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Visibility without voice:

Media witnessing irregular migrants in BBC online news journalism

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Abstract: In the analysis of journalistic representation of irregular migration to Europe, there is rather little attention given to the variation of modes and genres of journalism. Most studies focus on text in “old media” and the news genre. This article analyses affordances of different modalities and genres of online journalism in framing irregular migrants. Media framing in BBC online news coverage of a mediatized conflict in Spain, defined as “migration crisis”, is analysed with multimodal social semiotics. While mediation makes global audiences witness tragedies at Europe’s borders and the online journalism affords more voice and deliberation for migrant sources, the frames of threat and victim dominate the news stories. Frames that depict migrants as surviving heroes who provide for their families emerge in feature genres.

Keywords: Europe-Africa border, immigration, media conflict, news frame, news images, online journalism, media witnessing

Introduction

European research on media representations of asylum seekers and irregular migrants demonstrates that in general two types of news framing – immigrants as threats or as victims - dominate news coverage (e.g. Erjavec 2004; Innes 2010; Leudar et al 2008; Lynch, McGoldrick & Russell 2012; Mena Montes 2010, 587 – 589; Moore 2013; Nordberg 2004; van Gorp 2005). First, these immigrants are framed as a threat to the society, its moral, order and safety. Portrayals of immigrants as threats link to broader communitarian frameworks of understanding immigration control (Balbanova & Balch 2010, 384). These frameworks are constructed as a three-tiered framing of immigrants as a threat: a physical threat to the society and its security, economic threat often in the form of suspected welfare exploitation, and a cultural threat of invading values (Innes 2010). The frame of threat is widely discussed in research across European contexts. This type of representation of migrants as the Other produces what a scholar advocating human rights journalism, Ibrahim Seaga Shaw (2012, 202), terms “cultural violence”, a representation that denies human rights and dignity of a person. Similarly, Alessandro Dal Lago (1999) argues that the media produce a stereotypical social category in which migrants are presented as non-persons without personal history and rights. Second, these migrants are also presented as victims of for instance war, crime, natural conditions and their “culture”. However, this framing is very selective. Only some migrants are represented as “deserving” our protection. Oftentimes, cultural proximity and imagined cultural values define which migrants can be categorized as suitable victims (Horsti 2013). These two framings can have implications on migration policy in Europe. For instance, Noemi Mena Montes (2010)

shows how mediatized attention of irregular migration in Spain as both an issue of “illegality” and “humanitarianism” set the political agenda by increasing parliamentary debates along these two frames.

However, previous research on journalistic representation of migrants has focused on “old media” and the news genre, particularly newspaper journalism. There is rather little attention given to the variation of genre, medium and to the factors that shape the new media landscape. New media ecology shapes journalistic content, production, consumption and dissemination in ways that might have an impact also on framing. Affordances of participation, accessibility, connectivity, mobility, and convergence of modalities, representations, productions and dissemination have shaped the communicative field, including journalism. Emerging forms of “networked journalism” may provide a foundation for public dialogue that enables stories about distant others to be told and better understood (Beckett and Mansell 2008, 92). We are living an era of do-it-yourself journalism where anyone can set up a blog, web site or contribute to global news flows. Instant coverage and easier access to visual images in remote locations and marginalised conditions offers new opportunities to evoke moral responsibility. Nevertheless, the “new” and the “old” should not be compared as separate but they are highly entangled in complex networks. Television, radio and newspaper journalism are produced and shared both online and offline.

This article broadens the perspective of previous research on representations of irregular migrants and asylum seekers by focusing attention to the affordances of different modalities of online journalism. I am particularly interested in analysing how the recurring frames of threat and victim possibly emerge in the new media environment. How do different communicative modalities support certain framings? The empirical analysis focuses on online news coverage of irregular boat migration to the Canary Islands of Spain in 2006 – 2007 and uses multimodal social semiotics (Kress 2010). This approach allows me to examine social construction of meaning across different modalities. The visual modalities include design of the BBC world news website. Moreover, the concept of frame, understood as a principle of selection and salience, remains crucial. In Kress’s (2010, 10) terms “there is no meaning without framing”. The results of the analysis are discussed in terms of media witnessing and the communicative modes of visibility and voice. These modes are crucial for media’s power in mediating experiences across distances in ways that demand responsibility and action. As John Ellis (2000) argues, the audio-visual media has brought a modality of perception, witness, to our everyday lives. This creates certain responsibilities, because “we cannot say that we do not know” (Ellis 2000, 1). However, media witnessing needs to be scrutinized in the context of framing since it too is limited by selection and emphasis.

