Radboud University

MARGINALITY, FEAR & VIOLENCE -

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF THE MIGRANT CRISIS IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of 2020, the Canary Islands have emerged as a new migration hotspot at the southern external border of the European Union (EU). The increased migration has led to conflicts between local authorities, undocumented migrants, and the tourism sector on the archipelago, especially as the Canaries are in the midst of an economic crisis. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its travel regulations have hit the Canary Islands hard, as their economy depends on tourism (European Commission). However, also the economic situation in North African and Sub-Saharan states deteriorated during the pandemic, which led to strong push factors for many migrants.

These people often come on small fishing boats over the dangerous Atlantic route, departing primarily from Morocco and Western Sahara, but also Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea (The International Organization for Migration). The diversity in backgrounds makes it clear that the migrants are not a homogenous group, but they come from different countries and for different reasons. Despite this, I will further refer to them as 'the migrants' as though they were one group because my understanding of their migration is mediated by their representation in news media, which makes it difficult to distinguish between them.

Furthermore, I will refer to the irregular migration to the Canary Islands in 2020 and 2021 as a 'crisis,' despite justified criticism of the term due to its negative connotations created through anti-migration debates in society (Videler). However, I still consider 'crisis' a useful term to express the urgent need for humanitarian and political action on the archipelago, and how the situation reveals the malfunctioning of the EU immigration policies.

I only observe the ongoing crisis from a distance through its representation in different news media, constituting a window through which I learned about the deadly Atlantic route and the overcrowded camps. According to Mistiaen, media representations impact how we understand and relate to the world around us (57). For news consumers like me, who never

have experienced the dangerous migration on irregular routes and the living conditions in provisory migrant camps, media representations can influence how we perceive those that did (Müller 264). Thus, public sentiments towards migrants and our understanding of the situation are interrelated with the images and words we perceive in media discourses (D'Haenens and Joris 11; Müller 264).

This thesis does operate within these discourses, as my own understanding of the situation in the Canary Islands relies heavily on the way it is represented in news media. Hence, this thesis is not free from generalizations and moves within the present dynamics of representation. However, I still consider it relevant to reflect on how we perceive the migrant crisis mediated through the news we consume, as only an awareness of the shortcomings of these representations can help us move towards more nuanced representations in the future.

Fig. 1. Untitled Photograph by Javier Bauluz

One photograph I encountered in a news article stuck in my mind, as it made me think about the lives of those depicted. This photograph (Fig. 1) was taken on 21 October 2020 by the Spanish photojournalist Javier Bauluz, whose work is focused on human rights issues

(Javier Bauluz. Photojournalist). It shows migrants from Morocco walking along the shore on a beach on one of the Canary Islands shortly after their arrival. They are walking in line, from the right-hand side of the photograph to the left. The photograph's frame itself does not reveal where they are coming from and where they are going. In the foreground, a woman is sitting in the sand, playing with a small child. At the horizon, one can see a ship of the coast guard next to a small boat, potentially a fishing boat on which migrants seek to reach the archipelago.

A *Google* reverse image search revealed that the photograph is a file photo used by many different news outlets. For this thesis, I selected four English-language news articles from European and US-American news sites published in November and December 2020 that use the photograph in their articles. The first article was published by the American news agency *Associated Press* (AP), dealing with the tensions in migrant shelters in the Canary Islands (Wilson). The photograph was also used in a second *AP* article concerned with the general situation and numbers of undocumented migrants (AP News). Furthermore, it was used by the British online newspaper *The Independent*, which describes the construction of migrant camps in the Canary Islands due to the rising numbers of undocumented migrants. Lastly, the news and information website *InfoMigrants*, which is co-funded by the European Union, has dedicated an article to the perceived rising tension between the tourism industry and the undocumented migrants (Wolter and Bathke).

As the photograph by Bauluz has been used by these four news articles in November and December 2020, I assume it visually expresses some of the concerns urgent at that time in the ongoing crisis in the Canary Islands. Especially the stark contrast between the migrants at the shore and the woman and child on the beach seems to be significant for the relations between locals and undocumented migrants. Additionally, the news articles might have considerable influence on their readers' perception of the undocumented migrants and their

treatment at the external border of the EU (D'Haenens and Joris 11; Müller 264). Therefore, this thesis shall demonstrate how the discourses by Western, English-language news articles utilize Javier Bauluz's untitled photograph in the representation of irregular migration to the Canary Islands.

THEORY

The representation of irregular migration is closely related to its public perception. As expressed by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, the perceived freedom of choice is a deciding factor in ordering postmodern society (14). He uses the term "vagabonds" (14) to refer to those people unwelcomed wherever they go (14). This ties in with what Henk van Houtum and Freerk Boedeltje from the field of geopolitics describe as the ethical "problem of classification" (226) during an earlier migration crisis in the Canary Islands. This problem refers to the significantly different treatment of undocumented migrants and tourists based on political and legal differences (226 ff.). Currently, this stark contrast in perception is happening again, which makes it necessary to consider the political and geographical reasons that might lead to this discrepancy in the Canary Islands.

The economist Dirk Godenau explains that the importance of islands in migration movements results from their interconnectedness with other geographic and political structures (3). He recognizes the geostrategic position Southern-European islands offer to migrants (5), notably through "asymmetrical border enforcement" (14). According to geographers Nathalie Bernardie-Tahir and Camille Schmoll, migrants use islands as transit points on the way to the EU (90). However, undocumented migrants are also socially constructed as "undesirables" (89), and islands can function as gatekeepers and fences. Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll connect this to a newly emerging "politics of fear" (89). As

claimed by Sara Ahmed, fear "re-establishes distance between bodies" (63) and is concerned with the preservation of the known (64).

Building on Ahmed's argument, anthropologists Donya Alinejad and Domitilla Olivieri claim that media play a crucial role in the politics of fear (2; 4). Additionally, they further highlight the importance of the spatial dimension of affect and emotion, especially regarding migration and media representations (5). Moreover, the social construction of undocumented migrants as undesirable Other can be related to philosopher Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection. According to Kristeva, the abject is what disturbs identity (4). As the Self and the Other blur, the Self expels itself to establish itself (3). Related to these notions of fear, the bordering regime of the EU could be described in terms of political geographers Henk van Houtum and Rodrigo Bueno Lacy as the "EU's autoimmunity" (709). Referring to Derrida, they describe the process in which the EU seems to destroy itself in an attempt to protect itself, precisely through its "closed, discriminatory border regime" (709).

