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A cura di Marco De Biase e Stefania Ferraro

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HUMANITARIAN TARZANISM: THE DISCURSIVE TENSION BETWEEN INEQUALITY AND SOLIDARITY

Abstract:

Since the early 1990s, the relative stability that had characterized Europe's post-war asylum regime has given way to radical and widespread restrictive policy change, provoking one of the worst contemporary "migration crisis". Migration has been high on Europe's agenda and a main cause of concern for European citizens, alarmed by the levels of "illegal" migration as well as by the humanitarian duty of safeguarding the rights of people who are attempting to cross the borders. Focusing on «humanitarian narratives» as a communicative structure that disseminates the moral imperative to act on vulnerable others through a wide repertoire of popular genres, this paper examines the mediated representations of distant human suffering as it is constructed in public communication within two institutional contexts of humanitarian aid organizations and border control agencies. Highlighting how the discourses typically associated with the humanitarian aid organizations are today gaining importance in the context of border control, the paper sheds light on how this discursive dislocation of humanitarian narratives takes place and what types of political and epistemological implications it has.

Keywords:

Humanitarian Discourse, Border Control, Inequality, Solidarity, Communication.

1. *Introduction*

The cosmopolitan solidarity offered an ethically ambitious model of imaginative identification with the suffering people that would replace fighting in the formation of imagined communities. Stories of suffering become primers for the exercise of our «citizenship of the world», for the sentimental cultivation of «our moral community», and for the training of our sympathetic, moral imaginations (Rorty 1993, p. 75). As the nation is a political and sentimental unit in which we participate through synecdoche (as a part to the whole), the rhetorical task of cosmopolitanism and humanitarian imagination is to reconfigure the banal metaphorical analogies between people like and unlike us (between the self and the other) as metonymical relations of contiguity that are not based on national belonging. Inscribed in systematic patterns of global inequality and in their hierarchies of place and human life – hierarchies that divide the world into zones of Western comfort and safety and non-Western need and vulnerability – the humanitarian narratives unveil a remarkable paradox. On the one hand, moral sentiments are focused mainly on the poorest, most unfortunate, most vulnerable individuals: the politics of compassion is a politics of inequality. On the other hand, the condition of possibility of moral sentiments is generally the recognition of others as fellows: the politics of compassion is a politics of solidarity. As Fassin (2012, p. 3) argues: «this tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government».

Moving from the assumption that borders are not mirror-like reflections of the divisions existing in the physical-cultural landscape but are fabrications people and institutions make to legitimate distinctions between them (Sassen 2006; Popescu 2011), the paper explores the changing contexts and narratives that frame and activate the spectator-sufferer relationship. It begins by identifying the ways in which humanitarian narratives usually represent Europe and Africa as «imagined meta-communities» and construct borders at imaginary levels.

Following theorisations of the border, particularly the work of Sassen (2006, 2009), Balibar (2004), and Mezzadra and Nielson (2013) the paper does not consider the borders between Europe and Africa as naturally existing and stable. On the contrary, it focuses on "bordering" as a verb and a process that involves "making" and imagining of the border. Bordering is socially constructed and "made" at the imaginary level. Understanding what Europe and Africa are and where they begin and end need imagination and representation. These two continental imaginaries are often pre-

sented as binary opposites, yet there would not be an understanding of one without the other. The social production of these opposites is embedded in mediated representations of the "other" and the "we". This bordering is considered here as a asymmetry of power (in terms of both agency and dignity) that portrays the North as a wealthy, ordered and compassionate entity, a natural performer of a civilizing mission in/towards the underdeveloped, dangerous, voiceless and helpless South (Guiraudon, Joppke 2001; de Haas 2007; Dal Lago, Palidda 2010).