African migration to southern Europe

The immigration and asylum policy in the European Union countries is increasingly shifting to supranational decision making, but the focus of “harmonisation” of asylum policy has been on the management and control of migration flows, namely on the fight against “illegal” migration, smuggling and trafficking. Mediterranean irregular migration has been debated at European level since the beginning of the new millennium, raising both unity and divisions between European countries. The media in different European countries have reported on

unauthorized border crossings in the South of Europe in locations like Italy (Lampedusa in particular), Malta, Greece, and Spanish territory (Costa del sol, Gibraltar, Melilla, Ceuta, Canary Islands) since the late 1990s. News on asylum seeking and irregular migration have generally grown in the 2000s, but specific cases tend to attract media interest (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008, 18). The Canary Islands case is one such event that became highly mediatised not only in Spain (Mena Montes 2010) but also in the media in other European countries (about Sweden and Finland see Horsti 2008). The mediatisation and the Europeanisation of the case connect with the establishment of the European border control agency Frontex in 2006. Frontex's surveillance and push-back operation HERA in the Canary Islands and West African coast cost 3,5 million euros in 2006. This was the first major operation of the agency and characterizes well European Union's reactive policy towards irregular migration. Frontex's budget has grown twenty-fold since the establishment, which makes analysis of mediatised migration events particularly important. Such European wide financial contribution needs to be legitimized to European citizens, and the media plays a role in this process.

In 2006, some 31 000 migrants arrived in the Canary Islands in small West African fishing boats, but many lost their lives in this dangerous journey (BBC July 2, 2007). A year later the number of arrivals had dropped to 3 000, mainly because of negotiations between Spain, European Union, Senegal and Mauritania and the Frontex operation. Immigration to Spain became framed in the context of African irregular migrants arriving in small boats, although this route makes only 5 -10 per cent of irregular migration to Spain. Most irregular migrants come from Latin America and Eastern Europe via normal travel routes and overstay their visas (Clandestino project 2009, 80). Restrictions in policy and increased border control in Ceuta and Melilla and the Gibraltar directed migration to West-African coast where migrants began to take small fishing boats to the Canary Islands of Spain. Tenerife received 10 000 undocumented people in boats in the first half of 2006, which is double of the whole year 2005. Travel requires smuggling and contacts to organised crime. Additionally, the sea travel is dangerous and an estimated 6000 people died in 2006 while crossing the sea (BBC December 28, 2006). In 2006 the issue of African migration became highly politicised in Spain. In the national Spanish debate the opposition blamed the government in parliamentary debates, for instance accusing the government of creating a pull, "a calling effect", through regularisation programs that legalised undocumented migrants (Mena Montes 2010, 597). In addition, in public debate, the Canary Islands authorities demanded support from Spanish government. Spanish government, again, demanded assistance from the European Union. The Canary Islands case was also highly mediatised both in Spain and elsewhere in Europe in ways that pressured governments in Spain and European Union (Mena Montes 2010; Horsti 2008).

Frontex supported a patrolling operation in which aircrafts and expertise were taken to the Western African coast to prevent boats from leaving African shoresⁱ. In addition, Spain had offered aid to African countries in exchange of deportations. Spain also launched a television advertisement in September in West African countries to prevent undocumented immigrationⁱⁱ. All these efforts can be interpreted as attempts to solve the problem. However, the measures are mainly reactive attempts to stop immediate migration, but they do not solve the problem at structural level and in long-term basis.

Media witnessing: communicative modes of visibility and voice

Media present themselves as institutions of witnessing (Durham Peters 2009). Reporting live on television and mediating correspondents' immediate experiences on screen give the impression of immediate witness. Media can position audiences as witnesses by mediating images and narratives of the events. Through this mediation audiences become aware of distant events and experiences of people they would not otherwise encounter. Media can also bear witness and mediate eyewitness accounts in their reports. Thus, media witnessing includes witness *in, by* and *through* media (Frosh & Pinchevski 2009).

Media witnessing includes both visibility and voice: agents are both seen and heard in different modalities of communication. Photographs, graphs, maps, personal stories in the form of audio, audio-visual and textual display lives elsewhere to those who would not otherwise know about them. Nevertheless, display is never neutral, but it is a product of framing: of selection and salience. For instance, images are taken from a particular perspective in ways that make audiences look at the events from a certain position. However, display of testimony, whether visual image or personal story, is not the only mode of witnessing. Display only brings the unknown to the realm of the acknowledged. Another mode, deliberation, refers to a more profound witnessing that includes possibility of argumentation, information, reasoning, discussion and debate. (Cottle 2006, 173.) This distinction between display and deliberation is close to Shanto Iyengar's (1991) theorisation of thematic and episodic frames. News tend to rely on episodic framing that focus on individual events and details rather than discuss issues through thematic framing more broadly with a longer timespan and deeper context.

