



Migration Stories & Facts for the 21st Century

***Reframing the debate
about migration***



CENTER
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Weronika Rzeżutka-Wróblewska

Migration IS.

'Migration is like the wind,' writes Anna Alboth, one of the authors featured in this publication. Migration simply is and it can have both positive effects (like the wind when it helps plants to pollinate), and negative consequences (such as the destruction of houses). The idea behind this publication is that we must understand the phenomenon of migration so that we can protect ourselves and each other from the possible negative consequences that are happening even now as I write these words (e.g., walls being built to fortify borders, people dying in the forests on the Polish-Belarus border, etc.). The idea is that we can harness the power of migration for the good. We can build understanding and learn by examining the issue from different perspectives, by sharing experiences, solutions, and also doubts. It is exactly for this reason that this publication is dedicated to those of us who are concerned with migration, including activists, journalists, communication specialists, academics, and teachers in schools. This publication aims to help you talk about the issue that just is – migration.



In May 2022 during the conference 'Migration Stories & Facts for the 21st Century', which took place in Warsaw, we had the great pleasure to host meetings with people from around Europe who are engaged and experienced in activism, and open-minded and motivated to change the world. We discussed the narratives around migration and how migration is covered in the media, as well as pan-European regulations and regulations in individual countries regarding migration, global education initiatives, and how to build more open societies. We spent three full days discussing, sharing ideas, presenting actions and campaigns, and asking questions (though often failing to find one singular answer). Yet, those three days were still not enough. In that time, we did manage to agree upon one key conclusion: that there is not enough space to constructively continue such discussions. We agreed that we need to continue a nuanced discussion that would involve representatives from different fields, various stakeholders, as well as decision-makers working in areas that influence migration and migration policy.

This publication too is an invitation to continue the discussion. It includes five articles written by authors who represent different experiences and have different backgrounds, and who share their original ideas about how to address the topic of migration and issues around the integration of people with migration and refu-

gee backgrounds. The articles propose ideas for building an open and multicultural community together. They present various methods that can help start a dialogue in your local group, work environment, school, and community, and how to moderate the resulting discussions, including through Open Space methods, through the visual arts, by including the voices of socially engaging scientists, and by opening a Good Conversation Club. These approaches and tools have been tested by the authors who present them, and we wholeheartedly recommend them in this publication. We invite you, our readers, to not only implement these ideas but also to adapt them to your specific needs so as to pursue discussions on important topics with respect for diversity and in a way that inspires action.

The Centre for Citizenship Education (CCE) is the largest non-governmental organisation focused on advancing educational methods and programmes in Poland. With the CCE's support, teachers around Poland have been able to bring methods and topics into their schools in a way that helps students become more engaged in learning and better able to cope with the challenges of the modern world.

The CCE develops programmes that strengthen confidence in one's own capabilities, encourage openness, and foster critical thinking, as well as teach cooperation and social responsibility, and inspire engagement in public life and social activism. We follow current trends in the theory of education and respond to new challenges in a changing world.

The solutions proposed by the CCE are based on over twenty-eight years of experience, expert knowledge, and cooperation with practitioners. About forty thousand teachers and school directors from nearly ten thousand schools all over Poland have benefitted from our support.



Katarzyna Szajda

How to talk about migration?

**Handling difficult topics with diverse groups using
Open Space Technology.**

Imagine a reality in which people are free to share their ideas, opinions and dreams. A reality in which everyone is equal, where people from different backgrounds and social contexts can meet, and there is space to agree or disagree. A reality in which people get together and talk about topics that are potentially controversial, that provoke strong emotions, but that are also crucial and urgent to discuss. Migration is one such topic.

Facilitating this kind of open space for discussion about migration is exactly what Open Space Technology is designed to do.

A short look back

Back in the 1980s, the initiator of Open Space Technology (OST), Harrison Owen, received powerful feedback from the participants of a large conference that had gathered over 250 people. The participants made it clear that the most important exchanges and experiences they had had during the conference took place not during the conference sessions, but during the coffee breaks. It had taken Owen a year to prepare the intensive and promising programme for that conference, but Owen took the feedback about his 'failure' as a genuine learning experience and proposed a new conference format that would give freedom for exchange whilst also fostering a sense of responsibility among participants for the ultimate outcome of the conference.

Imagine an Open Space

It is not an easy task to describe OST to someone who has not yet experienced it. It is especially challenging to convey the spirit of OST as a written text, but let's give it a try.

OST is used to facilitate effective meetings and conferences that gather up to 2,000 participants. There is no common agreement regarding the minimum number of participants, but experience has shown that having more than 10 participants, who are fully committed to the topic at hand, is enough to meaningfully facilitate a dialogue through the OST structure.

Meetings and conferences organised through the OST structure should last a minimum of a few hours, so one afternoon can be enough time. However, the event can also be scheduled to take place over as long as three days.

The space of the meeting or conference should be carefully prepared. After an introduction by the facilitator, participants should be free to self-organise. A well-prepared space will ensure that participants are able to continue with the meeting without having to ask, 'what comes next?'.

The ideal space is one large room with seating arranged in a circle and with the meeting agenda situated so that it is easily visible and accessible from all parts of the circle. Small 'break out' spaces with a few chairs arranged around flip-charts should also be prepared in separate parts of the room or in smaller rooms located nearby. There should also be a space for coffee breaks. An important element of OST is to ensure a permanent space for coffee breaks, where participants can freely serve themselves even before the whole event begins. The coffee break area is where participants can engage in individual interactions, conversations, and networking.

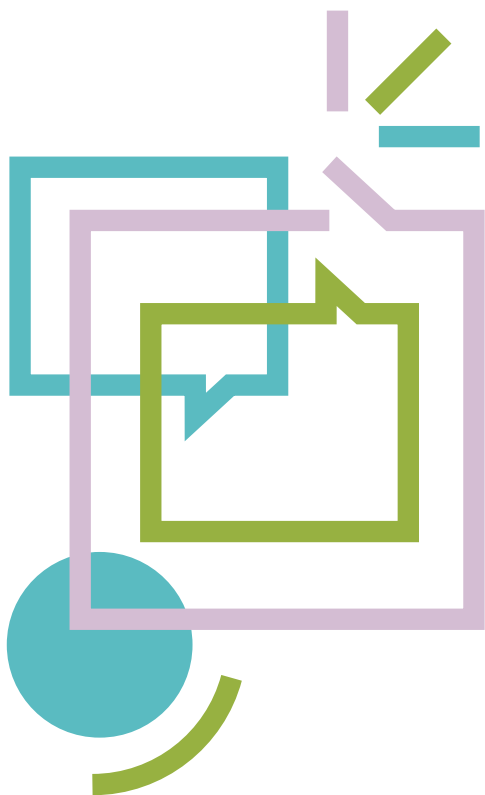
Participants should be invited to sit in the circle when the topic of discussion interests them and there should be an empty space to write the agenda. It is the participants' responsibility to outline the agenda, and everyone should be invited to propose topics for discussion. At the same time, however, participants must be free to decide how they want to use their time during the meeting or conference.