Similarly, migration scholar Elzbieta M. Gozdziak and anthropologist Izabella Main claim that so-called migration crises are actually European political crises (1), violating EU core values such as human dignity (3) through the treatment of undocumented migrants (4), as well as their representation in media and political discourses (5). This can be related to the notion of "structural violence" (292) by sociologist Johan Galtung. According to Galtung, "structural violence is a process" (294), institutionally reinforcing "avoidable insults to basic human needs" (292). Based on Foucault's notion of biopower, historian and postcolonial scholar Achille Mbembe describes the power to decide over life and death as the "ultimate expression of sovereignty" (66). These "necropolitics" (66) do not only include biological death but also being "subjected to living conditions that confer … the status of the *living dead*" (92).

METHODOLOGY

In order to explore the media representations of the 2020/2021 migrant crisis in the Canary Islands, I will utilize critical discourse analysis to gain insights into the different ethical and political agendas behind the four news articles mentioned above. Norman Fairclough developed this methodology to study the "connections between language and power" (25). It takes power relations rooted in ethnical, cultural, or class differences as one of its major concerns (26). Moreover, it seeks to analyze the effects of discourses on the "reproduction of macro structures" (45). This involves the analysis of ideology, meaning the "representation of *the world* from the perspective of a particular interest" (46). In case of the migration crisis in the Canary Islands, this includes the interests of those representing the crisis and those consuming the media representations. Drawing on Stuart Halls notion of "language as a signifying practice" (xxi), I consider the language and imagery in media representations to be invested for certain goals and informed by underlying beliefs and structures that affect those whom the representations are made of, as well as those consuming them. Consequently, critical discourse analysis can be helpful to gain a deeper understanding of the power dynamics that come into play in the current situation of the Spanish archipelago.

Furthermore, I will also apply some techniques from visual analysis on the photograph, as its visual characteristics are relevant to understand the discourses created through the news articles in which it is used. Influenced by Gillian Rose's "critical visual methodology" (15), I seek to consider both the context of the photograph and its use concerning its visual characteristics, as well as my own perspective when analyzing its representation of the undocumented migrants in the Canary Islands. For this analysis, I will focus less on the technical aspects but much more on the compositional and social dimensions of the photograph itself (30). A helpful theoretical framework for this analysis is offered by Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Especially the notions of

"stadium" (26) and "punctum" (27) are fruitful in understanding the effects the photograph has on its spectator.

Clearly, it is important to consider that my analysis is limited by my positionality as a German student at a Dutch university who only knows about the situation in the Canary Islands through media representations. Therefore, I cannot make any claims about the lived experiences of neither the migrants nor the locals in the Canary Islands. This topic is harrowing and ethically challenging, as it is likely to reproduce the same homogeneity in representation it seeks to critique. However, I am limited to engage with this topic through photography and news articles, which give me no better choice than to acknowledge the ethical pitfalls this inevitably brings about. Furthermore, it is necessary to keep in mind that this analysis is limited to a small selection of media representations, which does not represent the whole scope of the complex and ongoing situation.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will explore how the polarity between the tourism sector and undocumented migration in the Canary Islands is represented in the media, especially regarding the archipelago's geographical, political, and historical location. In the second chapter, I shall analyze what discourses are created by the untitled photograph and the news articles it accompanies concerning the supposed challenge or even threat undocumented migrants pose on the EU through embodying a perceived Other. Eventually, the final chapter will outline how the news articles represent and potentially contribute to the biopolitical control and structural violence at the external borders of the EU.

I.

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRATION AND TOURISM

Through their geographic characteristics and lack of natural resources, the economy in the Canary Islands depends heavily on the service and tourism sector (European Commission). This economic focus on tourism combined with a favorable subtropical climate and high standards in service and healthcare make the Canary Islands a popular tourist destination for Europeans (Hello Canary Islands). Following the latest rise of so-called irregular migration to the Spanish archipelago, a spatial proximity between tourists and migrants seems to be inevitable. However, it is primarily through a decrease in tourism resulting from travel bans installed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic that the increasing numbers of undocumented migrants have become so noticeable in 2020. According to the news article by *Info Migrants*, the low numbers of tourists and the difficult socio-economic situation following the pandemic contribute to the migrants being more visible to the public eye (Wolter and Bathke). In this chapter, I will focus on how the convergence of the tourism sector and irregular migration in the Canary Islands is represented in the photograph by Bauluz and in the news articles it accompanies, especially regarding the geographical, political, and historical location of the archipelago.

HISTORICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL & POLITICAL LOCATION

At first, it is important to consider how the migration crisis in the Canary Islands is influenced by a variety of factors, such as the historical relations between Spain and Morocco, the geographic position of the Canary Islands as well as their political role as Spanish territory at the external border of the EU.

Despite their geographic proximity to Morocco, the Canary Islands belonged to Spain since the Castilian Conquest in the 15th century, giving them a unique position between

Europe and Africa. Throughout history, the socially constructed ideas of Europe and Africa were and still are, according to Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo and Henk van Houtum, in a "perpetual discursive motion" (248), defined and re-defined over time. While the idea of a European civilization cannot be pinned down to a specific geographic location (Ferrer-Gallardo and van Houtum 245) but is constantly created in relation to a "Muslim other" (247), the EU as a political and economic union of states has clearer borders (European Union, *Countries*). Hence, the Canary Islands are an outermost region of the EU and constitute one of its external borders.

Furthermore, the archipelago has certain characteristics specifically related to its island-ness. As described by Godenau, islands are "physical and terrestrial entities surrounded by water" (4), indicating a relative difficulty to reach them. Despite this, many islands at the Southern border of the EU show a "nodal character" (3), also for so-called irregular migration, usually based on their "geostrategic position" (5). Therefore, the link between insularity and migration-related humanitarian crises (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll 88) at the Southern external border of the EU can be explained with the interaction between push factors from the African continent (Godenau 4) and islands being attractive transit points on the way to the European continent (Godenau 5; Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll 90, 96).

Additionally, Godenau claims that, while geographic location certainly plays a role in the way Southern European islands frequently become hotspots in humanitarian crisis, this should always be considered in relation to the "institutional membership" (14) of the islands, as they are usually mere transit points to the actually preferred destination of the migrants (14). Political agreements such as the Dublin Conventions regulating in which countries asylum seekers need to apply for asylum increase the focus on the Southern borders of the EU (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll 98).

Furthermore, there seems to be a link between past and current migration flows (Godenau 7). The current migration movement towards the Canary Islands might not be a coincidence considering the so-called "cayuco crisis" (11) in 2006 when around 30,000 migrants reached the Spanish archipelago. However, these migrants were mostly deported shortly after their arrival, which became impossible in 2020 through the measures taken to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, already in the 1970s, there have been migration movements from Morocco and Western Sahara towards the Canary Islands as a consequence of the decolonization of previously Spanish territories (7). Over time, the attractiveness of the Canary Islands as a node of transit has changed, depending on rather political than geographic factors such as the degree to which its borders have been enforced (14).