The paper examines the mediated representations of distant human suffering as it is constructed in public communication within two institutional contexts of humanitarian aid agencies and border control agencies. These two institutional frameworks are both dealing with issues of immigration and framing the public debate that shapes policy-making. Humanitarian organizations communicate to the general public as possible donors and to politicians and policy makers for support. Their communication sheds light on the reasons why people migrate and cross borders, and how the distant sufferers can be aided in their localities. Border control agencies take a different perspective: their aim is to control the movement across European borders, and therefore their public communication explains and legitimates their actions to the citizens of Europe and to the national politicians of the European Union (EU) member states (Pastore *et al*. 2006). The paper will highlight how the discourses and narratives typically associated with the humanitarian aid organizations are today gaining importance in the context of border control. In order to study how this discursive dislocation of humanitarian narratives takes place and what types of political and epistemological implications it has, the paper analyses and compares different contexts that construct imaginaries of "Africans" and "Europeans" in different contexts through text and visual images. Among others: humanitarian organizations' fundraising and awareness campaigns, and the public communication of the European border control agency Frontex. Although separate as genres I believe that in the everyday flow of mediated communication these different narratives entwine, and thus I am interested in examining them as a pool of texts that construct understandings of Europe and Africa. Through the lens of «humanitarian narratives» – intended as a communicative structure that disseminates the moral imperative to act directly in response to fundamental values and urgent needs through a wide repertoire of popular genres (Chouliaraki 2012) – this paper will shed light on the multifaceted interaction between social inequality and new humanitarianism in a globalizing world, as well as on the role of "bordering" as a framework useful for governing the «borderlands» (Duffield 2001) while unifying Europe (against the "Oth-

er"). Finally the paper discusses the ways in which these two fields construct a moral geography of the world and (re)produces positions in which the "European" protects and values the "African" victim simultaneously as a donor and a controlling agent.

2. *The salvational narratives of rescue*

In order to analyse the instrumentalization of humanitarian narratives – that is, the subordination of the other-oriented aims to save lives and change societies to the self-oriented imperative of protect Europe and its identity through border control – I take my point of departure on «humanitarianism as a historically specific articulation of cosmopolitan solidarity, which acts directly on the global South through specialized institutions, yet seeks legitimacy in the West through a communicative structure that disseminates moral discourses of care and responsibility» (Chouliaraki 2012 p. 27).

As several scholars argue, focusing on how media stories about famine in Ethiopia and other parts of the Sahel region of Africa have been central in making an audience empathize with the fate of complete strangers (Sontag 2003), it is difficult to understand the link between the visual projections of human suffering and the exponential growth of the humanitarian industry without taking into account the devastating imagery that circulated within a variety of western print and broadcast media formats in the 1980s (Wilson, Brown 2009). For a long time, through the moral narratives based on guilt and indignation, as well as empathy and gratitude, NGOs may have wanted to generate stories that would focus the attention of policy makers on the need for substantive diplomatic, economic or political intervention. While the mediated experience of "distant suffering", featuring in the discursive production of global sentiment, undoubtedly raised money and awareness across the world about a terrible injustice, media and NGOs' campaigns tended to negate the subjects' humanity while creating a feminizing and infantilizing trope around the mediation of Africa (Moeller 1999; Rieff 2002)[1].

1 It should be noted however, that in the last years many NGOs changed their communication strategies, as a response to fears within the aid industry of "compassion fatigue," the belief that spectators have become numbed and apathetic to the mediation of suffering. In order to highlight an emergent style of humanitarian communication, Chouliaraki (2012) argued that nowadays there is an epistemic shift from the solidarity as pity to solidarity as irony. The meaning of

The key position that the «humanitarian reason» (Fassin 2012) occupies in the contemporary moral order illustrates how the establishment of narrative conventions for the representation of suffering was historically central to the emergence of the humanitarian project, broadly construed as the mobilization of sympathy for humans in severe distress as well as the development of measures aimed at preventing needless suffering. As a consequence, moral sentiments have become an essential force in contemporary politics: they nourish its discourses and legitimize its practices, particularly where the discourses and practices are focused on the disadvantaged and the dominated, whether at home (the immigrants) or farther away (the victims of war or natural disaster) (Bornstein, Redfield 2011). As Muehlebach demonstrates, contemporary neoliberal reforms produce not only rational, instrumental subjects but simultaneously compassionate, ethical citizens with deep moral commitments. This is what he defines the new "ethical citizenship", which substitutes public systems of social security with voluntary forms of collective caretaking (Muehlebach 2012).

Moreover, the construction of "emergencies" in terms of a social imaginary that gives characteristic form to both perception and action is one of the most important factors that have contributed to nourish the growth of humanitarian organizations. The "emergency imaginary" shapes the definition and rhetoric of emergencies, the ways in which they are produced and recognized, and the organization of intervention. Thanks to the affirmation of this framework NGOs and, more general, interventions into "complex humanitarian emergencies" have become a central part of global society. In the words of Fassin and Pandolfi (2010, p. 15), the "contemporary states of emergency" constitute a sort of «no-man's land between public law and political fact, and between the juridical order and life». In other words, a form of "globalized biopolitics" (Foucault 1977).