The OST facilitator is responsible for setting up the space as well as introducing the overarching framework of the meeting and the key principles of OST, which include participants are free to move between sessions, sessions can take less time than planned or be extended if necessary, there is no correct number of participants so even one person or two people can have a meaningful moment of reflection and dialogue (it can be an inner dialogue).

Within the frame of OST, there are two types of participants: hardworking bumblebees, who fly from one group to another contributing with their ideas here and there, and butterflies, who use their freedom to 'have a break', if they need it, and possibly meet another butterfly at the coffee table where they may have the most inspiring and fruitful conversation of the whole meeting.

Topics that matter

OST creates a safe space to talk about difficult topics, especially ones that tend to be controversial and divisive. The current tendency for polarisation of society in many European



countries encourages people to stick to their own opinion and to search for arguments that support their existing views. The space and conditions created through OST encourage participants to hear new opinions from people who see and understand things differently compared to what participants think they 'know'.

Meetings and conferences organised through the OST structure focus on a specific topic, but the process of discussion, analysis and reflection can help create a 'live' mind map that grows out of and around the main topic and gives a complex picture of how a variety of topics are interconnected. This effect is especially helpful if the goal is to change dominant narratives about complex topics, such as migration.

Migration, which was the main topic of the conference 'Migration Stories & Facts for the 21st Century', is one of the most important issues of public debate in Central and European countries today. Before now, this topic was connected to

individual stories about people who came from distant regions of the world, from different cultural backgrounds and social realities compared to those we are familiar with in Central and Eastern Europe. This framing of the subject of migration was largely based on how it was presented in the media. Today, this topic has become part of our everyday reality in schools, work places, playgrounds, shops, parks, and even our families.

On the one hand, we meet people with migration experience every day. On the other hand, what we hear and see in the media influences how we feel about 'the other'. Yet, it is not only the media, but also teachers and educators that shape our attitudes towards migration. For this reason, we invited representatives of all these groups to attend the above-mentioned conference, as well as researchers, who work on the topic of migration and have an important role in creating the content that reaches both the media and educators.

When not to use Open Space Technology?

If it is important that participants attend all the conference or meeting sessions, then OST may not be the right structure. If you apply the OST structure, you may find that rather than discussing in the conference sessions, participants behave like 'butterflies' and spend more time discussing informally than in the sessions.

If you have a precise expectation for the outcome of your meeting or conference, then OST may not be the best option either. Although OST sets up a clear structure, it allows participants great freedom in how they can be involved in the process. The discussions may go in different directions than originally planned. The OST structure assumes a high level of trust in the process, which is understood to develop out of the interactions between participants. As stated in one of the OST principles, 'whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened'.

When to use Open Space Technology?

OST is particularly helpful when the goal of a given meeting or conference is to explore a topic that is complex, controversial, or difficult, such as the topic of migration.

It is also especially effective when the aim is to inspire and motivate participants to self-organise and to build a sense of co-responsibility, as well as to create a space for networking.

The circular seating arrangement fosters a sense of equality amongst participants, so that everyone can be seen as an expert and as contributing valuable ideas and viewpoints. If the topic is important to participants, then they are likely to have something to share about it, and having a receptive audience is crucial to dialogue. In the case of our conference, we invited both practitioners with several years of experience and students, who asked in-depth questions and gave completely new perspectives on the work of the experienced practitioners.

Another example of open space meetings focused on the 'future of our schools', inviting students, teachers, administrative and custodial staff, parents, and other individuals who made up the school community, created a uniquely eye-opening experience for all participants.

OST creates space for meetings or conferences, in which participants can talk about what truly matters to them, stay engaged, listen and understand better what others have to say, as well as reflect on themselves and the world around them.

The possibilities created by the OST structure relate not only to what happens during the meeting or conference. When the inner motivation of participants is stimulated, there is a greater chance that people will feel responsible for taking the ideas that were generated during the meeting and putting them into action, and that, after the meeting or conference, they will become actively engaged in bringing about change in the reality that surrounds them.





Anna Alboth

How to talk and write about migration

Migration IS. During the conference 'Migration Stories & Facts for the 21st Century', Rob McNeil, from the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, noted that even Adam and Eve were forced migrants. I often compare migration to the wind. The wind was, is and always will be. The wind might be stronger or lighter; it may bring relief or trouble, but without the wind, windmills and sailboats would not exist, plants could not pollinate, and humans probably could not stand the sun. The wind is, and each of us can decide what our attitude towards it will be: do we wish to understand the drivers behind it, the reasons why it is sometimes stronger, and how to happily live with it? Similarly, in the case of migration, do we want to be smarter and learn lessons from communities or regions beyond our own, to see what works and what does not work as migration policy? Or do we want to pretend that migration is just a temporary 'crisis' that can be solved by expensive fences?

My personal connection with migration

My life experience brought me to a place where I wanted to understand migration, both its brighter and darker sides, the processes that drive it, and how I can talk about it with readers (as a journalist), students (as a teacher), and the wider public.

I first met people who were refugees about twenty years ago thanks to the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights. It was in a detention centre outside Warsaw and the refugee I met was my age at the time. He had come from a small village in Afghanistan. I remember the strong impression that meeting made on me. After that, I spent many years covering the topic of migration as a journalist, more or less effectively, both in Poland and in Europe. Then, everything changed in 2015 when a large number of Syrians came to seek refuge in Berlin, where I live. My life changed as well and I began to focus on migration full-time. Since then, I have initiated dozens of campaigns: from actions to collect sleeping bags, to organising the Civil March for Aleppo, which was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. During this time, I have had the chance to meet hundreds of refugees and talk about their experiences, including older Polish ladies in Iran who arrived there on boats in 1942. While working on various campaigns, I had the chance to monitor what works best to inspire compassion in audiences. An example of an effective campaign is the video 'Looking 4 minutes into eyes', which can be easily found online. I now work as a media officer for the organisation, Minority Rights Group International, and, for the past four years, I have been running projects for journalists and influencers who wish to cover migration issues effectively. All the experiences that I collected through my activism and observations, by doing and writing about what I do, brought me to where I am today, combining journalism and activism.

Here is what I would like to share with all of you: Media coverage of migration and other related topics, such as the division of the world into the global south and the global north, is often based in negative stereotypes and simplified explanation of complex contexts. Such coverage prioritises audience reaction and attention by focusing on dramatic issues such as poverty, natural disasters, terrorism, corruption, and conflict rather than offering more nuanced analyses and perspectives.

Context and perspective matters

All too often, stories about migration are told from the viewpoint of humanitarian aid workers, diplomats or other external commentators from North America or Europe. Such narratives come at the expense of voices from local communities, so that the experiences of local experts and activists remain unheard. Also, positive stories – though there are many to choose from – rarely feature in media coverage of migration.

Migration is an important issue to address both in public debate and in policy across Europe and worldwide. The media plays an important role in how these issues are interpreted. Sometimes, however, media coverage builds narratives about migration on pure myths or speculation. In other cases, the media applies more subtle distortions and misconceptions of the issues. Though the coverage may be, strictly speaking, factually correct, it nevertheless presents information out of context or interprets it in a way that is misleading.

The world is more interconnected than ever before and journalists must adapt to meet this new reality. I believe that global development journalism is the direction in which journalism should evolve.