Finally, borders are "social institutions" (Godenau 6), which's permeability is constructed by multiple factors and closely tied to the "asymmetry in power between territorial units" (6). As argued by philosopher Thomas Nail, borders are not static but constantly a "zone of contestation" (6) and "circulation" (7). Therefore, historical and current political and economic relations between the Canary Islands and Morocco, as well as the geographic proximity of the Moroccan coast, certainly contribute to the present migration movement from Morocco and West African countries towards the Canary Islands.

VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

Secondly, it is important to reflect on the visual characteristics of the photograph by Bauluz, and how they relate to the spatial situation in which the undocumented migrants and the tourism sector converge in the Canary Islands. Therefore, it is useful to consider Barthes' concepts of "studium" (26) and "punctum" (27). The *studium* refers to a "classical body of information" (26), usually based on cultural or stylistic characteristics, while the *punctum* is what "disturb[s] the studium" (27) and gains the attention of the spectator.

Divorced from its context, the middle ground of the photograph shows a group of people walking along a shoreline. In the foreground, there are a woman and a child sitting in the sand on the otherwise empty beach. Next to them is a pile with clothing, beach shoes and, a pink snorkel. The child seems to play in the sand while the woman is facing away from the observer, and it is not clear if she watches the child or the people at the shore.

Considering the information added by the context in which the photograph was published, we know the people walking on the beach are migrants that just arrived at the coast of one of the Canary Islands and are now presumably escorted by the police to further registration (Wolter and Bathke). The woman and child in the foreground are likely locals spending a leisure day on the beach. Moreover, the beach appears to be relatively empty besides the migrants, the woman, and the child. This could result from the decrease in touristic travels subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic (Wolter and Bathke). The *studium* of the photograph provides all this information through cultural codes and the knowledge a spectator already has on the photograph (Barthes 26; 51). As it is so focused on what the spectator knows, the *studium* of the photograph is informed by the news articles alongside which it is published.

The *punctum* on the other hand is much more personal, often an unintentional detail that strikes the observer and expands beyond the photograph itself (Barthes 27; 43; 45). In this case, it is the question of what happened to the migrants after the photograph was taken. They might have been sent back to their countries of origin, or live under precarious conditions in a temporary camp, waiting for their procedures. For the spectator of the photograph, these questions remain unanswered and offer an opportunity to experience a tiny fraction of the ambiguity of the moment depicted.

As spectators, the photograph offers us the opportunity to look at the scene through the frame the photographer chose for us. While Bauluz was on the beach himself and witnessed

the arrival of the migrants, we are offered one slice of the event captured in the photograph. Therefore, our understanding of the dynamics on the photograph is directed by the visual characteristics within its frame.

Fig. 2. Untitled Photograph by Javier Bauluz, red triangle added to show composition

The vanishing point of the photograph directs the spectator's gaze onto the woman and the child, making them the fixed point of the image. Additionally, the woman, the child, and the pile of clothing form a triangle in the center of the photograph, directing the observer's gaze on them first (Fig. 2). The migrants are positioned as walking past the vanishing point. This does not only visually create a clear hierarchy in attention, but also alludes to the position the different persons on the photograph have in the Canary Islands. While the presumed locals are a fixed point on the archipelago, the migrants are outside of the focus, seen as only passing through.

Moreover, the gaze of the spectator is mediated through not only the photograph itself, but also the context in which it is received, as part of various news articles. However, as described by John Berger, "we are always looking at the relation between things and

ourselves" (qtd. in Rose 12). Therefore, the gaze of the spectator might be informed by the way we understand our relation to the situation depicted. Centering the woman and child on the photograph might offer a point of identification for many spectators in the EU that never experienced crossing the Atlantic Ocean on irregular migration routes but have been on a beach vacation before.

This direct juxtaposition between locals and undocumented migrants shows how different their experiences of the same place can be. As described by Bauman, postmodern society is stratified by the perceived freedom of choice one has (14). The woman and child spending a leisure day at the beach are supposedly there by choice, while the undocumented migrants came out of necessity, and are not even allowed to stay at the beach at which they arrived. Hence the juxtaposition of locals and undocumented migrants stresses their differences in agency and, consequently, hierarchy (van Houtum and Boedeltje 226 ff.). Furthermore, the fact that the locals are captured in the foreground of the photograph, while the migrants are further behind suggests this hierarchy between different visitors of the same place. While the "undesirable" (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll 89) migrants are kept in the margins, the locals are presented centrally.

However, it does not become clear from the untitled photograph alone how Bauluz values this juxtaposition, if he understands the locals as more relatable or if he wants to express how strange this confrontation actually is. Independently of this, the visual juxtaposition of undocumented migrants and locals draws attention to their close spatial proximity in the Canary Islands. Differentiated through legal categories (van Houtum and Boedeltje 226 ff.) and the assumption that undocumented migrants "allegedly … threaten public order and security" (van Houtum and Boedeltje 227), the way there are perceived has significant influence on their experience of mobility and freedom (Bauman 14).

The lack of tourists, which might be indicated by the empty beach, further draws attention to the radically different ways tourists and undocumented migrants are perceived by the locals in the Canary Islands. Tourists may be welcome for contributing positively to the archipelago's economy (European Commission), while undocumented migrants are feared as taking a toll from said economy (Wolter and Bathke). However, as stated by Bauman, tourists and vagabonds are not as different from each other as it may seem at first, but vagabonds are the "caricature" (15) of tourists. This means that vagabonds may reveal the hidden truth being the mobility and border crossings of tourists, something that is inherent to postmodern traveling but separated from the positive image of the tourist (15). Therefore, the contrasting juxtaposition of both kinds of travelers on the photograph might ridicule the figure of the tourist in contrast to its "alter ego" (15).

Additionally, the photograph constitutes a visual reflection of the liminal position of undocumented migrants by presenting them walking along the shore, which constitutes the borderline between the ocean over which they came, and the island they were longing to reach. The beach as a littoral zone is a non-place, that is not only transitional as described by Godenau (5), but permanent in its geological characteristics. The materiality of the beach highlights the territoriality of the border, which is usually considered a line. However, crossing a line on a map does not guarantee fully being in that country. Through capturing the migrants shortly after their arrival in this zone of constant in-between, the photograph expresses the liminal state in which the migrants are forced in the Canary Islands. Even after they physically left the beach on which they arrived, the photograph stays unchanged for the spectator. As described by Barthes, the migrants are turned from subjects into objects to be looked at (13). No matter where they are going outside the frame of the photograph, they are forever stuck in the liminal position in the photograph.