Nevertheless, media witnessing is tightly connected to framing. While "bearing witness" (Cottle 2006, 182) to suffering can create awareness and responsibility that encourage the audience to moral judgement and to "do something" (Chouliaraki 2006, 19), an expectation of this "something" that needs to be done depends on the kind of framing that is constructed. Repetitive connection of irregular immigration to crime and social problems, as discussed earlier, can increase demands for control policy. A study that compared reception between a criminalising representation and a socially responsible representation concluded that framing had an impact on reactions towards asylum seekers (Lynch, McGoldrick and Russell 2012). As an opposite of criminalising and conflict oriented journalism on asylum seekers and irregular migrants some scholars advocate the framework of "peace journalism" or "human rights journalism" (Shaw 2012; Lynch, McGoldrick and Russell 2012). This media policy orientation advocates for journalism that treats issues and events with thematic frames (Iyengar 1991) by exploring background, balancing between different views and voices, and offering creative ideas for conflict resolution and development. Thus, this human rights journalism stresses visibility, voice and context as means towards ethical journalism. Only through background and context personal narratives and appearances in visual images can become ethically, politically, and culturally relevant.

Multimodal semiotic analysis of the BBC online news journalism

Social semiotics offers a methodological paradigm to examine the cultural resources for witnessing through media. Media witness is always a selected and

framed representation. Social semiotics is a multidisciplinary paradigm that examines the construction of meaning particularly in visual images and signs. While images can carry meaning across cultures better than language, socially and culturally shared meanings around images influence their interpretation. An image carries meaning potentials that are read in a particular context. Thus, some readings may be more preferable than others. (Aiello 2006.) Social semiotics stresses that visuality has become increasingly important form of communication, particularly in the new media era. The multimodal approach to social semiotics, developed particularly by Gunther Kress (2010) expands the analysis of meaning making to multiple modes of communication: visual, textual, audio and audio-visual. Each mode has specific representational affordances, which often come together in a design. For instance, in a news website different modes may strengthen a certain hegemonic meaning, present one kind of reading more preferable than other. The modes can also offer conflicting readings of the event and the reader interprets and selects meanings in his/her social and cultural environment. In Kress's (2010, 28) terms design refers to "selections and arrangements of resources for making a specific *message* about a particular issue for a particular audience" (italics in the original). Therefore, design that brings together modes is crucial for framing issues. Kress (2010, 122) recognizes that framing takes place in a specific cultural and social context. He defines frame as "fixing of meaning in modal, generic and discursive form". This fixing is practiced by "a rhetor" who "shapes a message as a response" to a prompt. Moreover, framing is practiced in a communicative environment "using available resources". This understanding of framing as partly conscious and partly guided by the communicative environment, the context, is a crucial one. However, the extent to which frames are conscious and promoted by different agents (journalists or their sources) and the extent to which they are more unconscious varies. Although journalism is a framing profession in which journalists and editors aim to present the events in the world in a comprehensible form to their audiences, the concept of media frame includes also unconscious practices and routines. Todd Gitlin defines media frames in the following way:

"Frames are principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters. (...) Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the word both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports." (Gitlin 1980, 6-7.) In this definition, framing refers to a professional practice that is based on largely unspoken routines and cultural frameworks. Therefore, the concept of media frame is different from the conscious perspective that every journalist decides to take on a topic while working on a story. Gitlin speaks about "reports" in this quote but in his studies visual were equally important for framing. Editors select and highlight certain images, photographers select and frame images in particular ways. (Coleman 2010, 237.) Moreover, the conjunction of the image and text is crucial as text often gives a preferred meaning to the image (Hall 1997, 228).

In the empirical analysis, I operationalize the concept of media frame that is produced in the intersection of conscious decisions made by journalists, editors and their sources and the more unconscious processes of professional routines and cultural practices. In the analysis, I ask how is undocumented migration and migrants framed but do this analysis in reflection to the frames of victim and threat that have been discussed in previous research. Following Kress (2010), I pay attention to the affordances of modes and genres, asking what kinds of resources they offer to particular framings. Therefore, I examine how the design of the website, photographs,

graphs, maps, journalistic genres, and language shape the framings. As previous research strongly suggests, two dominant framings of threat and victim have become hegemonic, I examine how these frames possibly organise coverage of the event. In addition, I pay attention to additional frames that are grounded in the data. I have coded the material asking (following Entman 1993): what and who are constructed as a problem, sources of problems, and solutions for problems. In addition, I examine the level of agency and interaction in the text: who defines the problem, sources of problems and solutions for whom. Finally, adopting the ideas of human right journalism, I discuss the ethics of the “witnessing” BBC offers for its audiences.

The empirical data set consists of 37 stories copied from the BBC world news website on November 5, 2007. The news site was searched with “migration” and “Canary Islands”. All items include photographs and 22 items have maps or graphs. In addition, the material includes BBC World Service audio clips that are edited within two online items, and three slide shows with short captions titled “In pictures”ⁱⁱⁱ. The analysed items have been published between March 17, 2006 and July 21, 2007, which is the period when the migration issue on the Canary Islands peaked. BBC’s online service requires basic skills of Internet use. It organises foreign news in geographical areas, and therefore it has a separate link for news on Europe and Africa. The page automatically opens a column on the right with links to other news stories related to the same event or theme. The dataset was collected manually by clicking all available material that appeared on the page. In addition, a BBC website search tool was used with key words Canary Island and migration. The material was saved in a form that includes the page layout and images.