The ethics of journalism are in urgent need of a rethink in our increasingly interconnected world. Media coverage today requires taking

into account more diverse information and data, and more voices and perspectives so as to present a balanced and accurate perspective. National or personal interests should not take precedence over transnational principles of human rights and justice. Journalists should become transnational communicators, whose social contract extends beyond their own personal audience or country. Instead, journalists should develop a significantly wider, multi-society contract with the whole global community.

Free, fair and balanced journalism has always been a cornerstone of modernity and democracy because it can then empower people and societies.

Shaping narration on migration

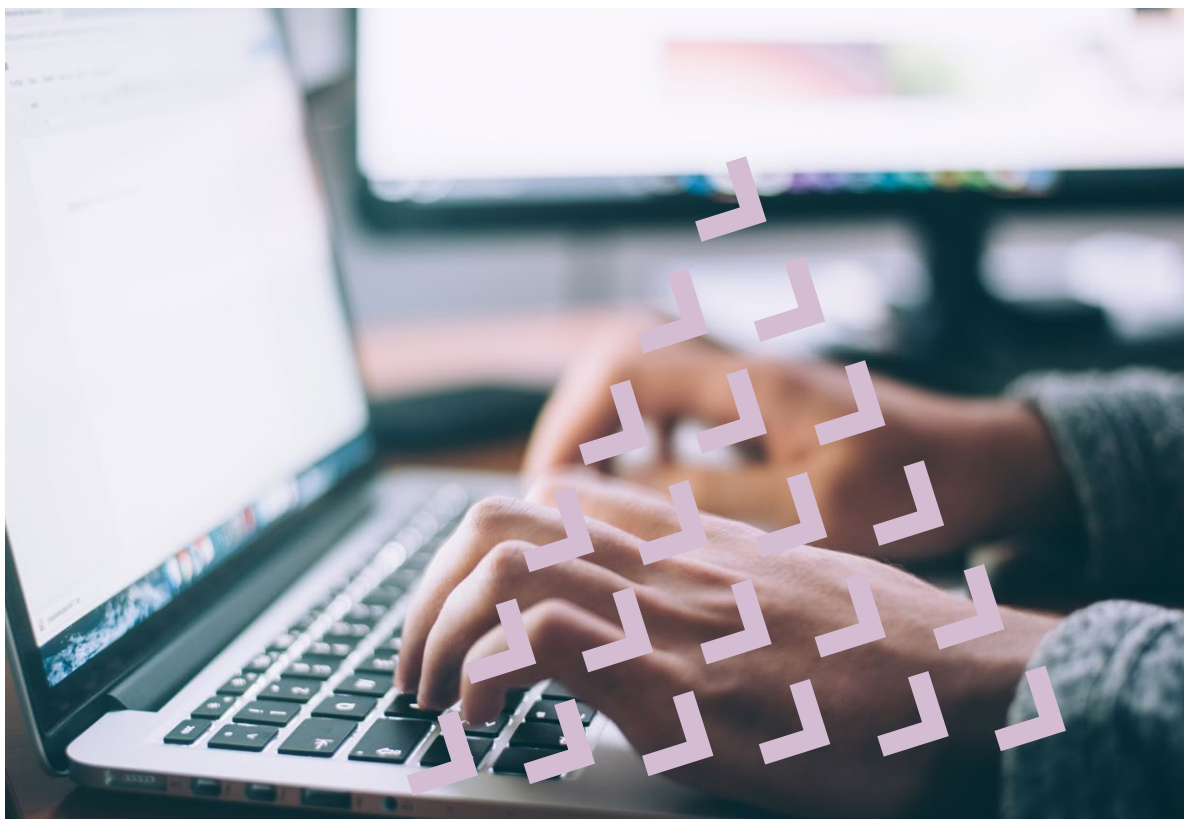
Covering culturally and geographically distant contexts brings a variety of challenges. How do you achieve the right balance of perspectives? How can you feed the local context into a bigger picture? How do you avoid the dangers of depoliticisation and other common pitfalls of Western coverage of the global South? How can you analyse a subject in which you are not an expert? And can you make these unfamiliar contexts relevant and accessible to your audience at home? Fortunately, there are tools that can help.

A hook is a technique to make your story engaging by going beyond the 'five Ws' of journalism: who, what, when, where and why. Put simply, it answers the question 'So what?'. Another technique relates to building a narrative that opens your story in a way that draws the audience in so that they want to keep reading, watching, or listening. Such an opening can be, for example, a specific event or a particular finding in a recent report.

It is important to capture the voices of people who are personally affected by the issue you are covering. In order to achieve this, it is important to enter the local community when covering migration and/or development issues. As part



of my role at Minority Rights Group International, we prepared a Covering Migration Toolkit that includes examples and checklists to help you prepare before, during and after you cover migration topics. The toolkit can be viewed at: <https://coveringmigration.com>. I also run trainings for journalists, editors, and publishers. Ultimately, it does not matter how many well-trained journalists there are if there is no space for publication on migration topics. The media should take responsibility for shaping narratives about migration. Without space and opportunities for reliable and effective coverage of migration, the topic can be manipulated politically, as has been happening since 2015 in Europe.



Jakub Můčka

Are scholars our allies?

Can we expect scientists to speak out about migration and other social issues? What do scientists need in return for engaging with contemporary social issues? Below, I share the story of the Atlas of Today's World, a media project I initiated during the 2016 migration crisis.

Scientists seek their role in society

With every new social crisis, there are sharp disputes across academia about whether socially engaged science is legitimate. Students tend to have a strong position in favour of such engagement, though universities have not always agreed. In recent years, there is a new trend amongst universities to frame such engagement in terms of social responsibility, similar to corporate social responsibility. Some higher education institutions even establish a 'Third Mission' as their official institutional development programme¹. According to this policy, science that serves the needs and interests of broader society should be an organic part of university life, comparable to teaching and research. In the case of the natural sciences, maths, and technology, the 'innovations' that scientists develop can, in themselves, be considered socially engaged and beneficial, but what can be the contribution of the social sciences and the humanities to addressing contemporary social issues, which are multi-layered and sometimes controversial, such as global migration? In such cases, what is the role of socially engaged science?

Scientists are not superior beings with a unique ability to know and share an 'objective truth'. Scientists are not magicians with direct insight into reality. They do not own the truth. Scientists are just as limited, biased, or susceptible to temptations as everyone else. Thus, when a highly respected scientist expresses a political opinion and this is defended or excused only on the basis of his or her professional title and social status, I see this as a form of manipulation of public opinion. Such cases can result in a harmful politicisation of science². At the same time, the risk of such a situation makes many scientists reluctant to speak out and comment publicly. Scientists also fear situations when their work, name and status are used incorrectly to underpin misguided or harmful policies. In 2016, when the project Atlas of Today's World was initiated during the migration crisis, we tended to do the same foul when inviting scholars to give public lectures at schools and towns or at demonstrations to undertake action, for ins-

tance to call for open borders. For scholars in the social sciences and the humanities, social engagement means entering the political arena, so that, on the one hand, social concerns can be more understandable to the general public. On the other hand, however, these concerns should not become an excuse for scientists to avoid any connections with the public and to limit themselves to the comfort of the closed lecture hall with students who either understand them or do not challenge what they say. In contrast, speaking to non-academic audiences may be difficult and unpleasant. I contend that precisely because scientists are a privileged social group, they have a moral duty to be socially engaged, particularly if they are employed in a public university and their income is drawn from public funds.