What kind of consequences this "emergency imaginary" has on the ways in which humanitarian interventions are produced and recognized? On the one hand, in the post-Cold War era the mainstream optimistic narrative that development is a more or less linear process towards a clear goal has been challenged: most of the people have lost faith in both economic development and political struggle as ways of trying to improve the human lot, so humanitarianism flourishes as an ethical and technical response to

irony is incorporated in the neoliberal rhetoric of the media market and is related with a post-humanitarian morality that combines action on others with benefits for the self. The post-humanitarian appeals privilege a self-oriented form of solidarity of short term and low intensity engagement with a cause, over an other-oriented solidarity of deeply felt, ideological commitments.

emergencies. "Emergency" is a way of grasping problematic events, a way of imagining them that emphasizes their apparent unpredictability, abnormality and brevity, and that carries the corollary that response-intervention is necessary. Emergency, it is implied, both can and should be managed. It seems that, even though we live in a "risk society" (Beck 1992) we can no longer accept the capriciousness of God or some fates. Modernity has brought the expectation of effective action to stop such intrusions of fate into the world of human organization. We tend to think of disasters as in principle avoidable, even while we contribute to them and while the death toll grows. In this sense, humanitarian interventions reflect the refusal to treat "disasters" as merely matters of fate, approaching them instead as emergencies that demand action. The idea of "intervention" is thus almost as basic as the idea of "emergency", as well as the notion of risk is immediately joined by that of risk management (Agamben 1998).

On the other hand, the humanitarian narrative shaped by the fund raising appeals, is playing an important role in shifting our attention from development to emergency assistance. Watching most of the humanitarian appeals, we find ourselves living in a world of constant emergencies. Finding it more convenient to speak of development as an urgent, apolitical and technocratic problem, humanitarian agencies tend to frame and sell to us as humanitarian emergencies different issues, such as human rights, governance, social injustice, gender inequality, conflict, and poverty. These problems, related with the universal sense of obligation based on common humanity, call for an urgent humanitarian response, not political or economic analysis. This sense of suddenness and unpredictability that inform the "new humanitarianism" is reinforced by the media, especially television, and is often adopted to frame a wide array of activities included under the label "humanitarian practices", undocumented immigration control included (Musarò 2011). The managerial orientation that embodies the moral commitment to protect the victims and save their lives focuses on restoring and legitimizing the existing order, not on changing or even challenging it. It shapes a logic of security and technical protection that neutralizes political choices by reducing them to simple operations measures. Nevertheless, as Calhoun (2010, p. 41) denounces: «humanitarian action is not merely managerial – it is also moral. But, like missionary activity and the *mission civilisatrice*, the moral message is double-edged». It is precisely this "humanitarian ambivalence" that politicians and institutions use to legitimate border control, migrant detention, and deportation.

3. *Controlling our borders*

In order to unveil how discourses framed by media and humanitarian agencies are dislocated from the context of humanitarian action and philanthropy into the context of border control, we need to consider that there are no natural borders to separate human beings in space. Emphasizing the multidimensional character of social, cultural, and spatial borders and borderland, the debate on social science relies on the idea that borders are socially constructed.

If Simmel (1908, p. 467) – over a century ago – affirmed that the border «is not a spatial fact with sociological effects, but a sociological fact that takes a spatial form», and Debord (1995, p. 19) focuses on the spectacle as «a social relationship between people that is mediated by images», we can imagine the border not just as mirror-like reflections of the divisions existing in the physical-cultural landscape, but as symbolic and political barriers enacted and performed as «discursive or emotional landscapes of social power» as well as «technical landscapes of control and surveillance» (Paasi 1996, p. 63).

Borders are not treated here as fixed physical boundaries but rather as "bordering", a process involving both imaginary and concrete making of borders. People who move and cross state borders feel and see the borders in different ways. Some move freely and, for them, borders seem invisible and their movement and existence naturally legitimate. On the contrary, for others borders in Europe are tangible and their belonging and right to access services and entrance is constantly under question. As argued by Popescu (2012, p. 8): «Borders are first and foremost about power. Border making is a power strategy that uses difference to assert control over spaces by inscribing difference in space... Borders have traditionally served the role of ordering society». Therefore, process of bordering is essentially political, and this political dimension permeates border making at all scales, from the daily life of individuals to international relations (Cuttitta 2006).