THE PHOTOGRAPH IN NEWS MEDIA

All four news articles by which the photograph was used have in common that they either directly address or indirectly imply a certain conflict or challenge for the Canary Islands, often related to the convergence of the tourism sector and undocumented migrants. The *Info Migrants* article "Boat migrants instead of holidaymakers - how is Canary Islands' tourism industry coping? (Part II)" by Wolter and Bathke, is specifically dedicated to the strange situation in the Canary Islands, in which undocumented migrants seemingly replaced tourists as predominant travelers coming to the Canary Islands. It is the longest of the four news articles and deals with the coping strategies of the tourism industry in the Canary Islands after the decrease of tourists visiting the archipelago, while the numbers of undocumented migrants increased.

This contrast between the tourism sector and undocumented migration is not mentioned in the *AP* article "Tensions in packed migrant shelter on Spain's Canary Islands" by Wilson and the *The Independent* article "Spain to build Canary Islands migrant camps after 900% rise in arrivals" by Keeley. However, it is indirectly implied that the situation in the Canary Islands is increasingly challenging. The use of terms such as "overwhelmed authorities" (Wilson), "rising tensions" (Wilson), "steady stream of arrivals" (Wilson), "humanitarian drama" (Wilson), and expressions like "Spain has bowed to mounting pressure from human rights groups" (Keeley), indicate an overwhelming, hardly bearable situation.

The sense of threat and crisis connoted through such terms can potentially lead to a rising fear for the consequences of the increased migration. According D'Haenens and Joris, news media can influence the public perception of migrants and asylum seekers through the frequency and framing they apply to their coverage (11). Furthermore, Mistiaen describes how media representations shape our understanding of the world (57). This might especially

apply to news representations of such migration crises, in which the experiences of migrants are far removed from the lived realities of most Europeans.

Likewise, the *AP* article "Spain searches for answer to migrants eyeing Canary Islands" uses words like "overwhelming" to express the situation in the Canary Islands, stressing the large numbers of undocumented migrants arriving at the Spanish archipelago. Furthermore, it states that the Canary Islands are known better as a "European vacation destination" (AP News), indirectly contrasting the current situation with associations of holidaymakers. This is especially noticeable, as the article does not reference the convergence of tourists and migrants directly, but it is indirectly implied through this half sentence which stands in stark contrast with the tense situation described.

II.

MARGINALIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

As described in the previous chapter, a multitude of historical, geographical, political, and economic factors led to the current crisis in the Canary Islands. Moreover, the complex interplay between the social and economic situatedness of the archipelago might contribute to the way migration is perceived and represented in news media. Economic and health crises such as those induced through the COVID-19 pandemic (Wolter and Bathke) can contribute to higher levels of fear among the local population (Elias et al. 783 ff.). Thus, to understand media discourses representing the migrants as a challenge or even a threat for Spain and the EU, it is necessary to consider the current destabilizing situation and its implications for rising xenophobia in the Canary Islands (Wolter an Bathke). According to Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll these hostile sentiments in public opinion can be described as "politics of fear" (89), and strengthen societial inequalities through corroborating existing power structures. Hence, this chapter shall focus on the discourses revolving around the marginalization of undocumented migrants in the news articles accompanying Bauluz's photograph.

THE MARGINALITY & LIMINAL POSITION OF THE MIGRANT 'OTHER'

To begin with, it is necessary to analyze the media discourses revolving around the marginal position of migrants, as they could contribute to their perceived outsider status. Burrell and Hörschelmann describe how especially visual representations of the "dramatic, frightening and overwhelming arrival of 'other' bodies onto European shores" (48) dominate refugee discourses. As stated by Benedict Anderson, "community [is] imagined through language" (146). Therefore, also the Other and what is considered not to be part of said community is constructed by the same language. Consequently, the prevalent othering of the migrants reduces them to a position outside of the community (Burrell and Hörschelmann 48 ff.).

According to Gozdziak, and Main, narratives of threat and challenge in relation to migration movements are often focused on someone coming in from the outside, instead of concentrating on prevalent internal problems (5). Similarly, Burrell and Hörschelmann highlight the material metaphors used in prevalent discourses, such as Bauman's notion of "strangers at our door" (48), externalizing the threat and crisis. In the case of the news media coverage of the migrant crisis in the Canary Islands, the representation of migrants as marginal Other might be an important factor contributing to the perceived threatening developments for the local society.

In these media representations it seems as though it is a sudden, unexpected movement that could not have been anticipated, leaving the authorities overwhelmed (AP News; Wilson; Keeley). This overwhelm is expressed through sentences like:

> Overwhelmed authorities in the Canary Islands are asking Spain's government for help amid rising tensions between migrants and police at a crowded, makeshift tent camp for a steady stream of arrivals from west Africa. (Wilson)

Next to showing the struggles of local authorities, the use of the expression "steady stream of arrivals" (Wilson) might enhance the experience of overwhelming confrontation.

Furthermore, the news article by *Info Migrants* gives room to some locals voicing concerns about the presence of undocumented migrants in the Canary Islands. One example is this excerpt from an interview with a restaurant owner:

> "It's our right to be concerned about our future," she told *Info Migrants*. "Even though we can't be sure if tourists stay away because of the migrants, we are so dependent on tourism that even a small doubt about tourists coming back is a reason to say that this has to be resolved in a different way. If we don't come out of this crisis next year, we will not survive and this tourist area is doomed." (Wolter and Bathke)

As this quote illustrates, the local concerns refer especially to the potential economic consequences the irregular migration to the Canary Islands might have on its tourism industry.

Through framing the incoming migrants as a threat and the current situation as overwhelming, feelings of acute danger and crisis are evoked. As stated by Lauren Berlant, the understanding of a situation as crisis often distorts that it is rather structural than a sudden appearance (760). Indeed, Burrell and Hörschelmann describe how Europe's association of Islam, which is the predominant religion in Morocco, with threat, dates back until the Middle Ages, and is now expressed in the othering of the predominantly Muslim migrant groups arriving at European borders (48).

Based on Edward Said's *Orientalism*, this othering of the migrants can be described as the creation of "arbitrary boundaries between [two groups]" (54). While these boundaries are imaginary, they are performed and reinforced by social groups, giving them very tangible consequences (Nail 5). Therefore, the societal position of undocumented migrants is marginalized and separated from mainstream society, for instance through being located in camps (Keeley; Wilson; AP News). However, the position of migrants is not only marginal, but also liminal. While arriving on the shores of the Canary Islands made these people cross a physical border, they are still located at a border in the liminal position between being sent back and being able to cross the political border towards the EU and the social border into society.

