The film was shot in a refugee camp on the Turkish-Iraqi border in 2003. The main problem of *Turtles Can Fly*, filmed before the American invasion,

is war. The problems that accompany this crisis-making trouble are gender, disability, sexual violence and death. Children's challenges and personalities differ. However, living in the face of death to survive is the most vital problem. Although non-refugee local people are not seen here except for commercial communications, there is a hierarchy between them, at least due to the living conditions in the tents. Unlike other films, children are closer to the death of war and minefields. However, even though it is a different type of death, death is death. It is only being killed very close to the war. The economic exploitation of refugee children costs their lives or bodily organs by collecting mines in the minefield.

Andaç Haznedaroğlu's *Misafir* tells the story of a girl trying to escape from the Syrian civil war to Europe and her struggles in a transit country. In this film, homelessness is one of the most critical social problems and a significant risk. 8-year-old Lena and her little brother have lost their whole family in their bombed-out house. Similarly, their neighbour Maryam lost her whole family. Their paths crossed during the escape, and Maryam protected Lena and her brother. In this film, the spatial characteristic of Turkey as a transit country for displaced individuals aiming for Europe stands out. In the words of Deniz Bayrakdar (2022, 194), "*Misafir* depicts where those migrants in Istanbul live in cheap basement flats, as transitional spaces, and shopping malls, as non-places of super-modernity." Therefore, as in the film *Daha*, there is a spatial similarity, and, in temporal terms, the transit before reaching the shores of the sea or the land border is one of the previous stages of the escape with a compulsory waiting process because Istanbul is not a city on the sea border to Europe.

In Emanuele Crialesi's film *Terraferma* (2011), set on an Italian island, it is not the locals' perception of illegal immigrants as cheap labour and a cause of unemployment that leads to conflict but the prohibition of rescuing those who sink at sea. Due to the rules set by the state, fishermen are forbidden to take refugees on their boats. A fishing family at the central axis of the film has to choose between providing humanitarian aid on the one hand and watching refugees die on the other. When they rescue refugees and the state security

forces discover this, they are not allowed to use their boats by the state, which are their source of income. The local people here are not allowed, but their conscientious guest responsibility brings to mind the Finnish film *The Other Side of Hope* (Kaurismäki 2018). Similarly, this film is about being a refugee in Finland. Gültekin stated that even in Finland, which is associated with advanced democracy and social welfare, there are problems in the humane treatment of refugees. The author observes that states cannot respond to the humanitarian crisis of states' policies towards refugees, particularly those of the European Union member states. In this context, hope is not in political institutions but in solidarity between people (Gültekin, 2021, p.83). However, *Terraferma* (2011) differs regarding citizen-state interaction from *Misafir* (2017). According to Yüksel, the film *Misafir* presents an emotional discourse on the acceptance of refugees by the citizens of the nation-state. It creates a hierarchy between them—with the opposition of helping and being helped—and delegates the state policies to individuals (Yüksel, 2019, p. 248).

In *Capernaum*, the setting is Lebanon. Being a neighbouring country like Turkey makes Lebanon a vital refugee country. 11-year-old Zain's many economic, sociological, and medical problems in a highly low-income family with many children led to his inability to benefit from children's rights. In the film, Lebanon is a transit country as a mandatory stopover and place for human trafficking. According to Roula Seghaier, *Capernaum* absolves the upper classes from responsibility for the economic inequalities that nourish them and exempts the state from any criticism. The favourable portrayal of the state, especially concerning public security, enabled *Capernaum* to quickly pass through censorship measures. Rather than reflecting chaos, the film reproduces government propaganda, legitimises a kind of liberal impunity and depicts a liberal dystopia (Seghaier 2018, p.231). Seghaier's observations on the representation of the state are similar to Yüksel's comments (Yüksel 2019, p.248) on the film *Misafir* (2017), which delegates state policies to individuals. However, Seghaier criticizes the positive representation of the state. The English title of the film, "Guest," indirectly implies

a positive representation of the state. It is reminiscent of Yalouri's (2019, p.224) mention of the culture and discourse of hospitality in Greece, Turkey's neighbour, despite its current economic vulnerabilities.