Since the rise of modern nation-states, national borders have played an important role in shaping national identity, not only marking national territory and national sovereignty in a physical way on the ground, but also serving in maps and other visual depictions of nation-states to delimit the geographies of nations as «imagined communities» (Anderson 1983). In Anderson's argument national identity enables citizens to imagine themselves as part of a larger national community. The nation thus is imagined in the sense that it creates connections and a sense of belonging across long distances by fellow citizens who never see one another in person. Borders

play an important role in this respect because they constitute imaginative geographies that are also tied up directly with (state) practices that police and regulate national belonging and citizenship (Popescu 2011).

Analyzing how to govern the borderlands by projecting authority through non-state actors and the non-territorial networks of international assistance, Duffield (2001) argues that the objective of contemporary states is to promote and create order out of disorder within a liberal framework. There is a sense in Western policy circles that disorder stems from new types of conflict and under-development. As argued by Duffield, the new humanitarianism, with its focus on risk analysis and integrated liberal development, was put in place as a new way to govern the borderlands, given the changes in the global context and the perceived failure of traditional humanitarianism in dealing with them. Following his understanding, humanitarian aid can be seen as a «technology of government» – as something that has the power to reorder the relationship between people and things to achieve desired outcomes. Since the 1970s, metropolitan non-state and private actors have greatly increased their economic, social and political influence in the borderlands. Beginning with economic management, this governmental responsibility has progressively deepened to include development, social welfare and, during the 1990s, humanitarian action, governance and security. In many respects, the management of public policy in the borderlands has been significantly internationalised and privatised. At the same time, however, while the nature of their authority has changed, metropolitan states have not lost influence in this process; on the contrary, they have been innovative in shaping metropolitan–borderland relations. European identity requires bordering between those who belong to Europe and carry "European values" to those who do not. These boundary markings however cannot be interpreted violent, since, democracy and peace are the core principles of the imagined European identity. Thus, European identity construction moves paradoxically in the axel of humanitarianism and control.

4. *Victims or threats?*

We exemplify the use of humanitarian narratives in the two social fields of humanitarian action and border control by focusing on communication of the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)[2] and Frontex. Both of these

2 http://www.dec.org.uk/appeals

organizations are recurring sources for the mainstream media in the field of humanitarian action and/or migration. In the media ecology, these organizations can be seen as "frame sponsors" (Gamson *et al*. 1992, p. 385) and "discourse technologists" (Fairclough 1995, p. 105) that frame issues from their viewpoint in the public sphere.

The DEC, which began his life in the offices of British Red Cross in London, has been uniting the UK's leading humanitarian agencies in their efforts to finance humanitarian relief in poorer countries since 1963. DEC is an umbrella organization for the aid agencies and serves as a contact point for journalists and other media professionals. DEC carefully coordinates and facilitates communications since media visibility is crucial in order to gain financial support from donors. Since the first appeals in the 60s, public support for the DEC continued to grow and between 1983 and 1984 it raised more than £15m in three appeals for the famine in Ethiopia, which were followed by the extraordinary success of the mediatized Bandaid and Live aid fundraisings. The oldest appeal available on the DEC website is the Sudan Emergency appeal[3], which in 2004 raised £35 million. The video applies "shock effect" and creates a figure of a deserving victim, that of a suffering child. This video follows the defining humanitarian imagery in which innocents make an inescapable appeal to conscience. The voice of Joanna Lumley affirms that «it is impossible to exaggerate the scale of this tragedy», while talking about how the refugees arrived in the camps with their horrifying tells of war, rape, and murder. The heart-breaking music amplifies the images of naked bodies with terrible injuries, screaming and crying children on the edge of death. This imagery where the suffering of the other is brought close, although mediated, has been typical for humanitarian communication. Although it has been widely criticized for its "negativity", also among aid organizations, many still rely on the shock effect in their fundraising. Nevertheless, towards the end of the appeal we find what Haskell (1985) as defined a "recipe": the specific sequence of steps we can take to put in action our responsibility for the distant other: £15 for a water purification tablet and a water container, £44 for feeding a family for two months, so on, so forth. It is a menu for intervention that has become a standard fundraising practice for most humanitarian agencies.