This can be linked to what van Houtum and Bueno Lacy describe in "The Autoimmunity of the EU's Deadly B/ordering Regime" as the three borders of the EU. Next to the material "iron border" (717), there are also the "paper border" (712) linked to visa regulations, and the "border camp" (721), which spatially marginalizes and excludes migrants. The migrants in the Canary Islands might have crossed the dangerous iron border in

form of the Atlantic Ocean, but they are still confined by the paper border and the border camp.

Fig. 3. Untitled Photograph by Javier Bauluz, two orange lines added to show composition

The composition of the photograph by Bauluz is striking in this regard, as the migrants are depicted further in the back than the persons spending leisure time on the beach. This evokes a certain hierarchy, rendering the migrants seemingly less significant but more of a disturbance lurking at the margins of the bigger picture. If the photograph was to be horizontally divided in three equal parts, the migrants would take up parts of two compartments, the background and the middle ground, without taking center stage in either (Fig. 3). Consequently, their liminal position is not only clearly visible through them walking at the shoreline of the island, physically between water and land, metaphorically between their past and their future, but is also highlighted by the technical composition of the photograph. The middle ground of the photograph is dominated by the two persons on the beach, who experience a radically different reality of the same beach in the moment the photograph was taken. While they can enjoy the beach in their free time, the migrants are

escorted by the police after arriving at the shore (AP News) and thus limited in their freedom to take space on the same beach. The background is dominated by the ocean, the dangerous material borders the migrants had to cross on their way to the Canary Islands. The heads and upper bodies of the migrants are also located in this part, potentially hinting at their experience of not having arrived at their destination yet, despite walking on Spanish soil already.

The liminality and marginalization of the migrants visible in the composition of the photograph is further cemented by the news articles by which it is used. For instance, notions of migrants having to "shelter … on a pier" (Wilson) evoke a liminal space, which is typically used as a mooring for ships, but also popularly used as a place for leisured strolls by tourists. Both of these uses are focused on a passing through rather than lingering. Furthermore, that migrants have to sleep outdoors due to a tent shortage (Wilson) highlights their marginalized position outside of the society in which their arrived.

The news article by *The Independent* quotes Carolina Darias, the territories minister of Spain, about the migrants on this pier, the dock of Arguineguin. She said at a press conference:

> The objective is to help migrants, especially those living in the dock of Arguineguin, and this will mean to return [the dock] to the use it has always had as soon as possible. (Keeley)

While helping the migrants is clearly mentioned as a priority, the second half of the quote specifies the plan as restoration of the former conditions on the pier, leaving unclear in how far this improves the situation for the migrants.

Words like "temporary camp" (Wilson) underline this outsider perspective, as the migrant's presence of the Canary Islands, at least in its current expression, seems to be temporary limited. Additionally, mentioning the dangers migrants undertake to reach the

Canary Islands draws attention to the borders they are crossing, and thus the liminality the archipelago constitutes for them (AP News). Another news article describes how many of the migrants were temporarily housed in hotels (Wolter and Bathke). Hotels typically provide accommodation for tourists, therefore, the housing of undocumented migrants in hotels emphasizes their strange position in the Canary Islands. Following Bauman's description of tourists as the "epitome of [the postmodern] avoidance [of being fixed]" (11) through "not belonging to the place they might be visiting" (11), the migrants ordered to stay in hotel rooms are also placed outside of the place they are visiting. However, in case of the migrants, this marginalization can be considered not a sign of their privilege, but as a lack thereof. Next to this unwanted marginalization, many of the migrants are described as hoping to enter the EU through the mainland of Spain (AP News; Keeley). This highlights the liminal space the Canary Islands constitute for them, as only a stepping stone on their passage rather than a final destination.

MIGRANTS AS A THREAT TO THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORDER

Media representations impact the way migrants are perceived (Müller 264). However, media representations often characterize migrants through one-dimensional, "reductive images" (Burrell and Hörschelmann 48), which can lead to "compassion fatigue" (Moeller 7). The often-deadly passage over the Atlantic Ocean and utter despair of migrating people are hard to accept. Moeller argues, that as a defense mechanism, people become dulled against suffering they see repeatedly, for instance in the media (53). Especially in socially and economically challenging times such as the Corona crisis, the threatening rather than vulnerable aspects of migrants at the threshold to the EU might be more prevalent in media representations.

None of the four news articles literally mentions to word 'crisis' in relation to the increased migration to the Canary Islands, nevertheless, it is constantly implied through different words. For instance, the title "Spain searches for answers to migrants eyeing Canary

Islands" (AP News) evokes associations with a strong interest in something that belongs to someone else. The word "eyeing" is often used to describe an intense stare, usually in connection to a strong desire (The Free Dictionary). Furthermore, the implied economic threat of poor migrants coming to the Canary Islands in search for a better life leads to the social threat of overwhelmed Spanish authorities (AP News). In this specific article the migrants are represented as rather greedy, risking their lives on the Atlantic route despite many of them do not have a chance for asylum in the EU (AP News).

Similarly, the article "Tensions in packed migrant shelter on Spain's Canary Islands" (Wilson) evokes a sense of threat through describing the rising tensions between police and migrants, using expressions such as "problem for public order" and "Humanitarian drama". While the latter frames the migrants more as victims than as threatening, taken together both indicate challenging circumstances for the society in the Canary Islands. Also, the article by *The Independent* contributes to this impression. It states how "57 per cent of all refugees heading to the European Union" (Keeley) are arriving in the Canary Islands. This seemingly sets the large numbers of migrants into perspective, but simultaneously shifts the focus to the disproportionate efforts Spain has to make for the EU, rather than the experience of the migrants.

The article "Boat migrants instead of holidaymakers -- how is Canary Islands' tourism industry coping? (Part II)" focusses especially on the perceived economic threat the increased migration to the archipelago creates. For instance, it describes how the housing of migrants in hotels directly contrasts the lack of tourists and triggers fear in many locals that economically depend on the tourism industry. The decrease of tourists due to the COVID-19 pandemic had led to socio-economic problems on the islands for which the undocumented migrants offer a convenient scapegoat (Wolter and Bathke). They are perceived as a threat to the archipelago, economically through expelling tourists, socially through bad behavior (Wolter and Bathke).

However, this article seeks to offer also opposing discourses and counter-observations, describing unbothered tourists and earlier migrants that adapted to the local society (Wolter and Bathke). Nevertheless, the increased migration is described as a challenging if not threatening force for the social and economic order in the Canary Islands.