I begin the analysis discussing the design of the website and then move to the framings in news genre. Finally, I explore the framings in other journalistic genres, compare the results and discuss them in the broader framework of media witnessing.

Design of the website

The layout of the BBC world news website disposes certain events and topics, it organises materials in a particular way and indicates to the viewer what aspects are important (Kress 2010, 92). The news item is situated at the center of the webpage, highlighting the importance of the news genre. Each story has a photograph on top closely connected to the headline and the lead. This package offers an immediate framing of the event and follows the logic of newspaper journalism. In addition, similar to a newspaper, the website is divided into different sections according to geographical area (Africa, America, Middle East and so on) and topic (News, Sport, Health and so on), and it is indicated by colour where in the world the story is located. While the BBC can be seen as a global news organisation, it is also clear to the reader that it is UK based: the only clickable nation in the left column is UK.

On the right, a column appears under the heading “Migrant Crisis” in capital letters and lists additional material related to the news item. While this is a convenient way to reuse archive material it also indicates what kind of background is relevant. One can click open maps, graphics, statistics, migrant interviews and picture galleries. The heading “Migrant Crisis” that sticks, to each news item in the dataset becomes a defining naming for the whole event. The main affordance of writing and speech is naming (Kress 2010, 92), and here the particular naming (Migrant Crisis) is supported by layout and technical qualities of offering the column with this heading

on the side of each news story. This reappearing naming anchors different news stories, images and other materials together and offers a preferred meaning in a similar way than what a caption does with a photograph. As Stuart Hall (1997, 228) writes about the role of a caption in reference to Roland Barthes, the “meaning” of the photograph (or the online news page) does not lie exclusively in the visual but in the “conjunction of image *and* text”. This naming favours the interpretation that there is a crisis that originates from migrants. The main problem is “migrant” who causes a “crisis” where as titles like “European border control crisis”, “European migration policy crisis” or “Spanish crisis” would lead interpretation to different direction.

Image 1. BBC News websites displaying “Migrant crisis” column on the left^{iv}



Framing in the news genre

The news stories related to migration by boat to the Canary Islands are mainly published in the Europe section (23 out of 27), which highlights European and Spanish perspective of the story as compared to the one of African nations and peoples. The news items’ most salient problem definition in the headline and the body text is that “too many” migrants arrive “unexpectedly”, and therefore cause problems to the administration at Canaries, to Spanish authorities, and finally to Europe. This connects to the frame of threat that has become a dominating framing pertaining to irregular migration in Europe. Also in this case, the news texts use language that connotes with invasion, war, and natural catastrophes in ways that present migrants as problems and a physical threat. The story of migration focuses on unauthorized border crossing and in so doing the news re-circulate the idea of a physical threat that crosses the border of an imagined national – and in this case European body. This language of invasion appears in the direct and indirect quotes from the sources that journalists have used, which are mainly Spanish authorities, including the regional Canary Islands’ authorities. The interests of different agents shape media framing. Scholars who have analyzed securitizing of migration argue that framing of migrants as a threat

benefits politicians and other “managers of unease” such as the police, as they can be seen to manage the problem and to protect the society (Innes 2010, 469). The Canary Islanders in particular define the situation in terms of invasion and natural catastrophe. They are at the bottom of a mediated claims-making hierarchy (except for the migrants). They make claims to the Spanish authorities and to the EU for resources and responsibility. Therefore, they have a motivation to define the situation as an invasion and a catastrophe that requires resources. Spain on the other hand both responds to the claims made by regional authorities and makes claims towards the European Union for resources. Thus, the framing that Spain is motivated to promote is a catastrophe it can solve with resources.

The following extracts illustrate how the media sources are able to define the event as a naturally occurring catastrophe in quotations:

“The dam is about to burst,” the head of the regional government told members. (BBC September 6, 2006.)

The regional government [...] over what it calls an immigration avalanche. (BBC August 20, 2006.)

Spain’s Canary Islands can no longer cope with the soaring number of illegal immigrants arriving from Africa, local leaders say. (BBC August 18, 2006.)

The Spanish government has said it will not tolerate the continued arrival of African migrants on its shores. (BBC September 4, 2006.)

The journalistic text also uses similar language as the following exemplify:

Headline: Canaries’ migrant wave hits 1,000 (BBC August 20, 2006.)

Spain is on the frontline for illegal migration. (BBC July 2, 2007.)

Spain has asked the European Union for more help to deal with a renewed wave of illegal immigrants travelling by sea from West Africa. (BBC May 18, 2006.)

Spain has announced a three-year diplomatic offensive in West Africa to try to stem the flow of African migrants to Europe. (BBC May 19, 2006.)

Three more boatloads arrived on Sunday, swamping reception centers. (BBC August 20, 2006.)

