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Representing Political Events in Documentary Films: the Case of the Ukrainian Crisis

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VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETAS

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Politinių įvykių reprezentacija dokumentiniame kine: Ukrainos krizės atvejis

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SUMMARY

Relevance of the research. Documentary films have gained great significance in the present-day visual and media culture, therefore, the study of works of this genre, especially in terms of political persuasion and the dissemination of political ideas, is particularly relevant. Political events presented in an aesthetically attractive and emotionally suggestive form and their participants become a source of knowledge that not only informs but also influences an audience. In this case, documentary not only exists as a part of media and visual culture, but also creates / reveals a connection between art and political power. Documentaries are significant both in the context of a nation state and on the international scene, when constructing and presenting political events, defining allies and opposing groups, and inducing audiences for civic and political actions. Not only do documentaries capture conflict, they reflect on a clash of values, especially where and when it comes to knowing its causes and presenting it to mass audiences.

Since 2014, political events in Ukraine have been extensively represented in documentary films created by Ukrainian and foreign filmmakers and journalists. They got intrigued by the Ukrainian public protests that emerged at the end of 2013 over the then pro-Russian geopolitical orientation of the government and failure to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union, prompting documentary filmmakers to capture and reflect upon emerged changes in the country, even without predicting what they might turn into. As the protests fail to subside and the political crisis goes deeper (the Crimean annexation, the pro-Russian forces acting in eastern Ukraine that resulted in war, economic downturn, etc.), documentary filmmakers observe the situation and delve into its manifestations and consequences.

Thus, the factor of political and military crisis caused by political decisions denotes the conflict, which is conveyed not only by journalistic news reports but documentaries as well. This conflict is a crossroads of political communication, where political interests clash, the objective of media to convey reality and reveal the truth, and the need for various audiences to be informed of ongoing events or even get impetus for action. Documentaries fall into that part of political communication, which is given a historical perspective by politicians and media creators; it is a source that will remain as a testimony on the decisions made, their implementation, and the actors involved. Through its creative means, a documentary conveys a political message in a seamless narrative that causes a major part of the audience, that does not necessarily read or listen to statements made by politicians or political scientists in daily news programs, to believe in visual information. Therefore, a documentary film is an important representative and communicator of political events, the research of which should occupy a worthy place in the field of political communication.

Topic exploration. Although interest in documentaries and the number thereof has increased over the last decade (a documentary film has become established not only on television but in cinemas as well; documentary film festivals such as Visions de Reel, Sheffield DocFest, IDFA etc. are being organized) and interdisciplinary research (for example, conferences focused on documentary film research, one of the most famous being Visible Evidence) takes place, such kind of research is not abundant in the Lithuanian scientific space. Although the documentary film research scope in Lithuania has not been developed and the research performed is rather fragmented, there are still several researchers in the field, who apply the theory of documentary film in their work: film and visuality researcher Natalija Arlauskaitė and Renata Dubinskaitė. In their research, Renata Šukaitytė, Anna Mikonis-Railienė and Lina Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė cover both feature and documentary films, while philosophers

Audronė Žukauskaitė and Nerijus Milerius delve deeper into the relationship between film and philosophy.

Detailed studies of documentary films on the Ukrainian crisis is not carried out in Lithuania, although the Ukrainian crisis topics are widely analyzed in the media and in the texts of political scientists. There is relatively little research on this topic in other countries, though, as mentioned, the number of documentary films on the Ukrainian crisis has increased not only in Ukraine but also in Western countries, Russia. One of the researchers interested in the Ukrainian crisis is Jason Buel, who in his research (2015) focuses on the visual presentation of the Ukrainian revolution and political crisis on social networks (*Babylon13* documentary), using Manuel Castells's theoretical insights into the context of network society and power shift in relationships. Larysa Artiugina (2014), a Ukrainian filmmaker and activist, explores the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on a documentary film and on-line television by analyzing the dissemination of information and reflection on events. Another researcher, Jose M. Palacios, analyzes S. Loznitsa's film "Maidan", using the *observational documentary* theory, *nation* and *community* concepts.