In the Artıkışler collective's video *Afghanistanbul*, for refugees struggling to survive by selling what they collect from the garbage and sleeping on the beds that more privileged ones and people with the economic power to buy new mattresses throw away, there is the danger of trying to reach a destination country again and entering the networks of human traffickers. As in *Capernaum*, they do not have a passport and, therefore, do not have access to health services. As the interviewee said, "We are nothing here." Their invisibility recalls the depiction of refugees as ghosts on the borders (Saybaşılı 2011). All the people in front of the camera are men in *Afghanistanbul*, where illegality sets the stage for cheap labour, and local garbage collectors express their anger against the reduction of the market value of labour and the risk of losing their jobs due to the increasing supply of (cheap) labour. It is common for local people (Vogt Isaksen 2019) to see refugees/asylum seekers as individual and social threats due to their current unemployment problems and cheap labour, which is a vicious circle problem brought about by poverty. Including the opinions of vulnerable local people affected by this and who work in precarious jobs increases the objectivity criterion for the documentary. It is a source of first-hand experience when realistic interventions to the problems of those affected are needed. It should not be forgotten that people working precarious local jobs are also mostly internal migrants. In this film, the fact that the local people experiencing local economic difficulties are also given the right to speak provides a two-way communication. However, the local garbage collector's derogatory remarks about Afghan refugees, such as ignorant and uneducated, warrant criticism. If illiteracy is associated with not attending school, then most of the garbage collectors in Turkey are people who have not had the opportunity to access education. They do not focus on their own history of internal migration⁵ and precariousness but on the new forced migrants or

newly displaced people in an angry and *ad hominem* way. The directors should add first-hand views on the globalization of precarity and whether it is a system problem, with questions that move away from an *ad hominem* perspective. Films in which refugees working illegally and unregistered and non-refugees working unregistered are not isolated and can produce ideas together can offer dialogue-based alternatives for today's transnational employment world based on labour exploitation.

Discussion

In the purposively selected eleven films, which we meta-synthesis through the representation of refugees on escape routes or in transit/target countries, the danger levels are primarily about fighting for life. We encounter intense infrastructural -socioeconomic, medical, and legal- problems that violate human rights and victimize the refugees, but dialogues with non-refugees who experience poverty are missing in almost all of the films. The context of migration is different here, but we should take Yalouri's findings about the use of mimetic representation for the future, considering visual oversaturation and image fatigue. On the other hand, "intellectuals from diverse backgrounds such as Sontag (2004), Kleinman and Kleinman (1997), and Judith Butler (2004), have argued that invisibility does not help victims of injustice or atrocities" (Yalouri 2019, p.227). Therefore, considering the ways to present images in detail is necessary. However, in many media and public discourses of migration countries, refugees and immigrants are subjected to a cultural reductionist distinction between them and us. Although the selected films in the sample almost do not portray cultural factors, their role in reducing violence through more in-depth analysis should be questioned. To help serve an intervention, we should keep in mind Sen's (2008) view that approaches to explaining violence should avoid isolationist programs only regarding socioeconomic inequalities and deprivation of human rights or culture. Therefore, we should pay attention to Amartya Sen's approach:

⁵ Many large cities in Turkey have received internal migration since the 1950s, while in recent years, following the wars in Syria and Afghanistan, external migration has also led to significant population increases.

Theories based on the culture of societies, among which the theory of the clash of civilizations is the most influential, attempt to explain violence by referring to antagonisms between collective identities. Theories of the political economy of power and inequality seek the sole cause of violence in economic factors. While each approach has some plausibility, both are inadequate on their own (Sen 2008, p.5).

The selected films for this paper are pro-refugee films and, therefore, have a similar mission to the “cinema of the affected” or “cinema of duty” (Malik 1996, pp.203–4) in the 1960s and 1970s in some European countries, such as England and Germany. Even though the type of migration was not the same then, it was the case that non-migrants or non-refugees adopted a mission and narrated the “victims” in Europe’s first decades of migration. However, it should be noted that although the actors in the films are primarily refugees, a considerable number of the filmmakers and crew are non-refugees; the depictees of the victims are not the victims from the target or transit countries. Films made by filmmakers from countries that have experienced being a refugee country have at least the potential to move away from the Eurocentric humanitarian perspective.