Science does not mean direct knowledge

Scientists should be understood as using rational *techniques* when seeking the truth of the world around us, instead of any 'direct knowledge'. My use of the term 'rational *techniques*' refers to using tools of human observation and rationality such as gathering data, logical arguments or even theoretical concepts. Transparency is crucial to this process to help avoid manipulation. Only when scholars use these *techniques* professionally can they be entirely transparent about their experiments, surveys, logical argumentations, or personal beliefs, which then have the chance to be an objective evaluation of the quality of their research and, thus, the quality of their conclusions. One example is the academic tradition of writing position statements³. Similar transparency should also be expected from journalists or contemporary influencers. Thanks to transparency, we are able to critically review every scientific voice and be aware of low-quality or misleading research, as well as of how research results can be manipulated by stakeholders in other non-academic sectors (e.g., politicians, media, etc.), but also by scientists themselves. We have seen many such cases during the recent Covid-19 pandemic⁴.

The social sciences and the humanities skate on very thin ice. Reducing expectations from science should not lead to scepticism, relativism or resigning from social engagement amongst scientists. There is great potential for these *techniques* to enable scientists to share their knowledge and foster greater understanding amongst all. Scientists can engage in socially responsible activities as a public service that includes analyses, broader contextualisation, and critical reflection.

Three missing voices: analysis, contextualisation, and critical reflection

Analysing can enable to see deeper, deconstruct or even verify initial impressions. When applied to migration, scholars might support the work of NGOs and the media and deepen the public debate by exploring the push and pull factors of migration, presenting statistics (e.g., global comparisons are rarely presented), or answering common questions such as 'Why are there so many young male migrants with iPhones?' For example, I remember when, in 2015, some journalists in the Balkans were astonished upon learning that a group of migrants had slept on gravestones. Deconstructing key concepts such as refugees vs. economic migration can help explain the realities that many migrants from the non-Western world experience when they are forced to leave their country of origin (e.g., lack of money for cancer treatment for one's parents might be just as strong a motivation to leave as the risk of political persecution).

Contextualisation, on the contrary, can help grasp a wider perspective and thus to discover entire new worlds behind individual migration stories. By creating a big-picture description, scholars can expose the realities behind migration. For example, scientists can help explain the labyrinthine system of human trafficking and modern slavery in the EU and how it is connected to low migration quotas and a lack of opportunities for legal migration, but also to a vast underworld

of European organised crime, exploitation of unprotected migrant workers and sex workers, and can also actually facilitate radicalisation. Another example can be when scientists depict a picture of human life in Afghanistan, which takes into account the system of local corruption, unemployment, ethnic tensions and violence or secret executions by the regime. Science can thus draw simulations of the human condition in the non-Western world just to the eyes of the European spectator.



Finally, critical reflection can serve as a mirror that exposes and undermines deep-rooted concepts and images of the world, which otherwise appear 'natural'. Though this can be a painful experience, this process can help us become aware, for example, that the concept of the nation state is an ideological construct of 19th-century nationalism, or that contemporary Euro-American prosperity and high living standards result from an exploitation of the rest of the world. For instance, buying cheap Russian gas and oil has systematically helped build Putin's regime for twenty-two years and, today, Ukrainians are the biggest victims of this regime and that is why they openly speak about it.

The three approaches noted above can be understood as political since they concern our political life, but this should not discredit such voices. There is a difference between describing a situation publicly and recommending a solution or giving a call to action. To describe the world around us is, after all, the central mission and role of science.

Scholars can thus be seen to be politically engaged when helping the public understand reality. But if they take part in demonstrations for open borders, it should be as ordinary citizens and not 'in the name of science'. My objective here is not to 'reinvent the wheel', nor to criticise scholars, but to better understand the potential for cooperation between academia and NGOs and the media. Indeed, academics also need support when they become socially engaged and providing such support is also part of the story of the project 'Atlas of Today's World'.

Making scientists' voices heard

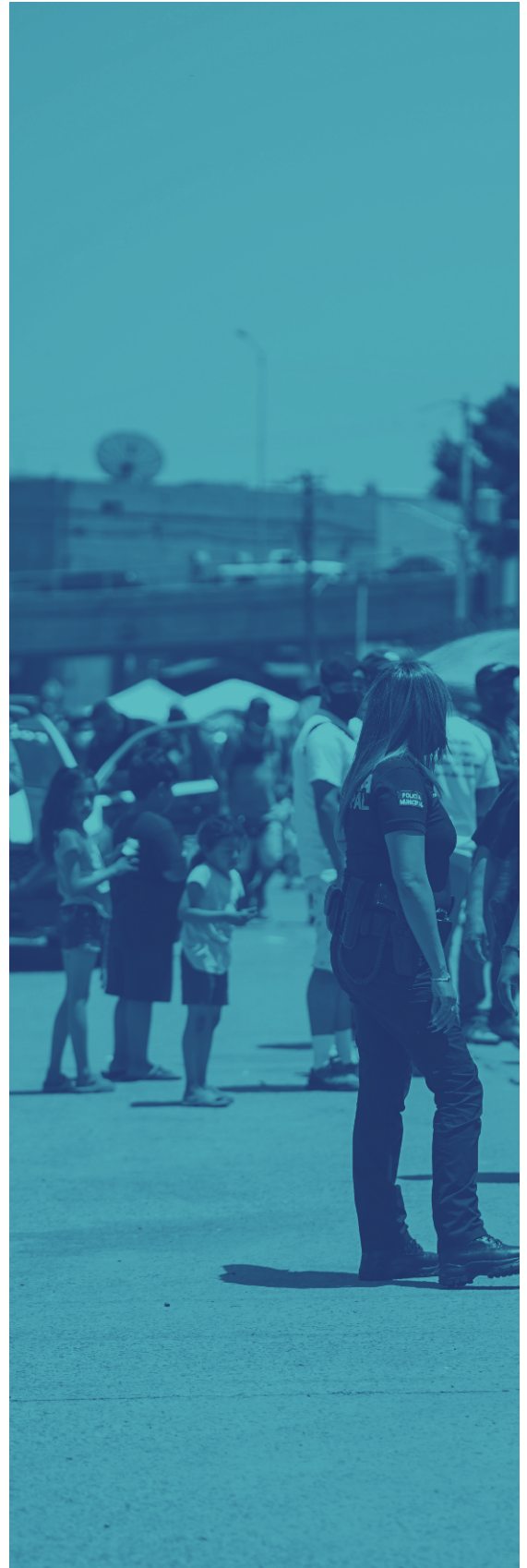
After returning from Serbian and Croatian, where I was among hundreds of Czech students who volunteered to help refugees who had been blocked in open fields, a no man's land, between borders in the autumn of 2015, my colleagues and I sought to contribute to the public debate about the ongoing refugee crisis. Some of us were students in the social sciences and the humanities and we noticed the negligible presence of academics at a time when 'everyone' seemed to have become an expert on Syria or Islam. We wanted to make the knowledge of specialists in fields such as Arabic studies, religious studies, and migration studies more accessible. Together with other students and thanks to the support of several Czech universities, we designed the Online Encyclopaedia of Migration. This is an open access education resource where relevant scholars share their analyses of current migration patterns from the Middle East in short explanatory entries. The encyclopaedic content was presented using an interactive interface that showed a world map and that visually

displayed contemporary global migration based on UN data. The website was used in lessons by teachers in primary and high schools, and also accompanied news media features on migration. Once, it was used as a tool in a training for police. From today's perspective, however, I admit that the impact of this tool on Czech society in general was marginal at that time. We did not influence the public debate on migration with that tool. Interestingly, the tool became highly popular among academics. Although our project could not offer them more journal citations, which are important for the academic profession, we created a safe digital place with encyclopaedic formats, in which the specialist knowledge was not taken out of context or mocked due to the surprising or sometimes unpleasant conclusions. Additionally, publishing on our encyclopaedia did not mean they automatically supported any particular policies. The entries were neutral and strictly descriptive.