It is worth noting that research into documentaries has long been dominated by genre-specificity research, topics of reality representation and rhetoric. The concept of representation and the rhetoric of documentary films are explored in the works of the leading documentary film theorists Bill Nichols, Carl Plantinga, John Corner and Michael Renov. Most of the research related to the visualization of political events is interdisciplinary, therefore not only documentary, but also theoretical approaches and concepts are applied in their analysis. Within the framework of international politics, political films are explored by Sean Carter, Klaus Dodds (2014), Michael Shapiro (2008), Belinda Smaill (2010). This is also highlighted in the book compiled by Munster and Sylvest (2015); it identifies a documentary film as a *soft power* tool that influences understanding of political processes nationally and internationally. *Soft power* is one of those

new elements that theorists demonstrate as creativity in political communication and / or propaganda. Therefore, by combining the visualization of events such as the crisis with the principles of political communication, one can observe how and why documentary plays an effective role in conveying political views, attitudes, positions based on (as is most common in politics) values, however, a film does not necessarily have a value foundation familiar or acceptable to a particular audience. The relevance of research into the interaction between politics and films is also illustrated by a film and politics guide that was reissued in 2019 by Routledge publishing house (*The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Politics*, 2019), compiled by Yannis Tzioumaki and Claire Molloy (2019), Part 3 of which focuses on relations among films and propaganda, ideology and the state, while Part 8 is dedicated to documentary film politics.

This review of significant research suggests the scarcity of analogous studies in the Lithuanian and international field, therefore, the author's dissertation will allow expanding the exiguous documentary film research in Lithuania, while the chosen research object will ensure the novelty and originality of the dissertation internationally likewise. Moreover, the theoretical basis of the dissertation is constructed not only with reference to documentary film theory but also on analyzing documentaries as a means of mass communication and political communication.

Topics of the research. Documentary is justly identified as *soft power* tool, especially in cases of political and military events, as it shapes and establishes certain values and civic attitudes, which also in one way or another serve as a basis for interpreting political events, questioning decisions of others or justifying them. For example, Paul Christopher defines these existing processes of dissemination of values, attitudes as a *war of ideas* (Christopher, 2008), where the dominance of the information disseminated and the images created is essential. Documentary is an important form of expression of this kind of war, which not only represents events but also constructs audience's

perspective on their own and foreign country. It is important to note that in this context, not only a filmmaker, but also his/her producer, production company, and distribution channel become important – they have preconceived notions dependent on political will and views when forming an assignment or condition for a film creation.

The dissertation will also pay great attention to the *war of ideas*; films about the Ukrainian crisis often reflect the positions of different sides, while the channels used – the aim to dominate the information space. As it is the very political communication by its theoretical nature that is intended to observe how an *idea* in the form of a message reaches the media and ultimately the mass audience. Thus, in the case of the Ukrainian crisis, the *war of ideas* affecting the geopolitical orientation of the country and the security of the state, is extremely important. Therefore, it is essential to investigate what strategies Ukrainian filmmakers use to represent the Ukrainian crisis, as well as what visuals are created in Russian and Western documentaries, what aspects remain untouched, what persuasion techniques are employed to influence the audience.

The object of the research is a documentary film as a political medium and a means of political communication.

The aim of the research is to investigate how the geopolitical crisis that started in Ukraine at the end of 2013 – the first half of 2014 is represented and interpreted in the documentaries of Ukrainian and foreign filmmakers and what ideological attitudes are communicated / presented to the audience.

Tasks:

1. To define the concepts and role of a political documentary film in informing the public about significant political phenomena and situations.

2. To reveal documentary cinema as a tool of *soft power* and propaganda.

3. To explore techniques and methods used to represent, analyze and influence political events in documentary cinema.

4. To analyze and compare the representations, ideologies and civic attitudes of the Ukrainian crisis that dominate Russian, Western and Ukrainian documentaries.

Defended statements:

1. With the growing influence of visual rhetoric in political communication and the expanding range of communication channels, through which political messages can quickly reach and impact different segments of the audience, states, individual institutions, and creative citizens are using documentary cinema (because of the ability of this medium to act on emotions and represent reality in a convincing way) by solving political crises, problems, even fighting ideological wars. The case of the Ukrainian crisis and its presentation in documentaries may serve as an example of such a political confrontation in the communication field that seeks to convince viewers of its truth and ideology.