UNDOCUMENTED MIGRATION AND THE POLITICS OF FEAR

A threat implies that something unpleasant could happen. It makes one guard oneself, fear the potential harm. Media representations framing the migrants arriving in the Canary Islands as a threat to the social order and the economy play on fears of the people consuming these representations.

While undocumented migrants and tourists can be considered as two sides of the same coin due to their mobility and outsider position (Bauman 14 ff.), migrants become more threatening as they intend to stay. From the perspective of the local, the migrant is an Other. Through crossing the physical and socially constructed borders defining the territory of the local, the Other seemingly seeks to become the local Self. To understand why this transgression of borders is perceived as so threatening, it is useful to consider Kristeva's theory of the abject. The abject is what disturbs identity (4), while the process of abjection is to "expel [oneself] … within the same motion through which [one] claim[s] to establish [oneself]" (3). Rising xenophobia as a response to undocumented migration could be interpreted as the attempt to distance oneself from an aspect of the Self that disturbs one's sense of identity. This aspect of the local identity in the Canary Islands might be tourism, as the archipelago seems to be proud of being a popular tourist destination (Canary Islands Tourism 2021). As irregular migration can be understood as the dark mirror image of tourism (Bauman 15), the fear of these migrant groups could be understood a rejection of how the hospitality the Canaries provide for tourist might harm them socially and economically if provided for undocumented migrants.

In the case of the difficult economic situation in the Canary Islands resulting from the Corona crisis and its travel restrictions, framing the incoming migrants as an economic threat might help to maintain the self-image of a popular tourist destination. The fear of migrants can be described as a scapegoat for the internal socio-economic problems that currently challenge this part of the Canaries' identity. In case of the EU, which is in most cases the destination of the migrants arriving at the shores of the Canary Islands, perceiving the migrants as a threat to security and economic stability might help to maintain the self-image of valuing human dignity, freedom, equality, and human rights (European Union, *The EU in Brief*) when its deadly borders speak a different language (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 708). The border transgression by the Other challenges the identity of the Spanish and EU Self, and thus triggers abjection in form of xenophobia.

According to Chiara Marchetti, a neoliberal society tends to perceive asylum seekers as undeserving if they are unable to contribute to "communities of value" (238), which implies they only deserve support if they can contribute something rather than for purely Humanitarian reasons (239). In the case of the Canary Islands, the undocumented migrants are probably considered a threat and burden to society especially as they are in need of support without being legally able to contribute to the economy. This perceived "undeservingness" (237) of the migrant figure as is increased through the stark contrast with the economically beneficial tourists that did not come to equal amounts due to the global pandemic.

Judith Butler argues that everyone is "constituted politically … by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies" (20). Furthermore, she describes how the loss resulting from this vulnerability seems to be inherent in our "socially constituted bodies" (20). However, it seems as though some lives are more "grievable" when lost than others. For instance, Butler mentions how in the West, the deaths of Arab people are frequently mentioned without

considering their personal stories, reduced to mere numbers (32). The impersonal media representations of the migrants in the Canary Islands, and even this thesis, do the same. Migrants and their suffering are regarded from a distance, their death is acknowledged but not grieved. Their faces, names, hopes, and dreams are blurred in the groups in which they arrive, their individuality often disregarded.

According to Papastergiadis, through being represented as big threatening groups, the refugees and undocumented migrants trigger an "invasion complex" (431), which can be described as a "fear of the Other" (429). Subsequently, the politics of this fear are deeply entwined with the media representations of the events that trigger it (d'Haenens and Joris 11; Müller 264). As described by Ahmed, fear "re-establishes distance between bodies" (63) in an affective reaction. Following this definition, fear seeks for preservation of the Self, but also the Known (Ahmed 64). Therefore, fear is important for the formation of collectives (Ahmed 71). In the case of the Canary Islands, the fear of undocumented migrants and their effects on the local economy is used to unite many concerned locals working in the tourism sector in xenophobic demonstrations. An example for this has been described in the news article by *Info Migrants*:

> Some 1,000 people -- among them hotel staff, gardeners, cooks, waiters, taxicab and bus drivers, garbage collectors as well as restaurant, bar and hotel owners -- chant and hold signs that read "Hotels aren't immigration centers," "Save the tourism," "Tourism, no socialism," "No tourists, no money" or "Stop illegal immigration." (Wolter and Bathke)

Alinejad and Olivieri claim that media representations are especially important in relation to these fear-based social relations (2). Fear is not fixed or limited to one body, but can change both is subject and object. According to Ahmed, it is part of an "affective economy" (64), which means that is can "slide across signs and between bodies" (64). In

different political circumstances, the subject-object relations in this economy might be significantly different (Alinejad and Olivieri 5), but in the case of the undocumented migration to the Canary Islands, it is the archipelago and the EU that fear those they had rendered their Other.

Alinejad and Olivieri describe how the role of emotions such as fear and anxiety in the formation of the Self and the Other can be seen especially in the way the spatiality of migration is represented in media (4 ff.). For instance, the migrants only become a threat if they set foot on the Spanish archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean. This spatial dimension is also reflected in the previously mentioned material metaphors of the border, where the threatening Other seeks to comes inside from the outside (Burrell and Hörschelmann 48). The southern location of the Canary Islands, geographically closer to Morocco than to Spain, gives the migrants an opportunity to perforate the borders of the EU. Media representations of this perceived threat are one of the ways in which the EU seeks to re-establish a distance between the Self and the Other.

III.

LIMINAL SPACE AND BIOPOLITICAL CONTROL

In the final chapter of this thesis, I will explore how the containment of migrants in an in-between state in the Canary Islands can be described as a form of biopolitical control of migrant bodies at the external borders of the EU, especially in relation to Galtung's notion of "structural violence" (294) and Mbembe's concept "necropolitics" (66). For this purpose, I will also consider a discourse analysis of the three news articles, and how they might be influenced by Bauluz's photograph. I will describe why so many undocumented migrants are stuck in the in-between space the Canaries constitute, how this relates to the politics of fear, and manifests eventually as a political crisis.

MIGRANTS IN THE IN-BETWEEN

As I have described in the first chapter, the Canary Islands as a littoral zone can be considered a place in-between, not only regarding their geographic position but also their political position on the migrant's passage to the EU. Instead of "transit points" (Godenau 5), they have become a prison for many undocumented migrants. This can be described with anthropologist Michel Agier's term "undesirables" (89) as used by Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll. By way of not being desired, neither in their wished destination nor their current location, these groups of migrating people are pushed into the margins (89), such as the border camps that are theoretically on EU territory but by far do not give their residents the same privileges as EU citizens (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 721).