We closed the student migration project in 2019 as many of those who contributed to it began to work internationally and, on the worldwide level, there are many specialised and professional migration projects (e.g. the UNHCR's *map statistics*, the IOM's *Migration Data Portal*, the Oxford-based *Migration Observatory*, *Migration Matters*, *Migeurop* or *Migration Trail*). However, in establishing the Online Encyclopaedia of Migration we learned more about the global media system, and, through this, we discovered a new need. There is a lot of news and analyses i.e., in-depth insight. But no one who would do the opposite: who would look at our world from a higher perspective and enable us to see a complete picture of its long-term socio-political reality that stands behind individual events, personal stories, and other details. We, again, turned to scholars to help us design the *Atlas of Today's World*, which is similar in style to Wikipedia but is based on a platform designed specifically to enable broad contextualisation. Now, we aim to launch a full international media source that systematically builds a picture of today's human world as a mosaic that enables a big-picture description of individual countries and their reality based on the scholarship of scientists in the social sciences and the humanities. Like the On-

line Encyclopaedia of Migration, this project is also based on an interactive map of the world and relies on scientific contextualisation to enable the general public to look beyond what is being shown in the news of the moment.

Based on our example, I believe that socially engaged science can exist. Scientists who are socially engaged do not have to become politicised. Nevertheless, scholars need support, for instance, they require appropriate platforms for their content, bridges to connect the island of academia with the rest of the world, and partners in order to reach the public and effectively convey their knowledge. In return, scientists' unique *techniques* of analyses, contextualisation and critical reflection have the chance to fundamentally shape the quality of contemporary public debates. It will not force any political conclusion, but it might help to make human lenses wider and more realistic.

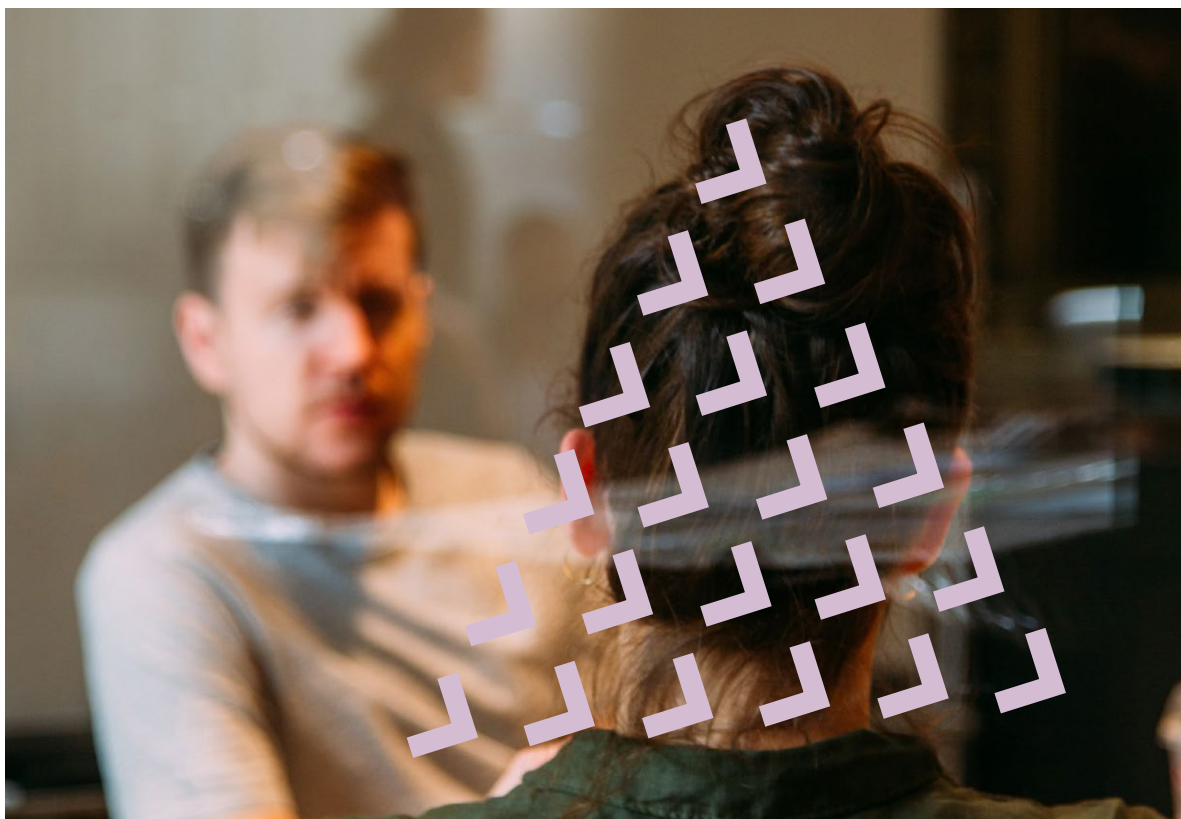


¹ For example, see this statement by the University of Vienna: <https://thirdmission.univie.ac.at/en/>

² See the following article for inspiring examples of ongoing debates about the politicisation of science: <https://thecoconversation.com/should-scientists-engage-in-activism-72234>

³ <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/standards-disclosures#positionality-statements>

⁴ For example:
1) <https://www.science.org/content/article/scientists-quit-journal-board-protesting-grossly-irresponsible-study-claiming-covid-19>
2) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/01/24/robert-malone-vaccine-misinformation-rogan-mandates/>



Sylvia Domagała

How to change the way we talk about migration

Good Conversation Clubs – a training in communication skills

The poor quality of public debate on migration reflects our society's level of knowledge about migration and our communication skills. We need to address these issues through diverse approaches. One possible method is to model alternative ways of talking about migration. Learning good patterns of communication and practicing them step by step in local communities can help reshape the debate both now and in the future. So, let's talk about migration and learn what good conversation is.