2. With an ongoing information war, a film creator becomes a political, social actor, presenting the crisis in Ukraine to local and international audiences and seeking civic and political support or exploiting the current complex political situation to produce a film promoting a dominant ideology in pursuit of benefits. The case of the Ukrainian crisis and its presentation in documentary is based on contextual information about the causes of political events, their historical, ideological evaluation and the circumstances of filmmaking. This framing of the crisis gives insight into the messenger's goals.

3. The theoretical framework constructed in this dissertation as a theoretical basis of means of political communication is relevant for the study of the political topics of documentaries, which are used to communicate political message and ideological influence. It enables identifying and analyzing films as *soft power* and propaganda, and accentuating techniques and methods used by filmmakers to influence audience.

Concept of crisis and political communication

An important aspect of this work is the concept of the crisis itself and political communication in traditional media and documentary. The crisis is as if contextualised in political communication: it is a message formulated by politicians in search of solutions and the content of which is influenced by an involved, i. e. active society. In the case of Ukraine, there is an observable conflict where the *war of ideas* by turning into a crisis involves medias that target to convey the essence of the conflict, and at the same time to find answers both in terms of meaning, essence and perspective. In other words, the crisis must have a perspective for the solution, but in order to understand it, the shake-up, which is perhaps best conveyed by creators of the visual content (message), is needed.

By watching documentary images witnessing of the crisis, we can look for answers about the consequences of the decisions, the causes, the audience's attitude towards the conflict and its participants. It helps us to understand that the *war of ideas* in one way or another reflects in the reality that documentary filmmakers – witnesses of events – deconstruct and interpret by offering us a creative product. And such interpretation, aimed at a mass audience, though poorly analyzed, is actually an important part of political communication.

Selection of films

Modern technological capabilities enable us to become an observer of important political events, i. e. those capabilities make it possible for us to follow and watch events on screens in our homes and in public spaces. Documentary filmmakers use a variety of channels to reach their audiences: festivals, television, video-on-demand platforms, social media, and special previews for communities. In the dissertation, only films that clearly identify filmmakers, country of origin and year of release are selected for the analysis. Another important criterion is that films are adapted for international audiences

and has English subtitles. This criterion has been chosen given that it is a study of a bilateral political conflict being resolved by the international political and civil community. The author of the study distances herself from documentaries on social media, which do not have the information mentioned above, and the only means of dissemination is social networks. The author of the dissertation reviewed more than 42 films in various channels and selected 31 films for in-depth analysis. The films reveal in detail the issues of political events, carry out analysis of events, provide viewers with a lot of contextual information, seek to inform and make an impact.

The structure of the dissertation

The first part of the dissertation examines the concept of a political documentary in the context of contemporary media. The concept of political documentary is explored from the perspective of political communication and analyzed on the basis of Lasswell's model of communication: who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect (Lasswell, 1972). From the perspective of political communication it helps to broaden the answers about interpretation of crisis events, how the idea is turning to creative product that is designed to convince the audience. Persuasive storytelling is an important lever of power that affects the audience, therefore political documentary is analyzed as a tool of *soft power* and propaganda as well as a mean for audience activation.

The second part of the dissertation is devoted to the exploration of documentary rhetoric and the representation of political events. The author introduces the concept of representation and strategies of representation. Documentary film's relationship to notions of objectivity and reality are discussed. The persuasiveness of a documentary is determined by arguments that can be seen both as interpretation of reality and manipulation of information. The author analyzes how filmmakers make their claims and construct reality.

Audio-visual interaction by constructing an audiovisual message, presentation of evidence, argumentation techniques are discussed.

The third part of the dissertation investigates and compares documentary films on the Ukrainian crisis according to the research methodology constructed by the author. Documentary films from Ukraine, Russia and Western countries are selected for the analysis in order to investigate the picture of the Ukrainian crisis presented to the audience, to identify prevailing narratives and representation strategies used.

Empirical research program

In the empirical part of the dissertation, documentaries are treated as texts. They are being deconstructed using critical and analytical methodological approaches to reveal how meaning and persuasion are being created. Identifying the creation context is an integral part of the analysis, therefore, when analyzing films, commentary is made according to the need, and contextual information is a social, political, cultural medium in which they function.

The object of the research is the representation of the Ukrainian crisis and the articulation of the causes of the crisis in political documentary.

The purpose of the research is to analyse, with the help of critical methodological approaches, how documentary films represent and interpret the geopolitical crisis that broke out in Ukraine at the end of 2013 – the first half of 2014 and what ideological attitudes are communicated to the audience.