The metaphors of wave, flood, flow, avalanche, and dam connect to natural catastrophes, namely of fluids and liquids, and they are very common across European media contexts (see for summary in Leudar et al 2008 and Charteris-Black 2006). Metaphors are cognitive frames that simplify complex issues and resonate with underlying cultural values. In his analysis of immigration metaphors Charteris-Black (2006, 579) argues that liquid metaphors are powerful because they are based on two kinds of imaginaries: disaster and a (broken) container. Fluid metaphors communicate an idea of a space, a bounded area that can be sealed and protected from an external contamination. Similarly disaster metaphors refer to destruction that originates from the outside. Both metaphors objectify immigrants, and present them as “non-persons” who barely live but have no social life (Dal Lago 1999). Rhetoric distance is also produced in the news texts in less explicit ways. The captions in the photographs do not mention names or any details of the migrants, they are mainly described as

“African migrants”, “migrants” or “illegal migrants”, which does not even reveal their country of origin. Moreover, the news texts describe “boats” as active agents that arrive, land, and capsize and migrants as “boatloads” which further de-humanizes migrants. De-humanizing language withdraws the social, political, historical and economic contexts of the events. When migrants seem not to have personality and history, their actions seems illogical, a kind of naturally occurring catastrophe.

This framing of threat is supported in visual images, a mode that is capable of depicting agents and action (Kress 2010, 92). The category of images that presents boats full of men is a significant one in the dataset (see table 1) and together with the de-humanising language they produce a framing of threat. These images of full boats photographed from the perspective of European as *arriving towards “us” viewers*, can be interpreted as a visual metaphor of invasion. Similarly, a small sign that illustrates the link “Features and Background” reproduces the metaphor of invasion. The red arrows pointing from the South to the North indicate danger targeted towards Europe. Moreover, the idea of a container that is threatened from the outside is reproduced in the maps that can be clicked in the middle of the news text. Nine maps represent “Key Migrant routes from Africa to Europe”, but they limit the route only to the Europe – Africa border and do not depict the winding routes that migrants have taken before the border. The arrows point from the African shores to named sites in Europe: Canary Islands, Ceuta, Melilla, Lampedusa and Malta. This visual mapping reproduces a mental idea of the border of Europe as it shows where the container has its edge. In addition, powerful metaphor of war and invasion is depicted in a map of Frontex deployment in Cape Verde and West African coast that is published twice (September 10, 2006 and September 13, 2006) in the news material. The map has signs representing ships, aircrafts, and helicopters. Deployment zone is marked with a darker colour. There is no reference to the origins of the map and therefore it seems like journalistic content. However, the same map is published on Frontex website, which explicates the power of Frontex as a frame sponsor as it has been able to access journalistic content with its own framing without editorial processing.

The images of Africans in queues and under control illustrate the actions taken to solve the crisis. These images (re)construct hierarchical position between Europeans and Africans: Africans are objects of Europeans’ actions – objects of criminalisation, control, and aid. While there are no images of Spanish or European politicians, and only 12 pictures out of 82 that show control authorities, the text produces agencies that solve and control the problem.

Table 1: Visibility: Main theme in visual images in news items and other sections in BBC website¹



¹ Counted pictures in news items. Same picture published in more than one news item is counted. Also In pictures images counted here. 10 pictures in “Details of boats/empty boats” appear in In pictures: Immigrant boats –link. 7 pictures in “Spanish/European authorities patrol/control” appear in In pictures: Guardia Civil – link. In pictures: Canary Isles migrant crisis –link has images that fall into all of these classifications.

| | |
|--|----|
| Boat full of migrants | 21 |
| Anonymous migrant close-up | 12 |
| Spanish (or aid workers) help migrants | 10 |
| Spanish/ European authorities patrol/control | 12 |
| Details of boats, empty boats | 11 |
| Groups or queues of migrants | 9 |
| Other | 7 |
| Total | 82 |

Image 2: Example of image category of a full boat in news genre.

The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. The main headline is "Spain vows to curb migrant wave" with a sub-headline: "The Spanish government has said it will not tolerate the continued arrival of African migrants on its shores." The article text states that Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega called on African countries to help cut off the flow of migrants. A photo shows a boat packed with people on the water. A sidebar on the right lists "MIGRANT CRISIS" and "PERSONAL STORIES" with a search bar for "Slave from Niger".

Image 3: Example of image category of anonymous migrant close-up in feature genre.

The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. The main headline is "African migrants' desperate journey" with a sub-headline: "Nigerian migrant worker Akum knew that she had to break the law to get to Europe." The article text describes how she works in a popular tourist resort in Tenerife. A photo shows a close-up of a person's face. A sidebar on the right lists "MIGRANT CRISIS" and "PERSONAL STORIES" with a search bar for "Slave from Niger".