Migration as a challenge for communication

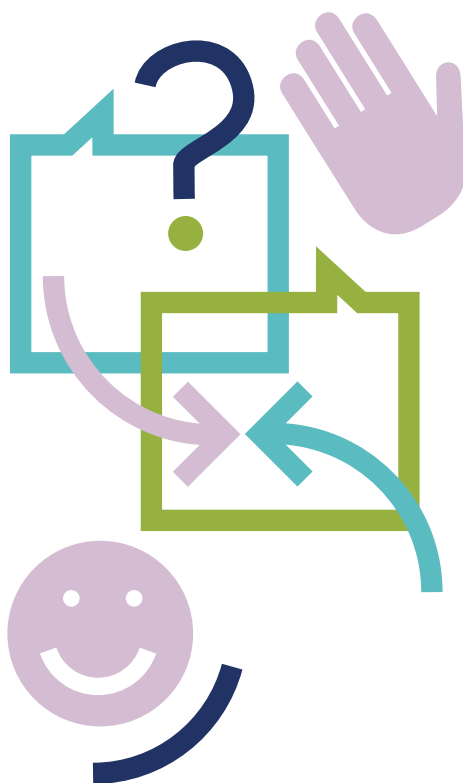
Since late 2015, the large-scale arrival of refugees from the Middle East and Africa to Europe is one of the most important topics of public debate in Poland and in Europe as a whole. Migration became the top story in the media and the topic has motivated activism among both supporters and opponents of refugees. This situation has also revealed the depth of the crisis of communication in society. In most cases, discussions about migration lead to a polarisation of opinions and mutual exclusion of those who do not share the same perspective. Discussion is often treated like a battlefield, where one side wins by persuading the other to a change of opinion or even by discrediting those who hold an opposing opinion. In this combative approach to discussion, the main goal is to convince others as much as possible, but there is no space for dialogue. How can we address this approach to communication and prevent people from isolating themselves in their bubbles?

Let's meet and talk – the idea of Good Conversation Clubs

In response to the migration challenges that began in 2015, the Centre for Citizenship Education (CCE) began to promote the 'good conversation' idea in schools. Teachers had been asking the CCE for support. They felt the need to react to the anxiety they saw in the young people with whom they work, as well as to respond to the questions that were being raised in their classrooms and to facilitate productive conversation between young people. Tensions caused by differences in opinion had become more visible in their classrooms than ever before. Teachers did not know how to react in a way that would meet the young people's needs. Many had concerns about getting involved in the debates because they did not feel they had

sufficient knowledge about migration. Which side should they take? Should they take any side at all? Teachers needed guidance and materials to tackle this topic in conversations with young people.

As an NGO that works directly with teachers across Poland, we felt that, along with knowledge about migration, it would be helpful to introduce both teachers and young people to the idea, principles, and values of 'good conversation'. This could make debates into a more educational experience that could also help debate participants develop their interpersonal skills. In addition to the many activities and materials related to migration that the CCE had already developed, we began to promote the initiative of 'Good Conversation Clubs'. The idea is to support teachers as they help initiate such clubs with the young people they work with in schools. Teachers can support them with organising discussions about global issues such as migration.



Our experiences with Good Conversation Clubs made us realise that people lack communication skills to debate global issues because these skills are not taught. The art of conversation involves knowledge, skills, and practice, but the feedback from both the teachers and young people we worked with revealed that there is no space for learning about dialogue in Polish education. Within the context of the low quality of public debate in the media and the lack of authorities who can model good communication patterns, the causes of this communication crisis seemed clear.

We believe that it is our responsibility to support good conversation patterns and to foster leaders in local communities who can model good communication as part of the answer to this crisis.

Good conversation needs frames of reference, rules, and practice

The idea of the Good Conversation Club concentrates on attentive listening and promoting discussion based on mutual respect between participants, as well as respect for those who are spoken about. Participants not only share their opinions, but also talk about the values that they consider important in relation to the refugee crisis. There is also space for sharing fears and addressing questions to open a wider and more respectful discussion about the situation of refugees.

First, the teacher or young person, with the teacher's support, sets up a club in their school and the club participants then decide how often the club will meet. It is important that all participants take part in the club voluntarily. No one should feel obliged or forced by the teacher or the moderator to participate.

During the first meeting, the club participants agree on the goal of the club and think about the topics they wish to discuss. Asking good questions that have no clear answer makes

discussions more interesting, engaging, and inspiring. It is better to start with material that raises questions rather than that gives answers as the latter can raise emotions and be interpreted in various ways. Films, short articles, or artworks can help open discussion on complex issues such as migration.

It is also important to set ground rules at the beginning as these can help assure that the club is a safe space based on the principle of mutual respect. Such rules serve as a kind of a contract that everyone can refer to and recognise if at any time a rule is broken. The below example of ground rules can be seen in the animation video 'Let's talk about migration' and serve as a reference for when clubs define their own rules specific to their needs. It is important that all participants of a particular club are part of the process of creating the ground rules.

Rules for Good Conversation Clubs:

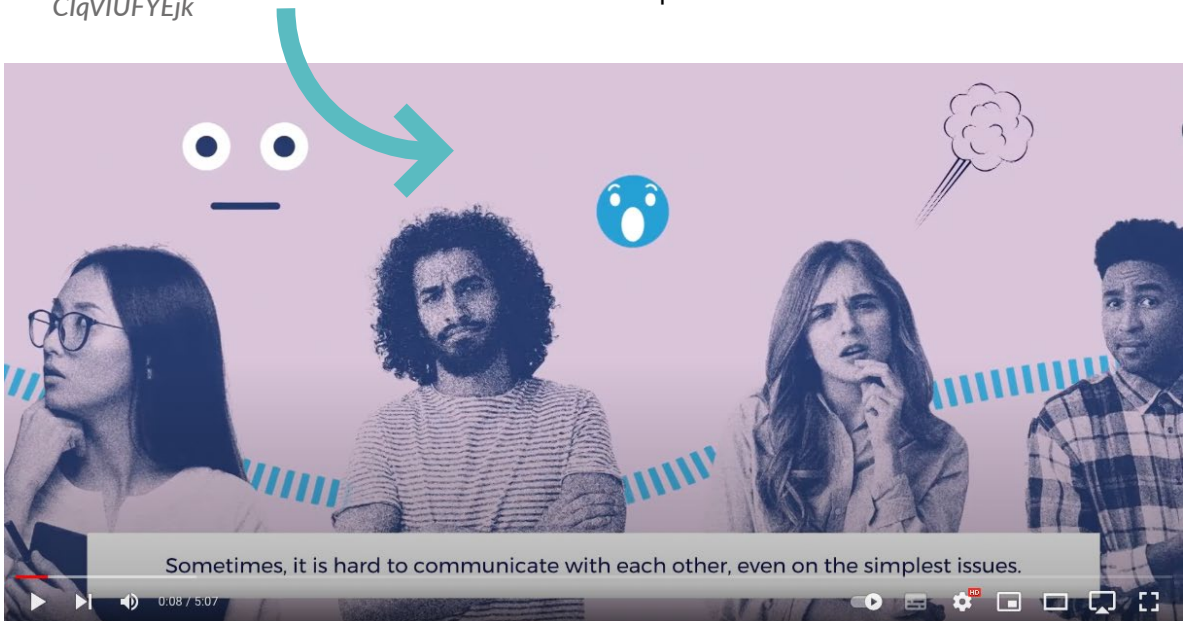
1. Try to listen attentively. Don't interrupt others and do give everyone a chance to speak.
2. Remember to distinguish facts from opinions. Data is objective, but how data is interpreted is not.
3. Respect those you speak with and those you speak about.
4. Language shapes our worldview. Be careful with using metaphors that you heard in the media, like 'influx' or 'flood of refugees' or 'migrant plague'.
5. Try not to use simplifications and stereotypes as they can cause harm and drive us apart. Be curious and attentive to those with a migration background and their stories.
6. Accept that migration issues can cause emotions such as fear, anger, excitement, anxiety, curiosity, or sadness. Experiencing such emotions is natural. Accepting your emotions and those of others will help you to talk honestly and listen carefully.