Research tasks:

1. To reveal the ideological and value positions of Ukraine, Russia and Western countries in the context of the Ukrainian crisis.
2. To analyze the factors influencing the production of a film and the conditions of dissemination that may influence the formation and perception of the message.

3. To highlight narratives that dominate the documentary films of Ukraine, Russia and Western countries and their relation to prevailing ideological attitudes.

4. Based on Munster and Sylvest's model of film analysis and expanding it by Nichols's representation modes, to investigate what kind of strategies and persuasive measures are used to communicate the Ukrainian crisis in Russian, Western and Ukrainian documentaries.

Fisher argues that people comprehend the surrounding world best by told / heard stories (Fisher, 1987). Documentary can be seen as one of the forms of storytelling that provides information about an object in a visual format. The world we perceive and comprehend is made up of stories, where we have to choose part of them in order to live in the process of continuous recovery / creation. People check the stories they hear (the credibility of the narrative) by comparing them with their own experiences, those stories they already perceive as true. Therefore, films act as texts of social discourse, they are created to convey a message, and as Foster believes, texts usually reflect conflicts, various forms of oppression, and are created to convey a message to the public, which can then be defined as discourse as well (Foster, 2014).

Discourse can be attributed to the rhetorical dimension, as Rose has pointed out, how a film convinces a viewer, what representation strategies are used in this case (Rose, 2001). The discourse itself reflects the prevailing ideological position. Therefore, all factors and actors involved in the process of a text writing and interpreting and the contexts that affect them are important in the discourse analysis. As Hall observes, the discourse determines ways in which one can talk about a particular topic and identifies the influencing factors associated with power relations (Hall, 1997); in other words, there is more than one discourse in society, but according to Weedon, their visibility depends on political power, interpersonal relationships (Weedon, 1997).

The dissertation uses Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach. It consists of three stages of research dealing with different aspects: the object of analysis (consisting of verbal, audio and visual material); processes that denote the production, distribution and consumption of an object and the socio-political / socio-cultural environment. Consequently, in this case, the object is analyzed in three sections: textual analysis; discursive practice analysis, social practice analysis (Fairclough, 1995). It can be conveyed that documentaries (texts) construct political events and they become the standard for the public to assess / understand these political events. In this case, critical discourse analysis assists in the study of film texts by revealing social relationships and power structures, and ideological principles of meaning-creation, i.e. the discourse is formed by groups of public influence, while the text itself acts as a tool for shaping social reality.

Textual analysis. Textual analysis, which is widely used in media, communication, and pop culture research (McKee 2003), is used for analyzing the selected films, and, according to Jason Bainbridge, is particularly handy for analyzing various media texts such as commercials, news narratives, television series, and films (Bainbridge, 2015). The film itself, as mentioned above, can be considered as a text: a creation of visual and audio form, so this qualitative research method allows to reveal the meanings created in films and the messages conveyed. The textual analysis helps to perceive the principles of the construction of a work, and a researcher chooses to use the textual analysis in his/her research whenever he/she wants to find out the meaning of the text, how the same text relates to other texts of the same nature, or how the same text affects, reflects, or contradicts public attitudes to a particular topic / problem (Allen, 2017).

This level of the analysis involves a topic / issue conveyance with emphasis on reasoning strategies, filming technique, aesthetics, etc., i. e. how the main idea of a film is conveyed to the audience. The theoretical tool for film analysis is constructed on the basis of Renov's

four main aesthetic / rhetorical functions of a documentary: to capture, show or preserve; to convince; to analyze, to investigate; to express (Renov, 2012). The scheme proposed by Munster and Sylvest (2015) is also used – a heuristic analysis model that helps determine the role of a political documentary and the features of the film genre / sub-genre. The author of the dissertation uses all of Bill Nichols's distinctive modes of representation: *poetic, observational, participatory, expository, reflexive, performative*, framed by the same scheme of Sylvest and Munster. The content of the film is also assessed from the perspective of *soft power* (Nye, 2014) and propaganda. The narrative presented can justify war or define it as a process of peace-building and democratization. Therefore, a documentary film is used to consolidate *soft power* and contributes to the formation of an overall image – the values and the spread of the country's culture. Although the formation of the country's power can be determined not only by soft means, but also by the use of propaganda, the work also analyzes propaganda techniques.