The same structure reappears in other appeals such as the Pakistan Floods Appeal[4] in 2010 and the Haiti Earthquake Appeal the same year. Describing "the worst flood in the century", the compassionate voice recites:

3 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gdzKbbDd3U
4 http://www.dec.org.uk/appeals/pakistan-floods-appeal

«DEC is not political. It is a charity and delivery care to the millions who lost everything. Your generosity... your donation is vital… immediately». Even in a crisis that has a widely acknowledge political edge, the Israel – Palestinian conflict a DEC appeal presents the conflict apolitically. They raised £8.3m to help Palestinians after three weeks of heavy shelling and an 18-month blockade of Gaza[5]. Over the same images of desperate children, deaths, injuries and destruction, the appeal depicts the situation in Gaza, where «thousands of people are struggling to survive», affirming with a pitiful voice: «It is not about the right and wrong of the conflict… These people simply need your help».

In all of these appeals, the visual construction of human suffering is abstracted from the wider political and economic dimensions of the conflict. Each appeal constructs an imaginary of an acute crisis rather than a chronic crisis. The claim of DEC to be «not political, only charity» assumes that humanitarianism is a space free of economics, military, and politics.

Moving from the realm of fund-raising appeals to that of border control, we examine the discourses in the public communication of Frontex. This European Union border control agency was launched in 2004, and since that it has become an important point of reference for policy makers and a media source across Europe. It receives funding mainly from the European Commission and in addition some member-states such as the Schengen countries. The agency's budget has grown 19 times higher during nine years[6]. This increasing investment in border control needs to be legitimated and reasoned to the European publics, and this is done through media. Frontex appears regularly in the news as an expert source and its own border guard trainings, investments in surveillance technologies and patrol operations are covered in the media across Europe. Additionally however, activists have publicly campaigned against its operations across Europe and Africa criticizing Frontex of constructing an inhumane "Fortress Europe"[7].

First of all, Frontex discursively assures its public that there are security concerns and border problems the agency needs to "combat". According to Horsti (2012) - who applied a critical discourse analysis to the press releases that Frontex published on its website between 2006 and 2011 – up

5 http://www.dec.org.uk/appeals/gaza-crisis-appeal

6 Frontex's budget in 2005 was EUR 6,2 m and in 2013 EUR 119,2 m.

7 Several advocacy groups report on criticism and protests against European migration policy and Frontex.
Among others: http://fortresseurope.blogspot.it/2006/02/immigrants-dead-at-frontiers-of-europe_16.html; http://frontexplode.eu; http://www.afrique-europe-interact.net/?article_id=113&clang=1

until 2008, the migrants were characterized as "illegal" in the press releases, but then there was a change in the nomenclature. Migrants were now referred to as "irregular" or just "migrants" and "immigrants". Although it still appears in the text, the adjective "illegal" was now used in a more precise context such as "illegal" actions of traffickers, human smugglers, or in unidentified "illegal border activity", and "illegal border crossings". To be specific, "illegal" refers to criminal action that requires interference and punishment, and is a key term in the discursive strategy of security. Here some extracts that illustrate these formulations: «Due to the exceptionally high numbers of migrants crossing the Greek-Turkish land border illegally, Greece now accounts for 90% of all detections of illegal border crossings to the EU» (Frontex, 25 October 2010). And just a few days later the Director Ilkka Laitinen affirmed: «Firstly, to bring the situation under control — ensuring at all times that irregular migrants are properly identified and treated in line with our commitment to fundamental rights and human dignity» (Frontex, 5 November 2010).

Investigating the discursive strategy of technocracy in the press releases by Frontex, migrants are referred to in numbers and nationalities and no other identification is made. The treatment is distant and politically correct, but harsh language is absent. Technocratic strategy appears in three different types of argumentation. First, the "cost-effectiveness" and "efficiency" of border control and deportation are mentioned as a legitimation for the existence of Frontex. Second, the actions are described in a professional, management style language that inherently mitigates power relations and possible accusations of human rights violations. The actions of Frontex are often described as identifying "key trends", "best practices", "profiles", "forecasts", and/or "offering recommendations and expertise". Third, border control is sanitized through technologized language and practice. The following extract illustrates these points: «Frontex has released the results of its first Tailored Risk Analysis into unaccompanied minors in European migration. […] as well as providing a medium-term forecast of trends and offering recommendations for action» (Frontex, 13 December 2010).