In the headlines, Spain is portrayed as an active agent that makes deals with African countries, seeks help, sends migrants “home”, and “vows to curb migrant wave” (BBC September 4, 2006). Spain and Spanish authorities also figure as main

agents in the body text. In addition the EU emerges as capable of solving problems. Spanish authorities are given the power to define the problem in the stories and they also make claims and direct their speech towards other agents, namely other African nations and the EU. Spain claims for responsibility and resources from the European Union, and in doing that, they promote a Europeanizing framing of the issue. Although the European Union is an object of speech and demands, its representatives figure as sources only rarely, mainly through a spokesperson rather than a Commissioner. EU appears in the news as a distant actor, without a prominent named voice and face. Justice Commissioner Franco Frattini figures in five news items indirectly criticizing Spain of its amnesty (implicitly suggesting the reason for the “crisis”) and announcing that EU will help through Frontex by sending rapid forces and resources (solving the problem).

While the headlines frame the problem of arriving migrants as a national Spanish issue, the body texts show more complexity in the problem definition. On the one hand, irregular migration is framed as European issue, “sharing the burden” (BBC July 20, 2006) but on the other hand it is depicted as a national Spanish issue that results from its own policies, namely its “amnesty policy” through which Spain granted official papers to those settled in the country. Moreover, also other nation-states are presented as active agents. Not only European countries that provide resources for Frontex operations but in addition African nations are depicted as responsible agents. Deportations are termed as “repatriations” (BBC September 13, 2006) and “sending migrants home” (BBC September 13, 2006), although also “expelling” (September 13 2006). Repatriation and “repatriation deal” are neutralising terms that present African and European nations as equals. African authorities are also quoted in ways that make them appear as responsible agents. The total omission of migrants’ viewpoint and voice in the news genre is therefore astonishing. The authorities of the countries they have left, in some cases escaped as asylum seekers, are treated as official framing agents where as the news genre leaves the migrants without voice and framing power.

Europe is depicted as the category opposite to Africa and as the final destination of irregular migrants. This wider threat of migrants moving to North appears through a quote of a regional Canary Island’s representative: “These immigrants aren’t only going to stay on the streets of the Canary Islands, they’re going to go on to Madrid, London and Paris” (BBC May 18, 2006). This quote is given salience by repeating it typographically in a separate visual element beside the body text. The threat of unauthorized border crossing is domesticated for the UK context in one of the two news items that appear in the UK section of the site. The UK Home Office puts forward its own framing of the events: “An internal Home Office report has warned of a potential threat to UK border controls from illegal immigrants arriving in the Canary Islands” (BBC January 20, 2007). The Europeanized framing produces a double threat based on an idea of various nested containers. Thus, the frame of threat does not only produce the idea of one European edge but several borderings within Europe. Furthermore, the Canary Islands and through Frontex deployment also the West African coast are depicted as buffer zones for Europe. Europeanization of migration and the operations and deals with third countries exemplify how borders in today’s Europe are dispersed and heterogenous both within and outside of Europe (Balibar 2002, 87 – 88; Mezzadra & Neilson 2012, 68).

Nevertheless, an interesting question remains: why is EU treated as a rather distant agent, particularly in the images? One answer lies exactly on the problem definition: it is defined as “migrant crisis”, and responsibility of the Others, migrants

themselves and non-European human traffickers. This Eurocentric framework does not encourage examining how European migration policies are interconnected to the events and what motivates migrants to the journey. After all, tightened EU border control and immigration policies are the core background to the fact that some people have chosen to take dangerous routes to Europe. In public debate European Union has distanced itself from the problem. It does not see itself as being part of its creation and long-term solution. Therefore, the only comprehensible action for the EU seems to be the protection of borders, and for the Northern European nations to distance the responsibility of solution to Spain.

So far, I have focused on the frame of threat, which dominates the news coverage of this event. Nevertheless, the analysed news stories also frame migrants as victims. In this framing the deaths and dangers facing migrants are depicted as problems. However, in the news items, death appears in technical style, stating numbers of those who drowned. This takes place in a paragraph towards the end of the news story. Only four news stories mention drowning in the headline or lead. Victim framing emerges in the news particularly in relation to two kinds of sources: the European Parliament (EP) and the NGOs or rescue agents such as the Red Cross. The EP is concerned of the treatment of migrants and NGOs are quoted as giving analyses of the humanitarian situation and of numbers of deaths. Nevertheless, these perspectives in the whole news coverage are in the minority, only seven news items frame migrants as victims through the witness of NGOs or the EP. While the motivations and expectations of migrants are hardly present in the news, they appear in few stories through NGO representatives and BBC correspondents who speak on behalf of them. In addition, in one story, published in the Africa section, a correspondent in Senegal quotes a relative of a man who was rescued at the Senegalese coast. This quote gets salience by typographical separation from the body text. This is the only quote in the news material that explains why migrants choose to make the dangerous journey: "If he took all the risks, it's because he saw the situation his family was in". In this quote the survivor who is recovering in a hospital is not only presented as a victim but also as a hero who has taken the journey in order to provide to his family. The problem in addition to the danger is the inequality of living conditions. Framing of migrant as an object of control and care shifts to one of agency.