This level of the analysis is directly related to the rhetoric of a documentary film: the presentation of evidence, argumentation, authenticity, and so on. The content of the film and the presentation form become the object of the analysis.

Process analysis. By analyzing, interpreting the processes, the production (creation) and consumption (acceptance), Fairclough identifies key aspects that require a researcher's attention:

- Situational context – time and place of production. In this case, it is determined how / when the production time and place affect the interpretation of the text.
- Intertextual context – the relationship between the creators and recipients of the discourse.

External and internal factors that affect a creator and can influence the content of a film and the message being conveyed are analyzed. Among the factors mentioned, sponsorship, institutional relationship

(e.g. a movie is made on TV initiative) or personal relationship to the topic being presented emerge.

A documentary film, as mentioned, is a construct of reality, primarily because many of the creators did not directly participate in the Ukrainian Maidan or the clashes in eastern Ukraine, even though they are witnesses to the event, they convey events through their own perspective. Consequently, a message being formed also depends on the sources of information and the material they provide. Therefore, according to Carvalho, discourse analysis should also reflect sources, social actors, and filmmakers themselves as creators of the discourse (Carvalho, 2008).

Social analysis. According to Fairclough, the purpose of the explanation stage is to disclose the discourse as part of the social process by demonstrating how the discourse itself is determined by social structures and what kind of effect it produces: maintains or modifies the same discourse (Fairclough, 1989). In this case, the existing ideology is presented in the broader social and cultural context, in which power relations unfold. When analyzing the representations of the Ukrainian crisis in documentary films, it is important to delve into the ideology of different sides (Ukraine, Western countries and Russia), the processes of geopolitical decision-making and their explanation.

Therefore, critical discourse analysis is chosen for its ability to analyze documentaries by incorporating different factors that are correlated with one another: the text being analyzed is not detached from the socio-political situation and discursive practices. In this case, the ideological aspects of filmmaking and theme conveyance are highlighted, as well as the political intentions that can be attributed to both the author of the work and the institutional apparatus. It is also important to pay attention not only to the production of the film at national level, but also to its further dissemination, awards and international recognition, which influence the political evaluation of

the topics / problems and at the same time the impact on audience and its decision making.

Conclusions

Analysis of the case of the Ukrainian crisis in the political documentary makes it possible to ascertain that this type of video communication has become, in the context of today's media, an important means of communicating political messages in the audiovisual language, i. e. where a creator conveying a political idea to a film audience can act not only as an artist but also as a social, political actor and researcher. As the conflict intensifies, the researched documentary unfolds as a construct of political media, revealing attitudes to facts, creativity, and politics interpretation. On the one hand, camera-captured events, eyewitness comments make a viewer feel like an event participant (observer), zoom in on global events, while creative visual presentations attract larger audiences that may get interested in conflict (crisis) because of a change in people's situation rather than political decision-making. On the other hand, political documentary can also be perceived as a form of presentation of the results of a journalistic investigation, i.e. several aspects are also important here, one of which is related with the analysis of a particular situation, event, systematic study, logic of reasoning, objectivity, the presentation of several positions, the other one – with its visual presentation, film aesthetics.

In the contexts of the abundance of information on the Ukrainian crisis, the concept of political documentary is gaining a new framework: 1) the creator selects political facts from a particular sequence of events; 2) the documentary visual narrative is constructed in the context of the historical value of events; 3) audience is turned into an observer discovering the truth (at least the impression that is being made) and can gain arguments to participate in a discussion; 4) an essential basis for the definition of political documentary is the

examination (investigation) of material and sources, the consistency, logic and objectivity of which can only be assessed by critics.

The uniqueness of the documentary genre can be perceived not only as the transmission of information, but also in its effect – arousing the audience and triggering the discussion. It is not only about capturing and preserving a significant event, but also engaging the public in the process itself. Political documentary is becoming a form of civic engagement, when the audience communicates about the necessary inclusion and engagement. The documentary genre is also useful for capturing a crisis or problem and presenting it to the public. Consequently, on the one hand, the film aims to reflect the political situation and, on the other hand, it seeks to have a direct impact on the audience and political processes.