The celebrated achievements are surveillance of migrant bodies with technology and force (Horsti 2012). The discursive technology uses a distant managerial style rhetoric, which pilots the mind away from anything negative. It assures the audience that migration can be and is controlled. It mitigates any interpretations of chaos or crisis. In addition, it mitigates any assumptions of human rights violation or brutal hands that might ever be involved in the control of migrants.

Finally, in recent years, Frontex is also embracing the discursive strategy of humanitarianism, based on saving migrant lives. When human rights activists and refugee organisations began complaining about its mission to protect the "Fortress Europe" without respecting minimum human rights standards, the humanitarian strategy has become overwhelmingly present in the Frontex press releases. It has become almost standard to have at least one sentence in the press releases in reference to the victimized position of migrants, the high human rights standards of border guards, or humanitarian "rescue" from dangerous conditions. The European agency is aware of the criticism it has received from human rights advocates, and the humanitarian discursive strategy is a direct response to that. There are two main lines of argumentation in the humanitarian strategy. First, the prevention of migrants from reaching their "illegitimate" destination is described as a humanitarian action, "saving lives". In these joint operations with member states, Frontex prevented migrants from continuing their journey and forced them to return. Second, since the security discourse focuses on trafficking and smuggling of humans, migrants are typically described as "victims" of these criminals, and therefore those "detected" in surveillance operations are "protected".

The operations were not about building "Fortress Europe". They were of a humanitarian character and were aimed at saving lives at sea, as well as reducing illegal immigration and combating trafficking in human beings, a crime from which only the traffickers benefit. As the Deputy Executive Director Gil Arias Fernandez argues:

> Facilitators lure these desperate people with the promise of an easy crossing and a better life, and charge up to USD 7,500 for a trip from Afghanistan. This is not always the case. Tragically, since the beginning of the year 41 people lost their lives trying to cross the Evros river or the sea in the area of Alexandropouli, many more die as a result of the dangerous forms of transport used by unscrupulous smugglers, others still end up victims of trafficking for the sex trade or in forced labour (Frontex, 30 November 2010).

In recent years, Frontex published a report on unaccompanied minors in European migration (Frontex 2010) claiming that unaccompanied minors are not only threatened by traffickers, but also by family members who use children unethically as a means to enter Europe. In addition, Frontex includes the dissemination of "humanitarian standards" as one of their important border training objectives. The agency trains border guards in European countries, as well as those countries, such as Greece, that are repeatedly accused of harsh and inhumane treatment of migrants at the borders. Thus, in discussing "humanitarian standards" in this context, the

understanding of securitized practices of border and surveillance training is brought together as one with that of humanitarian practice. Frontex needs to communicate that it is conducting its operations in a "humane" manner, which mitigates the critique both from humanitarian activists and from those concerned with national sovereignty. In doing so, the current humanitarian discourse has become a sign of the present-day administration and operation that appears both neutral and politically correct.

5. *Conclusion*

Throughout this paper, I have focused the analysis on two discourses around which representations and imaginaries condense in both fields. First, the depicted crisis situations are represented as "emergencies" whether the issue is about humanitarian aid or migration control. This refers to a sudden de-politicized and naturally occurring state of a disaster, which calls for certain type of agents to solve it. Second, in both fields the paper identifies a use of humanitarian narratives. This refers to discourse that presents some people as victims in need of protection and aid, usually in a compassionate and emotional mode of communication. Particularly interesting is to compare how humanitarian narrative developed in one field of analysis – philanthropy and aid – make its presence in another field – migration control. In both cases humanitarian discourse reduces vulnerable and suffering populations to voiceless victims by reifying their condition of victimhood while ignoring their history and muting their words.

Exploring how humanitarian discursive strategy has become more frequent in recent years, often connected to a security discourse, I have argued that it is both problematic and interesting that, according to previous research on media representations, public debate on borders in the context of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers has culminated in two discursive frameworks. Instrumentalizing humanitarian narratives, mainstream media, as well as Frontex, frame unwanted immigrants either as threats to European societies and values or as victims of their countries, cultures and, sometimes of European strict border control, referred as "Fortress Europe". To qualify as a victim, migrants are de-ethnicized and presented in communitarian framework (Boltanski 1999) as worthy of humanitarian attention. Women and children are more often than men raised as victimized public figures. Undocumented migrants are presented as objects (of charity, criminalisation or control), which means that they are treated as having no social or personal history and life: «non-persons» as characterised by Dal Lago

(1999). In addition there lies an atmosphere of conspiracy, "illegal" migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are presented in a light of suspicion and prejudice: there is never an attitude of trust or answer to who these people are and why they are here.