Victim framing appears in the stories also entangled with the frame of threat. For instance, in this quote the two frames appear in one sentence: "And in a separate motion, MPs urged the EU to set up an emergency fund to deal with the 'humanitarian crises resulting from the immigration avalanche'" (BBC May 22, 2006). This definition suggests that the threat originates from immigration, which causes a humanitarian crisis. Immigrants figure simultaneously as threats and victims. Moreover, two news stories report that Spanish authorities frame the event as a "humanitarian crisis" and in both cases in a context where they make demands towards European Union.

Similarly, the images of boats full of suffering migrants can be interpreted both threatening and asking for compassion. Another category of photography, that of close up images of African faces witness suffering in the expression. Nevertheless, the news items do not underline emotions through visual elements, which again conjunctures to framing in the textual mode that keeps migrants silent and distant.

The repetition of images of rickety boats full of migrants reproduces divisions between Europe and Africa by contrasting primitive to developed and desperate to logical/reasonable. As Canary Islands are a tourist destination, several

visuals constructed this division by filming wooden “primitive” boats side by side with yachts and migrants with tourists. These visual contrasts underline that African migrants do not belong to the scenery of wealthy European tourists; they are a visual metaphor of “dirt” as matter in a wrong place in Mary Douglas’ (1966) sense. Similar danger is produced through imagery where we see white European rescue agents wearing masks and plastic gloves – a reference not only to threat of disorder but also to disease that is imagined to cross the edge and contaminate the European body.

Solutions to both defined problems – threat and victim – is more surveillance, patrolling and border control. The Spanish government and the EU, which participates in control actions through Frontex involvement, are actually presented as “protecting” Africans from humanitarian crisis and suffering (that is from themselves).

Framing in the feature and background sections

The framing differs in the feature and background stories that the viewer is able to click on the right column. The frame of threat is less explicit and migrants are framed in more diverse ways: as victims and heroes. The journalistic genres are different in those stories as they are reportages written by correspondents in different locations or personal stories of migrants written or spoken in their own words. The style is more personal in both genres. The dataset includes ten stories that connect with the Canary Islands case. In addition, there are personal stories of other migrants unrelated to this case but which add to the variety of experiences of migration.

The “Eyewitness” section presents three personal stories: one of a Ghanaian man who has lived on Tenerife for 14 years (September 8, 2006), one Nigerian who has been deported and is interviewed via email from Morocco (September 12, 2006), and one of a European woman who lives on Canary Islands (October 24, 2006). In all stories, migrants are framed as victims: victims of rough sea, inhumane treatment in detention centers, and racism. In these accounts, the victim framing is more nuanced since the interviewees explain different kinds of experiences of suffering. In the news, victim framing was more abstract, namely numbers of dead. In addition, the two African personal stories offer more detailed analysis of the problem of inequality: they explain the difficulties of obtaining visas, the lack of fishing opportunities, and the pressure on young men to provide for large families. Therefore, these stories frame the migrants as active agents who make logical choices in the given circumstances. They are represented as heroes that do their best to survive and help their families. However, the last eyewitness story presents migrants as victims that Europeans help, but in addition it depicts the suffering of the Canary Islanders themselves. This testimony contrasts with the lack of migrant testimony *on site* in the Canary Islands and further naturalizes the death of an African migrant. Horror of a white spectator is worth of a story, and she is depicted as capable of mediating emotionally the experiences on the island for global (white) audiences. In addition to eyewitness accounts, “Have your say” comment section offers multiple perspectives from viewers, including migrants who have settled in Europe.

The seven feature stories originate from correspondents in Senegal, Gambia, and Tenerife and they offer a more detailed description of the situation. Nevertheless, the metaphors that construct a frame of threat entangle with victim and hero framing in these reports. Moreover, the Frontex deployment map which has a strong connotation of invasion is attached to two feature stories. In a report from Gambia the correspondent explains migration means and motives from the perspective of the

migrants and the people in the villages. Migration in this story is framed as “trade” and people participating in this trade as both victims and heroes for whom such dangerous route is the only alternative. While correspondents have interviewed prospective migrants or settled migrants, migrants in the boats who are hyper-visible remain largely silenced in the feature stories. This might protect the identity of the migrant, but nevertheless, it produces distance between the sufferer and the audience. A correspondent in Tenerife, however, opens the journalistic ethics for the reader: “...says Akum, who like many refugees did not give her full name for fear of persecution by the Spanish authorities.” This decision gives the reader the kind of context that is relevant for understanding irregular migrant’s position, and therefore contributes to socially responsible journalism. Access to the media and public voice with one’s name is part of freedom of speech, a fundamental right that citizens in Europe generally have, and therefore exposing this unfair situation of migrants to wider audiences is crucial.