These films depicting people affected by the aftermath and during the war should open up for discussion missions such as peace journalism, human rights journalism and media, peace filmmaking, and human rights filmmaking. A common point observed in the films is the emphasis on people’s responsibilities and human wrong behaviours and attitudes rather than the responsibility to protect of states.⁶ We should think of ‘Human Wrongs Filmmaking’ similarly to ‘Human Wrongs Journalism’ (Shaw 2012). In human wrongs journalism, censorship is an obstacle to an essential human right (Selvarajah 2021, 2020). Although not explicitly mentioned in the selected films, the absence or limited criticism of states should bring factors such as censorship and funding to mind (except, for example, *Island of Hungry Ghosts*).

Article three of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to

life, liberty and the security of person” (see Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948). Violation of this article is a significant conflict for refugees in different world geographies. Then, it is necessary to discuss the issues with dimensions such as peace filmmaking, filmmaking about the responsibility to protect, and human rights filmmaking, which concerns safeguarding human rights and intervening in violations with international and local dynamics. There is a need to develop theories and models to serve human rights in producing, screening, and reproducing such films.

Conclusion

This article sought to meta-synthesize and broaden perspectives for future research on (non-)refugees’ exposure to human rights violations in cinema. In a purposively sampled selection of eleven films, it focused on the representation of violations of the right to life in safety and freedom and the extreme poverty of people displaced by war. The effects of wartime and post-war forced migration constitute significant themes among the various traumatic facts of refugee people in the selected films. In the cinemas of different countries, displaced people are represented with similar suffering. Thus, typical sub-themes cannot be limited to a few geographies; culture should not limit perceptions towards refugees and migrants. Removing the here-and-now experiences of refugees from the vicious circle of war is impossible. The domino effect of human rights violations and living in a vicious circle are visible in these films. However, the causes and dynamics of the war that displaced them before and behind are generally invisible.

When the first research question, ‘Which human wrongs do displaced people face in films produced in different countries?’ was meta-synthesised, a thematization can be made as socio-psychological and physical life difficulties such as their life safety being in great danger, human trafficking and their commodification, the claustrophobic characteristics of escape areas for them at sea or on land, and their being far away from human rights. Poverty awaits the luckier surviving refugees when they arrive in the host country. The

⁶ Here, one can take exception to the film *Hungry Ghosts Island*, which deals with a refugee detention camp.

vicious cycle of poverty can be thematized as limited living space, working in dangerous, low-paid, precarious jobs, child labour, and rape of women and girls. Moreover, refugees are often exposed to false and stigmatized discourse in the media. Each of the stages of fleeing war is tragic in films. Looking at the places of escape from war, we see that the metaphors of paradise and hell on earth are based on a double standard of human rights for the privileged and non-privileged. For example, the Aegean Sea and coasts of Italy, Turkey and Greece (for example, Istanbul, Beirut, and Christmas islands) represent paradise for tourists and privileged local people with purchasing power in terms of having fun, resting, and enjoying the sun and sea in the films. For refugees, it is hell in dark, narrow, wet, and cold spaces, including death reality.

The second research question, 'Do local non-refugee segments who feel negatively affected by migration and experience poverty and unemployment express themselves in these films?' also led to the meta-synthesis. In a considerable number of the selected films, these groups are underrepresented. For economically vulnerable non-refugee locals, for example, it is sometimes a dangerous route of migration to better living conditions in Europe - even if it does not receive as much media coverage as refugee boat deaths. The tourist destinations in the films are more often inaccessible and expensive holiday destinations for low-income, vulnerable locals. In contrast to the speculative discourse in the media about refugees' unemployment and reduced wages, their voices are generally not heard in the films. For the non-privileged, disadvantaged and poverty-stricken locals, it should be possible to speak of relatively squeezed living conditions in material and moral terms.

In conclusion, holiday destinations, which are advertised as paradises on earth, serve the function of refreshment for tourists. For refugees, they are tantamount to facing death. Displaced people and vulnerable local people should have opportunities to express their "hellish conditions" in the media and films, which should depict the sociocultural facts to inform and sensitize the audience, including human rights organizations, national and international lawmakers, and practitioners. In addition, the expression and cooperation of local people who are not socioeconomically privileged and

affected by the exploitation of cheap labour should also be included in the films, and the films should become an arena of mediation, reconciliation, and solidarity for different social groups exposed to human rights violations due to migration.

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