According to van Houtum and Boedeltje, the negative perception of undocumented migrants is related to the fear of a great influx and the collapse of the familiar social order (227 ff.). This xenophobia manifests in visual representations and discourses centered on othered bodies arriving on European coasts (Burrell and Hörschelmann 48). According to

Burrell and Hörschelmann, fear and the experience of threat are at the core of the discourses revolving around refugees (48). Through threatening what is familiar (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 227 ff.), refugees, such as the migrants in the Canary Islands, trigger a process of delimitation and fearful self-protection.

As seen in the news articles, this self-protection manifests in the forceful marginalization of undocumented migrants in provisory camps and vacant hotels (Wolter and Bathke; Wilson; Keeley). Ahmed argues that distancing oneself from others is an affective reaction to fear (63). Through the installment of temporary camps, a distance between the perceived Self and Other can be created, despite the close spatial proximity of both owed to being on an archipelago. This also explains the protests triggered by migrants being housed in vacant hotels (Wolter and Bathke), or the outcry after many of the migrants were forced to stay on the pier (Wilson; Keeley), as this is close to the daily lives of the locals, not enabling them to distance themselves from what is happening around them.

In the case of Bauluz's photograph of migrants arriving at a beach on the Canaries, the migrants are visually presented in the margin beyond the vanishing point, not the focus of attention but certainly there. Instead, the focal point is on a woman and a child sitting in the sand, making them a point of identification through which the spectator sees the situation depicted on the photograph. The line of migrants on the shore might play into lingering feelings of an uncertain threat, and the uncertainty of what will happen to the migrants outside of the photograph's frame alludes to the impossibility for the spectator to fully understand the dimensions of their experience. While the individual fates of the depicted migrants are indeed uncertain, the accompanying news articles suggest that most of them are still in camps in the Canary Islands or potentially already sent back to their countries of origin by the time the spectator looks at the photograph.

Adding to the characteristics of the photograph, the different news articles by which it has been used might contribute to the increased fear and anxiety related to the liminal position of the migrants. For instance, both news articles by *AP News* allude to overwhelmed authorities (AP News; Wilson); one of them even describes conflicts between the local police and migrants (Wilson). This indicates a potential lack of control by the Spanish authorities, which is enhanced through the generally difficult social and economic situation in Spain following the COVID-19 pandemic. To illustrate this, one of the news articles mentions that

> ... the pier is currently home to 1,985 people — including 20 who have tested positive for the coronavirus. (Wilson)

While this quote stresses the extreme vulnerability of the migrants in camps, it might also pose as a potential threat to the local population and the European mainland if the virus keeps spreading in the overcrowded camps.

Furthermore, some of the articles mention numbers to illustrate the arriving migrants, such as:

> Over 16,000 migrants have made the perilous route from western Africa to the Spanish archipelago this year, a 900 per cent rise compared with last year. (Keeley)

> The number of migrant arrivals to the archipelago is near a historic high: More than 20,000 people … have arrived … since the beginning of the year -- more than five times as many as in 2019 and 2018 combined. (Wolter and Bathke)

Especially mentioning how much more migrants are arriving compared to previous years might contribute to how threatening to the social order their arrivals are perceived. Furthermore, describing the migrants in terms on their amount makes them appear as a

statistic rather than as individuals, although it is certainly difficult to do justice to their individuality in the limited capacity of a news article.

FEAR, PROTECTION & VIOLENCE

Through fear of undocumented migrants, the EU can be considered to act as a body, while the migrants constitute another body from which potential violence against the EU-body is suspected (Ahmed 69). Accordingly, the EU-body seeks to protect itself against the 'Other' body that it fears (van Houtum and Bueno Lacy 709). However, through the unequal power dynamics between the EU and the undocumented migrants, the EU can cause more harm for the vulnerable migrants than the other way around (Godenau 6; Burrell and Hörschelmann 51).

The confinement of undocumented migrants in border camps in the Canary Islands can be considered as a form of "biopolitics" (Foucault 139) at the external borders of the EU. Foucault describes biopolitics as exercise of "power over life" (139). Biopolitics are working through "biopower" (140), which is the power over another body (140). Hence, the control of migrant bodies and their further movement, which are regulated and restricted by EU institutions, can be considered an expression of this power. Further, its biopolitical power even enables the EU to subject migrants to death (137), for instance, though not rescuing migrant boats or exposing the migrants to living conditions that heighten their risk of death.

Through this liminal position on the EU border, the lives of the migrants are at stake. In the camp, they are floating between life and death, as the refusal of asylum status and citizen rights reduces them to their biological life. As argued by Agamben, the biological life (*zoē*) and political life (*bios*) are strongly interconnected (105). Thus, the loss of political status also threatens their physical integrity. Building on Foucault, biopolitics are the "politicization of bare life" (10), adding *bios* to the *zoē*. However, if a person is taken away

the autonomy over their own bare life, their life depends on the decisions of a sovereign, rendering them alive but dead, in the liminal space in-between.

Galtung uses the concept of "structural violence" (292) to describe processes in which the basic needs of people are not met (292 ff.). In case of the undocumented migrants in the Canary Islands all four basic needs including survival, well-being, identity, and freedom (292) are violated to a certain extent. Following Galtung's typology of violence (see table 1), most prominently, freedom needs are violated through confinement to border camps (292). Yet, also the survival and well-being needs are not adequately fulfilled through the precarious living conditions in the camps (292). Additionally, the marginalization of migrants and their lack of civil rights may also lead to the violation of their identity needs (292).

Form of Violence	Survival Needs	Well-Being Needs	Identity Needs	Freedom Needs
Direct Violence	Killing	Maiming Siege, Sanctions Misery	Desocialization Resocialization Secondary Citizen	Repression Detention Expulsion
Structural Violence	Exploitation A (Strong)	Exploitation B (Weak)	Penetration Segmentation	Marginalization Fragmentation

Table 1. Galtung's typology of violence

While the structural violence of the camps might be clearly detectable, also the media representations of migrants could be described as a form of structural violence that passes over the migrants' identity needs. Media representations often speak of migrants as a homogenous group instead of individuals, referring to them in terms of numbers as mentioned before. Thus, their media representations are very one-dimensional and often negative (Burrell and Hörschelmann 48). This might make it difficult for some migrants to identify themselves with the way they are represented. Galtung describes alienation from oneself as a consequence of the violation of identity needs (292 ff.). Hence, the lack of attention paid to

the heterogeneity of the migrants and their individuality might lead to an alienation of some migrants from themselves.