As the development of the Ukrainian crisis was influenced by both external and internal factors, the intensity and multiplaneness of events enabled the fast-moving political drama to be captured and interpreted creatively by involving real actors (social actors), influencing audiences depending on their knowledge and interest. This suggests that a documentary film is valuable as a tool of *soft power* and propaganda, where the state power depends on the narrative and its emotional affect by developing the coherence of the narrative, and its anchoring in the local and international audience. In the case of *soft power*, the documentary film, its content, and the message conveyed relate to the ideological apparatus, culture, value foundation, and reflect the evaluation of political events in the nation-state, the rationale for its decisions adopted, and communicate a positive country image to audiences, as political documentary is not only about the way how the creation was made along with its content, but also why and what it is intended for communication.

While propaganda is part of the information war that began with the political upheaval in Ukraine, reading, deconstructing and identifying its video messages as misinformation is not that simple. Films are made on the basis of real-world events (despite their

performed selection), which must give a viewer the impression of persuasive involvement, and even convince them of the correct interpretation of the facts. However, in the case of propaganda, any documentary artefact (photography, film, written document) is exploited as a means of manipulating, demoralizing, shaping the audience's understanding of certain real issues by distorting information or lying. In the case of an audiovisual document, creativity plays the most important role, i.e. the interaction of a director, cameraman, editorial and audio creators. Propaganda persuasion techniques contribute to the production and acceptance of the same message. Video and audio manipulations affect the audience that tend to accept the image and the documentary genre as reality. In this case, the information heard in documentaries, seen images are often unquestioned and perceived by the audience as truth, and emotions amplified by visual and audio material become an effective means of embedding the message conveyed.

The documentary mode chosen by a filmmaker (*poetic, observational, expository, participatory, performative and reflexive*) (Nichols, 2001) allows partial identification of the function of a film, assessment of the objectivity of the material presented, and identification of suggestive measures that may be associated with the following:

- Use and authenticity of primary sources;
- Information from the voice of authority – authoritative people and experts – building greater confidence in the material being submitted;
- Delivering personal dramatic stories allowing you to create a relationship with your audience and affecting you emotionally;
- Use of witnesses to convince viewers of the content of a message;
- Material selectivity and framing that allows certain aspects to be highlighted and presented, while others – rejected.
- Use of film editing techniques, video and audio rhetorical means to convince audience and excite emotions.

These categories are formed on the basis of a systematic study of the theoretical definitions of a political documentary film presented in the theoretical parts of the thesis and a critical discourse analysis of films on the Ukrainian crisis. The distinguished conceptual frames of analysis can be seen as a kind of strategic access employed in political documentary film research, indicating how a film, as an object of analysis, can be viewed: from an artistic perspective, by analyzing a director's creative decisions that form an impression of reality; from a perspective of values (as a means of conveying the values of an individual, a certain group, state); as a documentary testimony that becomes recorded, preserved and analyzed from a historical perspective; as a political struggle, when a film is used both as a tool of *soft power* and propaganda. Although films do not require to document the position of a director, when a conflict escalates, it is revealed that the reflection of the citizenship, i.e. the relationship with the public interest in defending declared values, turns into a kind of moral attitude of the creators.

The analysis of Russian, Western and Ukrainian documentaries on the Ukrainian crisis reveals the divisions that are related to the narrative constructed in the films: the chosen narrative is mostly related to the ideological position of the countries, while the choice of representation strategies and rhetoric allows for a partial understanding of the filmmakers' intentions as well.

Documentaries reveal the geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West and Ukraine's complicated situation – a *stuck* between East and West. In most films created by the Ukrainian directors (e. g., S. Loznitsa, S. Lysenko, A. Kovalenko, L. Durakova), the narrative is directed at the Ukrainian civil society, its strengthening in the face of the crisis, the heroification of Ukrainians fighting in eastern Ukraine, and maintaining a patriotic line. However, the creators do not shy away from the Ukrainian identity issues, talking about a divided society, raising the problematic aspects and articulating them in documentaries. There is a clear appeal to Western values in terms of

both state governance and human rights. However, Western values are not systematically conveyed in films. It can be stated that these films are used as a *soft power* tool in when creating community with the West and seeking Western support. In Ukrainian films, the conflict also highlights the value of directing as a means of artistry, regardless of the views of the filmmakers. If they reveal the crisis in Ukraine as they unfold the path of conflict development, concrete personalities, however, little known to the world, become the central figures, whose collision becomes the most dramatic axis of interpretation of the crisis. The films capture the way people perceive their roles on their chosen positions. The cameraman's eye watching an event as if knows that the recording of each episode would turn into a forceful piece of creation after it turns into an edited narrative.