7. Try to ask yourself 'why do I think what I think'?
8. Don't reject the right to have concerns about migration. People have a right to feel anxious about migration as long as they speak about it in a respectful way.
9. Don't treat your opponents as enemies. You will disagree sometimes. It is acceptable to criticize what your colleagues say, but you cannot criticize them as people.
10. Let's talk about migration, educational animation video produced by the CCE,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClqVIUFYEjk>

The role of the moderator

The role of the moderator is crucial in club discussions. It is the moderator who creates a safe space for conversation, and it is under their guidance that participants create the ground rules for their club and monitor if everyone respects them. The moderator can choose the most appropriate role to play in each meeting. For example, the moderator can participate as an impartial observer or as someone who takes sides or actively participates by sharing their personal opinions. The moderator must also be well-informed about the chosen discussion topic, but mental preparation is equally important.



Moderators should ask themselves the following questions to prepare for a discussion:

- What is my attitude towards the issue we will be discussing? Will I be able to stay objective when participants share their opinions? Do I hold any stereotypes in relation to the discussion topic?
- What do I know about migration, and do I need to learn more?
- What do I need to know to maintain a good atmosphere in the conversation so that all participants can feel safe to share their opinions?
- How can I respond to the various emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety, fear, etc.) that the topic of migration can prompt?
- How can I recognise and challenge the stereotypes and prejudices that can be revealed during the discussion?
- How can I help young people understand the difference between facts and opinions?

Let us learn to talk – Good Conversation Clubs outside of schools

The CCE's experience with Good Conversation Clubs has shown that young people are keen to meet and discuss about the topic of migration. They want to express their opinion about socially important topics, to know that they are being listened to, and they want to discuss in a safe and pleasant atmosphere where they do not feel judged. The CCE's role is to show young people how to create such a safe space and how to use their communication skills and knowledge in adult life. We believe that everyone has a right to participate in respectful conversations about the challenges our communities face and to be able to share personal opinions and to be heard. Schools have an especially important role to play in supporting good communication skills as discussions among young people are a crucial part of everyday life in schools. Schools should facilitate conversations to allow young people to learn from each other, share their views on diverse issues, and practice discussing topics in a respectful way. The idea of Good Conversation Clubs can also be promoted outside the school, for instance, in libraries, community centres, NGOs, and universities. Such institutions should also take into account the role of migrants in this kind of debate who, by taking part in the conversation, can have their voices heard in local communities.

We encourage the formation of Good Conversation Clubs as:

- an exchange of different perspectives about migration issue,
- a tool for practicing critical thinking,
- lesson in attentive listening and sharing opinions in a safe atmosphere where everyone feels respected,
- a space for exchanging ideas,

- a chance to broaden horizons,
- an opportunity to reflect on your own opinions and ways of thinking.

Discussion that brings young people back to their values can help build a common ground between individuals who disagree on specific topics. It is important to understand others' points of view instead of fixating on persuading others to your own opinions. Young people should be encouraged to engage with different perspectives instead of living in closed 'bubbles' that can lead to a radicalisation of opinions. At the same time, young people should also be encouraged to see such encounters as opportunities to connect with others. A good conversation can help us meet each other and practice listening skills. If it goes well, the conversation can help us take steps towards each other, which can help us see and understand the world better.





Marcela Kvetková on behalf of the SNG team

How to speak about migration through the visual arts

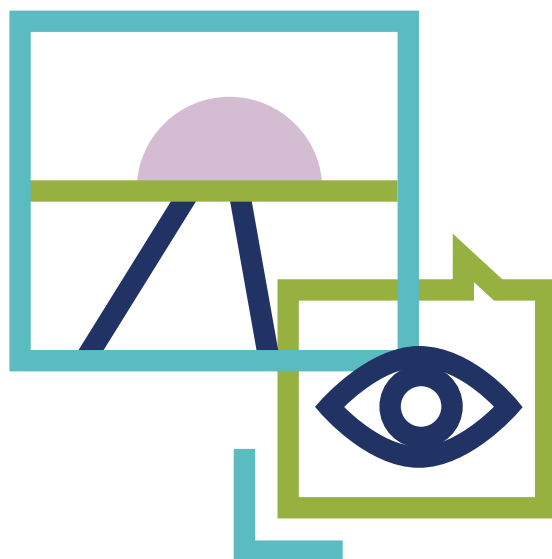
Can the arts help us think about migration? Can we use artwork as evidence of or insight into how people experience or understand mobility? Works of art can stand the test of time and travel to tell stories in places across space and time. The arts and humanities can help reach beyond the noise of everyday politics and draw out broader themes in a non-linear way that also depoliticises complex topics such as migration.¹

At the Slovak National Gallery (SNG) in Bratislava, we believe that the visual arts are an ideal platform for bringing together diverse cultural traditions in our country and beyond by enabling mutual learning and dialogue. In 2021, the SNG initiated a socially engaged project called 'Inclusive Art and Culture', which aims to thematise and make visible sensitive (global) topics of the present through the fine arts. Migration is one such topic. Below, I present the animated educational video *Ľudia v pohybe* (*People on the Move*) that the SNG created in partnership with the non-profit organisation, People in Need Slovakia. We believe this example of our work can inspire others to reach for the fine arts when writing or learning about migration.

Migration and Art

How can galleries and museums contribute to debates about the topic of migration? Should we address issues of refugees in memory institutions? The SNG team gave these questions a lot of consideration. We realised that we need to open this topic up for discussion and also turn our gaze inwards on our organisation to sensitise ourselves to issues of migration. We formulated several basic starting points that assert our position regarding how the SNG should engage with stories of migration:

- Art museums do not just showcase art objects and history. They are also places of multicultural exchange and dialogue. Art museums need to be more open so that they can play a prominent role in contemporary debates about human rights and antidiscrimination, and also encourage critical thinking.
- We believe that culture, by its very nature, contributes to social cohesion. Museums and galleries can be agents of change in society as the stories they showcase reflect the intertwining of cultures and, through that, enable knowledge to grow, contacts to develop, and (mutual) understanding to flourish. The activities that such institutions pursue should ideally lead to the suppression of prejudice and discrimination. Their presentation can underline the diversity and relevance of all cultures. The problem is that the dominant interpretation of history in Slo-



vakia is Eurocentric and Christian Catholic. We are surrounded by art objects coming from our social narrative. Cultural institutions have an important role to play in shaping the image of ourselves and others. They are an indicator of how we perceive, interpret, and further communicate cultural otherness.²

- The SNG is a state institution and public cultural space that is central to shaping artistic, cultural, and creative values in Slovakia. It can inform public opinion and influence perceptions of culture in society. It connects experts, researchers in the field of culture, artists, and teachers, and is able to communicate current events in society also through a visual language. At the SNG, we consider art and culture to be a unique catalyst that can open public debate about sensitive contemporary topics.
- Until recently, there was a lack of a public debate about approaches to migration and the co-existence of Slovak society with foreigners living in Slovakia. Dominant narratives in public debates do not advocate for tolerance but rather foster fear and social polarisation. The war in Ukraine has dramatically changed the context for these debates by giving Slovaks direct experience with refugees and activating society around support for refugees through various expres-

sions of social solidarity. However, the responsibility for creating the conditions for successful integration of people fleeing the war in Ukraine is increasingly with the non-profit sector, local administration, and individual people. At the SNG, we consider it is important that memory and cultural institutions take an active role in public debates on migration-related topics, such as the ongoing response to the war in Ukraine.