While migrants’ eyewitness accounts are important they tend to be descriptive in ways that leave media witnessing at the level of display of experience rather than deliberation (Cottle 2006, 173). Nevertheless, feature genre and participatory comments genre (Have your say in the BBC site) offers few examples of reportage where migrants frame the events by defining the problems which go beyond the problem definitions of the frames of victim and threat. The main problem is inequality. A Nigerian migrant points to European countries: “If you go to the British Embassy or French of Spanish it is next to impossible to get a visa to visit. I have no intention of going back to Africa.” Here the problem is inequality of mobility and the source of problem EU visa policies. It offers background that does not deny migrants’ agency. The analysis of the stories clickable in the “Migrant Crisis” column exemplifies that online journalism includes affordances for more contextualized journalism. If this section would not exist, these types of quotations would be almost non-existent as the hard news story genre is mainly reserved for voices of Spanish and European authorities.

This technical solution offers immediately opportunities to go back to previous news items and background material, such as statistics and eyewitness testimonies of individual migrants. Thus, the additional stories and links provide thematic framing (Iyengar 1991) to irregular migration, which potentially increases opportunities for human rights frameworks in journalism (Lynch, McGoldrick and Russell 2012; Shaw 2012) as it makes background, context, and variety of voices more easily accessible for the viewer.

Conclusions

High media attention to migrant tragedies and witnessing *through* media create awareness of the issue and demand responsibility of audiences and policy makers. Witnessing can proliferate compassion and support towards the migrants, but it can also legitimate increased migration control, deportation and surveillance. The analysis of media frames, therefore, is crucial for understanding the power of media witnessing in context of distant suffering. However, in contemporary mediascapes, the analysis of news texts alone is not sufficient for frame analysis if we wish to understand the dynamics of media witnessing more thoroughly. Even in mainstream media context, new media technology has shaped dissemination and display of news. This study

focused on the design and content of BBC news website that offers additional material when the viewer accesses the news item.

According to human rights journalism (Shaw 2012; Lynch, McGoldrick and Russell 2012), balanced media witnessing would give both visibility and voice to different agents involved in migration: European Union, member states, border control agencies, aid and rescue workers, ordinary citizens, migrant organisations, and migrants and their families. Furthermore, background and context to the events would be crucial. Following multimodal social semiotics I was able to examine the framing of migration in a variety of genres and modalities.

The different modalities and journalistic genres re-produced the news frames that according to previous research have been dominating the news coverage of irregular migration in different European contexts migrants appeared mainly as threats or as victims. However, there were differences in the affordances in different modalities and genres, and therefore, the degree of these media frames varied. In addition, additional and more nuanced framings emerged in the feature genre: the migrants were additionally depicted as active agents, as surviving heroes. While the frame of threat organised the news genre, it did not dominate the feature stories. Visual images, photographs, maps and typographical decisions supported the main frame of threat, particularly when they were interpreted with the text. The textual and visual modalities combined in the news genre re-produced a Eurocentric representation of migration that left the migrants' voice, perspective and proper background to the margins. The news genre clearly relies on episodic framing that produces conflict-oriented representations.

The news coverage quoted elite and organised sources of regional, national and EU level. The main extra-BBC hyperlink was the EU, and no links of organisations with more critical views towards immigration control were available. Although networked journalism in the first part of 2010s offered promise for more varied and nuanced coverage of migration, the routines of selecting sources and establishing hyperlinks to external sources remained conventional in this news site.

However, journalism, particularly in the online environment provides also genres and modalities that are able to give a more nuanced representation. This analysis demonstrated how feature stories, reportage and direct interviews offered migrants' voices and testimonies for the viewer. Witnessing through the media offered not only display but also deliberation as migrants gained some framing power: they were able to define problems and solutions that differed from the dominating frames. In these additional genres offered in the right column of the website, migrants and their families analysed, criticized and added to the Eurocentric perspective that dominated the center of the website, the news stories. While online journalism clearly has potential in advancing human rights journalism, particularly by offering background, context and personal testimonies and evaluations, in the case of BBC, these remained as an addition to the routine European oriented journalism. These two types of journalisms were separated in the design but nevertheless, in the reading process they mix and the generic boundaries blur. Online journalism affords more cultural resources for witness, nevertheless, the reading and viewing paths and the interest of the reader finally shapes the witnessing through the media.

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ⁱ Altogether 7 Member States/Schengen Associated Countries participated in the HERA I and HERA II operation in 2006 coordinated by Frontex with a total budget of 3.5 million EUR, 2.8 million EUR of which were co-financed by Frontex. The operation focused on the African migration to the Canary Islands. Information retrieved August 18, 2008 from

http://www.frontex.europa.eu/newsroom/news_releases/art8.html

ⁱⁱ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7004139.stm>

ⁱⁱⁱ In pictures: Canary Isles migrant crisis. (8 images) Last updated August 30, 2006.

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/5299046.stm

In pictures: Immigrant boats. (11 images) Last updated September 11, 2006.

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^{iv} Counted pictures in news items. Same picture published in more than one news item is counted. Also In pictures images counted here. 10 pictures in “Details of boats/empty boats” appear in In pictures: Immigrant boats –link. 7 pictures in

“Spanish/European authorities patrol/control” appear in In pictures: Guardia Civil – link. In pictures: Canary Isles migrant crisis –link has images that fall into all of these classifications.