Following Agamben's explorations of Aristotle, the lives of undocumented migrants are not "politically qualified" (11), leading to them being treated solely focused on preserving their physical life (zoē). The focus on preserving the physical life rather than providing a qualitative life can also be observed in media representations. For instance, the news articles all focus on the perspective of locals, politicians, Human rights groups, or European tourists, without offering some of the migrants in the camps the opportunity to speak about their needs and concerns (Wilson; AP News; Wolter and Bathke, Keeley).

This loss of access to fundamental human needs can also be seen in Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. As explored by Mbembe, necropolitics builds on the Foucauldian notion of biopower and basically refers to the power a sovereign has over its subjects through the right to decide if they are allowed to live or have to die (Mbembe 66; 70 ff.). While the EU not actively pursues to kill undocumented migrants physically, they are socially killed through not having citizen rights, being marginalized, and alienated from themselves (75). Further, Mbembe describes how slavery is a "triple loss" (74), the "loss of a *home*, loss of rights over one's body, and loss of political status" (74 ff.). While slavery and the confinement of undocumented migrants cannot be compared, there are parallels between both forms of "social death" (75). So are migrants as "undesirables" (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll 89) nowhere welcome and home, they have restricted rights over their body's due to their biopolitical control by the EU (Agamben 11), and they do not have a visa or asylum status.

The necropolitical control of undocumented migrants can be traced in news articles and the discourses on irregular migration that are strengthened within them. For instance, one article by *AP News* mentions faster procedures to send back migrants who are not eligible for asylum in the EU as a solution for the Canary Islands to cope with increased irregular

migration, which completely disregards the wishes of migrants that risked their lives to reach the Spanish archipelago. Furthermore, the article by *Info Migrants* describes how the migrants temporarily housed in hotels are confronted with xenophobia and hostility from locals, and how they would prefer more modest accommodations (Wolter and Bathke). This shows, that even if their physical needs are seemingly met, through being reduced to their bare lives and stripped of individual agency, the migrants are strongly violated against by both EU measures and media representations.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS

Considering the prevalent politics of fear in media discourses of the irregular migration to the Canary Islands, as well as the violent response of Spain and the EU, one can consider the situation on the archipelago a political crisis. According to Gozdziak and Main, a European political crisis is marked by stunned policymaking (1) and the violation of European values such as human dignity (4). Furthermore, the human dignity of migrants and refugees is frequently not respected by media representations, for instance, through the common image of migrants as a threat (5). Accordingly, the crisis in the Canary Islands is more a crisis of EU politics rather than migration.

The reaction of the EU-body to the feared migrant Other contains a sense of irony through the significantly unequal power relations (Godenau 6). While the EU is in the position to exude biopolitical control on migrant bodies, it also uses violence against them to protect itself from a suspected violation. Van Houtum and Bueno Lacy argue that the European reaction to irregular migration can be described as “autoimmunity” (709), directing its protection mechanisms against itself as they harm its own core values.

It is remarkable how little the root of this political crisis and self-harming behavior of the EU is addressed in the news articles by *The Independent*, *AP News*, and *Info Migrants*.

While the Spanish authorities are described as “overwhelmed” (Wilson), they are never directly accused of counter-acting EU convictions. Instead, phrases like:

> Spain’s government is stepping up its response to a surge in the number of migrants crossing the Atlantic from Africa to the Canary Islands, though there was little new in the measures announced Friday. (AP News)

> The representative of Spain’s government in the Canary Islands did not immediately respond to questions … regarding the mayor’s request. (Wilson)

> Spain has bowed to mounting pressure from human rights groups and agreed to build migrant camps on the Canary Islands. (Keeley)

emphasize their struggles to meet the heightened demand for action in the “humanitarian drama” (Wilson) at hand. Mentioning the lack of new measures and the seeming discrepancy between the local mayor and the Spanish government give insight in the dimensions of the political crisis taking place. Merely the role of human rights groups in influencing the government to take action indirectly hints at potential violations of human rights, and, therefore, EU convictions.

One contributing factor for the limited attention paid to the violation of human needs taking place of the Canary Islands might be the photograph I selected for this analysis. It focusses on the woman with child on a beach, presumably locals enjoying leisure, therefore, it is not surprising that also the news articles it accompanies tend to focus on the local perspective. Nevertheless, this does not justify that the migrants are represented as a threat to the social order, instead of elaborating more on the underlying political crisis, and how the disregard of the migrant’s dignity and agency are fundamentally harming the EU self-image as a place that upholds democratic values (Gozdziak and Main 3 ff.).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that Bauluz photograph is utilized in multilayered ways by the four news articles to represent the political crisis revolving around irregular migration towards the Canary Islands. The visual characteristics of the photograph contribute to the perceived contrast between locals and migrants, which is addressed by the news articles. Beyond the discussion of the liminal position of migrants and their forceful marginalization in provisory and temporary camps and shelters, also the conflicts between the tourism sector and the migrants are addressed. The beach depicted in the photograph contributes to associations with vacations that have been covered with discourses about death, overcrowded camps, and stunned authorities.

The visual representation of the migrants beyond the vanishing point of the photograph is mirrored by the news articles, which focus on local perspectives rather than the experiences of the migrants. Additionally, the faces of the migrants are not clearly visible, and their past and future are neither revealed by the photograph, nor by the new articles. While their great suffering on the Atlantic route and in the camps is implied, no room is given to their reasons for leaving their home countries or their hopes for a potential life in the EU.

This is relevant, as media discourses have the potential power to influence public opinions (D'Haenens and Joris 11; Müller 264; Mistiaen 57). Therefore, it is remarkable how the media present the migrants as a homogeneous group. While their vulnerability is acknowledged, their humanity seems easily forgotten behind numbers and generalizations. Thus, the ways we understand the violent treatment and biopolitical control of migrants through media representations might be influenced by how we refer to them.

Unfortunately, this thesis does not constitute an exemption to this ethical dilemma. By relying on media representations for my analysis, I also used generalizations that do not do justice to the many individuals affected in many different ways by the EU migration policies.

During the research for this thesis, I noticed how difficult it is to break out of the structures in which we represent migrants as seemingly homogenous groups. This way of thinking seems to be structurally embedded in the way we think about the world, making it difficult to deviate from it. However, as media representations have a strong impact on how we refer to and understand the world, it is even more crucial to explore how migrants can be represented as individual people instead of numbers.

Hence, this analysis of media discourses has revealed not only the shortcomings of media representations in acknowledging the individuality of migrants but also how difficult this is as a person relying on such representations for one's own understanding of the situation and how much easier it is to follow the same pitfalls and homogenize them. Nevertheless, I consider it as important to pay attention to how our understanding of such crises is shaped and actively try to become better in acknowledging how little we actually know about the experiences of migrants and refugees, potentially giving them the necessary agency to represent themselves.

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