Moreover, observing how emergencies are represented in a moral and managerial framework based on mediatized emotions, which neutralizes political choices by reducing them to simple operations measures, we understand how we - especially citizens of the world's richer countries - «tacitly reinforce the notion that the normal world of globalization is one of systems that work effectively, that shore up the world we inhabit, rather than destroying it, and that can be counted on to work in predictable ways» (Calhoun 2010, p. 393). In the videos of the DEC as well as in Frontex press releases, images tell a story of suffering bodies and an aid organization with the means to intervene. Here we find what Chandler (2002) calls a moral "fairy story", composed by three components: first, the hapless victim in distress, portrayed through films of the worst cases in the worst areas; second, the villain or the disaster that cause the crises; and third, the savior, the aid agency or institution, an external agency whose interests are seen as inseparable from those of the deserving victim.

Victims are represented only in abstract terms, denying agency to those who suffer, the crisis is amplified in a way that increases pity, and presented without political or historical context, because usually extreme suffering depicted by humanitarian narrative leaves no room for political speech. The videos of the DEC and most of the NGOs' fundraising campaigns, as well as most of Frontex press releases, present images that establish a moral geography of the world, portraying the rich Western culture as a "supranatural" source of civilization intervening in the poor South. Evidence shows that such images, aptly projected and replicated thanks to multimedia technologies, have been internalized by the Western consciousness, because Western movies contribute to nourish what Diawara (2010, p. 77) has called the «humanitarian tarzanism», which depict Africans as helpless and voiceless. It is from these representations of suffering that humanitarian marketing strategies and media apparatus generate a matrix of indistinct stereotypes, prejudices, and theoretical elaborations to form a gallery of performances that have now become part of the collective imagination of Western societies. In the Frontex press releases, for example, such representations not only are fundamentally at odds with empirical evidence that the vast majority of migrants are not among the poorest, move on their own initiative and that trafficking plays a relatively unimportant role, but also rule out migrants' own dignity and agency. So that it is clear how, bringing moral sentiments

into contemporary politics, humanitarianism has become a language that links values and affects, and serves both to define and to justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings (Feldman, Ticktin 2010).

In the fund-raising campaigns of DEC as well as in Frontex press releases, the discursive strategy of technocracy and risk management is related to the discursive strategy of humanitarianism: saving lives. In both cases, humanitarian discourse, with its focus on disasters and poverty that frequently reinforce the perception of Africans as helpless victims, is instrumentalized to legitimize and support the mission of the agencies. This representation of a victim in a non-place is detached from its historical causes, from international economic mechanisms. It is a process that essentializes the victims: against the thickness of biographies and the complexity of history, it draws a figure to which humanitarian aid is directed.

Focusing on the urgency of saving lives, humanitarian narratives create a gap between short-term (raise money or control the border) and long-term (unintended) effects. Not only does this representation of the emergencies prevent disclosure on the causes of the disparities between "spectator" and "victim", but it also increases the distance between "us" and "them" (Musarò, Parmiggiani 2014). Throughout this discursive strategy, such a representation influences longer-term attention to migration policies, inequality, and justice: Europeans appear as heroes, elevated by the efficiency of their aid to help the poor, needy and passive Africans. Moreover, it is evident how the term "emergency" became a sort of counterpoint to the idea of global order. In both cases, the narratives implied that things usually worked well, but occasionally went wrong, so we must intervene to restore linearity. This normalization of the emergencies reflects a wider shift from the development optimism (intended as a global moral engagement) to humanitarianism as a need for intervention to solve emergencies and restore linearity. From this point of view, the humanitarian intervention claimed by DEC appeals represents a post-developmental strategy that reflects "the unmaking of the Third World", that is, the ongoing failure of the development project, driven by the major international institutions of the so-called Washington Consensus. At the same time, the discursive strategy of humanitarianism used by Frontex to legitimize border control certifies the failure of restrictive migration policies aiming at "combating" irregular migration.

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