Research and Partnership

At the beginning of the 'Inclusive Art and Culture' project, we examined how migration issues are reflected in the collections of public galleries in Slovakia. My colleagues, Jana Švatnerová and Miroslava Maurery, curators at the SNG, undertook research that identified over 800 works of art that depict themes such as escape, migration, movement, and persecution. Since the entire cultural heritage in Slovakia has undergone digitisation and there is an enormous amount of data (i.e., images of works) that we can work with (e.g., through digital storytelling and education), our goal was to develop a collection of artworks on the theme of migration in digital format. When in a digital format, the artworks can be shown in new contexts, for example, on an Internet-based art platform that serves as an online catalogue of works of art from galleries all over Slovakia (www.webumenia.sk).

Although within the SNG team we agreed that engaging with the topic of migration is important, we were also aware that our experience and knowledge on the subject is subjective. We searched for an institutional partner that could help us with approaching the topic sensitively and decided to work with the non-governmental organisation, People in Need Slovakia, which has been supporting people suffering from the consequences of conflicts, natural disasters, and authoritarian regimes for more than two decades. We worked with Lenka Putalová and Lukáš Osvald from the Global Education Department, which implements global education projects both in schools and in non-school environments. We presented representatives of People in Need Slovakia with the works of art that

reflect migration, which we had identified in our research, and discussed how these works can be best presented to address migration topics. We decided to follow up on the SNG's series of educational animated videos *Výtvarná roz-
cvička* (Art Warm-up, <https://bit.ly/3rKyBDI>) and to create a new video, *Ľudia v Pohybe* (People on the Move), which would support teachers in opening discussion about the topic of migration with young people in the classroom.

Educational Video and Workshop

Ľudia v pohybe is a short educational animated video with a workshop based on digitised works of art from the collections of Slovak galleries. The aim of the video is to offer a different view of migration than what is commonly encountered in the media. The video is designed to foster a deeper understanding of the reasons for migration in the past and in the present.

The educational video is intended for children aged 11 to 15, though it may also be useful for working with younger children as well. The video, together with the creative workshop, is suitable for teaching subjects such as geography, history, ethics, art education, and technology, as well as in the cross-sectional topic of personal and social development.

The video is also well-suited for lessons in global education. The video can help link the topic of migration (intra-country migration, international migration, types of migration—seasonal, permanent, etc.), to the topic of development, human rights, and natural resources. The video can also open up discussions about the current situation of refugees and the war in Ukraine.

Approach

When writing the script for the video, we discussed how to approach the topic of migration. It was rewarding for the SNG team to learn about various aspects and the ethical concerns around communication about migration, which colleagues from People in Need helped the SNG team to recognise and navigate. In the video, we talk about migration

as a natural process that always has been and always will be a part of our lives. We present migration as a topic that is relevant to everyone, including in Slovakia, but acknowledge that the challenge is to find ways to talk about it and to understand the reasons for migration. Moving from one place to another is part of the experience of almost every family in Slovakia. After all, who does not know someone who has lived, studied or worked abroad either temporarily or for a longer period of time? It was important for us to create a tool that teachers can make use of in school and that will not further entrench social polarisation.

Structure of the video

The video *Ľudia v pohybe* (with English subtitles: *Výtvarná rozcvička: Ľudia v pohybe*) is nine minutes long and consists of two parts. The first part uses artwork and animation to narrate a story recounted in reverse chronology. The story begins in the present and we ask, 'Where do we live?' and 'Why did our family settle here?', 'Do we have good conditions for development here?' and 'Is it a safe place?'. Gradually, the story moves from the present to the recent past, then to the period of socialism, and, finally, the interwar period. The video explains the various reasons and motivations why people might move, including the mass emigration from Slovakia overseas

at the beginning of the 20th century and how the industrial revolution affected the migration of people, goods, and ideas. The second part of the video is a workshop in which young people explore the topic through their own research and creative activity. The video takes young people step-by-step through mapping and visually recording their family's history of movement. They are given a research task: to conduct interviews with family members from different generations, and then to transform the information they collect into a subjective legend and create a visual map of all of the places where their family members have lived. Together, they discuss their family members' motivations for moving, whether it is within the country or abroad.

We also prepared a thirty-page methodological handbook for teachers that complements the video *Lenka Putalová (People in Need)*. The handbook includes ideas for activities that can be based on the video and used in teaching different subjects. The handbook can help teachers better understand the movement of people and, at the same time, gain better orientation on the feelings the subject of migration may provoke in young people (the handbook is currently available only in the Slovak language).

Quotations

- ¹ Bridging the 'Evidence' Divide? Critical Reflections on Arts and Social Sciences Interventions in Global Migration Research (*Microsoft Word - Thessaloniki report FINAL.docx (soas.ac.uk)*)
- ² „Inclusive Museums, text by Jana Švantnerová, curator of Slovak National Gallery: *Seven Examples of Culture Inclusion Art* | by Slovenská národná galéria | SNG-online | May, 2022 | Medium

Resources

- Educational video *People on the Move: Výtvarná rozcvička: Ľudia v pohybe* - YouTube
- Text about Inclusive Museums and Art by Jana Švantnerová: *Seven Examples of Culture Inclusion Art II.* | by Slovenská národná galéria | SNG-online | Jun, 2022 | Medium
- Text by Lucia Almášiová, curator of SNG, which presents various examples of reasons for photographers' travels in the period from the beginning of photography to the middle of the 20th century – associated with our territory – whether willingly, for better job opportunities and specific topics, or forcibly, most often for political and ethnic reasons: *Seven Reasons for Photographers' Wanderings* | by Slovenská národná galéria | SNG-online | Medium
- Explore how artists reflect on moving to new places through the Tate Modern digital collections and permanent expositions: *Migration and Art* | Tate
- Digital project of Europeana on Migration: <https://www.europeana.eu/sk/search?page=1&view=grid&query=Migrácia>

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Weronika Rzeżutka-Wróblewska, a graduate in journalism and social communication as well as applied sociology and social anthropology departments at the University of Warsaw. She has been coordinating the Centre for Citizenship Education communication activities in the Global and Environmental Education Department. She is an author of numerous media publications on the issues of migration, identity, and climate change.

Katarzyna Szajda, trainer and facilitator of participative methods, in particular Open Space Technology, Appreciative Inquiry and Technology of Participation, with nearly 20 years of experience of working with large international groups during trainings and conferences.