Ukrainian documentary filmmakers mostly use media to capture and preserve political events. The beginning of Maidan was distinguished by *observational documentaries*, which are related to video capture, recording and faster film production and dissemination, when it was important to inform foreign audiences about the processes in the country as soon as possible, as well as to excite the local audience, to promote citizenship, and to motivate for change. The study revealed that the *observational mode* remained important in the later stages of the crisis when capturing the conflict: Russian intervention, separatist movements. The other two documentary modes used actively in Ukrainian films are *performative* and *participatory*. The *performative mode* allows to reveal the filmmakers' personal relationship with the crisis, their views on citizenship, freedom and the importance of personal choices (participation in the Maidan Revolution, conflict zone in eastern Ukraine) etc. These personal diaries create an opportunity to take a look at the crisis from multiple perspectives – micro and macro. Whereas, the *participatory mode* allows both individual and group Ukrainian stories to unfold. Personal experiences and testimonies

create a picture of the crisis in Ukraine and its consequences for the residents of the country.

Western documentaries are characterized by a variety of documentary strategies that influence a message being conveyed. Majority of creators (e. g., J. Counet, P. Entell, M. Kvedaravičius) strive for neutrality, do not take a clear stand and give a voice to different groups involved in the conflict (*participatory mode*) or to capture events from a distance (*observational mode*) and is based on universal values that focus on human rights and freedoms. Meanwhile, other part of filmmakers (e. g., D. Kolodiy, M. J. Harris, O. Sanin) take a clear position on Russia and construct its image as an aggressor that has not only contributed to the Ukrainian crisis and its development, but is also posing a threat to the security and stability of Western states and the value base of Western states. In this case, the creators are more inclined to employ the *expository mode* that is related to scientificity, reasoning, presentation of analysis results, and analyzes the Ukrainian crisis in the contexts of international politics, law, history, and other, seeks causal relationships, though in these films, the means to evoke a viewer's emotions are not avoided likewise.

There is a strong anti-Western stance in Russian films. Documentaries are broadcasted on state-controlled television stations, so the content of the films automatically corresponds to the prevailing position of the state regarding the Ukrainian crisis. Documentary films first and foremost stand out for their *expository mode*, where the results of a supposed study are presented. Attempts are made to convince a viewer by reinforcing the concepts that are often used: *fact, truth, reality*, without offering viewers multiple positions, but instead immediately pointing to a fair assessment of the event. From an ideological point of view, an important aspect of interpreting decisions and portraying events becomes the divide of We and They, where They (the West) demonstrate power, impose their governance model on Ukraine and Russia that cares for its compatriots (idea of the

Russian world). Often the films counter-argue for the Western position and try to present themselves (RT channel) as a source of alternative information. These films are interrelated by a preconceived notion of propaganda, which manifests itself as a stylistic tool offering a critical look at everything that belongs to the idea of Ukrainian independence or its closer ties with the EU. The opposition with the West stands out here; in other words, this documentary is characterized by the delineation of geopolitical space. However, such films ignore another very important point – the choice of the Ukrainian nation – so they obviously disunite the Ukrainian and Russian nations.

During the research, several films of Western countries (USA, Italia) were identified, which in their narrative correspond to the propaganda content of Russian documentaries. They can be classified to a field of Russian propaganda interests. By analyzing the production, distribution, filmmakers' motivation and other contextual information of these films, one can find direct links with the representatives of the Russian authorities, who do not allow films to be treated as an objective or impartial source of information. In this case, the individual filmmakers' attitude towards the situation, value foundation or pragmatic interests stand out.

Summarizing the results of the study it can be stated that the geopolitical crisis in Ukraine is represented and interpreted in the documentaries of Ukrainians and foreign authors in the following aspects: political interest in events; interpretation of historical conflict revealing the crisis; video documentary as an effective way to tell the truth; the inspiration for an international debate on Ukraine's transformation. This documentary spotlighted and conveyed political, social, economic, and ethnic-cultural conflicts, and also actualized the genre of military documentary that shows a viewer not only life but death as well.

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NOTES

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